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Music Integration in English Language Teaching: A Mixed-Methods Study of Instructors' Beliefs and Practices in Turkish University Preparatory Programmes

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Abstract. Previous research has shown that integrating music into foreign language teaching offers significant advantages, including improved vocabulary retention, pronunciation, and engagement. However, the success of musical interventions ultimately depends on how instructors perceive and manage these tools in their classrooms. Using a mixed-methods design, this study examined language instructors' perceptions of music use in language teaching and the practical factors influencing its classroom implementation. Specifically, it examined the frequency of music integration, targeted skills and activities, song-selection criteria and material development procedures, perceived benefits and challenges, and the relationship between instructors' beliefs and their reported classroom use of music. Data were collected from 81 English language instructors in preparatory programmes at universities across Türkiye via a survey. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis, while qualitative data were analysed using hybrid thematic analysis in MAXQDA 24. The findings revealed a distinct belief-practice gap: positive perceptions did not translate into frequent classroom use. Specifically, 53.1% of the instructors reported rarely using music in their classes. When used, music was mainly integrated through language-focused activities, particularly through fill-in-the-blank exercises. Practical challenges, such as material selection, curriculum integration, and time constraints, emerged as key barriers to regular implementation. Overall, the findings confirm a clear gap between instructors' positive perceptions and their classroom practices. Aligned curriculum design, systematic planning, and

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institutional support may help reduce this gap and support more consistent use of music for affective and linguistic purposes in the future.

Keywords: English language teaching; Music integration; Instructor belief and practice gap; Classroom practices; Mixed-methods

1. Introduction

In recent decades, music has become an integral part of language teaching, with instructors widely regarding it as an engaging tool (Chen et al., 2024; Degrave, 2019). As Chen et al. (2024) note, music has permeated every aspect of our lives: "...from our morning smartphone alarms to our commute, and even mundane tasks such as grocery shopping" (p. 2). This makes music a useful tool for enhancing classroom learning.

Music offers learners many opportunities to improve their language knowledge, especially in terms of vocabulary, listening, grammar, creative thinking, and cultural awareness (Hamilton et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2022; Vadivel et al., 2021). Compared with conventional language teaching methods, music gives instructors the opportunity to teach languages more effectively and creatively. Moreover, using music in class enables instructors to boost students' motivation for language learning (Chen et al., 2024; Turnbull et al., 2017). A recent systematic review identified 87 studies examining music in L2 learning across diverse contexts (Sun et al., 2025).

1.1 Research Problem and Significance

While music offers substantial benefits for second-language (L2) teaching, its integration into classrooms remains highly inconsistent, ranging from enthusiastic adoption to avoidance. This inconsistency stems directly from how individual educators approach its 'pedagogical use', defined here as the deliberate selection and application of musical materials to achieve specific learning objectives. While existing research focuses heavily on students' responses to music, a critical gap remains in understanding instructors, whose beliefs ultimately shape classroom reality.

As instructors' perceptions directly determine why, how, and to what extent music functions as a transformative learning tool, a targeted investigation into their professional viewpoints is significant. To address this gap, this study investigates instructors' internal perceptions alongside their actual classroom practices, offering a comprehensive look at how instructors' attitudes shape the implementation of music in L2 instruction.

1.2 Research Objectives

The present study aimed to:

1. Examine the frequency of music use, targeted language skills, and music-based classroom activities;
2. Examine instructors' song-selection criteria and material development practices;
3. Identify instructors' perceived benefits and challenges of music use;

4. Examine the relationship between instructors' beliefs and their reported frequency of music use;
5. Provide practical recommendations for curriculum integration and institutional support.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1. How do language instructors integrate music into their classroom practices in terms of frequency, targeted language skills, music-based activities, song selection, and material development?

RQ2. What benefits and challenges do instructors perceive when using music in language classrooms?

RQ3. How do instructors' beliefs about the affective and linguistic value of music relate to their reported frequency of classroom use?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Value of Music in Language Learning

Recent studies have elaborated on the advantages of using music in language teaching. A recent systematic review of 87 studies found that music generally supports L2 learning by contributing to linguistic knowledge and skills, cognitive processes, cultural learning, and pedagogical practices (Sun et al., 2025). One main advantage is its positive impact on optimising learners' cognitive processes. By improving working memory capacity, music helps learners actively comprehend the materials they use (Kim et al., 2024).

Music can also bridge real-life language exposure and formal classroom learning. Ludke and Morgan (2022) highlight the role of pop music in connecting formal and informal learning and supporting learners' autonomous engagement with the target language outside the classroom. In this sense, music can connect classroom learning with learners' everyday experiences (Engh, 2013). Furthermore, music may reduce affective barriers by creating a more relaxed learning environment in which students become more receptive and engaged (Kim et al., 2024).

2.2 The Pedagogical Use of Music in Language Classrooms

Music offers many benefits in language classes, and instructors use different approaches and techniques to incorporate it. Recent research has also examined music as a structured medium of instruction, highlighting its potential as a pedagogical approach to English language teaching (Fernández de Cañete García et al., 2025; Parkinson & Vyner, 2025). At the tertiary level, Robinson (2024) similarly emphasises the pedagogical value of songs in English language teaching, particularly when they are integrated purposefully rather than merely used as supplementary activities.

One common use of music is to integrate songs into classes to teach grammar. Listening to music can also create a more positive learning experience by reducing language anxiety and supporting learners' attitudes toward foreign language learning (Kim et al., 2024). Furthermore, songs may provide an authentic learning context for language acquisition. Thus, grammar objectives can be easier and more

understandable for learners because of this important aspect of songs (Kara & Aksel, 2013).

Another common use of music is vocabulary instruction, as songs expose learners to new words and expressions while providing opportunities to practice pronunciation (Omolara, 2023). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2023) found that singing songs facilitated both L2 vocabulary and pronunciation learning, with learners in the singing condition outperforming those who practised the same lyrics through speech. Related evidence also suggests that short-term musical training can improve sensitivity to non-native linguistic pitch cues, supporting a broader relationship between musical training and L2 phonetic perception (Wiener & Bradley, 2023).

According to Adnyani and Dewi (2020), including songs in language classes motivates learners to transfer words from songs into real-life use, especially when the lyrics are catchy and repetitive. Murphey (1990) suggests that song lyrics stay in students' minds, supporting the learning process in an engaging manner. Murphy Odo's (2022) meta-analysis similarly found a positive effect of English songs on L2 vocabulary learning while emphasising the importance of appropriate instructional duration and learner characteristics. Furthermore, composing songs, writing lyrics, or creating narratives causes learners to express themselves imaginatively and explore alternative means of communication (Chen et al., 2024). Most previous research has focused on learner outcomes, while instructors' perspectives and classroom practices remain less examined.

2.3 Perceptions About Using Music in Language Learning

The use of songs in language learning is widely regarded as a positive pedagogical approach, and songs are commonly used as a powerful tool in various educational contexts to achieve different objectives (Parkinson & Vyner, 2025). Hamilton et al. (2024) support this view, noting that teachers often believe songs 'work' for a wide range of educational purposes, reflecting a well-established pedagogical reliance on music's instructional value in language learning. A similar study by Şevik (2011) highlighted the common support for music-based instruction among English as a foreign language instructors. Similarly, Bokiev and Ismail (2021) found that Malaysian ESL teachers across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels generally held positive beliefs about the benefits of music and songs and used them in various ways to support language learning in their classes. Studies examining instructors' beliefs have concluded that songs are perceived as a highly beneficial tool in EFL classrooms.

Beyond these perceptions, Luo and Gao (2024) showed that song-sharing activities can promote intercultural learning by encouraging learners to discuss cultural topics, explore different perspectives, and develop greater awareness of their own and others' cultures. In addition to these cultural benefits, music-based instruction is believed to impact learners' emotional well-being. Chen et al. (2024) reported that music-based activities encourage self-expression. They create space for individual success and collaborative behaviour. These experiences foster

belonging and emotional security in the classroom, conditions that are believed to support meaningful language development.

Schoepp (2001) categorised teachers' reasons for using songs into affective, cognitive, and linguistic dimensions. Songs may create a supportive learning atmosphere, facilitate automaticity through repetition, and provide learners with authentic language exposure. Taken together, these findings show that songs are perceived as a multifaceted pedagogical resource that develops learners' emotional, cognitive, and cultural skills.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks Supporting Music Use in Language Learning

One theory that inspired the current study is Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence can influence learners' engagement with and processing of language input. Lower anxiety and greater confidence create conditions that are more conducive to language acquisition. As music reduces anxiety and promotes relaxation, learners tend to become more open to receiving and processing linguistic inputs.

In Krashen's view, this shows that by creating optimum learning conditions and reducing affective filters, music may support language learning by helping create a lower anxiety, more motivating environment. As an effective way to positively influence affective factors, music is widely accepted, and several studies have highlighted that it creates a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere for language learning (Linh et al., 2020; Urbaite, 2025). Krashen's Affective Filter Theory is important for instructors' beliefs about language learning because it shapes when and how they use music in the classroom. Their perceptions of whether music reduces anxiety, increases motivation, or creates a conducive learning atmosphere directly affect how they integrate music into their classes. Instructors who believe that music is comforting, motivating, or interesting, will consider it a valuable pedagogical resource. However, those who accept music as an activity that disrupts academic focus may interpret its affective influence differently.

Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory offers another perspective on the use of music in ELT. The framework proposes several relatively autonomous forms of intelligence (Davis et al., 2011), challenging the traditional educational focus that heavily favours verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. Within this framework, using music in the classroom directly stimulates musical rhythmic intelligence. Therefore, music-based activities may provide an additional route for engaging learners alongside verbal-linguistic tasks, particularly through rhythm, movement, and collaborative lyric work. In this study, MI Theory helps frame instructors' use of varied activities and their perceptions of music as a resource for different learner profiles.

Along with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Gardner's MI Theory, this study is grounded in Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's theory claims that learning occurs through social interactions in various cultural contexts. In his view, cultural interactions shape the language learning process. Within this

scope, music is a cultural and pedagogical artefact that mediates the learning process. Songs not only expose learners to language input through rhythm, melodies, and lyrics, but also encourage them to experience an environment where meaning is built and shared. Music-integrated activities transform language learning into a social practice by motivating learners to engage in group work, choral singing, discussions, and interpretation. For example, collaborative lyric discussions, peer-based interpretations of song meanings, and group singing enable learners to construct meaning through interaction. Such activities position music as a mediating tool through which learners can exchange linguistic and cultural knowledge in socially relevant contexts.

For this study, Sociocultural Theory provides a suitable framework for understanding how and why instructors use music in class. If music is perceived as a means to boost interaction, collaboration, and cultural awareness, language instructors are likely to integrate it into their classes more consciously and purposefully. However, if music is viewed primarily as an activity for individual enjoyment, some instructors may overlook its social and cultural dimensions. Therefore, instructors' perceptions shape the mediating role of music in language learning. Together with the Affective Filter Hypothesis, Sociocultural Theory helps explain both the affective and interactive dimensions of instructors' music-related practices.

Teacher agency also provides a useful lens for interpreting instructors' decisions regarding music integration. From an ecological perspective, teacher agency is not simply an individual capacity but is shaped by the interactions among teachers' beliefs, professional experiences, and contextual conditions (Priestley et al., 2015). In the present study, instructors may value music pedagogically but still exercise limited agency when faced with curriculum requirements, time constraints, material selection difficulties, or insufficient institutional support. Therefore, teacher agency helps explain why positive beliefs about music do not necessarily translate into regular classroom practice. Figure 1 demonstrates how theoretical and conceptual perspectives, instructor beliefs, teacher agency, and contextual constraints relate to pedagogical decision-making and reported music integration practices.

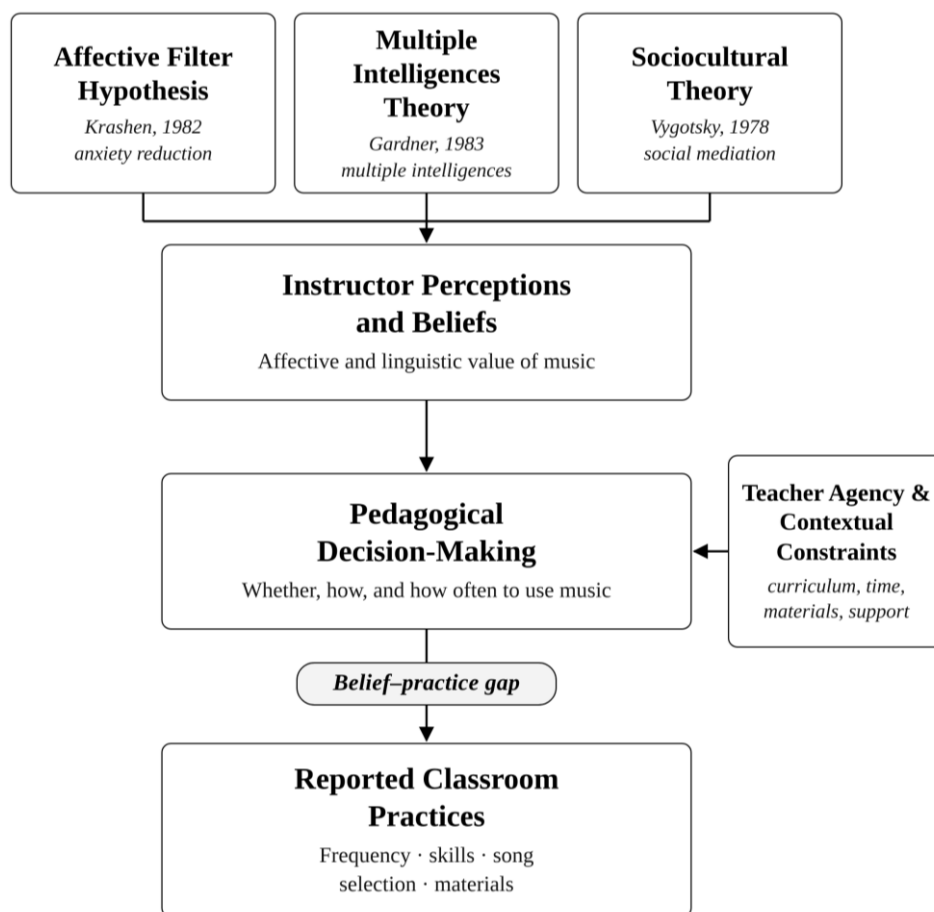


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for understanding music integration in language teaching

2.5 Research Gap and Rationale

Although many studies have examined the role of music in language learning, much of this work has focused on learner outcomes such as vocabulary learning, listening skills, and motivation (Cheng & Amirdabbaghian, 2024; Nadiyya & Suryadi, 2024; Sadiqzade, 2024). However, instructors' perceptions and beliefs about using music in language learning remain under-researched, particularly their classroom experiences, decision-making processes, and practices (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2017). This study addresses this gap by examining instructors' perceptions, practices, and the challenges they face in implementing these strategies.

By focusing specifically on university preparatory programmes, the study also examines a distinctive tertiary EFL context in which intensive language instruction, curriculum demands, and limited classroom time may shape instructors' decisions regarding music integration. Linking instructors' beliefs with their reported practices and constraints also extends 'music in ELT' research beyond learner-focused outcomes. Although conducted in Türkiye, the findings offer transferable insights for comparable tertiary EFL contexts facing similar challenges related to materials, curriculum integration and time.

3. Methodology

In the Turkish higher education system, students entering English-medium programmes may be required to complete a one-year intensive English preparatory programme before beginning their departmental courses (Arik & Arik, 2014). These programmes operate at both state and foundation universities and typically provide 20–30 hours of weekly language instruction, aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Coşkun, 2013). This study focused on language instructors in these language preparatory programmes and used a mixed-methods survey design to examine their perceptions and in-class practices. The survey included demographic questions, closed-ended and multiple-response items on classroom practices, a 10-item Likert scale on instructors' beliefs about the affective and linguistic value of music and open-ended questions on practices, benefits, challenges and pedagogical beliefs.

Participants were 81 English language instructors working in university preparatory programmes in Türkiye who reported using music in their English teaching at least occasionally. Given the exploratory, context-specific nature of the study, this sample was sufficient to identify patterns, examine rank-order associations, and capture instructor perspectives across university contexts. To establish the survey's content and face validity, the researchers obtained expert opinions from faculty members in English language teaching, starting in June 2025. Based on their feedback, the researchers revised the survey. The researchers then conducted a pilot study with six English language instructors teaching in preparatory programmes and refined the instrument based on their feedback. Data collection took place from September 2025 to April 2026.

The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means where appropriate. For multiple-response items, the responses were analysed using multiple-response frequency analysis. Because participants could select more than one option, the totals may exceed the sample size, and the percentages may not sum to 100%. The 10-item Likert-scale section demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). Spearman's rank-order correlations were used to examine (a) the relationship between instructors' beliefs and reported frequency of music use and (b) associations between usage frequency and selected indicators of classroom integration (activity types, preferred music types, and material-development practices).

Open-ended responses were analysed using a hybrid thematic approach, combining deductive and inductive coding. An initial coding framework was developed based on the research questions and literature on music-assisted language learning, with additional codes added when responses introduced ideas not captured by the preliminary framework. Two members of the research team reviewed the coding framework and resolved any discrepancies through consensus. Qualitative data were imported into MAXQDA 24 (qualitative data analysis software) for systematic coding. When a single response encompassed multiple themes or codes, multiple codings were permitted. The percentages were calculated based on the full sample size ($N = 81$). MAXQDA 24 facilitated the

organisation of coded data, examination of code frequencies, and development of the final thematic structure. This study was approved by the Bursa Uludağ University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Approval No. 42). Participants were informed of the study's purpose and assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Participant Profile

The study included 81 English language instructors working in language preparatory programmes in Türkiye. Women comprised the majority of participants ($n = 58$, 71.6%), and most were experienced, with 64 participants (79.0%) reporting 11 or more years of teaching experience. Most participants held postgraduate degrees (master's: $n = 53$, 65.4%; PhD: $n = 17$, 21.0%), while the remaining held a bachelor's degree ($n = 11$, 13.6%). The institution type was fairly balanced, with 44 participants (54.3%) working at public universities and 37 (45.7%) at private universities. Participants were based in various cities, mostly in Istanbul ($n = 41$) and Bursa ($n = 20$). This geographical concentration should be considered when assessing the generalisability of the findings to regions outside the Marmara Region.

4.2 RQ1. Classroom Integration and Pedagogical Use of Music

Table 1 shows that language instructors rarely integrate music into their lessons. More than half of the participants stated that they rarely used music or songs in their lessons ($n = 43$, 53.1%), while smaller proportions used it once or several times a week. This finding indicates that although music is a well-known pedagogical tool in language teaching, the participants in this study did not use it regularly or systematically. However, when participants integrated music, they used it for specific objectives.

Table 1: Classroom integration of music

Dimension	Category	n	%
Frequency of music use	Rarely	43	53.1
	Every two weeks	11	13.6
	Once a week	14	17.3
	Several times a week	13	16.0
Targeted language skills	Teaching vocabulary	65	80.2
	Developing listening skills	52	64.2
	Reinforcing grammar structures	47	58.0
	Improving pronunciation	38	46.9
Music-based activities	Fill-in-the-blanks	66	81.5
	Discussing lyrics	38	46.9
	Speaking/discussion with music	31	38.3
	Grammar exercises based on songs	29	35.8
	Listening and comprehension questions	27	33.3

Note. Multiple responses were permitted for the targeted language skills and for music-based activities

The most common objective in classes was vocabulary teaching ($n = 65$, 80.2%), followed by developing listening skills, reinforcing grammar, and improving pronunciation. The most common music-based activity was fill-in-the-blanks ($n = 66$, 81.5%). Other reported musical activities were discussing lyrics, speaking/discussion with music, grammar exercises based on songs, and listening and comprehension questions. These findings indicate that music is generally used for guided listening, vocabulary recognition, meaning elicitation, discussion, and grammar revision.

Table 2 shows that the participants adopted certain pedagogical criteria when developing materials and selecting songs. There was no common inclination regarding material-development practices. Some participants preferred ready-made materials, whereas others developed their own, either partially or completely. The responses show that the instructors frequently adapt or edit ready-made materials to meet their teaching objectives.

The most common tool used to search for resources was websites ($n = 74$, 91.4%). This was followed by AI platforms ($n = 51$, 63.0%). This highlights that language instructors benefit from digital sources in developing music-based content. Conversely, traditional or institutional sources, such as materials shared with colleagues and textbooks, were used less frequently.

The song-selection criteria underline that these are not random choices, but pedagogical decisions. The suitability for the student level had the highest weighted score (144). The other items were comprehensible lyrics and the inclusion of the target grammar structures. These findings suggest that language instructors choose songs based on students' proficiency levels, lyric clarity, and alignment with target language structures.

Table 2: Song selection and material development

Dimension	Category	n	%
Material development practice	I never develop my materials; instead, I use ready-made materials	12	14.8
	I rarely develop my materials	21	25.9
	I sometimes develop my materials	22	27.2
	I mostly develop my materials	17	21.0
	I always develop my materials	9	11.1
Main resources for materials	Websites (YouTube, Spotify, etc.)	74	91.4
	AI tools (Suno, ChatGPT, etc.)	51	63.0
	Materials shared with colleagues	23	28.4
	Textbooks	13	16.0
Song-selection criteria	Suitability for student level	144	Weighted score
	Comprehensible lyrics	90	Weighted score
	Contains target grammar structures	90	Weighted score
	Rich vocabulary	46	Weighted score
	Cultural appropriateness	34	Weighted score

Note. Song-selection criteria were analysed using weighted ranking analysis: first choice = 3 points, second choice = 2 points, and third choice = 1 point

Regarding **RQ1**, participants were asked, “Briefly describe how you carry out a music-based activity”, to understand how they conducted music-based activities in class. The responses were analysed using thematic analysis. Table 3 shows that music-based activities in classes are usually guided listening activities, consistent with quantitative findings.

Table 3: Music-based activity implementation patterns

Theme	Code	n	%
Preparation and Task Design	Song-selection aligned with level objectives	24	29.6
	Material preparation or adaptation	38	46.9
	Warm-up / contextualisation	27	33.3
	Pre-teaching vocabulary / key language	28	34.6
Implementation and While-Listening Procedures	Listening implementation / repeated listening	42	51.9
	Gap-fill tasks	44	54.3
	Comprehension or question-based tasks	20	24.7
	Peer or group feedback	15	18.5
	Karaoke / listen-and-sing	10	12.3
Post-Activity and Productive Follow-Up	Discussion of lyrics	29	35.8
	Productive follow-up	19	23.5
	Feedback and evaluation	18	22.2
Pedagogical Language Focus	Vocabulary focus	35	43.2
	Target structure focus	26	32.1
Affective or Less Structured Use	Atmosphere-oriented use	10	12.3
	Minimal or non-specific description	8	9.9

Note. Multiple coding was permitted; therefore, one participant could contribute to more than one code, and the frequencies and percentages do not sum to 100%. The percentages were calculated based on the full sample (N = 81).

As shown in Table 3, the most frequent codes in the participants’ responses were gap-fill tasks (n = 44, 54.3%) and listening implementation/repeated listening (n = 42, 51.9%), followed by material preparation or adaptation and vocabulary focus. This indicates that language instructors do not use music randomly for fun; instead, they use it as a teaching tool that is aligned with their objectives. The findings also describe a three-stage pattern: preparation before listening, guided tasks during listening, and discussion, production, or feedback afterwards. Additionally, a small group of instructors used music more informally to shape the classroom atmosphere (n = 10, 12.3%), while eight responses provided little detail about implementation.

Table 4: Significant associations with frequency of music use

Relationship	Spearman’s ρ	p
Frequency of music use × number of activity types	.381	< .001
Frequency of music use × number of music types preferred	.356	.001
Frequency of music use × material-development practice	.341	.002

Note. Only statistically significant associations were reported.

According to Table 4, there was a positive correlation between the frequency of music use and a wider range of activity types ($\rho = .381, p < .001$), a wider range of preferred music types ($\rho = .356, p = .001$), and more active material-development practices ($\rho = .341, p = .002$). These associations indicate that instructors who use music more frequently report a broader range of activities and music types and more active material-development practices.

Overall, RQ1 showed that music was used infrequently but usually for clearly defined instructional purposes.

4.3 RQ2. Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Music Use

For RQ2, the participants' responses to the question "share your observations about the impact of using music on your students" were evaluated using thematic analysis. This question examined language instructors' perceptions of the impact of music on students' learning.

Table 5 illustrates that language instructors evaluate the impact of music on students in terms of their affective and motivational characteristics and engagement. The most frequent code was increased motivation ($n=40, 49.4\%$). The most prominent benefits were enjoyment, student engagement, a positive classroom atmosphere, stress reduction and confidence/self-expression. These findings indicate that music is not only seen as a tool that supports language skills but also as a pedagogical aid that enhances student interest, motivation, and involvement by positively influencing the classroom's atmosphere. Reflecting these findings, P3 stated, "Using music boosts student engagement and motivation. It helps with vocabulary, pronunciation, and creates a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere."

Table 5: Perceived benefits of music use

Theme	Code	n	%
Affective and Motivational Benefits	Increased motivation	40	49.4
	Enjoyment / fun / positive affect	31	38.3
	Anxiety or stress reduction	18	22.2
	Confidence / self-expression	13	16.0
	Emotional connection / shared experience	6	7.4
Student Engagement and Classroom Dynamics	Student engagement	26	32.1
	Active participation	17	21.0
	Positive classroom atmosphere	19	23.5
	Focus and attention	5	6.2
	Variety / non-traditional learning	8	9.9
	Teacher-student rapport	3	3.7
Language Learning Support	Memory / retention / internalisation / revision	15	18.5
	Vocabulary learning / retention	14	17.3
	Grammar reinforcement	10	12.3
	Listening development / authentic exposure	9	11.1
	Pronunciation / rhythm / intonation	5	6.2
	Productive/receptive skills	5	6.2

Theme	Code	n	%
Cultural, Authentic, and Linguistic Connection	Authentic/real-life relevance and linguistic awareness	8	9.9
	Cultural awareness	3	3.7
Conditional Effectiveness and Constraints	Song selection / learner preference	7	8.6
	Mixed, negative, or limited impact	5	6.2
	Lesson alignment	4	4.9

Note. A single response can be assigned to multiple codes. Non-specific positive comments were not coded into distinct themes.

Furthermore, the responses highlighted the contribution of music to language learning. The most frequently reported benefits were memory, retention, internalisation, and revision ($n = 15$, 18.5%), followed by vocabulary learning and retention ($n = 14$, 17.3%), grammar reinforcement ($n = 10$, 12.3%), and listening development and authentic exposure ($n = 9$, 11.1%). Pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation ($n = 5$, 6.2%) and productive and receptive skills ($n = 5$, 6.2%) were mentioned less frequently. Responses also referred to authentic or real-life language use ($n = 8$, 9.9%) and cultural awareness ($n = 3$, 3.7%), suggesting that music may support both language development and learners' connections with authentic linguistic and cultural contexts.

However, the theme of Conditional Effectiveness and Constraints indicated that the effectiveness of music use may depend on factors such as song selection, students' language proficiency, lesson objectives, and activity design. Despite the reported benefits of using music in language classrooms, the participants identified several challenges and limitations. The challenges are presented in detail in Table 6.

Table 6: Reported challenges in using music

Challenges	n	%
Difficulty finding suitable songs	47	58.0
Integrating with curriculum	45	55.6
Time constraints	44	54.3
Student proficiency differences	22	27.2
Cultural appropriateness concerns	19	23.5
Lack of technical facilities	8	9.9
Classroom management problems	6	7.4
Assessment challenges	5	6.2
Lack of colleague/administrative support	4	4.9

Note. Multiple responses were permitted; however, one respondent reported no substantive challenge.

The findings regarding the challenges of music use highlight that language instructors categorise challenges into two main categories: pedagogical and practice-oriented. The most prominent challenges were finding suitable songs, curriculum integration, and time constraints. Reflecting these challenges, P5 stated, "It should be integrated in the course content; otherwise, it may be difficult to find time to use it in the class."

The similar percentages suggest that the challenges leading language instructors to avoid music in class stem from practice-oriented difficulties such as planning, material selection, and classroom management. Less frequently reported but noteworthy difficulties included student proficiency differences ($n = 22$, 27.2%) and concerns about cultural appropriateness ($n = 19$, 23.5%). The findings revealed two aspects: lyrics mattered to participants, and selected songs should align with students' proficiency, cultural contexts, and lesson objectives. Finally, the participants reported a lesser extent of technical facility limitations, classroom management problems, assessment challenges, and limited colleague/administrative support.

The findings regarding RQ2 indicate that instructors value music as a pedagogical tool for motivation, engagement, and improving the classroom atmosphere, but its use requires careful planning to manage challenges such as material selection, curriculum alignment, and time constraints.

4.4 RQ3. Instructors' Music-related Beliefs and Practices

The relationship between language instructors' perceptions and the reported frequency of music use was examined using Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis.

Table 7 shows that not all positive beliefs about music relate to classroom practices to the same extent. The strongest relationship was between the frequency of music use and the belief that music use increases students' confidence ($\rho = .325$, $p = .003$). In addition, significant relationships were found for vocabulary learning ($\rho = .264$, $p = .018$), student participation ($\rho = .234$, $p = .036$), and classroom atmosphere ($\rho = .238$, $p = .033$). These findings imply that instructors who use music more in class are more inclined to associate it with directly observable classroom outcomes such as confidence, participation, vocabulary learning, and a positive classroom atmosphere.

Table 7: Beliefs and frequency of music use

Belief Statement	Mean	Spearman's ρ	p
Music facilitates vocabulary learning	4.51	.264	.018*
Music improves pronunciation skills	4.48	.176	.116
Music enhances grammar retention	3.77	.149	.184
Music raises cultural awareness	4.15	.131	.242
Music increases students' confidence	4.04	.325	.003**
Music increases participation	4.28	.234	.036*
Music leads to a positive attitude toward language learning	4.46	.218	.051
Music reduces students' stress	4.40	.154	.169
Music increases students' motivation	4.36	.137	.223
Music positively affects classroom atmosphere	4.56	.238	.033*

Note. ** $p < .01$ indicates a highly statistically significant relationship; * $p < .05$ indicates a statistically significant relationship; values without asterisks ($p \geq .05$) are not statistically significant.

In contrast, some beliefs strongly supported by instructors did not show a significant relationship with the frequency of music use. For example, although participants agreed that music use in class increases students' motivation ($M = 4.36$), this belief was not significantly related to the frequency of music use ($\rho = .137$, $p = .223$). Similarly, beliefs regarding pronunciation, grammar retention, cultural awareness, stress reduction, and positive attitudes toward language learning did not reveal a statistically significant relationship with the frequency of music use. This pattern suggests that positive beliefs regarding music use in class do not necessarily mean that instructors regularly use music in their lessons.

Overall, these findings support a clear belief-practice gap, as positive beliefs about music do not consistently translate into its frequent classroom use. In particular, the codes of confidence/ self-expression, vocabulary learning/ retention, active participation, and positive classroom atmosphere/ class energy overlap with significant correlations shown in Table 7.

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that language instructors perceive music as a pedagogically valuable tool that requires careful planning for classroom use. Participants associated music with affective and motivational benefits, student engagement, and classroom dynamics, including increased motivation, enjoyment, participation, and a positive classroom atmosphere. This finding is consistent with previous studies.

Alisaari and Heikkola (2017) found that, among singing, listening to songs, and reciting poems in language education, teachers in Finland deemed listening to songs to be the most effective method for boosting learner motivation and influencing emotions and moods. This highlights the strong emotional and motivational effects of music-based classroom activities. According to Melisa et al. (2022), when teachers use music in class, students feel happier and more motivated to learn. The researchers included 25 high school students in their study and collected data through observation. The results showed that students were positively affected by music in class and actively participated in classroom activities. Similar positive beliefs have also been reported among Malaysian ESL teachers (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021), suggesting that the affective and motivational value attributed to music extends beyond the Turkish context.

Regarding classroom practice (**RQ1**), the findings show that activities were structured around specific linguistic objectives. Music is mostly used for vocabulary, listening, grammar reinforcement, and pronunciation. The most common practices are gap-fill/lyrics-completion tasks, repeated listening, lyrics discussion, comprehension questions, and productive follow-up activities. This reveals the study's core pattern: although music is valued for its affective benefits, teachers generally implement it through language-based activities. Güler and Bozkurt (2021) similarly found that the most common activities included gap filling, vocabulary and pronunciation work, singing along to train students' stress and intonation, discussing song meanings, and written responses to songs. The dominance of gap-filling activities in the present study may reflect their ease of

use and clear alignment with vocabulary and listening objectives. However, this may also limit the communicative uses of music.

This emphasis on structured, language-focused activities is consistent with Robinson (2024), who highlighted the pedagogical value of using songs purposefully rather than merely as supplementary activities. This purposeful and structured use is also reflected in the findings on song selection and materials development. While participants stressed music's positive impact on motivation, classroom atmosphere, and students' affective conditions, they believed that the song's suitability for the student level, comprehensible lyrics, and inclusion of target grammar structures were more important.

Cultural appropriateness also remains relevant, as instructors need to consider whether song lyrics, themes, and values suit their learners and the institutional context. Taken together, these considerations suggest that music is not viewed as a random, entertainment-oriented activity but as a pedagogical resource that requires careful selection and adaptation to specific instructional objectives (Parkinson & Vyner, 2025). Overall, the findings indicate that music plays a dual role in language classrooms: it functions as both an affective and motivational tool, and as a language-focused instructional resource.

Kumar et al. (2022) likewise described music as both a language-learning tool and a means of creating a lower-pressure classroom environment. The relatively high use of AI tools (63.0%) suggests that instructors are already turning to digital support for developing music-based material. Tools such as ChatGPT and Suno may help reduce preparation time by supporting the creation or adaptation of level-appropriate lyrics, activities, and supplementary materials for teaching English. However, instructors still need to evaluate their pedagogical suitability and accuracy.

RQ3 further clarifies the gap between positive beliefs and their limited classroom use. Although the participants held positive beliefs about using music, they did not use it frequently in their classes. Given that 79% of the participants had at least 11 years of teaching experience, this low frequency is particularly significant. This suggests that limited music use may persist even in an experienced instructor sample and may therefore relate more to practical and contextual constraints than to teaching experience. In particular, beliefs related to confidence, vocabulary learning, student participation, and classroom atmosphere were significantly associated with the frequency of music use.

This suggests that music is translated into classroom practice primarily through its observable effects on the learning environment. In contrast, the absence of significant relationships between usage frequency and strongly endorsed beliefs such as motivation, stress reduction, pronunciation, grammar retention, cultural awareness, and positive attitudes toward language learning reveals a clear belief-practice gap. While previous research examined teachers' beliefs and practices regarding music use (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2017), these findings show that positive

beliefs may not lead to frequent use because of curriculum, time and material constraints.

The **RQ2** findings help explain this gap. The most common challenges were difficulty in finding suitable songs, integrating music into the curriculum, and time constraints. Similar challenges were reported by Hubilla and Embile (2026), including limited musical resources, time constraints, classroom management difficulties, insufficient training, and lack of institutional support. Thus, limited music use appears to stem primarily from practical constraints rather than from negative perceptions. Although instructors recognise music's pedagogical potential, its regular classroom use depends on conditions that support appropriate material selection, preparation, and curriculum alignment.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that language instructors across various preparatory programmes within the Turkish context perceive music as a pedagogically valuable resource for language instruction. However, its value is translated into classroom practice in a limited, selective, and highly structured way. Language instructors stress the impact of music on creating a positive classroom atmosphere for student engagement.

However, while using music, they mostly associated it with linguistic objectives such as vocabulary and grammar teaching. Furthermore, although participants' beliefs regarding the use of music in class were generally positive, these positive beliefs did not necessarily translate into music use in the classroom setting. Observable outcomes, such as confidence, participation and classroom atmosphere, were associated with frequency of use, while broader beliefs about motivation, stress reduction, cultural awareness and attitudes towards language learning were not. This suggests that classroom use depends not only on positive beliefs but also on the practical feasibility of musical activities.

In conclusion, to use music more effectively and regularly in language classes, song selection, material preparation, activity design, and curriculum alignment should be supported. The factors limiting the use of music in classes are mostly pedagogical and practice-oriented. The most significant challenge was finding suitable songs, followed by curriculum integration difficulties and time constraints. Therefore, material development plays a key role in translating instructors' positive perceptions of music into practical, curriculum-aligned classroom activities. Accordingly, Turkish university preparatory programmes should move beyond recognising the value of music and actively support its systematic integration through curriculum alignment, accessible materials, and practical support for instructors.

7. Implications

The findings reveal a clear gap between ELT instructors' positive perceptions of using music for language learning and its actual, highly constrained classroom implementation in Türkiye. To bridge this belief-practice gap, the following practical implications are proposed.

- Teacher training: Professional development programmes should provide practical training in song selection, material adaptation, and designing activities aligned with specific language-learning objectives.
- Curriculum integration and institutional support: Music-based activities should be incorporated more systematically into preparatory programme syllabi, supported by accessible and curriculum-aligned resources.
- Textbook and material development: Textbook publishers could provide level-appropriate music-based activities linked to vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, grammar, and communicative objectives while also considering cultural appropriateness.
- AI-assisted material creation: AI tools such as ChatGPT and Suno can help instructors create or adapt level-appropriate lyrics, exercises, and supplementary materials, potentially reducing preparation time.
- Assessment: When music-based learning is incorporated into the curriculum, assessment should focus on the intended language-learning outcomes rather than musical ability. Short formative tasks can assess outcomes such as vocabulary learning, listening comprehension, pronunciation, and understanding of song content.

8. Recommendations

To translate these implications into practice, institutions should maintain a shared database of suitable, level-appropriate songs and support peer-sharing workshops for material development. Future studies could also examine whether instructors' perceptions and classroom practices vary across different musical genres. Finally, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine whether instructors' practices and the effects of music-integrated instruction change over time.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix 1

Survey Form: The Pedagogical Use of Music in English Language Teaching

Dear Participant, you are kindly invited to take part in a scientific research study that investigates the use of music in English preparatory classes at Turkish universities. This study aims to explore how instructors integrate music into language teaching. Data will be collected through this anonymous online questionnaire and will be used solely for academic purposes. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. No personally identifiable information will be collected from the participants. Estimated time to complete the survey: 7–10 minutes.

Confidentiality and Ethics: All responses will remain strictly confidential and will be analysed collectively. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher. Thank you for your valuable contributions.

Important Notice: This survey is intended only for instructors who use music in English teaching. If you do not use music in any form, please do not complete the survey, as your input falls outside the scope of this study.

Consent Statement (required)

☐ I confirm that I have read the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender: Required.

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Prefer not to say

2. Age: Required.

- a. 25–30
- b. 31–40
- c. 41–50
- d. 51 and above

3. Teaching Experience: Required.

- a. 0–5 years
- b. 6–10 years
- c. 11–15 years
- d. 16 years and above

4. Education level: Required.

- a. Bachelor's
- b. Master's
- c. PhD

5. Type of Institution: Please indicate where you work. Required.

- a. Public University
- b. Private University

6. City you work in: Required. Response type: Open-ended

Section 2: Frequency and Types of Music Use

7. How often do you use music/songs in your English classes? Required.

- a. Several times a week
- b. Once a week

c. Every two weeks

d. Rarely

8. What types of music/songs do you prefer? Select all that apply. Required.

☐ Pop

☐ Rock

☐ Classical

☐ Jazz/Blues

☐ Folk/Traditional

☐ Children's song

☐ Movie Soundtrack

☐ Instrumental/Background music

☐ Hip-hop/Rap

☐ Other: _____

9. Please select the most important criterion when choosing a song. Required.

a. Suitability for student level

b. Comprehensible lyrics

c. Contains target grammar structures

d. Rich vocabulary

e. Cultural appropriateness

f. Song tempo

g. Song style

h. Song popularity

i. Other: _____

10. Please select the second most important criterion. Do not repeat your previous choice. Required.

a. Suitability for student level

b. Comprehensible lyrics

c. Contains target grammar structures

d. Rich vocabulary

e. Cultural appropriateness

f. Song tempo

g. Song style

h. Song popularity

i. Other: _____

11. Please select the third most important criterion. Do not repeat your previous choices. Required.

a. Suitability for student level

b. Comprehensible lyrics

c. Contains target grammar structures

d. Rich vocabulary

e. Cultural appropriateness

f. Song tempo

g. Song style

h. Song popularity

i. Other: _____

Section 3: Purposes and Types of Music-Based Activities

12. For what English language skills do you use music in your classes? Please select all that apply. Required.

- ☐ Teaching vocabulary
- ☐ Improving pronunciation
- ☐ Developing listening skills
- ☐ Supporting reading skills
- ☐ Reinforcing grammar structures
- ☐ Enhancing speaking fluency
- ☐ Inspiring creative writing
- ☐ Other: _____

13. Which music-based activities do you use? Select all that apply. Required.

- ☐ Fill-in-the-blanks
- ☐ Putting mixed-up lyrics in order
- ☐ Discussing lyrics
- ☐ Listening and comprehension questions
- ☐ Writing activities based on songs
- ☐ Singing/repeating songs
- ☐ Grammar exercises based on songs
- ☐ Role play/drama based on songs
- ☐ Project work based on songs
- ☐ Speaking/discussion with music
- ☐ Other: _____

Section 4: Material Development

14. What is your practice regarding developing materials for music-based activities? Required.

- a. I always develop my materials.
- b. I mostly develop my materials.
- c. I sometimes develop my materials.
- d. I rarely develop my materials.
- e. I never develop my materials; instead, I use ready-made ones.

15. Which resources do you use when developing music-based materials? Please select all that apply. Required.

- ☐ Websites (YouTube, Spotify, etc.)
- ☐ AI (Artificial Intelligence tools such as Suno, ChatGPT, etc.)
- ☐ Textbooks
- ☐ Materials shared with colleagues
- ☐ Academic articles
- ☐ Teacher training seminars
- ☐ Other: _____

Section 5: Challenges and Perceived Benefits

16. What challenges do you face in using music? Select all that apply. Required.

- ☐ Time constraints
- ☐ Lack of technical facilities
- ☐ Difficulty finding suitable songs
- ☐ Integrating with curriculum

- ☐ Student proficiency differences
☐ Cultural appropriateness concerns
☐ Classroom management problems
☐ Lack of colleague/administrative support
☐ Assessment challenges
☐ Other: _____

17. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Undecided, 2 =Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree). Required.

No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
17.1	The use of music facilitates vocabulary learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.2	The use of music improves pronunciation skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.3	The use of music enhances the retention of grammar.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.4	The use of music raises cultural awareness.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.5	The use of music increases students' confidence.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.6	The use of music increases participation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.7	The use of music leads to a positive attitude toward language learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.8	The use of music reduces students' stress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.9	The use of music increases students' motivation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.10	The use of music positively affects the classroom atmosphere.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 6: Open-Ended Questions

18. Briefly describe how you carry out a music-based activity. Preparation, implementation, post-activity evaluation, etc. Required. Response type: Open-ended

19. Share your observations about the impact of using music on your students. Required. Response type: Open-ended

20. Your suggestions for making music use more effective in English teaching. Required. Response type: Open-ended

Thank you. This is the end of the survey. We appreciate your time and contributions.