



## Research Article

# Contribution of folk songs to language skills of primary school students within the scope of qualified teacher training programs

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the contribution of the rhythmic structure in children's songs to the correct pronunciation of the words in the spoken language in training qualified teachers. In this study, which was designed for this purpose, document analysis and qualitative research methods and descriptive expression were used. In this context, the first level teacher's guide book prepared by the Ministry of National Education was examined; Structural analysis was made by selecting samples from children's songs in the structure of Turkish Folk Music. It is evident that the emphasis structures observed in the analysis of children's songs in the folk songs structure of the child's own culture will contribute to high quality language teaching based on mother tongue. As a result, this study, conducted with qualitative research and descriptive narrative method, reveals that the emphasis structures of Turkish Folk Songs in the first-level teacher's guide book will contribute to the speaking skills of children in order to train qualified teachers. In teacher education, it was predicted that the quality of education would be increased by considering language teaching primarily in the context of spoken language, and transforming these skills into correct acquisitions through the teaching of folk songs.

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## Introduction

One of the fundamental functions of education is to improve students' language skills. An overview of studies aiming to advance language skills reveals that language teaching efforts generally focus on teaching the rules of that particular language. However, the significance of social activities (such as drama, dance, sports, music, etc.) for language learning, along with formal education, is well accepted in the literature. Among these activities, especially, music is of tremendous importance for language learning because students have the opportunity both to learn and have fun simultaneously in a music course. Based on the theory that games play a crucial role for the education of children, music stands as one of the effective methods to be applied during language teaching.

### Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate the contribution of rhythmic structures in child songs to the correct pronunciation of words in spoken form of the language within the scope of qualified teacher training programs. The desired study within qualified teacher training efforts is to advance language skills of students by way of music; and this development is realized by teaching the correct use of language through improving students' speaking skills.

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## Method

Designed in accordance with the aforementioned aim, this study has utilized document analysis and qualitative research methods together with descriptive analysis. Among the songs practiced at schools, Turkish folk songs were randomly chosen; and these songs have been described in terms of word emphasis, sentence emphasis, and musical emphasis.

### Emphasis

Emphasis is of high significance in terms of speaking skill. All languages have their own emphasis patterns. Mastering the emphasis pattern of a language takes a long time; and it may not even be possible for many foreign language learners. Speaking a language effectively and correctly matters the most, and it is not only based on the correct usage of grammar and vocabulary rules. Lacking the right emphasis pattern of that particular language impedes us from speaking the language efficiently and clearly. Native languages are spoken perfectly by their users since they are picked up in the family and supported at school and other cultural activities throughout a long time (Gurgun. 2004).

Speech intelligibility is highly appreciated in today's world. Using the language grammatically and along with the appropriate emphasis patterns earns the individual some advantages; it may even determine a person's place in social life. Speaking clearly and effectively is one of the common features of successful people.

It is important to know what emphasis is and how it shapes the language in terms of clarity and efficiency. Word emphasis can be defined as articulating one of the syllables in a word louder, higher, and longer than the other one(s) during reading or speaking (Sever, 2008). Emphasis empowers the speech, and enhances the meanings and emotions conveyed through words. Correct use of emphasis pattern makes it easy to understand what is said, and leaves a feeling of music in the ears of the listener. Speech without the proper emphasis pattern sounds dull, and disturbs the listeners. Likewise, incorrect employment of related emphasis patterns endangers the comprehension of speech and may direct listeners towards wrong meanings.

Emphasis in Turkish language can be divided into two as; word level and sentence level emphasis.

### Word Level Emphasis

Word emphasis means that one of the syllables in a word is articulated more strongly and with extra power than the others.

- In general, Turkish words are emphasised on the ultimate syllable.  
'Okula sabah gittim.' Final syllables of these words are emphasised.
- Unlike tonal languages, one-syllable words do not have differentiating emphasis patterns in Turkish.

Her zaman sen aklıma geliyorsun. The underlined words don't have any emphasis patterns.

- Place names are generally emphasised on the first syllable.

Bursa'nın yeşil ovası ne yazık ki betonlaştı.

- Exclamation and signal words are emphasised on the first syllable.

Haydi, aferin.../yarın, şimdi...

- Emphatic emphasis falls on the first syllable in the words with reduplicated syllables.

Masmavi, upuzun, tertemiz...

- Suffixes shift the emphasis onto themselves.

Yazıyı defterden sildim.

Some suffixes shift the emphasis onto the preceding syllable:

- Negation suffix '-mE'

Yapmadı, yazmayacak...

- Question suffix '-mİ'

Yazdın mı? Geliyor mu?

- The suffix ‘-ce’ when it doesn’t have diminutive function

Bence bu daha güzel!

- The word ‘ile’ and copular verbs ‘idi, imiş, ise, iken’

Seninle, Ali’yle

- The copular verbs in Present Simple tense

İyiyim, iyisin, iyidir, iyisiniz, iyidirler

- The conjunctions ‘de’ and ‘ki’ are distinguished from the suffixes ‘-de’ and ‘-ki’ by way of emphasis.

Ayşe de geldi mi? Ahmet’te ne var? Sen ki.../ Seninki

### Sentence Emphasis

The most important word in the sentence in terms of meaning is highlighted through emphasis. There are two ways to do this.

- Placing the most important word of the sentence right before the verb.

Ben yarın İstanbul’a trenle gidiyorum

Yarın İstanbul’a trenle ben gidiyorum.

Ben yarın trenle İstanbul’a gidiyorum.

- Emphasizing the important word.

Ben seni sinemada gördüm. (Not someone else, but I)

Ben seni sinemada gördüm. (Not someone else, but you)

Ben seni sinemada gördüm. (Not somewhere else, but at the cinema)

Language skills are acquired at early stages of life. A child first hears the sounds of a language from the family members, then s/he gets to recognize the sounds, and finally s/he starts speaking with baby steps. The native language of a child is the one spoken by the family members. Language development accelerates as schooling starts. Especially language courses influence the development of speaking and writing skills tremendously (Gurgen, 2004).

At primary school, music class is one of the courses that both helps students socialize and improve language skills. “Educational music can be considered as a tool used not only to teach music but also some other disciplines” (Aksu, 2010, p:14). Students may learn new words and the correct emphasis patterns of those words in a music class. It may be easier to furnish the students with the melodic structure of a language within a music class. All languages have their idiosyncratic melodic features. “At preschool level, not only plays but also music has a significant effect over language development. Musical pieces such as tongue twisters, riddles, child songs, and folk songs that children can sing have positive impact on children’s language development (Sun-Seyrek. 1993, p:32). Learning the rhythm of a language is indispensable to learning that language properly. This can only be achieved through music education.

Following is the explanation of how to teach language skills through music:

The phonetic structure of the first words that children acquire is a signal of the emphasis pattern that they will be using for the rest of their lives. Especially, the child songs, lullabies, tongue twisters, riddles, and local folk song samples have a shaping influence over children’s language skills. Although folk songs differ in terms of their rhythmic structures from one region to another, they generally have important phonetic contribution over the language skills of children. The first verses of the sample songs in this study have been examined, and their emphasis patterns are given below:

- Word Emphasis
- Sentence Emphasis
- Musical Emphasis

## SARI MENDİL

Allegro

Turkish Folk Song

Sa rı men dil el de dir yar yar yar a man.  
Gül le rim bağ da bi ter yar yar yar a man.

Gü rün şa lı bel de dir yar yar yar a man.  
Tü tü nüm dağ da tü ter yar yar yar a man

(Aydintan &amp; Eguz, 1980, p.36)

Sarı mendil **eldedir** yar yar yar amanGürün şalı **beldedir** yar yar yar aman

- With respect to word emphasis, the general emphasis pattern indicates that words are mainly emphasised on the ultimate syllable. The emphasis pattern observed in this song is compatible with Turkish language.
  - Sentence emphasis in this example falls onto “**eldedir**” and “**beldedir**”, because these are the emphasized words in the lines.
  - In terms of musical emphasis, emphasized words have a longer value than the others. Another feature that enhances emphasis in this song is the rhythm; the middle C note on “**eldedir**” has been sharpened.
- (The words “yar yar yar aman” are used as fillers in this song; therefore, they are not included into the analysis.)

## DALDA DURAN ÜÇ ELMA

Orta Hızda

Türkü

1. Dal da du ran üç el ma. Dal da du ran üç el ma,

1. Sen de gü zel sen de gü zel sen de gü zel ko par ma.

1. Sen de gü zel sen de gü zel sen de gü zel ko par ma.

(Aydintan &amp; Eguz, 1980, p.47)

**Dalda duran üç elma dalda duran üç elma**

**Sende güzel sende güzel sende güzel koparma**

- With respect to word level emphasis, the pattern is on longer notes which fall onto “**dal**”, “**üç**”, “**sen**”, “**zel**” and “**par**”. This one is also consistent with the emphasis pattern of Turkish language.
- Sentence emphasis is observed on “**elma**” and “**koparma**”.
- In terms of musical emphasis, the words “**elma**” and “**koparma**” are sung with a quarter note/crochet. Sentence emphasis leads the musical emphasis; in that, emphasized words have longer note values than other words.

## Dere Geliyor Dere

**Allegro**

Lüleburgaz Folk Song

1. De re ge li yor de re ya le lel ya le lel.

2. Al be ni gö tür de re ya le lel ya le lel.

1. Ku mu nu se re se re ya le lel lim.

2. Ya rin ol du ğu ye re ya le lel lim.

A ma nın a man a man ze ma nın ze man ze man

Bi zim dü ğün ne ze man ya le lel lim.

(Ozgul, 2009, p.165)

**Dere geliyor dere kumunu sere sere**

**Al beni götür dere yarin olduğu yere**

**Amanın aman aman zamanın zaman zaman**

**Bizim düğün ne zaman**

- Word emphasis is on the final syllables of the words “**dere**”, “**geliyor**”, “**sere**”, “**götür**”, and “**yere**”. The emphasis pattern of this song is also compatible with that of Turkish language.
- The words emphasized in terms of sentence emphasis are “**dere**”, “**götür**” and “**zeman**”.
- Likewise, “**dere**”, “**götür**” and “**zeman**” have distinctively longer note values. Again, the musical emphasis pattern is led by the sentential emphasis, which causes the emphasized words to have longer note values.

(The phrase “**yalelel**” is excluded from the analysis since it is meaningless)

As seen above, songs that have been analyzed in this study are compatible with the general emphasis pattern of Turkish language. Considering that folk songs are integrated in children’s play, entertainment, and musical activities, it won’t be wrong to state that folk songs may positively contribute to language skills of students. Precisely highlighting the strong syllables of words during oral rhythm exercises may bring variety and fun to the classroom. Both syllable emphasis and meaning emphasis of words should be made clear to students in order to direct them to careful and proper speech skills” (Sun-Seyrek, 1993, p:67).

## Conclusion

Music education has to be included into qualified teacher training programs. A teacher candidate with a good command of musical knowledge will probably be more useful for his/her students. Teaching the emphasis pattern of a language to teacher candidates through use of folk songs is likely to influence language skills positively. Teachers have to improve their quality in accordance with the demands of contemporary circumstances, which underlines the significance of qualified teacher training programs.

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