

## Internationalization of a Regional Children’s Song for Teaching English to Young Learners

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**Abstract:** Integrating internationalized songs into English language teaching has emerged as a dynamic strategy to ignite students’ interest and enhance their language proficiency. This article comprehensively explores internationalized songs’ significance in language education. A central focus lies on a detailed case study that demonstrates how the expertise of a Turkish musician was leveraged to select and that of field experts to translate and refine a local children’s song for educational purposes. The study meticulously details the collaborative efforts among educators to tailor the song’s content to meet language learning objectives, highlighting the transformative potential of such initiatives in the English language classroom. By immersing themselves in this practical example, educators can gain invaluable insights into the versatility of internationalized songs as effective tools for language instruction, thereby enhancing their teaching practices. Furthermore, the article underscores the importance of incorporating cultural elements into language teaching materials to foster intercultural competence among students. Educators can create immersive learning experiences that promote linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, and appreciation by integrating internationalised songs.

### Anahtar Sözcükler:

Uluslararasılaştırma,  
çocuk şarkıları,  
İngiliz dili eğitimi,  
Çocuklara İngilizce  
öğretimi,  
şarkıların  
uyarlanması

### Çocuklara İngilizce Öğretimi için Bölgesel Çocuk Şarkısının Uluslararası Hale Getirilmesi

**Özet:** Uluslararasılaştırılmış şarkıların İngilizce öğretimine entegrasyonu, öğrencilerin ilgisini çekecek ve dil yeterliliklerini artıracak dinamik bir strateji olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu makale, uluslararası şarkıların dil eğitimindeki önemini kapsamlı bir incelemesini sunmaktadır. Çalışma bir Türk müzisyenin uzmanlığından eğitim amaçlı yerel bir çocuk şarkısını seçmek; alan uzmanlarının katkılarında da bu şarkıyı tercüme etmek ve geliştirmek için nasıl yararlanıldığını gösteren ayrıntılı bir vaka çalışmasıdır. Çalışma, şarkının içeriğini dil öğrenme hedeflerini karşılayacak şekilde uyarlamak için eğitimciler arasındaki işbirlikçi çabaları titizlikle detaylandırmakta ve bu tür girişimlerin İngilizce dil sınıfındaki dönüştürücü potansiyelini vurgulamaktadır. Eğitimciler kendilerini bu pratik örneğe kaptırarak, dil öğretiminde etkili araçlar olarak uluslararası şarkıların çok yönlülüğüne dair paha biçilmez içgörüler kazanabilir ve böylece öğretim uygulamalarını geliştirebilirler. Ayrıca makale, öğrenciler arasında kültürlerarası yetkinliği geliştirmek için kültürel unsurları dil öğretim materyallerine dahil etmenin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Eğitimciler, uluslararası şarkıların entegrasyonu yoluyla yalnızca dilsel yeterliliği değil aynı zamanda kültürel farkındalığı ve takdiri de destekleyen kapsamlı öğrenme deneyimleri yaratabilirler.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the incorporation of music into education has gained widespread popularity, with educators increasingly acknowledging its transformative potential (Fonseca-Mora et al., 2011). Various methods exist for seamlessly integrating music into the curriculum, proving beneficial in teaching pronunciation and establishing a tranquil, creative, and focused classroom environment while aiding students in memorization (Garcia-Conesa & Juan-Rubio, 2015). Integrating internationalized songs stands out among English language educators' innovative strategies to captivate students and enhance language acquisition. These songs originate from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and provide a distinctive avenue to enhance students' language proficiency, exposing them to a rich tapestry of worldviews and traditions (Mehr et al., 2019).

The incorporation of songs into language education has garnered significant attention in the past two decades, especially in the field of teaching English to young learners, reflecting the acknowledgement of their diverse pedagogical benefits. Scholars such as Aguirre et al. (2016) have explored the influence of songs on primary school students' motivation for learning English, emphasizing their practical utility in language classrooms. Arevaro (2010) contributes to this discourse by highlighting using songs as tools to enhance listening skills and cultural understanding in EFL classes. Furthermore, Boothe and West (2015) emphasize the performance aspect of language learning through music and song lyrics, reinforcing that songs can serve as a transformative tool in education. Building on this perspective, Asmalı (2017) underscores the importance of recognizing the characteristics and needs of young learners. Asmalı's (2017) insights into the unique traits of young learners, such as their short attention span and the necessity for personalized learning experiences, reinforce the significance of adapting language teaching approaches to cater to the diverse needs of students. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of young learners' preferences and learning styles paves the way for exploring innovative approaches, such as incorporating internationalized songs into language education.

The term internationalized songs can be described as national songs translated and adapted into English or other languages for global utility, encapsulating the rich diversity of cultural and linguistic heritage worldwide. Internationalized songs refer to songs that originate from various countries and are sung in different languages. These songs represent the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds found around the world. By incorporating internationalized songs into language learning, children are exposed to various linguistic features, vocabulary, and cultural elements, enhancing their language skills and cultural awareness. Internationalized songs are universal songs with features suitable for use in every language. According to Shin (2015), international songs offer a rich linguistic and cultural tapestry, allowing children to explore diverse vocabulary, melodies, and rhythms. Many internationalized songs are known in different versions, such as "Old MacDonald's Farm" or "Ali Baba's Farm", which are widely used in every language. These songs hold a unique place as they resonate across languages and cultures, forming a shared musical experience that transcends geographical borders (Garcia-Conesa & Juan-Rubio, 2015; Keskin, 2011). According to the literature review, some researchers have summarized certain standard features of these songs.

When considering the internationalization of national songs, scholars have explored various dimensions, including their multilingual adaptability. Shin (2015), Garcia-Conesa and Juan-Rubio (2015), Keskin (2011), and Mehr et al. (2019) delve into this aspect, examining how

songs can transcend linguistic boundaries to cater to diverse audiences. Another crucial aspect evaluated in the literature is the ability of national songs to bridge different cultures and languages effectively. Bozdoğan (2016) specifically highlights the importance of incorporating multicultural elements into language teaching materials to promote intercultural competence among young learners. This inquiry is addressed by Shin (2015), Garcia-Conesa and Juan-Rubio (2015), Mehr et al. (2019), and Bozdoğan (2016), shedding light on the role of songs in fostering cross-cultural understanding and communication.

Scholars have also investigated whether national songs provide exposure to the language and support language acquisition. Kobiljonkizi and Solohiddinovna (2020), Millington (2011), and Fonseca-Mora et al. (2011) examine this aspect, highlighting the potential of songs as language learning tools. The literature explores whether national songs offer cultural insight and empathy. Kobiljonkizi and Solohiddinovna (2020), Shin (2017), and Garcia-Conesa and Juan-Rubio (2015) analyze the capacity of songs to evoke cultural awareness and empathy among learners. Furthermore, motivation is considered one of the most crucial predictive factors of foreign/second language learning achievement (Selçuk & Erten, 2017). Selçuk and Erten (2017) suggest that motivation should not be viewed as a stable individual difference factor but rather as a dynamic and fluctuant process, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of motivation in the language learning context.

In addition to motivation, scholars investigate whether national songs provide insights into different cultures. Shin (2015), Garcia-Conesa and Juan-Rubio (2015), and Mehr et al. (2019) examine how songs can serve as windows into diverse cultural landscapes. The universality of melodies in national songs is also examined, with Mehr et al. (2019) and Shin (2015) exploring the extent to which melodies resonate across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Scholars inquire into whether national songs evoke emotional resonance among students. Pica (2013) and Chou (2014) explore the emotional impact of songs, considering their potential to evoke sentiments and connections.

Furthermore, researchers examine whether national songs reflect cultural diversity. Aguirre et al. (2016) and Shin (2015) delve into this aspect, highlighting the importance of songs in representing and celebrating diverse cultures. The literature also explores students' cognitive engagement with national songs. Pica (2013) and Shin (2017) investigate how songs can stimulate cognitive processes and enhance learning experiences. Motivational impacts of national songs on learners are examined by Aguirre et al. (2016) and Boothe and West (2015), highlighting the role of songs in fostering motivation and engagement in language learning contexts. Garcia-Conesa and Juan-Rubio (2015) also investigate whether national songs enhance vocabulary and grammar skills, shedding light on their potential as language learning resources. Scholars explore whether national songs stimulate creativity among students. Pica (2013) and Chou (2014) analyze the creative potential of songs, considering their role in inspiring imaginative expression.

The literature also examines whether national songs engage students cognitively and emotionally. Pica (2013) and Chou (2014) delve into this aspect, considering the holistic impact of songs on learners' cognitive and emotional domains. Researchers investigate whether national songs facilitate language practice. Keskin (2011) and Chou (2014) explore how songs can provide language use and practice opportunities in authentic contexts. Keskin (2011) examines national songs' contribution to cognitive development, shedding light on the cognitive benefits of engaging with songs in educational settings. Finally, scholars inquire into whether national songs encourage active participation from students. Chou (2014)

investigates the participatory nature of songs, considering their potential to engage learners actively in the learning process.

Internationalized songs go beyond just having these qualities. They are also uniquely able to be understood across different languages (Chou, 2014). This means they can be translated and enjoyed by people worldwide. This ability makes them like a bridge that connects different cultures and languages through music (Shin, 2015). The global appeal of internationalized songs lies in their musical content and their role as cultural ambassadors (Mehr et al., 2019). As these songs move between languages, they carry fragments of the cultures they touch, offering listeners a glimpse into other societies' values, stories, and traditions. This fosters a sense of curiosity and respect for the diversity that enriches our world.

The study aims to assist educators by identifying crucial considerations for song selection through a comprehensive literature review, transforming them into criteria. Additionally, it seeks to offer teachers guidance by delineating the distinctive features of internationalized songs. The study evaluates the translation and internationalization of a selected song based on these identified features. Furthermore, it contributes to the EFL literature by introducing a newly internationalized song and illuminates the process in detail, paving the way for integrating more internationally diverse songs. With all these in mind, it is aimed in the study to explore the process of internationalizing a local children's song and to answer the following research questions:

1. What steps can be taken to internationalize the children's song?
2. What do EFL teachers think about using this internationalized song in their classes, including when, where and how it should be used?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Design**

A comprehensive case study was conducted to illustrate the concept of internationalized songs in language education. The research design employed in this investigation was multifaceted, involving two-phased research methods, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the characteristics of internationalized children's songs thoroughly. The research design involved two phases, each addressing specific research questions. A comprehensive case study is a research method that involves an in-depth examination of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context, incorporating multiple data sources and research techniques to provide a thorough understanding of the topic under investigation (Yin, 2003). This approach aims to capture the complexity and richness of the phenomenon, typically by employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to gather and analyze data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the context of language education, a comprehensive case study would involve a detailed exploration of the pedagogical practices, instructional materials, and learning outcomes associated with a particular intervention, such as the use of internationalized songs in language teaching.

In the study described, the comprehensive case study methodology encompassed two phases of research, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the adaptation and implementation of internationalized songs in language education settings. This approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the characteristics and effectiveness of the intervention, drawing upon diverse data sources such as focus group interviews, surveys, questionnaires, classroom observations, and reflective discussions with educators. By adopting a comprehensive case study approach, the researchers were able to provide a

holistic analysis of the phenomenon, offering valuable insights for theory, practice, and future research in the field of language education.

The first phase focused on translating the selected song and considering appropriate word choices for students' different proficiency levels and ages. This phase included focus group interviews and qualitative semi-structured interviews with teachers. Quantitative data were gathered through surveys and questionnaires administered to a carefully selected sample, providing numerical insights into participants' preferences. Following this initial interview, focus group sessions were conducted to translate the song. Subsequently, the translated version was presented to a group of English teachers to solicit diverse suggestions. Lexical analysis was performed on the gathered data to generate codes and frequencies of the teachers' word choices, while a second focus group concentrated on refining the translation to its final version. The second phase of the study addressed the second research question, focusing on the usability of the song in English classes. During this phase, the opinions of teachers were collected through structured interviews. The questionnaire utilized in this phase included both open-ended and closed-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

## **2.2. Participants**

The study included a diverse range of participants, totalling 125 individuals, consisting of practising EFL teachers and teacher candidates. The age distribution of the participants spanned from 20 to 46 years old. Among them, 97 participants fell within the age range of 20-30 years old, 13 were between 30-40 years old, and 15 were above 40. Among the participants, there was a varied distribution of genders. Out of the total sample, 85 participants identified as female, while 40 participants identified as male.

The sample also encompassed a mix of proficiency levels and teaching statuses. Within the participant group, 85 individuals were student-teachers actively engaged in teacher training programs. Additionally, 40 participants were practising teachers currently employed in EFL teaching positions. This diverse mix of participants with varying levels of teaching experience and professional status contributed to the richness and depth of perspectives gathered in the study. Furthermore, an expert interview with Onur Erol and focus group interviews with two esteemed academics renowned for their expertise in the field of English Language Teaching and two experts in Music Education were conducted.

## **2.3. Data Collection**

After receiving the ethical official board's approval of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University's School of Graduate Studies (Decision dated October 5, 2023, Number: 12/59), a national song was chosen through expert interviews. Researchers collaborated with a renowned Turkish musician, Onur Erol, who provided us with a children's song suitable for translation and adaptation. The process involved several key steps, emphasizing collaboration with educators and their invaluable input. A famous Turkish musician and educator selected three potential songs for translation. After a thorough evaluation process, one song was chosen for its suitability in language education. In the song selection process, the advice of 4 experts, two music educators and 2 EFL instructors was sought in choosing the children's song. Their insights were instrumental in choosing a song that had linguistic richness and was culturally relevant and engaging for students. This initial phase is critical as it sets the foundation for a successful adaptation (Keskin, 2011).

The focus group translated the song. After the draft translation of the song, individual verses of the chosen song were composed separately, and EFL teachers and prospective teachers were invited to provide input via a qualitative survey. They played a pivotal role in the refinement process, suggesting alternative words. The involvement of teachers in the translation process was crucial as they understand the needs and preferences of their students, allowing for a more student-centred approach to adaptation. This ensured alignment with the curriculum and teaching goals. The suggested changes were incorporated into a Microsoft Excel file as qualitative data, and the gathered data was quantified by tabulating their frequencies (Meyer & Avery, 2009).

Following this, a quantitative survey was administered to collect data regarding the song's adaptability. EFL teachers and teacher candidates were invited to provide insights into the song's adaptability to English language teaching. Participants were asked to indicate the lesson stages, subjects, and proficiency levels for which the adapted song could be used. This allowed for insights into when, where, and how the adapted song could be effectively utilized in teaching English. Following this phase, a focus group reconvened to discuss the suggestions until a thorough consensus was reached. The collaborative effort between educators and the focus groups led to a more effective adaptation.

#### **2.4. Data Analysis**

The responses from the questionnaire were collected and organized in a Microsoft Excel document, allowing for a detailed analysis of how often each choice was selected. Statistical analysis was performed to analyze the numerical data obtained from the completed questionnaires. Moreover, direct quotes from participants during focus group interviews, which provided qualitative data, were included exactly as the participants expressed them.

Throughout the study, peer debriefing was employed to ensure the rigour and credibility of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another researcher independently reviewed the studies conducted, critically examining the research methods and findings. This external validation enhanced the trustworthiness of the study. Thick and rich descriptions were provided for all applications and procedures, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research context (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, triangulation, as Yin (2003) advocated, was utilized to corroborate findings through multiple data sources.

Interviews with EFL teachers, two different focus group interviews, and expert interviews were conducted, enriching the validity of the research outcomes. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the study, with researchers continuously reflecting on their biases, assumptions, and roles in the research process (Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2022). Prolonged engagement with the subject matter facilitated meaningful data collection and analysis, contributing to the credibility and richness of the study outcomes (Creswell, 1998). Collaboration was integral to the research process, particularly during focus group interviews, where decisions were made collectively with complete consensus. This collaborative approach ensured that diverse perspectives were considered, enhancing the authenticity of the research findings.

Member checking, a technique advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), was employed to involve participants in the validation process. Participants were provided with the final version of their individual case studies for review, and all draft translations and the final version of the translation were shared with focus group members. This iterative process allowed participants to verify the accuracy and authenticity of their contributions, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the study findings. Through these strategies, the study

aimed to enhance the trustworthiness and validity of its findings, ensuring that the research outcomes accurately reflected the realities of the research context and the participants’ perspectives.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Research Question 1

Addressing research question 1, which examines steps to internationalize children’s songs, Onur Erol, a famous musician of children’s songs acclaimed for crafting Türkiye’s most listened-to children’s songs, shared three distinct song suggestions through an expert interview. In the initial focus group session, the most fitting choice for translation and adaptation was selected from these three songs. The chosen song underwent translation, with careful consideration given to syllabic harmony, resulting in the creation of a preliminary draft. The participants of the initial focus group session reached a complete consensus on translating the chorus part of the song. They felt no need to ask the EFL teachers to suggest further translation versions of this part. Therefore, EFL teachers’ suggestions for translating the chorus part were not asked.

The first draft of this translated version and the original Turkish rendition of the song are presented in Table 1. The initial translation process involved four translators: two researchers and two instructors. During the first round of translation, thorough discussions were held to ensure precision and coherence with the original meaning and alignment with the song’s melody. Suggestions were carefully considered, leading to the formulation of the preliminary translation outlined earlier, which emerged from insights from the focus group interview.

Table 1.

*Original song and draft translation*

Verses	Balta Balta Song	Stop Axes Song (Draft Translation)
Verse 1	Balta balta vur vur	Axes axes hit hit
Verse 2	Odunları kır kır	Woods woods cut cut
Verse 3	Doldur doldur küfeye	Baskets fill fill
Verse 4	Haydi yükle eşeğe	Donkey load load
Verse 5	Ai Ai eşek	Ai ai donkey
Verse 6	Sırtındaki yük pek	Your back is too heavy
Verse 7	Sana yardım edelim	Please let help you carry
Verse 8	Seni hafifletelim	Let's make your job easy
Chorus	Balta balta	Axes axes
	Balta balta	Axes axes
	Bir balta	One ax ax
	İki balta	Two axes
	Üç balta	Three axes
	Dört balta	Four axes
	Beş balta	Five axes
	Dur balta	Stop axes

During the focus group session, participants provided various suggestions for translation, resulting in a consensus with minor discrepancies noted only in verses 7 and 8. For the 7th verse, examples such as “Let us help you carry,” “Please, we’ll help you carry,” “We can help you carry,” and “We shall help you carry” were proposed. The preferred option, “Please let help you carry,” garnered the most support. Similarly, for the 8th verse, three participants

recommended "Let's make your job easy," which was ultimately selected as the preferred option, and the first draft version of the translation was prepared (see Table 1).

The song "Axes Axes (Tr. Balta Balta)" reflects a theme of cooperation and assisting one another. These themes are not only relevant for language teaching but also for instilling values of teamwork and empathy in students. The song provides a rich context for discussions on cultural aspects, and the translated lyrics retain the essence of the Turkish original, making it a valuable resource for cross-cultural exploration (Keskin, 2011).

The study employed a systematic approach guided by established principles of language education and cultural adaptation. The initial steps involved a meticulous examination of the linguistic and cultural nuances of the original song. Following this, educators and language experts collaborated to identify appropriate word choices and cultural references that would resonate with the target audience.

### *3.1.1. EFL teachers' suggestions on the translation of the song*

Verse 1 was evaluated by participants, with 114 individuals finding the translation "Axes axes hit hit" to be appropriate in conveying the intended meaning. Twelve other suggestions were given. The suggestions for the song lyrics vary in frequency, reflecting the diversity of ideas proposed. Among the suggestions, "Chop (it/wood) with the axe axe" and "Hit it with the axe axe" emerge as the most frequent, occurring twice each. Other suggestions, such as "Ax ax, hit hit," "Axes, axes chop, chop," and "Axes, axes smash, smash," each appear once, showcasing a range of lyrical options. Additionally, "Chop, chop, chop away," "Hatchets, hatchets, hit, hit," "Hey axes, hit hit," and "Hit, hit the ax ax" are each suggested once, contributing further to the pool of creative possibilities for the song. In the analysis of the first verse, participants, consisting of both teachers and student teachers, agreed with the initial translation "Axes Axes hit hit". A great majority of the participants (91.2%) found the translation appropriate. However, their suggestions for alternative translations varied, with recommendations to use different words such as "hatchets" instead of "axes" and diverse verbs including "chop," "strike," and "hit."

During the evaluation process, Verse 2 underwent evaluation, with 101 participants affirming that the translation "Woods woods, cut cut" accurately captured the intended meaning. The participants gave twenty-four different suggestions. The suggestions provided for the song lyrics exhibit a variety of options, each with its own frequency of occurrence. Among these suggestions, "Cut, cut the woods, woods" emerges as the most frequent, appearing four times, followed by "Cut the woods, cut the woods," which occurs three times. Other suggestions such as "Chop the woods, chop the woods," "Cut the tree's wood, wood," and "Cut the woods, cut, cut" are each suggested twice, contributing to the range of lyrical possibilities. Additionally, phrases like "Woods, woods chop, chop" and "Woods, woods crack, crack" are repeated twice, further diversifying the pool of suggested lyrics. Furthermore, individual suggestions like "All woods cut, cut," "Break, break the woods, woods," and "Cut, cut the woods the woods" are mentioned once each, alongside unique proposals like "Start chopping logs today," "Woods cut, cut," "Woods cut them cut them," and "Woods, woods, cut them," each appearing once. These varied suggestions offer comprehensive options for crafting engaging and dynamic song lyrics. Exploring the second verse, translated to "Woods, woods cut, cut," a consensus among 101 participants, which constitutes 80.8% of the participants, favoured the original translation. The suggestions provided by the respondents introduced a variety of alternatives. The feedback underscores the flexibility of interpretation for the Turkish

phrase “Odonları kır kır,” offering diverse linguistic options for expressing the concept of cutting woods in English.

Throughout the evaluation phase, Verse 3 was carefully examined, resulting in 105 participants validating the translation as “Baskets fill fill” to convey the intended meaning effectively. Eighteen other suggestions were given. The suggestions for the song lyrics encompass a range of ideas, each occurring with varying frequencies. The most frequently suggested phrase is “Fill, fill the baskets,” which appears seven times, emphasizing the act of filling baskets. Additionally, phrases such as “Fill them into basket” and “Load, load the baskets” are each mentioned twice, contributing to the theme of filling or loading baskets. Other suggestions include “Backpack fill, fill,” “Baskets, baskets, fill, fill,” and “Baskets, baskets, make them full,” each appearing once, highlighting the concept of filling containers. Furthermore, phrases like “Fill in baskets, fill, fill,” “Fill the fill the baskets,” and “Fill up the baskets” are suggested once each, emphasizing the action of filling baskets to their capacity. Lastly, the phrase “Fill up the baskets, do not delay” suggests a sense of urgency in filling the baskets, providing a unique perspective on the theme. Overall, these diverse suggestions offer various perspectives on the theme of filling baskets, providing ample inspiration for crafting engaging song lyrics. In analyzing the third verse, which translates to “Baskets fill, fill”, a vast majority of the participants (84%), constituting 105 individuals, concurred with the initial translation. Two participants found the translation inappropriate but did not propose any alternative suggestions.

During the assessment process, Verse 4 was thoroughly reviewed, with 101 individuals affirming that the translation “Donkey load, load” accurately represents the intended meaning, as determined by the participants. Twenty-three participants shared different suggestions. Various suggestions have been provided for the song lyrics, each with its own frequency of occurrence. The phrase “Let's load the donkey” emerges as the most frequent, appearing three times, suggesting a collaborative effort to load the donkey. Additionally, variations such as “Let's load on the donkey” and “Let's load to the donkey” occur twice, emphasizing loading onto the donkey. Similarly, phrases like “Load, load the donkey” and “Load to the donkey” are mentioned twice. Other suggestions include “C'mon, load them on the donkey”, “Donkey ship, ship”, “Give it on donkey”, “Load donkey, hey hey hey”, and “Load it on the donkey”, each appearing once. Additionally, unique phrases such as “Load it up, it's time to sway” and “Load the donkey with wood” provide creative perspectives on the loading process. Lastly, variations such as “Load the wood to/on the donkey,” “Load them on the donkey,” “Put on the donkey,” and “To donkey load, load” are suggested once each, offering diverse expressions for loading items onto the donkey. Overall, these suggestions offer a comprehensive range of ideas for crafting engaging song lyrics centred around loading the donkey. In examining the fourth verse, corresponding to “Donkey load, load,” a significant majority of the participants (80.8%) agreed with the initial translation. Two participants found the translation inappropriate; nevertheless, they did not propose any alternative suggestions. Some participants offered creative variations, acknowledging the adequacy of the original translation while considering potential alternatives for musical or rhythmic reasons. It can be seen that the participants tended to place the verb first and emphasized it in their translations.

Verses 5 and 6 were subject to scrutiny, with 120 participants concurring that the translations “Ai ai donkey” and “Your back is too heavy” respectively aptly conveyed the intended meanings. Six different suggestions were given. Various suggestions have been provided for the song lyrics, each with its own frequency of occurrence. The phrase “Ai Ai Donkey, your load is too heavy” emerges as the most frequent, appearing three times, suggesting a concern for the burden on the donkey. Additionally, variations such as “Package on your back is too

heavy” occur twice, highlighting the weight of the load carried by the donkey. Similarly, the phrase “Your bag is too heavy” is mentioned once, conveying a similar sentiment about the weight of the donkey’s burden. Overall, these suggestions offer a range of perspectives on the theme of the donkey’s heavy load, providing ample material for crafting meaningful song lyrics. In the assessment of the fifth and sixth verses, corresponding to “Ai Ai donkey” and “Your back is too heavy”, respectively, an agreement was reached by a great majority of the participants (96%)-specifically, 120 individuals. Only one participant found the translation inappropriate but offered no alternative suggestions. Nonetheless, the feedback from the remaining teachers presented a spectrum of alternative expressions.

Verse 7 underwent evaluation, with 100 participants concurring that the translation “Please let help you carry” effectively captures the intended meaning. Twenty-five other suggestions were given. The most frequently suggested phrase, “Let us help you carry,” appears eleven times, indicating a strong willingness to provide support. Additionally, expressions such as “Please let us help you carry” and “Let’s help you to carry” are mentioned three and two times, respectively, further emphasizing the desire to assist. Other variations, including “Please let us help you carry that heavy” and “We should/must help you carry,” each occur twice, reinforcing the sentiment of offering aid. Moreover, phrases like “Let us help you carry, carry, carry” and “Let us help you carry it” are suggested once each. Additionally, unique expressions such as “Let us help you, dear friend” and “Let’s help you (for carrying)” convey a sense of camaraderie and support. Lastly, the phrase “Please let me help you carry” further emphasizes the help. Overall, these varied suggestions highlight the theme of offering help and support in carrying a heavy load, providing rich material for crafting meaningful and supportive song lyrics. In the analysis of the seventh verse, corresponding to “Please let help you carry”, a great majority of the participants (80%), 100 people, reached a consensus in agreement with the initial translation. However, the feedback provided a range of alternative expressions. The suggestions indicate a consideration not only for linguistic accuracy but also for rhythmic and stylistic elements.

Verse 8 was reviewed, with 112 participants concurring that the translation “Let’s make your job easy” accurately conveys the intended meaning. Eight different suggestions were given. Variations of expressions conveying support and assistance are provided, each contributing to the theme. The phrase “We will help you carry” appears twice, emphasizing the commitment to aid in carrying the load. Additionally, expressions such as “It/That will help you greatly,” “Let us bear your burden,” and “Let’s make it less heavy” each occur once, conveying a willingness to alleviate the weight of the load. Moreover, phrases like “Let’s make your back lightly” and “Let’s make your job easier” offer suggestions for reducing the task strain. Additionally, expressions such as “We will make it easy” emphasize the intention to simplify the task at hand. Overall, these varied suggestions underscore the theme of offering assistance and support to lighten the burden, providing diverse options for crafting supportive and encouraging song lyrics. In the analysis of the eighth verse, corresponding to “Let’s make your job easy”, a consensus was reached among most participants (93.6%) on the initial translation, which involved 112 participants. The diversity in recommendations indicates participants’ consideration for both literal accuracy and contextual appropriateness when translating the Turkish phrase “Seni hafifletelim” into English.

### *3.1.2. Focus group interviewees’ suggestions on the translation of the song*

The second focus group interview was conducted after collecting the views of EFL teachers on the first draft of the translation of the song. The frequencies of EFL teachers’ answers

and their suggestions for each verse were analyzed by the focus group consisting of two EFL instructors (E1-E2) as well as two music instructors (M1-M2).

Verse 1: "Axes axes, hit hit" was accepted by all focus group interviewees.

Verse 2: Although there are 24 suggestions from the EFL teachers, "Woods, woods, cut, cut" was accepted as the second verse as it is, maintaining a thorough consensus among the researchers.

M1: *'Woods, woods, cut, cut' sounds better for the melody.*

E1: *It's important for the flow of the song to have a binary structure, so 'axes axes, hit hit, woods woods, cut cut' makes sense.*

Verse 3: "Baskets fill fill" was accepted by 105 EFL teachers; however, the focus group interviews reviewed the suggestions of 18 teachers to find a better translation.

M1: *It sounds harsh. It is very hard to sing.*

E2: *We can check the rhyme. Reversing the order might make sense.*

M2: *'Fill them into basket' might sound good, considering melody alignment.*

E2: *'Fill fill the basket' is better for pronunciation, especially for young learners.*

After reviewing the suggestions, "Fill fill the basket" was chosen with complete consensus.

Verse 4: For this verse, 23 EFL teachers gave suggestions, and the focus group reviewed the suggestions.

M2: *'Ship ship' would be fun and a pleasant word.*

M1: *I think we should stick with 'load load'.*

E1: *I am not sure of the usage of the word 'ship'. Is the meaning appropriate?*

E2: *Considering the usage of 'ship', it could add a playful element, making it more enjoyable.*

M2: *It also works well with diaphragmatic sound production.*

M1: *Like a breathing exercise, with a sh (f) sound.*

After reviewing the suggestions and discussing the possibilities, the focus group decided to use "Ship, ship the donkey".

Verses 5-6: "Ai Ai donkey, your back is too heavy" verses were not changed as they were accepted by 96% of the EFL teachers, and it has been accepted by the focus group with thorough consensus.

Verse 7: "Please let help you carry" was favoured by the majority of the EFL teachers. The instructors reviewed the suggestions to find a better translation.

E2: *The 'let us help you carry' suggestion is excellent for young learners. It is much easier to say and sing.*

M1: *I think 'we should/must help you carry' is also good; 'should' is preferable.*

M2: *'Should' is more comfortable to say, creating a smooth flow for young learners.*

E1: *'We should help you carry' seems more comfortable. Moreover, 'Let's' is harder to say and learn; they already know the word should.*

The final decision for this verse was "We should help you carry" with complete consensus.

Verse 8: Although 112 EFL teachers agreed on "Let's make your job easy", the instructors reviewed the suggestions for a better and easier translation.

E2: ‘Let’s make’ might be a bit challenging for them to pronounce.

M2: ‘We’ll make your job easy’ would be nice.

E2: Using ‘Let’s’ caused difficulties, ‘we will make’ is more familiar.

M1: ‘We will make it’ is smoother and easily pronounceable. How about ‘we will make it easy?’

M2: I agree that “we will make it easy” is much better.

After reviewing the suggestions, the instructors agreed on “We will make it easy”.

### 3.1.3. Finalizing the song through suggestions

Several key points emerged from the participants’ comments regarding the song’s educational suitability and potential impact from the focus group interviews. M1 expressed concerns about certain phrases within the song, suggesting that while they might be appropriate for preschool settings, they may not resonate internationally. Additionally, they highlighted the thematic elements involving axes, cutting trees, and loading donkeys, questioning whether awareness would be created around these topics. E1 responded by emphasizing the importance of the song’s concluding message, “Stop Axes,” suggesting that renaming the song to reflect this message would enhance its significance and encourage positive action. This underscores the song’s potential to entertain, educate, and advocate for environmental awareness.

Furthermore, M2 noted the song’s versatility from both educational and musical perspectives, suggesting that its folkloric rhythm makes it engaging for young learners while also appealing to a broader audience within the popular music scene. E2 corroborated this observation by sharing insights from implementing the song in lessons with prospective teachers and preschool students. They highlighted the students’ ease in singing the initial parts of the song but identified difficulties with the last lines. This led to a fruitful discussion on updating and adjusting those lines to suit the young learners’ level better, ultimately enhancing their learning experience and enjoyment of the song. Overall, these comments highlight the collaborative effort to refine the song’s content and delivery, aiming to maximize its educational value and accessibility to diverse audiences. As a result of combining the final comments, the song was rearranged, named “Stop Axes”, and transformed into its latest version according to the findings obtained from the focus group interview (see Table 2).

Table 2.

*Original song, draft, and the last version of the translation*

Verses	Original Song	Stop Axes Song (Draft Translation)	Stop Axes Song (Last Version)
Verse 1	Balta balta vur vur	Axes axes hit hit	Axes axes hit hit
Verse 2	Oyunları kır kır	Woods woods cut cut	Woods woods cut cut
Verse 3	Doldur doldur küfeye	Baskets fill fill	Fill fill the basket
Verse 4	Haydi yükle eşeğe	Donkey load load	Ship ship the donkey
Verse 5	Ai Ai eşek	Ai ai donkey	Ai ai donkey
Verse 6	Sırtındaki yük pek	Your back is too heavy	Your back is too heavy
Verse 7	Sana yardım edelim	Please let help you carry	We should help you carry
Verse 8	Seni hafifletelim	Let’s make your job easy	We will make it easy
Chorus	Same with the first translated version (See Table 1)		

### 3.2. Research Question 2

To delve into research question 2, which examines what EFL teachers think about using this internationalized song in their classes, including when, where, and how it should be used, the study engaged EFL teachers in reflective discussions and interviews. These sessions provided a platform for teachers to share their perspectives on integrating the internationalized song into their instructional practices. The research sought insights into implementing a specific song in language lessons. Participants were asked about the features of internationalized songs and what features the selected song had, and the number of participants who thought it had these features is presented in the following.

Regarding the song's properties, a significant majority of participants (80%) found it motivating ( $n=100$ ), while 72% perceived it as repetitive ( $n=90$ ). Additionally, 71.2% considered it age-appropriate ( $n=89$ ), and 68% recognized its high retention value ( $n=85$ ). Notably, 66.4% found the song easy to learn with predictable lyrics ( $n=83$ ), and 60.8% found the song easily adaptable to actions and dramatization ( $n=76$ ). While 57.6% observed the use of limited and short phrases ( $n=72$ ), 41.6% indicated its suitability for students' language levels ( $n=52$ ). Lastly, 18.4% noted its incorporation of daily life topics ( $n=23$ ), while 13.6% recognized valuable lessons within the song ( $n=17$ ).

#### 3.2.1. *When to use*

While seeking an answer to the question of when the song could be used, participants were given proficiency levels as an option and were asked at what proficiency levels the song could be used. In exploring proficiency levels, most participants (80%,  $n=100$ ) endorsed the song for preschool use, with 68.8% ( $n=86$ ) extending its suitability to kindergarten and primary school levels. Interestingly, 14.4% ( $n=18$ ) found no issue with its application in secondary school, and a minimal 0.80% ( $n=1$ ) suggested its potential use in high school.

#### 3.2.2. *Where to use*

As an answer to the question of where the song can be used, teachers were asked for specific subject areas or grammar areas. Participants chose the appropriate part of the song as grammatical items (verbs, adjectives, nouns etc.), numbers, imperatives, new vocabulary items or daily life themes (routines etc.). In terms of thematic integration, a great majority of the participants (68.8%,  $n=86$ ) identified daily life-related themes as suitable contexts for the song, while 53.6% ( $n=67$ ) recommended its use for teaching new words, and 48% ( $n=60$ ) for imperative sentence instruction. Additionally, 32.8% ( $n=41$ ) saw potential in incorporating the song when teaching numbers, and 2.4% ( $n=3$ ) of the participants proposed its use for grammar instruction (verbs, adjectives, etc.).

#### 3.2.3. *How to use*

While the participants' opinions were taken about how the song could be used in practice, they were asked which part of the course could be applied. They were also asked to choose the most suitable lesson stage for the song to be used. In relation to the optimal stage of a lesson for song integration, a significant majority of the participants (59.2%,  $n=74$ ) advocated for its use at the beginning, while 35.2% ( $n=44$ ) suggested its integration during the practice process, and 30.4% ( $n=38$ ) during the presentation stage. A smaller percentage (16.8%,  $n=21$ ) suggested its placement at the end of the lesson, with 12.8% ( $n=16$ ) proposing its versatility across all lesson sections.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research highlighting the positive impact of integrating songs into English language teaching. Aguirre et al. (2016) emphasized the motivational aspect of songs in language learning, a sentiment echoed in our study, with 80% of participants affirming the song's motivational influence. The relevance of songs in language education is further supported by the works of Boothe and West (2015) and Keskin (2011), who advocate for using music and songs as effective tools in language instruction. Moreover, the correlation between music and language aptitude, as discussed by Fonseca-Mora et al. (2011), adds a dimension to our understanding of the impact of songs on language learning. Our research underscores the practical implications of this connection, as seen in the positive reception of the song by participants.

Arevaro (2010) and Garcia-Conesa and Juan-Rubio (2015) have previously explored the use of songs to work on listening skills and promote language learning in primary education. This resonates with our study's findings, wherein 68.8% of teachers suggested the song's applicability at the preschool level, emphasizing its potential to engage young learners. Additionally, the diverse themes identified by teachers, including life-related materials and imperative sentences, align with the findings of Millington (2011) and Chou (2014), showcasing the versatility of songs in teaching various language components.

The study extends this discourse, providing quantitative insights into specific attributes such as repetitiveness, age-appropriateness, and retention value. The study also contributes to the ongoing discourse on innovative language teaching methods. Kobiljonkizi and Solohiddinova (2020) emphasize the importance and methodology of using songs in teaching English to early-year learners, supporting our approach of integrating songs as a valuable pedagogical tool. Additionally, Mehr et al. (2019) discuss the universality and diversity of human songs, providing a broader context for understanding the cultural and linguistic richness that songs can bring to language education. The synthesis of our findings with existing literature reinforces the efficacy of integrating national songs into English language teaching. This collaborative and inclusive approach, as evidenced by the practical case study presented, not only aligns with established research but also contributes nuanced quantitative insights, offering a comprehensive perspective on the usability of songs in language education.

Teacher suggestions and feedback proved invaluable in identifying potential applications for different units, subjects, and proficiency levels. English language teachers found various applications for the translated song, making it suitable for diverse classroom settings. For beginner-level students, it can serve as a warm-up activity, introducing them to basic vocabulary related to tools and actions. For more advanced students, the song can be a creative platform for discussing the themes of teamwork, cooperation, and problem-solving. By integrating the song into classroom activities, educators can provide students with meaningful language practice in a fun and engaging way. The song serves as a starting point for discussions and creative projects that can be tailored to different proficiency levels, ensuring that it remains a versatile tool for language teaching (Arevaro, 2010).

#### 5. Conclusion

This research sheds light on the pivotal role of internationalized songs in enriching English language teaching, as evidenced by the insights gleaned from 125 EFL teachers and teacher candidates. The findings underscore the multifaceted benefits of incorporating songs into

language lessons, with most participants recognizing their motivational impact. The quantitative data further illuminate critical attributes of the song, including its repetitiveness, age-appropriateness, and high retention value, providing valuable considerations for educators in song selection.

Moreover, participants' perspectives on proficiency levels and thematic integration offer practical guidance. An overwhelming 80% advocate for the song's use at the preschool level, highlighting its potential to captivate young learners. The identified themes, ranging from life-related materials to imperative sentences, provide a versatile toolkit for teachers seeking to integrate songs into diverse lesson contexts. The quantitative approach, facilitated by a structured questionnaire, quantifies participants' views, and lays the groundwork for evidence-based decision-making in language education. The study's methodology, involving 125 participants and a systematic analysis of questionnaire responses, enhances the robustness and reliability of the findings.

The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate study, emphasizing the broader significance of internationalized songs as conduits for cultural exchange. Integrating such songs transcends linguistic borders, fostering global awareness and empathy among students. As highlighted in the collaborative process detailed in this article, the selection, translation, and adaptation of local songs for language education exemplify a practical and inclusive approach. Educators can leverage these insights to create vibrant and interactive language learning environments that enhance linguistic proficiency and cultivate a deep appreciation for diverse cultures. Integrating internationalized songs emerges as a teaching strategy and a transformative tool for fostering curiosity, understanding, and connection in language education.

As the study aims to explore the potential of internationalized songs in language teaching, future research endeavours might delve deeper into the impact of these songs on language proficiency and cultural awareness. By employing a detailed analysis, it can be aimed to discern the specific linguistic and cultural competencies that students may develop by integrating diverse songs. This includes assessing vocabulary acquisition and grammatical understanding and cultivating intercultural sensitivity and communicative competence.

Expanding the repertoire of internationalized songs available to educators, the study tries to create a dynamic and immersive learning environment where students can explore linguistic diversity while developing a deep appreciation for the rich tapestry of global cultures. This forward-looking approach aims to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries, fostering an inclusive educational experience that prepares students for effective communication and collaboration in an interconnected world. The future directions of our research underscore a commitment to advancing the understanding and implementation of internationalized songs in language teaching. By delving into the nuanced impact on language proficiency and cultural awareness and expanding the repertoire of available resources, internationalizing songs could contribute to a more inclusive and globally-minded language education landscape.

While this study provides valuable insights into the translation and usability of internationalized songs in language lessons, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study was conducted as a case study with a relatively small sample size of 125 participants. This limited sample size may impact the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of EFL teachers and teacher candidates. Due to time constraints, only

one song could be translated and evaluated. While this allowed for in-depth analysis of the chosen song, it may limit the applicability of the findings to other songs.

Furthermore, the focus group interviews with experts were conducted with limited participants, potentially limiting the breadth and depth of perspectives captured in the study. Additionally, the nature of focus group interviews may have constrained the extent to which individual opinions and experiences were fully explored. These factors collectively contribute to the recognition that this study represents a preliminary exploration into the translation and usability of internationalized songs in language lessons rather than a comprehensive examination. Future research endeavours should address these limitations by employing larger sample sizes, exploring multiple songs, and incorporating diverse perspectives from a broader range of experts and participants.

### Authors' Note

This paper was produced from the master's thesis written by the first author under the supervision of the second author.

### Note on Ethical Issues

The authors confirm that ethical approval was obtained from Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University's School of Graduate Studies (Approval Date: 10/05/2023, Number: 12/59).

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