



Determining the Students' Proficiency Level in Performing Foreign Folk Dances

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Abstract

Performing one's own folk dances is understandably easier to do for reasons of familiarity; but it's quite different when the folk dances are of foreign origin. Given the latter, determining the performers' proficiency level likewise requires some unique appraisal. Cognizant of this peculiarity, this paper sought to fill in the gap with what is required in judging such a performance. Utilizing a Quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, the performances of the respondents were evaluated using a researcher-made rubric that was first subjected to content validation to measure the students' performances in the execution of the different basic foreign folk dance steps. The results showed that learners' performance in the pretest and posttest was statistically different. The students who participated in the study yielded an increase in performance, specifically, in learning foreign folk dance. There is no significant interaction between teaching and learning style in terms of its effect on learners' performance towards foreign folk dance. Thus, student performance cannot be attributed to the learning style and how the learner is being taught. It is recommended that text and illustration be adopted when teaching foreign folk dance although teaching the students through demonstration, audio, and audio and video are also beneficial in terms of increasing student performance.

Key words: dance steps, folk dance, dance performance, proficiency level, learning style

Introduction

Dancing is an art that adds up to the cultural richness of any society (Sanderson, 2008). Performing foreign folk dances is a great way to expose students to diverse cultures and traditions of the world. Students who have proficiency in performing foreign folk dances have a deeper understanding of different cultures, thus, develop tolerance, acceptance, and respect for other people (Giurchescu, 2001). These skills will help students become more culturally sensitive and empathetic individuals.

When students perform foreign folk dances, they not only learn the physical movements of the dance but also the historical, social, and cultural context in which the dance was developed (Shay, 2006). For example, learning a traditional African dance like the Adowa or a Latin American dance like the Salsa can help students understand the cultural significance of these dances. Students can appreciate the meaning behind the movements and learn about the customs and traditions of people from a different part of the world.

Performing foreign folk dances then can bring numerous benefits to students. It can help them develop a deeper appreciation for different cultures, become more tolerant individuals, and develop teamwork and collaboration skills while learning the dance (Hanrahan, 2017). The knowledge and skills that students gain from performing foreign folk dances can have a marked impact on their personal and academic success, enabling them to develop a more global perspective in our interconnected world.

In this study, the determination of the students' dance performance is not necessarily to identify the socio-cultural learnings that they showcase, but to figure out how they learn or fail to perform well, and how the teaching of those dance steps should be strategized.

Literature Review

There are various perspectives on the meaning of proficiency level. Carlsen (2012) argues that proficiency levels are often poorly defined in Computer Learner Corpora (CLCs), and that the methods used for level assignment of corpus texts are not always adequate. Bashori (2021) investigates whether proficiency level affects lexical access in L1 and L2, finding that more proficient learners tend to outperform less proficient learners. Knox (1980) proposes a proficiency theory of adult learning, which uses proficiency as a unifying concept to relate acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improved performance. Furthermore, Liskin-Gasparro (1984) describes the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines, which provide a series of proficiency levels for speaking, listening, reading, writing, and culture in a foreign language, and serve as a guiding principle for the development of communicative, proficiency-oriented tests and curricula. Proficiency level then is a complex and multifaceted concept that can have implications for language learning, assessment, and research.

As regards proficiency level in dance performance, literature suggests that it is determined by a combination of factors, including qualitative aspects of performance, expertise, auditory guidance, balance ability, and physical fitness. Krasnow (2009) developed a measurement tool for evaluating qualitative aspects of dance performance, while Sofianidis (2012) found that expert dancers displayed lower variability of lower leg rotation and stronger interlimb coupling compared to novice performers. Strešková (2009) found that balance ability was positively correlated with dance efficiency, while Angioi (2009) found that upper body muscular endurance and jump ability were the best predictors of aesthetic competence in contemporary dancers.

Research provides different explanations of foreign folk dances. Taylor (2008) discusses the tanchaz folk revival movement in Hungary as a way of reproducing the folk and securing its citizenship. Shay (1999) examines the development of professional state folk dance ensembles and their influence on the worldwide phenomenon of folk dance. Ruyter (1995) muses on the definition of folk dance and its adaptation for the stage. Deagon (2008) focuses on ethnic dance performance and festival in North American immigrant communities and the contestation over representation. Somehow, foreign folk dances can be seen as a way of preserving cultural traditions and identity, but their meaning and interpretation can vary depending on the context and perspective.

Sure enough, students can be proficient in performing foreign folk dances. Babiera (2014) found that Physical Education teachers' interest in teaching folk dances was related to their level of acculturation. Şuşu (2018) discussed the educational potential of folk dance and how it can be used in the Romanian education system. Filippou (2006) examined the training of dance teachers in Greece and found that their methodology and anthropological approach to dance was satisfactory, but there was a lack of courses on directing, choreography, and costume design. Siljamäki (2011) discussed the pedagogical conceptions of Finnish teachers of transnational dances and found that different teachers had different ways of understanding the nature of transnational dances, which influenced their pedagogical approaches. With proper training and education, students can become proficient in performing foreign folk dances.

Of the literatures reviewed, none so far had tried to determine the students' foreign folk dance performance for pedagogic purposes, hence a gap that this study is trying to fill in. It's a study that looks into the extent of student folk dance proficiency, or failure to achieve it, so that teachers could device ways and means to address this learning need.

Methods

This study utilized a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design with non-equivalent control. It is said that this design is used when it is not possible to control the assignment of respondents to condition and take the intact groups. The study participants were composed of sophomore college students taking up Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED). Due to ethical considerations, voluntary participation was requested from these students who were officially enrolled in four (4) of seven classes offered with International Dance and Other Forms of Dances.

The mean performance of the students in Principles of Motor Control and Learning of Exercise, Sports, and Dance (PEd 105) of the seven intact classes was compared to determine the classes that were to be involved in the study. The four comparable classes comprised the three experimental groups and one control group. The proponent adapted survey instruments from the University of California, Merced (Student Advising and Learning Center, 2006) and "Learning Styles: Make the Student Aware by O'Brien, Lynn (O'Brien, Learning Styles: Make the

Student Aware, 1989). The instruments utilized in the study also include the following components: profiles of the students taking up Foreign Folk Dance, and the extent of the practice of the prevalent learning styles.

The performances of the respondents were evaluated using a researcher-made rubric. The rubric was subjected to content validation, specifically on the aspects of *clarity and relevance* and the utility of the point system used. This rubric measured the students' performance in the execution of the different basic foreign folk dance steps. The students were given a chance to perform two sets of six dance steps during the formative assessment. A summative evaluation was conducted for six out of the twelve basic foreign folk dances learned in different classes, both experimental and control groups. The formative assessment was directed to assess the students' learning experience during the lesson using a rubric. The summative assessment was done after all the basic dance steps were introduced.

The rubric scoring is as follows: Five (5) If the Student demonstrated excellent attention to the quality of movement, body position in performing the basic dance steps and maintained the beat and phrasing of the music. Then, if the student demonstrated attention to details of technique in performing the basic dance steps and had few errors and could not maintain the music's beat and phrasing, they got four (4) points. The teacher asked the students to execute the dance steps for the second time. Suppose the students demonstrated with attention to most details of technique in performing the basic dance step, with 3 – 5 errors and could not maintain the beat and phrasing of the music, then the teacher asked them to execute the dance steps the second or third time and were given three (3) points.

Supposing the students demonstrated only some understanding of technical elements (i.e., footwork, quality of movements, body position) in performing basic dance steps and could not completely maintain the beat and phrasing of the music, then they got two (2) points. Lastly, if the students remembered some of the basic dance steps with little attention to how movements are done or other dance details and could not completely maintain the beat and phrasing of the music, they were given one (1) point. The categorical interpretations of the overall performance of the students based on summated points are as follows: *Excellent 25 – 19; Good 18 – 14; Acceptable 15 – 9; Partial 8 – 6; Minimal 5.*

Results and Discussion

The following presents the results and discussion of the study's findings. A total of 143 BPED students participated in the study, but there are some missing responses specific to some variables measured in this study. The analysis done did not of course include the missing values.

Level of Proficiency

A total of 137 students took the pretest and posttest. The table below shows their performance:

Table 1
Scores of BPEd students before and after treatment.

Descriptive Measures	Pretest Score	Posttest Score
Range	16	25
Minimum	9	18
Maximum	25	43
Mean	11.7	27.6
Std. Deviation	3.7	6.2

The post test scores ($x=27.6$; $n=137$) of the BPEd students seems to be higher than their pretest scores ($x=11.7$; $n=137$). However, the range, computed as the difference between the minimum and maximum values, varies between pretest and posttest. Such variation is consistent with the varying standard deviation of pretest and posttest, 3.7 and 6.2, respectively. This phenomenon is interesting considering that the same students took the pretest and posttest scores.

Significant Improvement in the Level of Proficiency

The significant improvement in the students' proficiency in performing basic foreign folk dance steps was tested using a test of difference for paired samples. Both the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolm Ogorov-Smirnov were conducted to examine the normality of the data. Equally, tests for normality returned significant p-values, < 0.05 , as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2

Test of Normality for Pretest and Posttest Scores of BPED Students

Variables	Test for Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig	Statistic	df	Sig
Posttest Score	0.091	137	0.007	0.952	137	0.000
Pretest Score	0.259	137	0.000	0.728	137	0.000

The table above shows that the pretest and posttest scores yield a p-value < 0.05 , which leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Such hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the observed scores (pretest and posttest) and the normally distributed data dummy scores. Thus, it can be said that both pretest and posttest scores are not normally distributed and do not warrant the use of the parametric t-test for paired samples. In this regard, the nonparametric test for two samples, *Wilcoxon Signed Ranked Test*, was utilized. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Difference between Pretest and Posttest Scores of BPED Students

Measures	Values
Positive Differences	136
Negative Differences	1
Number of Ties	0
Standardized Test Statistic	10.14
Asymptotic Significance	0.000
N	137

The table shows the performance of students in the posttest ($x=27.6; n=137$) is significantly higher than their performance in the pretest ($x=11.7; n=137$) with p-values < 0.05 . Thus, the null hypothesis, which claims that the students' pretest and posttest scores did not differ significantly, is rejected. It can be concluded confidently at 95% significance that students who participated in the study yield an increase in performance, specifically, in learning a foreign folk dance.

Conclusion

Learners' performance across all groups, control and experimental, varies significantly. BPED learners exposed to the experimental group (text and illustration) outperformed the control group (demonstration). Thus, students can learn better foreign folk dance when taught using text and illustration than being exposed to a demonstration. Students exposed to either audio and audio and video will be with comparable performance to students exposed to demonstration teaching. While students exposed to audio and video will likely perform poorly than those exposed to audio. The choice of teaching style may then adopt text and illustration when teaching foreign

folk dance although teaching the students through demonstration, audio, and audio/video may also prove beneficial in terms of increasing the students' performances.

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