

UNVEILING PROPAGANDA IN NATIONAL ANTHEMS AS A TEACHING TOOL IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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It is essential that students who learn a foreign language become familiar with the history and culture of the country whose language they are studying. By incorporating national anthems into teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), teachers can enhance both language learning and cultural awareness and create a more enriching classroom experience for their students. Anthems, throughout history, have served as powerful tools for propaganda, making them an excellent resource for educating students about this aspect. In this chapter, we will show how national anthems “God Save the King” (the United Kingdom), “The Star-Spangled Banner” (the United States), “Das Deutschlandlied” or “The Song of the Germans” (Germany), and “Zdravljica” (Slovenia) can serve as educational tools for revealing propaganda and ideology, explicitly targeting intermediate to upper-intermediate level students. By analysing the lyrics and exploring their origins and significance, we will delve into the concept of propaganda embedded within each of them. We will take a close look at two remakes of the anthems, each of which hides propaganda messages in its own way. This will provide a few more ideas specifically designed for the EFL classroom, drawing inspiration from national anthems.

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1 Introduction

When teaching a foreign language, it is vital that learners explore and understand the culture, history, and traditions of the nation whose language they are learning. Language and culture are closely connected, if not inseparable, so it is essential to incorporate cultural classes into teaching practice. Teachers should select a range of materials to enhance their learners' (inter)cultural understanding, and one approach is to utilise national anthems as teaching tools in the EFL classroom. Throughout modern history, national anthems have consistently conveyed propaganda to a significant extent, which makes them an excellent example for educating students about it. Since the words are closely intertwined with the music, the message has even more impact and meaning for anyone who listens to, repeats, recites, or sings these songs. The lyrics often express the pride and honour of the nation, strengthen national identity, reflect a particular nation's political and ideological values, and may, therefore, include propagandistic elements.

First, we will examine the anthems "God Save the King" and "The Star-Spangled Banner," which Slovene students often encounter when learning English. Since German is the most frequently chosen second foreign language among students in Slovenia, we will also examine "Das Deutschlandlied" with its English translation for analysis. Lastly, we will delve into a close analysis of the Slovene national anthem, "Zdravljica," based on its English translation. To foster students' engagement and critical thinking, it can be useful to encourage them to arrive at their insights and conclusions during the analysis of national anthems. After briefly presenting socio-historical facts, we chose to explore ways to help identify propaganda within the text – this way, students can be empowered to detect and interpret propaganda independently. The chapter will continue with an examination of two remakes of national anthems, which express propaganda slightly differently. Finally, additional ideas for incorporating national anthems into teaching and learning English will be provided.

2 National Anthems as a Powerful Tool of Propaganda

2.1 Exploring Socio-Historical Roots to Unwrap Propaganda in National Anthems

A national anthem is a solemn musical composition officially adopted by a country as an expression of national identity. Like other national symbols, a national anthem represents a nation's tradition, history, beliefs, and people. It helps to evoke feelings of patriotism among the country's citizens, reminds them of their nation's glory, history, beauty, and heritage, celebrates values of peace, unity, solidarity, and freedom, and boosts collective identification; in short, like other symbols, it connects people of a specific nation. Abril (2007, 73) claims that a national anthem is a unique musical work in that it functions primarily as a malleable symbol of a bounded geographical region. Ethnomusicologist Nancy Guy (2002, 96) describes it as a symbol of the nation-state, which is far from being static or monologic. Because of its performative nature, it may be filled with additional meaning beyond that dictated by printed words and music notation (Guy 2002, 96). An anthem usually comprises many elements: first, there are words, then music is written upon them, or vice versa; a text may be added to a tune. Afterwards, the performance may also be a significant element, since it includes the singer or singers with various voices and musical instruments with different sounds, and thus, it opens numerous interpretive possibilities. National anthems are a valuable teaching tool, as they provide teachers with several ideas that can be intriguing and thought-provoking for their students. Based on the text, learners can acquire new cultural, historical, and linguistic knowledge, which can be compared to teaching and learning a foreign language through songs. Not only do the texts offer many opportunities to acquire and enrich vocabulary, but they also provide a tool through which new grammatical structures can be introduced and learned, or familiar ones may be revised. Nevertheless, to unveil the elements of propaganda in anthems, students should initially understand the essential socio-historical facts connected with them.

English language learners, in the first place, become familiar with the anthem of most Commonwealth realms, their territories, and the British Crown Dependencies, "God Save the King," or alternatively, "God Save the Queen." The title and the lyrics depend on the gender of the reigning monarch, and since the longest-reigning British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, passed away after 70 years on the throne, the

word *King*, referring to King Charles III, will be used here. All feminine pronouns are replaced with their masculine equivalents.

There are no clear facts about the origins of “God Save the King.” The anthem had many versions throughout history, and many verses were added or omitted. According to Cummings (1902, 2), it was believed that Henry Carey wrote the music and words; however, the music was later ascribed to Dr John Bull, who presumably composed it in 1607 for an entertainment given by the Company to King James I. (Cummings 1902, 3). Although we may not be sure about the authorship, the melody has been famous for centuries. Even Beethoven wrote in his *Diary*: “Ich muss den Engländern ein wenig zeigen, was in dem ‘God Save the King’ für ein Segen ist,” which means: “I must show the English a little what a blessing they have in their ‘God Save the King’” (Cummings 1902, 1). It has been said that around 140 composers, including Beethoven, Haydn, and Brahms, used the tune in their compositions. On the other hand, the official website of the Royal Family (The Royal Household n.d.) states that the words and tune of the British anthem are anonymous, and the lyrics are a matter of tradition. Further, it is mentioned that only the first verse is usually sung on official occasions. The lyrics of the National Anthem are as follows:

God save our gracious King!
Long live our noble King!
God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King.

Thy choicest gifts in store
On him be pleased to pour,
Long may he reign.
May he defend our laws,
And ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice,
God save the King. (The Royal Household n.d.)

“The Star-Spangled Banner” is the national anthem of the United States, written by Francis Scott Key on the early morning of September 14, 1814, as an account of the Battle of Baltimore, a days-long siege between British and American forces (Key-Smith 1930, 267). At this point, students should be taught that the Battle of Baltimore was a crucial land and sea battle of the War of 1812. Following their occupation and burning of Washington, D.C., in August 1814, British forces decided to strike the port of Baltimore, America’s third-largest city and a shipbuilding centre. Although the British expected the city and harbour to fall quickly, they were defeated, as Baltimore’s citizens had worked on the city’s defence for more than a year (Bluhm 2024).

Key was inspired to write the lyrics when watching through the night how the British Navy bombarded Baltimore’s Fort McHenry. Siegel and Green (2000, 29) vividly describe that as the sun rose, the flag flying at the Fort was still there, which meant that the American troops had been victorious in. Key wrote the first stirring lines of the poem, which was later called “The Defense of Fort McHenry” (Hildebrand 2014, 254). Issued in Baltimore on a broadsheet the morning after Key’s return to shore, these lyrics also found their way into print in newspapers over the following days. They were set to a tune called “To Anacreon in Heaven,” which was composed in the late 1700s by John Stafford Smith. Key-Smith (1930, 272) claims that there was an objection to the music because of its origin¹; however, the music was revised and Americanised when it became the music of “The Star-Spangled Banner”. With the composition, Key not only christened the flag “The Star-Spangled Banner” but immortalized America as the “Land of the free and the home of the brave” (Key-Smith 1930, 271). Although the poem has four stanzas, only the first one is commonly sung today:

O say can you see, by the dawn’s early light,
What so proudly we hail’d at the twilight’s last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O’er the ramparts we watch’d were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket’s red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave? (Key 1814)

¹ The song was linked to the Anacreontic Society, which was an amateur musician’s and singer’s club named after the Greek poet Anacreon.

“The Star-Spangled Banner” was not adopted as the official anthem of the United States until 1931, though by then it was already popular and had been used by several American institutions. Abril (2007, 72) explains that even The National Association for Music Education voiced opposition to the song’s becoming official, as they felt it was too warlike in spirit; secondly, it was the product of a single historical event; and finally, it was difficult for school children to sing. As Abril (2007, 72) points out, critiques primarily focused on its questionable origins (a violent drinking song), challenging vocal range, and lack of poetic merit. On the other hand, many were in favour of its being recognised as the first national anthem of the United States, and in 1931, the SSB was finally made official by an act of Congress and the signature of President Hoover.

“Das Deutschlandlied,” also known as “The Song of the Germans,” has been the national anthem of Germany since 1922. The text was written in 1841 by the democratic nationalist poet August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798–1874), who sought to popularise the idea of a unified Germany:² the poem’s three stanzas conveyed his longing for a united Germany based on liberal principles (Feinstein 2000, 507). The music to “Das Deutschlandlied” was composed in 1797 by Joseph Haydn and was the Hapsburg answer to revolutionary France’s “La Marseillaise” (507). Fallersleben selected Haydn’s tune himself, for he found it to be musically the best of the well-known German national melodies. The song became popular by the First World War and was used to identify soldiers’ location in the smoke of battle (508). It was announced as the first national song for united Germany by the first president of the Weimar Republic; however, the second and the third stanzas were omitted, as they did not exemplify Nazi values. The second stanza caricatures German loyalty, women, wine, and singing, which was not an appropriate description of a virtuous woman and a loyal man. The third stanza is about justice, unity, and freedom, which did not send out the message the Third Reich leadership wanted to convey. The first stanza became, from that time on,

² While a fully unified Germany remained elusive before 1871, several significant attempts and developments paved the way for Germany’s unification. The German Empire occurred in 1871 after Prussia’s victory in the Franco-Prussian War. Most of the German-speaking states of Europe united under the crown of Prussia to form the German Empire. The empire was forged not as the result of the outpouring of nationalist feeling from the masses but through traditional cabinet diplomacy and agreement by the leaders of the states in the North German Confederation, led by Prussia, which remained the dominant force in the nation until the empire’s demise at the end of the war in 1918 (Britannica 2024).

closely associated with the Nazi regime. During the Second World War, “Das Deutschlandlied” served as a signal song in battle, and after Germany had been defeated, the Allied Control Council banned it along with other Nazi songs (509). After the Second World War, there were attempts to erase the past and to establish a new anthem, but some tried to reintroduce “Das Deutschlandlied.” West Germany finally adopted the anthem in the early 1950s, while the anthem in East Germany was “Auferstanden aus Ruinen” (“Risen from Ruins”) from 1949 to 1990 (Mdr.de 2020). After the German reunification in 1990, the third stanza of the already known “Das Deutschlandlied” was confirmed as the national anthem.

Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit
für das deutsche Vaterland!
Danach lasst uns alle streben
brüderlich mit Herz und Hand!
Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit
sind des Glückes Unterpfand;
Blüh im Glanze dieses Glückes,
blühe, deutsches Vaterland! (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1841)

Once students have learned the crucial facts, their attention should be drawn to elements of propaganda hidden in the words of the lyrics. We must first explain the concept of propaganda if we want the task to be performed successfully. Mull and Wallin (2013, 2) explain that “propaganda” finds its root in the Latin word “propagare,” which was used to describe the process of aiding plant reproduction by using cuttings from the plant, and it changed its meaning in the 17th century when the Roman Catholic Church established the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (the Congregation for Propagating the Faith). During the French Revolution, the term gained connotations more political than religious, and by the mid-19th century, “propaganda” bore the political connotation it carries today. Velasco-Pufleau (2014, 2) points out that the development of modern propaganda methods was not exclusive to authoritarian regimes but also used by liberal democracies. He claims that modern propaganda developed in times of war to legitimise the military effort as a means for imposing a particular social order afterwards. He later concludes that “propaganda should be thought of as a *dispositif* that involves one or several strategies of domination which seek not only to influence but also to cause identification with and conscious support for a power that is perceived as legitimate” (Velasco-Pufleau 2014, 2). Similarly, *The Cambridge Dictionary* explains “propaganda” as information,

ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument, that are broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions. We should also consider that nowadays, propaganda mainly has a pejorative connotation.

By examining anthems, students can search for ideas and messages beyond mere words and become aware that certain words and phrases, especially when sung or accompanied by music, trigger patriotic and nationalistic emotions in people and express explicit and implicit values of a particular nation. The following questions may serve as a basis for creative and, at the same time, in-depth study of the anthems, which may open spaces for students' better understanding of them. Through the process of answering them, they gradually arrive at specific insights that illuminate and unravel many elements of propaganda in the lyrics. Each question should be answered for each anthem separately; however, they may be compared later.

- What is the tone of the anthem? Is it/Does it resemble a hymn, a prayer, a march, an ode, or something else?
- Who/what is praised or prayed for in the lyrics?
- Why are certain words or phrases repeated?
- Does the anthem focus on the past, the present, or the future? What does the time sphere imply?
- In what way and why are some words connected to spirituality and religion?
- How is loyalty towards tradition, the monarchy, or the state expressed in the anthem?
- What words or phrases promote solidarity and a nation's unity the most? What words or phrases, in your opinion, heighten the sense of patriotism, national commitment and pride?
- What values are glorified in the anthem?

At the comparison stage, students can also be asked the following:

- Which lyrics are, in your opinion, the most vivid? Which of the anthems triggers your imagination the most?

The teacher should point out basic ideas regarding propaganda. To begin with, students should focus only on the stanzas officially adopted as part of the national anthems; later, the focus can be extended to other existing stanzas. As stated by Erden (2019, 45), who wrote a comparative analysis of “God Save the Queen,” this anthem seems like a serene prayer through which the safety of the Queen is wished. The same can be said for the newest version of the anthem, where the word “Queen” is replaced by “King.” According to the lyrics, it can be claimed that God is being asked to help the King remain healthy, glorious, happy, and victorious and reign for a long time. “The Star-Spangled Banner,” on the other hand, cannot be perceived as a prayer but rather as an ode, since it is commonly known that the lyrics were set to the famous British tune called “The Anacreontic Song.” However, the song mentioned is originally a drinking song dedicated to wine, and even if the lyrics of “The Star-Spangled Banner” display a historical battlefield scene (“/ ... / through the perilous fight / O’er the ramparts we watch’d were so gallantly streaming? / And the rocket’s red glare, the bombs bursting in air” (Key 1841, 3–5)) and try to evoke citizens’ patriotic feelings connected with the American flag (“Whose broad stripes and bright stars / ... / Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there, / O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave” (3, 6–7)), it is the nature and origins of the melody that make it an ode. Given the melody, “Das Deutschlandlied” may, in the first place, resemble a march, which can also be supported by two facts: firstly, the hymn was conceived in response to “La Marseillaise” of Napoleonic France and was intended to raise national morale at a time of conflict with France (Friebs n.d.); and secondly, the song was made a signal song in combat by the First World War (Feinstein 2000, 508). Feinstein (2000, 508) acknowledges that the Germans embraced the romantic-heroic vision of German youth singing “Das Deutschlandlied” while sacrificing their lives for Germany. Alternatively, it could be argued that the anthem resembles an ode (to the nation or the country) since it starts with “Unity and justice and freedom / For the German fatherland!³” (1–2). Considering all stanzas, especially the second one, the poem also has characteristics of a drinking song, since the following lines are repeated twice: “German women, German loyalty, / German wine and German song” (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1841, 9–10; 15–16). Furthermore, it can also be interpreted as a form of toast, a traditional expression of goodwill often accompanied by a drink. It typically honours individuals, groups, occasions, achievements, sentiments, ideas and concepts, so the

³ There are many different translations of the German anthem into English; this one is adapted from the website Classic FM (2021).

poem's celebration of German women, loyalty, wine, and song aligns with the festive atmosphere characteristic of toasts.

Students would presumably have no difficulty finding out who and what is praised in a particular anthem. In the British one, everything is centred on the reigning monarch. As Erden (2019, 48–49) implies, “The Star-Spangled Banner” elevates the flag of the nation, which is so valued that it turns into a personified object, while in the German anthem, the focus is on the fatherland. A visual presentation is a great way to show students which words and phrases are repeated in anthems. Examples below highlight repetition, clearly defining the most significant parts of stanzas used as official anthems. “God” is repeated four times and represents religion or the almighty creator, who can protect the King; “King,” on the other hand, occurs five times (if we count pronouns, then the King is referred to even more than that) and represents the traditional monarchy and its values.

God save our gracious *King!*

LONG live our noble *King!*

God save the *King!*

Send him victorious,

Happy and glorious,

LONG to reign over us,

God save the *King!*

Thy choicest gifts in store

On him be pleased to pour,

LONG may he reign.

May he defend our laws,

And ever give us cause,

To sing with heart and voice,

God save the *King!* (The Royal Household n.d.; my emphasis)

In “The Star-Spangled Banner,” there are only two examples of repetition: “O Say” occurs twice and “flag” is repeated as its synonym “banner”, which indicates that the national flag and the message it carries are given the utmost importance. In the German anthem, particular words and formulations are repeated twice and draw

attention to how Germany should be seen, as a land of unity, justice, and freedom, and as such, it should continue to flourish.

Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit

Für *das deutsche Vaterland!*

Danach lasst uns alle streben

Brüderlich mit Herz und Hand!

Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit

Sind des GLÜCKES Unterpfand;

Blüh' im Glanze dieses GLÜCKES,

Blühe, *deutsches Vaterland!* (Hoffmann

von Fallersleben 1841; my emphasis)

Unity and justice and freedom

For *the German fatherland!*

Towards these let us all strive

Brotherly with heart and hand!

Unity and justice and freedom

Are the foundation of HAPPINESS;

Flourish in the radiance of this

HAPPINESS,

Flourish, *German fatherland!* (Classic FM 2021; my emphasis)

“God Save the King” is imbued with religious concepts, which could be, according to Erden (2019, 46), considered crucial factors that unite members of a specific society. God as creator is, in fact, one of the most repeated concepts in the anthem; therefore, it could be stated that the association of the monarchy with religious motifs both enhances the credibility of the system and amalgamates the members of the society through shared sacred beliefs (Erden 2019, 46). Although no specific religious concepts can be found in the first stanza of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” they are nevertheless noticeable in the last stanza of the poem: “Blest with vict’ry and peace may the heav’n rescued land / Praise the power that hath made and preserv’d us a nation!” (Key 1841, 27–28) and “And this be our motto – ‘In God is our trust,’” (Key 1841, 30) where the divine power is praised and given credit for the preservation of the nation, which should stay loyal to its creator. The German anthem does not refer to any divine power or spirituality, although the first lines of the royal song composed by Haydn for the birthday of Holy Roman Emperor Francis II read as follows (Britannica 2022): “Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser, Unsern guten Kaiser Franz!” (“God preserve Francis the Emperor, Our good Emperor Francis!”).

The anthems show devotion and loyalty to tradition and the monarchy (“God Save the King”), to the flag, which represents the nation and the nation’s greatness (“The Star-Spangled Banner”), and to the country (“Das Deutschlandlied”). Numerous phrases, when written in a table and compared with the lines from other anthems,

indicate that solidarity and national unity are essential for a nation's existence, and what is more, they increase the sense of patriotism.

Table 1: An example of cross-anthem comparison of nationalistic themes

Which words or phrases boost solidarity and national unity the most? Which words or phrases, in your opinion, heighten the sense of patriotism, national commitment and pride?		
"God Save the King"	"The Star-Spangled Banner"	"Das Deutschlandlied"
"Long to reign over us" (6) "Long may she reign" (10) "May she defend our laws" (11) "And ever give us cause" (12)	"What so proudly we hailed" (2) "O'er the ramparts we watched" (4) "our flag was still there" (6) "the land of the free and the home of the brave" (8)	"Unity and justice and freedom" (1, 5) "Towards these let us all strive" (3) "Brotherly with heart and hand" (4) "Flourish, German fatherland" (8)

Students may come up with different opinions and refer to different lines in the lyrics; however, there can be no wrong answers, since the anthems generally share common ideas and concepts based on similar values that a nation appreciates and cherishes. When discussing values, we should refer to personal values that determine students' lives, behaviour, and work. A follow-up discussion can touch on new challenges by which the era of significant technological advance, materialism, machine-based work, growing individualism, and the development of artificial intelligence is confronted.

The questions in the above-described task may also be used to examine the Slovene national anthem, which may be interesting from two aspects: we can explore the differences between the translated poem and the original and identify the preserved propagandistic ideas.

A TOAST

The vintage, friends, is over,
 And here sweet wine makes, once again,
 Sad eyes and hearts recover,
 Puts fire into every vein.
 Drowns dull care
 Everywhere
 And summons hope out of despair.

To whom with acclamation
 And song shall we our first toast give?
 God save our land and nation

To you, our pride past measure,
 Our girls! Your beauty, charm and grace!
 There surely is no treasure
 To equal maidens of such race.
 Sons you'll bear,
 Who will dare
 Defy our foe no matter where.

Our hope now, our to-morrow –
 The youths - we toast and toast with joy.
 No poisonous blight or sorrow
 Your love of homeland shall destroy.
 With us indeed

And all Slovenes where'er they live,
Who own the same
Blood and name,
And who one glorious Mother claim.

Let thunder out of heaven
Strike down and smite our wanton foe!
Now, as it once had thriven,
May our dear realm in freedom grow.
May fall the last
Chains of the past
Which bind us still and hold us fast!

Let peace, glad conciliation,
Come back to us throughout the land!
Towards their destination
Let Slavs henceforth go hand-in-hand!
Thus again
Will honour reign
To justice pledged in our domain.

You're called to heed
Its summons in this hour of need.
God's blessing on all nations,
Who long and work for that bright day,
When o'er earth's habitations
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
Who long to see
That all men free
No more shall foes, but neighbours be.

At last to our reunion –
To us the toast! Let it resound,
Since in this gay communion
By thoughts of brotherhood we're bound
May joyful cheer
Ne'er disappear
From all good hearts now gathered here.
(Trans. Lavrin 1954)

“Zdravljica,” written by France Prešeren (1800–1849), arose in turbulent times, during the Spring of Nations in 1848, when many European nations envisioned a better future and struggled to achieve “the fulfilment of national goals” (National and University Library, n.d.). At this point, knowledge of history can be successfully incorporated into the lesson, and thus, the anthem may be better understood and interpreted. It has been stated that “Zdravljica” carries a deep humanistic message about the core of the idea of a connected and peaceful Europe (National and University Library, n.d.); it propagated and still propagates values which are essential not only to Slovenia but also other (European) countries and nations “who long and work for that bright day” (transl. Lavrin, 44). It expresses the idea of a world without war and strife and sends a message about all people’s equality. It may be claimed that the Slovene anthem can be used universally and internationally since it does not refer to any specific country by its name; it mentions neither state nor monarchy and does not depict any specific nation’s history or leaders.

Students in Slovenia who already have some knowledge of propaganda in “Zdravljica” from Slovene and history classes can easily find answers to the questions given. The often-censored poem bears its meaning in the title itself, which suggests that the poem is a toast to the homeland and its loyal nation. It praises the land, the Slovenes, Slovene women (“Our girls! Your beauty, charm and grace! / Here surely is no treasure / To equal maidens of such race” (trans. Lavrin, 30–32)),

and Slovene men (“Our hope now, our to-morrow - / Our youth - we toast and toast with joy. / No poisonous blight or sorrow / Your love of homeland shall destroy” (36–39)). In the seventh stanza of the official national anthem, there are no specific repetitions in the Slovene or the translated version, although the same ideas can be sensed many times. Comparing the original stanzas to the translation, we can find some repetition conveying the essence of a toast: to drink in honour of somebody or something, wishing them all the best. Thus, the Slovene version contains some repetitions of “Bog živi” and “žive” (“**Bog** našo nam deželo, / **Bog živi** ves slovenski svet” (10–11); “**Bog živi** vas Slovenke” (29); “**Živé** naj vsi naródi” (43); “dókaj dni / naj **živi** / vsak, kar nas dobrih je ljudi!” (54–56); my emphasis), while Lavrin does not always use this technique, but reformulates the same idea with other words. There are two similar phrases in which God is repeated twice (“**God** save our land and nation / And all Slovenes where’er they live” (10–11); “**God’s** blessing on all nations” (43), my emphasis). The mention of God makes us realise that we may speak of religious elements in the anthem. They express the poet’s fervent wish for the nation’s well-being, which can also be interpreted as a prayer for the welfare of the Slovene people.

After the students have become familiar with the content of all anthems in detail, they can dwell on the initial questions about propaganda. Many things will be more apparent to them by this point since they have learnt the facts about the anthems’ origins, development, meaning, and many more. Now, they can try to find answers to more specific propaganda-related questions like the following: Why is propaganda included in anthems? How can it serve the interests of the authorities? How do subtle messages of propaganda influence the people of a particular nation? What socio-historical factors contributed to the concealment of propaganda in the lyrics? Is the message clear or hidden behind metaphors, euphemisms, pleonasm, etc.? What are some examples of “positive” and “negative” propaganda? What visions are highlighted in the lyrics? How do the words utilise any emotional appeal? How can the people of a particular nation distinguish between “positive” and “negative” propaganda, and resist the latter? Can you think of any other text type in which propaganda is used extensively? These and many other questions can lead to a fruitful discussion about how propaganda is present in anthems and how it influences a particular nation.

2.2 Remakes

To make classes more attractive and thought-provoking, some controversial examples of remade anthems or songs inspired by anthems can be shown to students. One of the most contentious ones is “God Save the Queen” (the title is taken from the first words of the British anthem) by the 1970s English punk rock band the Sex Pistols. The song, originally called “No Future,” was released in 1977 and coincided with Queen Elizabeth II’s Silver Jubilee (History.com 2010). One of the group’s members, vocalist Johnny Rotten, said that the song made the Sex Pistols the most reviled and revered figures in England in the spring of 1977, claiming that “there are not many songs written over baked beans at the breakfast table that went on to divide a nation and force a change in popular culture” (History.com 2010). He further explained that the lyrics expressed his “point of view on the Monarchy in general and on anybody that begs your obligation with no thought” (Grow 2017). Although we cannot characterise it as deliberate propaganda, it was provocative and problematic, as evidenced by the fact that it earned a total ban on radio airplay from the BBC and was also rejected by the major retailers.

First, students should be shown the sleeve of the disc featuring a defaced version of Queen Elizabeth II’s photo, which will probably lead to a heated discussion about the story behind the image. The original cover features a stark, minimalist design with a black band covering the Queen’s eyes and mouth. However, later reissues and versions often incorporated additional elements, such as the Union Jack flag and the Sex Pistols logo, to reflect the album’s rebellious and provocative image. Then, the video can be presented to them, and students should listen to the lyrics carefully.

God save the Queen
The fascist regime
It made you a moron
Potential H-bomb
God save the Queen
She ain’t no human being
There is no future
In England’s dreaming

When there’s no future, how can there be sin?
We’re the flowers in the dustbin
We’re the poison in your human machine
We’re the future, your future
God save the Queen
We mean it, man
We love our Queen
God saves

Don’t be told what you want to want to
And don’t be told what you want to need
There’s no future, no future

God save the Queen
We mean it, man
And there is no future

No future for you	In England's dreaming
God save the Queen	No future
We mean it, man	No future
We love our Queen	No future for you
God saves	No future
	No future
God save the Queen	No future for me
'Cause tourists are money	No future
And our figurehead	No future
Is not what she seems	No future for you
Oh, God save history	No future
God save your mad parade	No future for you
Oh, Lord, God have mercy	(Lydon et al. 1977)
All crimes are paid	

After listening, they should be encouraged to explore the history of Great Britain in the 1970s and find out what this “anti-royal song” or “anti-anthem,” as called by several authors, refers to in terms of British politics and establishment. They can be asked what some specific lines try to convey; they should guess what the mention of a fascist regime means, who is implied by the name “moron,” and what nuclear weapons relate to (“/ .../ The fascist regime / They made you a moron / A potential H bomb” (Lydon et al. 1977, 2–4)); for whom there is no future (“And there’s no future / And England’s dreaming” (7–8)); how tourism influenced and still influences the monarchy and what is meant by the figurehead (“Cause tourists are money / And our figurehead / Is not what she seems” (19–21)).

The song cannot be primarily considered traditional propaganda but rather a critique of the British establishment and the socio-political climate of the time. According to Green (2022), Rotten once said that “you don’t write a song like ‘God Save the Queen’ because you hate the English race, you write a song like that because you love them, and you’re fed up of seeing them mistreated.” However, when listening to it, students may find that the lyrics are filled with anger, frustration, and disillusionment, expressing discontent with the British monarchy and all the problems like unemployment, economic hardships, political corruption, poverty, etc. the society was facing at that time, and can be as such considered propagandistic in nature. It contains some basic examples of propaganda, as it challenges authority, protests the unquestioning loyalty to the monarchy by suggesting that the Queen

does not deserve any respect and offers a cynical view of the reigning monarch (“God save the queen / She’s not a human being” (Lydon et al. 1977, 5–6)). It is a subversion of traditional nationalistic sentiments associated with the national anthem and is aimed at promoting nonconformity and resistance (“Don’t be told what you want / Don’t be told what you need” (9–10)).

Ultimately, the Sex Pistols’ “God Save the Queen” is not merely a song; it is a rebellious manifesto which challenges the then-regime and, at the same time, encourages critical thinking and seeks a better life in the future. However, this “anti-song” is a strong expression of disagreement or rebellion, also against the propaganda of the hymn lyrics, and is still considered one of the most offensive and controversial music pieces of all time.

Another example of a changed, disguised, or re-formed anthem is “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which was brilliantly performed by Jimi Hendrix at the Woodstock Music Festival in 1969. Students usually find the famous three-day musical festival alluring, inspiring and iconic, as it brought together many world-famous musicians and gave a new meaning to pop culture history. In class, we can use many videos and documentaries about Woodstock to give students a better picture of the event, which was supposed to demonstrate love, unity, and peace. The festival brought together young people from all over America who opposed the Vietnam War and gave a boost to the “hippie” culture, which strongly advocated anti-war views. Again, not only music but history as well may be successfully incorporated into such a class. Although Jimi Hendrix’s performance at Woodstock sparked controversy, it was “a turning point in the history of the counter-culture movement” (Pernu 2021). By his interpretation on the guitar, he produced the “sounds of the Vietnam War” mixed with the American anthem’s melody. The well-known musical theme from the anthem is, in places, almost violently interrupted by rough, disturbing sounds. When listening to Hendrix’s “The Star-Spangled Banner,” students may be asked what “sounds of the war” they can hear or sense, and the recording or the video may be stopped at certain places to give students time to ponder or write down what they hear. There will likely be many answers to this question: students can hear machine guns, ambulance sirens, combat, chaos, bombs dropping, planes crashing, explosions, screaming, agony, and more. Students should illustrate their findings with words and compare them. Through this activity and further debate, they not only become aware of what Hendrix and his contemporaries

were protesting, but they also recognise and develop an awareness of the world, what changes it has undergone, how individuals can express themselves, and last but not least, they can realise what significance a short three-minute performance can achieve in the world. This is best shown by Pernu's words (Pernu 2021) describing this new version of the anthem as "a work that evoked the chaos of the times in a manner which was frightening, apocalyptic, and, at the same time, exceedingly freeing and optimistic" and concludes that "[i]ts stunning interpretation of that particular era rendered it timeless enough to be as relevant today as it was then."

By exploring the hidden elements of propaganda, students can conclude that Hendrix's rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" served as an anti-war protest, challenging the establishment and questioning the meaning of the Vietnam War. The national anthem, which should convey a sense of unity and patriotism, was deliberately deconstructed, thus suggesting that the nation's ideals and actions were being compromised. Screeching and dissonance performed on the guitar represented the chaos and conflict of the time, and while the anthem should celebrate freedom, bravery and honour, its destructive tones symbolised the reality of war and death. Hendrix's interpretation went beyond a typical musical performance; it was a daring and provocative declaration that challenged conventions and resonated beyond the notes he played.

Another similar masterful blend of music and hidden propaganda may be Whitney Houston's rendition of the American national anthem at the Super Bowl in 1991, performed during the Gulf War. It carried a powerful message and subtle propaganda by conveying a sense of national pride and evoking a feeling of shared identity. By listening closely, students can discern similarities beyond the surface. They can compare Houston's technically flawless interpretation to Hendrix's experimental and unconventional performance, which share some common threads, particularly subtle messages of propaganda hidden beneath the surface of an artful musical piece.

3 Some Ideas for Further Teaching and Learning through National Anthems

3.1 Vocabulary Acquisition

In the following section, we will provide a few examples of teaching and learning vocabulary based on the lyrics in national anthems. Since the lyrics of “God Save the King” are not difficult to understand by an average learner, we propose a simple word formation task by which students (in this case, the task is appropriate for intermediate-level students, as it is rather unchallenging for higher levels) could revise the formation of adjectives based on nouns given in the brackets.

God save our _____ King! (GRACE)
Long live our _____ King! (NOBILITY)
God save the King!
Send him _____, (VICTORY)
Happy and _____, (GLORY)
Long to reign over us,
God save the King.

Furthermore, students should be encouraged to find more adjectives ending in -ous and nouns that correspond to them (e.g., *adventure* – *adventurous*, *humour* – *humorous*, *glamour* – *glamorous*, etc.). A more advanced activity could refer to the second stanza beginning with “Thy choicest gifts in store” (The Royal Household n.d., 8), which touches on using archaic forms of specific pronouns and implies that God should give him (the King) the best of everything. More grammar-oriented teachers could use the same stanza to introduce or explain the subjunctive mood (which is also found in the first stanza) by examining and pointing out the lines “Long may he reign. / May he defend our laws, / And ever give us cause / ... / God save the King” (9–11).

EFL learners can be encouraged to expand their vocabulary by exploring “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which consists of four stanzas vividly describing the American flag flying over Fort McHenry and the American victory over British forces and thus providing a wide range of somewhat unusual or atypical vocabulary. Unsurprisingly, the poem is also a tough nut to crack for the American population, since even many

American citizens struggle to remember words. It is often heard, usually as a fun fact, that speakers with Spanish origins might believe the anthem begins with “José, can you see” instead of “O say, can you see.” The table below lists only a few examples of how students can acquire new words and their meanings. We propose three ways: searching for the word in the anthem based on its explanation or Slovene equivalent, providing an English explanation for a specific word, or simply translating or just trying to translate it into Slovene. The task may be extended further by asking students to use the newly learned words in meaningful sentences or a new context.

Table 2: An example of vocabulary explanation

Words from the anthem	Explanation (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.)	Slovene translation
rampart (n)	a large wall built round a town, castle, etc. to protect it	obzidje, okop
glare (n)	unpleasantly bright or strong light	sij
spangled (adj)	decorated with small pieces of shiny metal or plastic, or wearing clothes decorated in this way	okrašen

Considering that most Slovene students learn German as their second foreign language in school (some already in primary school, then in grammar school and most technical programmes), “Das Deutschlandlied” is an excellent tool to connect both foreign languages, English and German. Students can try their hand at translating words, phrases, or even whole lines from German into English, thus revising and expanding their English vocabulary. Collected (and presumably various) translations can serve as a basis for comparison and further lexical and semantic analysis of the text. The table shows examples of translated words and phrases; however, many more can appear during schoolwork.

Table 3: An example of German-to-English translation for vocabulary expansion

German	English
Einigkeit	unity, agreement, accord, concord
Recht	law, justice, right
Freiheit	freedom, liberty
Unterpfand	foundation, pledge, edifice
blüh	flourish, bloom, prosper, blossom, thrive, boom
im Glanze	in the radiance, in the splendour, in the lustre, in the abundance
Glück	happiness, success, prosperity, luck, joy, bliss

A similar activity, based on vocabulary, can be done with the Slovene national anthem, the seventh stanza of “Zdravljica” (“A Toast”). Students may be asked to compare the Slovene lyrics with the translation and then discuss their differences. As seen below, there are some significant changes in Lavrin’s translation, which can be examined and analysed.

Živé naj vsi naródi,
ki hrepené dočakat’ dan,
da koder sonce hodi,
prepir iz světa bo pregnan,
da rojak
prost bo vsak,
ne vrag, le sosed bo mejak! (Prešeren 1844)

God’s blessing on all nations,
Who long and work for that bright day,
When o’er earth’s habitations
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
Who long to see
That all men free
No more shall foes, but neighbours be. (Trans.
Lavrin 1954)

Hladnik (2000) uses in his lectures another translation of “A Toast” by Tom M. S. Priestly, a Canadian professor of Slavic Linguistics and Henry R. Cooper, a professor of Slavic Languages, which contains an entirely different vocabulary compared to Lavrin’s version. At an advanced level, students might be interested in comparing both English translations as whole texts of “A Toast” to explore how faithful translators are to the original.

Let’s drink that every nation
Will live to see the day,
When ‘neath the sun’s rotation
Dissent is banished from the earth,
All will be
Kinfolk free
With neighbors none in enmity. (Trans. Priestly & Cooper)

It is interesting to see that the first lines of the seventh stanza are quite different from each other (“Živé naj vsi naródi”; “God’s blessing on all nations”; “Let’s drink that every nation”). “Vrag” (“devil”) is not mentioned in either of them; Lavrin uses the word “foe” while Priestly and Cooper skilfully wrap the meaning into the phrase “neighbors none in enmity.” The discussion can go on forever, and, in this way, students can expand their vocabulary knowledge and, at the same time, strengthen their speaking skills. To extend the class and enrich students’ knowledge even

further, we can introduce the German translations of “A Toast” titled “Trinklied” by Luiza Pesjak (1865) or one by Klaus Detlef Olof (1995).

3.2 Activities for broadening student horizons

Richards (1969, 161) claims that “[p]leasure for its own sake is an important part of language learning, a fact which is often overlooked by the teacher in his quest for teaching points, or by the course designer focussing on presentation or repetition.” Songs, including anthems, provide excellent conditions for acquiring foreign languages and may also be taught in connection with other subjects. Therefore, it is advisable to take up cross-curricular activities or collaboration between language and content teachers, as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) broadens students’ horizons, supports their critical thinking, encourages them to participate in classes actively, and, above all, allows them to learn a language by learning the contents of various other subjects. By comparing the English syllabus with the syllabi of other subjects in school, we can discover numerous overlapping themes and topics which enable us to create various collaborative teaching practices, from discussions and group work to projects and team teaching. Thus, we can successfully incorporate cross-disciplinary themes into the English language syllabus. English can be combined with other subjects in primary or secondary school, and the curriculum allows teachers to be creative and freely choose their ways of teaching. When using anthems as a pedagogical tool, language can be combined with subjects such as History, Sociology, Geography, Music, and other (foreign) languages. To familiarise students with the historical and social background of anthems, we suggest utilising a simple list of intriguing or amusing facts about the anthems and making up a stimulating and refreshing task for students. Below is shown an example of such a task, which may be expanded with many other facts that can be placed in a broader socio-historical context.

Task: Which of the three anthems (“God Save the King,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and “Das Deutschlandlied”) do the following sentences refer to?

- a) In 2012, the national soccer team refused to sing the national anthem before the UEFA Euro semifinal match against Italy (Reuters Staff 2012).
- b) In March 2005, a government-sponsored program, the National Anthem Project, was launched after a poll showed that many adults knew neither the

- lyrics nor the history of the anthem. The campaign, sponsored by Jeep, included a travelling road show of carnival-like tents, where visitors could learn or perform the anthem (Abril 2007, 81).
- c) The culture minister suggested playing the national anthem on the radio more often, although the BBC already plays it at the end of the programming on Radio 4 (Grierson 2022).
 - d) The melody was composed by the famous Austrian classical composer Joseph Haydn, a contemporary of Mozart and Beethoven, who is often referred to as “The Father of the Symphony.”
 - e) *The New York Times* reported that two sopranos sang the air to refute the argument that it is pitched too high for popular singing (Abril 2007, 72).
 - f) The melody with various textual versions served as the Austrian national anthem until 1918 and between 1930 and 1938 (Friehs n.d.).

4 Conclusion

National anthems offer a diverse range of possibilities for classroom use. Through their exploration, we can delve into various historical, cultural, and political topics, which help to unveil elements of (hidden) propaganda. With appropriate support, activities and questions, the teacher can guide students to pay attention to the content and reflect on the messages conveyed in the lyrics. Remakes of national anthems may be particularly intriguing, as they often express disagreement with the status quo, rebellion, or even anger in a unique way. Reading, listening to and analysing anthems in the classroom in this way sparks crucial questions about patriotism, diversity, and social justice. It makes an essential contribution to raising young people's awareness in today's world, where they are increasingly exposed to various forms of propaganda because of the ubiquity of the media in our lives. This approach helps them identify (hidden) propaganda around them, think critically about it and respond appropriately. Furthermore, national anthems serve as a springboard for fruitful and engaging discussions and are an invaluable resource for acquiring new knowledge. They should be incorporated into the EFL syllabus as a rich avenue for comprehensive learning.

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