

## 4

# The Case for Integrating Dance in the Language Classroom

Angela N. Gardner

Ross High School, Hamilton, Ohio

*“In dance, I found a world where I could express myself and use my imagination...Dance was not only physical and athletic, it was also expressive.” —Nancy Lemanager (Nathan, 2008, p. 191)*

### Abstract

While significant research has proven the benefits of physical movement in learning, many world language classrooms still do not incorporate the use of movement or dance as part of the curriculum. The integration of movement and dance can be achieved in the world language curriculum and should even be considered an integral part of the curriculum. There are numerous resources and research-supported methods for teachers to integrate music and movement, or dance into their comprehensible input (CI) classrooms. For the purpose of this article, the comprehensible input classroom is one in which the target language is used as much as possible to communicate, and methods of instruction are focused on integration of authentic materials and target language use in authentic contexts to support language acquisition.

This article offers the opportunity to consider and explore the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits of integration of dance in a classroom where the objective is to support and increase student competence in target language use. Practical ideas are offered for effective integration of dance in a comprehensible input language learning environment.

## **Introduction**

*“Your brain is much happier if you learn to place or move your body to a designated location.” —Jeff Allen (Allen, 1998, p. 1)*

World language teaching professionals are encouraged to create and utilize curricula that integrate not only competencies in terms of linguistic input and output, but also those competencies needed to succeed in a globalized world. These competencies can include knowledge and skills related to cultural nuances, skills that relate to other disciplines and skills that relate to the needs of a local or even global community

In a rapidly and ever-changing profession, there are methods and activities that can facilitate fulfillment of these curricula needs and help develop a sustainable and successful world language program. In an era of reliance on technology, and lightening-speed communication, teachers have at their disposal many choices for integration and support of their curricula. Even in this era of technology saturation, world language teaching professionals may find that instructional practices rooted in tradition can offer many benefits to language learners and world language programs that have yet to be fully explored.

Integrating dance on a regular basis into language learning curriculum, for example, necessitates rich use of the target language to communicate in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. Dancing affords language learners the opportunity to delve into deeper cultural meaning and understanding. Additionally, the regular and purposeful integration of dance into a world language curriculum opens the doors of opportunity for language learners to connect their learning to other disciplines, such as art, history, and even mathematics. This article offers language educators a rationale for integrating dance into a robust world language curriculum, one rich with connections to other disciplines and cultural celebrations.

## **The Cultural Case for Dancing**

*“The truest expression of a people is in its dance and in its music.” —Agnes de Mille (goodreads.com, n.d.)*

The following statement from an online encyclopedia, presents the idea that dance and culture are linked:

The idea of dance...allows for greater attention to the categories that define movement systems within individual cultures, nations, or societies... For anthropology and its related disciplines (folklore, ethnomusicology, ethnology, and ethnography), aspects of culture are revealed in dance practices. These disciplines also look at dancing itself as a culturally constructed activity that offers information about human behavior and, by extension, culture. (Dox, 2005, n.p.)

Dox states that dance is linked to culture, a behavior that is defined by those that practice it within a specific culture. This underscores the reciprocal relationship that exists between dance and culture. Hanna (2008) posits:

An individual's creativity and culture influence her or his dance-making, performing, and viewing. Culture, another key concept in the discipline of dance, refers to the values, beliefs, norms, and rules shared by a group and learned through communication. The relationship between dance and culture is reciprocal. Culture gives meaning to who dances what, why, how, when, where, and with and for whom, in addition to the dance audience. Such variables...may promote self-esteem, separatism, or nationalism. Dancers may reflect and/or influence culture....History attests to dance as a means of sending messages of grievance and remedy. (p. 492)

Marion (2006) asserts that “the separation of dance from the rest of culture is, at best, a conceptual abstraction—and a faulty one at that. (n. p.)” Marion continues to indicate that dance ought and cannot be “separated from robust anthropological conceptions of culture, . . . dance cannot be understood as anything less than integral to human life” (p. 93). Clearly, Marion feels that dance is as essential to culture as any other practice—perhaps more so. Arguably, failure to include dance as part of language learning is a failure to implement one of the most valuable elements within a culture.

If we consider dance an integral and relevant aspect of a culture, we must consider the importance that it bears on our language curriculum. The cultural benefits of dance in the classroom can include a deeper understanding of the history, geography, music, clothing, motion, and behaviors related to dance, the country. There are many forms of dance and many components that can illuminate cultural values.

In her book titled *Dance*, Lorrie Mack (2012) delves into some of the cultural considerations related to dance, including dances from African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries. We can see through her comments the different virtues that are celebrated through dance, as well as the links between communities that are shared. Mack (2012) makes the following observations regarding dances from various cultures: On African dances: “African dances are often based on a ritual or tradition. Some are dances of love, some of war, and some are rites of passage” (p30); on Middle Eastern dances: “In the traditional cultures of India and Pakistan and the...Middle East, dance has played an important role since ancient times...many...are linked by shared history and traditions;” and on Asian dances “For centuries, there have been close artistic links between China, Japan, and Korea, so their dances share many cultural traditions” (p30).

Mack (2012) even describes and details different types of groupings or patterns for dancing, such as dancing in lines, squares, pairs, and circles. These patterns of grouping can reflect deeper meaning and cultural values that may go unnoticed. Mack's comment on the meaning of circle in dance richly illustrates the reciprocal relationship between culture and dance:

One of the most common, and certainly the oldest, dance formation(s) is the circle. In early societies, the circle may have symbolized togetherness or strength, as everyone can see each other as they dance around. The ancient Albanian and Romanian version of the circle dance is the hova, which found its way to the Jewish community at the end of the 1800s. This dance is central to occasions such as weddings and coming of age ceremonies. (p. 16)

Through these observations, we see that dance is not only a celebration of culture, but also offers the opportunity to empower communities, building strong bonds and relationships between the people within a nation or community.

Additionally, Mack (2012) delves into customs related to the attire, props, and instruments of different dances. She explains that “In many societies, traditional dances use specific props...(that) may symbolize ancient customs” (p. 21). Mack points out that props used in Flamenco dancing include castanets, flared skirts, shawls, flowers, and combs in the hair, but in a Middle Eastern dance called Bhangra, a two-sided drum called a dhol is used. The attire and props are very specific to the types of dances being performed, and are an important aspect of the rituals and customs of participants in the dance. (p. 27-28)

In a presentation at the Butler County Educational Conference, Dr. Sandra L. Johnson explained that dancing is connected to cultural values. Citing a Balinese dance-chant called a *kecak*, Dr. Johnson explained that in Balinese culture, no person is ever alone and that the same holds true in their music and dance, where each part of the song is shared by many people within the community (Johnson, personal communication, November 3, 2015).

Dancing is indeed an act of celebration that contains a rich wealth of movement, sound, clothing, color, and emotion that connect us on a fundamental and very human level. As stated by Donnelly (2007) “How can one taste the culture without swaying to the music? What is Argentina without it’s tango...? Since music is the language of our students, let us teach our language through their language!” (p. 106).

### **The Cognitive Case for Dance**

*“Dancing satisfies the emotional, the artistic, the intellectual, the physical, and even the competitive spirit of its participants”- Jeff Allen (Allen, 1998, p. 1)*

According to a website from the International Society of Teachers of Dancing (2009), “dance is a fun way to open up new possibilities, keep healthy, and enjoy yourself,” and “keeps both the body and the brain active, vital for people of every age” (ISTD, 2009, n.p.). Neurologist John Krakauer (2008) of Columbia University further delineates possible reasons people may derive pleasure from dance, explaining that “music is known to stimulate pleasure and reward areas (in the brain) like the orbitofrontal cortex...as well as...the ventral striatum...In addition, music activates the cerebellum,...which is involved in the coordination and timing of movement” (Krakauer, 2008, n.p.). Clearly, participants derive enjoyment from

a combination of music and movement, as a result of the stimulation of both music and movement on the brain.

Audrey Dascomb, (n.d), Director of Dance Expressions Unlimited, categorizes dance into physical, intellectual, artistic, social, and individual benefits (see Appendix A). Among the cognitive (intellectual) benefits listed are benefits such as planning and calculating, increased academic performance, mental flexibility and problem-solving, patterns, and increased motivation.

Particularly valuable traits for students include understanding of patterns, planning and calculation, all of which can contribute to improved academic performance in a language learning setting. The mental flexibility and problem-solving benefits are traits that will enhance student motivation and prepare them for skills needed in an ever-changing global world. Such intellectual benefits justify the integration of dance in a world language classroom, where motivation is essential to success and understanding of patterns can help language learners connect their language learning to other patterns such as those in dance, fostering connections among other disciplines. Additional connections in artistic fields such as musicality, creative expression, imagination and innovation provide further justification for including dance in the language classroom (Dascomb, n.d.).

Hanna (2008) describes the link between dancing, brain function, and language stating “Areas in the brain that control the hands and gesture overlap and develop together with the areas that control the mouth and speech” (p. 494). She further states that the “process of making a dance engages some of the same components in the brain for conceptualization, creativity, and memory as do verbal poetry or prose” (p. 494). Dance can engage learners, provide a direct link between physical movement abstract concepts and promote creativity (Hanna, p. 499).

Cooke (2014) notes “Dancing...prepares the brain for prime learning...it pumps blood to the brain, giving it the glucose and oxygen it needs to function well” (n.p.). As a result of dancing, “energy levels are increased because of the constant influx of the hormone serotonin.” Dance offers the opportunity to create new neural pathways through kinesthetic, rational, musical and emotional connectivity (Powers 2010). These benefits help to prepare the brain for other learning tasks, increasing participant alertness and energy levels. As Amar Ramasar, Ballet Dancer, stated in *Meet the Dancers* (2008) “Dancing is...a challenge...but it keeps me happy, keeps me wanting more...I love it...there’s this wonderful music...and it’s incredible. Nothing compares” (p. 80).

As world language teachers, we can take advantage of the benefits of dancing to increase alertness and energy levels of our students, as well as build neural pathways and connections by integrating dance into our courses. Teachers and language learners alike can enjoy the benefits of dancing, in particular as dance activates pleasure and reward systems within the brain which can promote a positive learning environment.

### **The Linguistic Case for Dancing**

*“I was born in Hong Kong...Because of my dad’s job, we’ve lived in many different places: Taiwan, China, Canada, and the United States. We like to travel a lot, too.*

*Wherever we visit, we go to the ballet. Dance is an international language!*— Eva Lipman (Feldman, 1999, p. 5)

### *Opportunity to Use the Target Language*

Undoubtedly as noted above there are benefits to introducing language through the context of dancing within the language classroom. One such benefit is the opportunity to foster connections to other disciplines through dancing's connections to history, music, physical movement, art, and culture. When introduced in a classroom that is founded on practices that require comprehensible input, dancing allows language learners and teachers to employ a variety of vocabulary including body parts, locations, words related to historical and folkloric stories and to music and rhythm.

Other linguistic features inherent in a dancing lesson are the use of the imperative voice, the use and formation of questions and answers related to steps or other related topics, and utterances of joy and happiness, or discomfort and complaint if participants become fatigued and thirsty. Students and teachers may reflect in the target language on the history and culture surrounding the dance, as well. This can occur through a guided (group) discussion, small group research in think-pair-share style, or other methods the instructor finds appropriate within the learning environment.

For many dances, song lyrics may provide an additional opportunity to connect language to movement. In songs such as Jennifer Lopez's "Ven a Bailar," instructions are integrated in the song, such as "*Salta, ven a bailar... no, no pares, sigue, ven...*" "Jump, come and dance... no, don't you stop, keep going, come on..." Such instructions offer the opportunity for students to jump and dance the steps, following directions as provided in the music. Or, in "Danza Kuduro," listeners hear "*con la mano arriba...mueve la cabeza...*" "with a hand up... move your head..." Similarly, students can respond by putting hands up and moving their heads. Other songs may offer opportunities to express emotional content with hand gestures and to learn about such gestures and attitudes within the culture of the language being acquired.

### *Linguistic and inter-curricular connections in dance*

According to Bell (1997), there are seven major and compelling reasons to integrate dance into the language learning classroom, as follows:

1. Dance in the language classroom provides engaging ways in which students can gain functional control of language by emphasizing phonological chunks, sentence stress and intonation, conversational rhythm, gesture and body movement, and other paralinguistic features.
2. Dance and gesture can combine to provide powerful kinesthetic connections for vocabulary development.
3. Dance can be used as a force to unify the community of the classroom, to enact and visualize language learning objectives, and by so doing lower affective factors in the classroom.

4. Dance has a power to transform our notions of classroom space. When you begin to make use of the open spaces of the classroom, you discover both that there is a lot of unused working space in a classroom and that large classes are much less formidable and remote than they appear when arranged in rows behind desks.
5. Dance helps expose language learners to the culture which underlies the target language. The dances I have used in class draw on a wide range of rhythmic sources: children's skipping or jump rope songs and rhymes, hand- clapping, sports chants, cheer-leading, together with blues, jazz, gospel, rock and roll, rap, etc.
6. Dance may allow students to get in touch with those rhythmic resources which played a part in the acquisition of their first language and make these available for the kinesthetic learning of their second language.
7. Dance liberates language learners from the silence and stillness which pervades many language classrooms, thereby helping to prepare the body (and the mind) for the more cognitive demands of language learning. (Bell, 1997, n.p.)

Johnson further affirms these connections of music and rhythm to language as she explains that in the Balinese *Kecak* that there are linguistic features in the rhythm of the drum, including tonal, syllabic, and accentuation (S. Johnson, personal communication, November 3, 2015) that can assist the language learner in acquiring more authentic pronunciation skills.

Additionally, in a hypothesis provided by Krashen (2015) and supported with research from others, Krashen indicates that there are different types of "dins," akin to an echo of learning that continues after a particularly impacting activity or experience. These dins, Krashen asserts, "produce involuntary mental activity that can be pleasant and even ecstatic (p.1)" Among the types of dins are linguistic (reading) dins, such as mulling over quotes or comprehensible input, as well as musical and kinesthetic dins. Arguably, dance provides input for all three of these types of dins, activating pleasure stimuli for language learners and making the language acquisition experience more positive and the experience more meaningful (pp. 1-4).

In a different article regarding TPR, Krashen (2015) suggests expanding the use of movement in the classroom to include other forms beyond TPR. Krashen states that "the core idea of TPR is the use of movement to make input comprehensible and engage students. But we don't have to limit ourselves to 'stand up.'" Krashen goes on to list suggestions of other forms of integrating movement in the classroom, including exercise (particularly yoga), and juggling. While Krashen does not specifically list dance as such an activity, dance is an excellent venue for movement and exercise (p. 7).

*Reduction of Affective Barriers*

According to the International Society of Teachers of Dancing (2009), dancing can “help reduce stress levels...build vital communication skills...increase self-esteem and confidence”(n.p.). These claims are further supported in statements from an article by University of California Berkeley Wellness (2014), indicating that

dancing provides physical, psychological, and social benefits galore... (and) may also be good for your mood. (Dancing) has been shown to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress and boost self-esteem, body image, coping ability, and overall sense of well-being, with the benefits lasting over time.” (n.p.)

Dascomb (n.d., n.p.) lists improvements in listening skills, accuracy, persistence, and open(ness) to new ideas as additional benefits of dance, all of which are desirable traits in an ideal language learner.

The benefits of reduced anxiety, improved self-esteem, and improved communication skills as derived from dance are highly relevant and valuable in a language learning environment. Such benefits help to combat the very affective barriers and filters that plague language learners. In a report by Du (2009) on the Affective Filter in second language teaching, Du indicates that anxiety correlates to performance (increased anxiety impedes linguistic performance) which manifests itself in three ways: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Communication apprehension is a type of anxiety related to exchanges with other people. Du (2009) indicates that it may be a type of shyness, or reticence that is part of a personality trait. The second type of anxiety addressed in the article is testing, essentially anxiety related to an anticipated evaluation of performance or skill. Du indicates that this fear may be due to a lack of confidence, and even asserts later that the more confident language learners are, the greater their risk-taking, and thus, the stronger their language skill becomes. The final type of anxiety that Du describes in a world language classroom is the fear of negative evaluation, essentially a fear of, or concern for negative judgment by other people. These types of anxiety, if left unchecked, can significantly impede language acquisition and production. If dancing can indeed reduce anxiety and improve confidence and self-esteem, we can expect increased output and uptake of language by learners that could be otherwise afflicted with such anxiety or lack of confidence.

*Creating an Ideal Learning Environment*

Dancing fits well with Du’s (2009) suggestions for lowering anxiety, indicating that “classroom atmosphere is very important and should be delighted, lively, friendly and harmonious...can help students overcome their psychological barrier and lower their anxiety”(p. 3). He further suggests that to reduce classroom anxiety, teachers can “creat(e) a warm, welcoming classroom environment, take time to allow classmates to get to know each other; and ...encourag(e) social and oral activities” (p. 3). Dancing meets these criteria very well. Through dancing,

world language professionals and students are creating a warm, lively environment rich with social activity that allows students to get to know one another. The introduction of dance into a classroom supports and creates an environment that celebrates the language, culture, people, from which it originates.

Compared to other traditional activities, dance offers the opportunity to interact with peers and the instructor(s) in a contextualized scenario, unlike traditional video or audio listening activities where students are unable to engage by asking questions or participating actively in the dialogue. Dance offers an authentic context in which students can communicate verbally and non-verbally in structured and spontaneous ways. The authenticity of the activity, as well as the support offered by peers and the instructor can help to lower the level of anxiety in the classroom, increasing productivity and uptake of the language.

#### *Worthwhile Results*

In a study conducted by McMahon (2003), the impact of dancing on literacy skills for first graders had a significant positive impact when arts, particularly dance were integrated into reading and literacy programs. The program that was used was a Basic Reading through Dance (BRD) program, which integrated movement and dance into reading activities for students.

The program's specific objectives were to teach students to (a) move and freeze their bodies on cue, (b) use their bodies as instruments of communication, (c) create and dance fluidly a locomotive movement sequence, (d) say the sounds of letters or letter combinations they see, (e) dance/write the letter or letter combination that represents a spoken sound they hear, (f) say the individual sounds of short-vowel words they see and blend them into one spoken word, (g) say the individual sounds of short vowel words they hear and write the letters that represent them, and (h) manipulate sound symbols to change words into other words. (p. 110)

At the end of the study, the students who participated in the BRD program showed significant improvement compared to peers in a control group in the areas of consonant and vowel sound recognition, and phoneme segmentation. MacMahon (2003) reflected that "The results of this study are overwhelmingly positive regarding the impact of the BRD program on ... students' reading abilities" (p. 119). While this study was limited to first graders and aimed at a very specific set of linguistic and literacy skills, one would expect that integrating dance into world language programs could also help students build literacy skills in the target language.

#### **Implementation of Dance**

*"Let us read and let us dance; two amusements that will never do any harm to the world"— Voltaire (goodreads.com, n.d, n.p.)*

Now that we have considered the benefits of dance in a language classroom, we must consider best practices for engaging students in this valuable practice.

As with any other teaching approach or practice, timing and execution must be well planned and thought out. A poorly planned lesson, or series of lessons will surely not glean the same benefits as a well thought out, sequential and robust program that integrates dance seamlessly into the curriculum. Just as language educators plan instruction in terms of time management, timing, content, and materials, world language professionals should expect to plan and prepare lessons that include dance with the same level of detail.

Teachers should consider what topics or themes are already being studied and how to integrate dance with that unit, theme, topic, or chapter of study to make a cohesive lesson. For example, if a class topic is the history of a country during a specific time period it would be appropriate to introduce a dance performed in that country during that specific time period. Or, if a class is learning about social rules related to parties, festivals, or other celebrations in a particular country, dance can be introduced as a topic, along with the social norms for asking for a dance, who dances with whom, and so on. Teachers can support the learners in language acquisition throughout lessons on dance using visual cues such as gestures, photographs of dancers, and videos in tandem with linguistic input. For example, the teacher can call out to students while gesturing to their heel “*empujen con el talón*” (push with your heel), “*sacuden las manos*” (shake your hands), or “*meneen*” (wiggle).

#### *Challenges in Real Classrooms*

Special consideration and preparation needs to be made also for students who may be physically, or for other reasons, unable to participate. Some students with physical challenges may still wish to participate as much as possible so as not to feel left out. It is the teacher’s responsibility to prepare adaptations as necessary based on their student population, such as providing research activities or adapting the movements so that a student without use of their hands or feet can still participate in the movements. For students, who for religious or other personal reasons wish to refrain from dancing, teachers can arrange for an alternate lesson or select an appropriate alternative research project.

Some students may also demonstrate a lack of maturity or readiness and will act out, requiring actions congruent with classroom expectations and a classroom management plan. Typically, if teachers are clear and consistent regarding behavior expectations, students realize that they are expected to conduct themselves respectfully and participate fully and respectfully. According to Boynton and Boynton (2005), “Having high expectations of all students, even the students you struggle to have high expectations for, is very powerful” (n.p.). Teachers can plan and monitor behavior and make appropriate behavior modifications during dance activities just as they would with a seating chart to help minimize distractions or disrespectful conduct, such as asking certain students to stand closer to the teacher.

There is a possibility that instructors may also meet resistance to dancing at the administrative level. Such resistance can be minimized with the support of research

evidence. Additionally, demonstrations of dance activities that display a high level of professionalism and decorum can help diminish concerns by administrators.

Another challenge teachers may face is resistance, or student reluctance to participate. Teachers can help reduce student anxiety by modeling the dances, by making deliberate and even exaggerated mistakes in their own dancing, thereby taking the pressure and attention away from students who are unsure of themselves. It is advisable to monitor for use of electronic devices, some students may want to chronicle their participation, but unless they have permission from all participants, they should refrain from making videos. Not all students are willing to participate if they think they might wind up on YouTube.

As with any other activity, certain physical classroom spaces are more conducive to certain dances than others. For many classrooms, it is ideal to move desks or tables and chairs to the perimeter of the room where they are still accessible to allow students to take notes during breaks. This ensures an open dance “floor” in the center of the room, allowing space for students to move freely. This is part of why such careful planning is required—a poorly planned lesson could easily unravel if the space and equipment available will not allow for freedom of movement. Teachers may want to enlist the help of their students in arranging desks before and after a dancing activity.

Some instructors may also cite the issue of time as a challenge for integrating dance. There are already so many topics and issues to cover in a world language curriculum and instructors may see dance as just one more topic, or activity to squeeze into an already tight schedule. However, dance offers the opportunity to address the content themes delineated in the College Board Advanced Placement curriculum such as Beauty and Aesthetics, Contemporary Life, and Families and Communities. Andrews (2013) explains the deep connection between dance (performing arts) and knowledge, “Performing artists are in essence living bodies of knowledge—each body part a chapter in a collective whole that inscribes knowledge through performance and practice...” (p. 5). Given the link between dance and the curriculum, as well as the many intellectual and motivational benefits instructors are encouraged to integrate such activities as a worthwhile and meaningful component in their curriculum.

### *The Dancing Lesson*

The steps and guidelines that follow are suggestions derived from experience and experimentation within the classroom in an effort to find the most functional approaches for introducing dance in the language classroom. Teachers are encouraged to experiment, consult with other professionals, and consider the needs of their students and classrooms and adapt these dancing lessons accordingly. Some teachers may find a handout cumbersome or unnecessary, and may wish to experiment with the dances to determine whether the suggested order is ideal for their classrooms.

First, the teacher plays music that is appropriate to the type of dance to be studied. While students listen to the type of music they list instruments they hear, or emotions provoked by the music. Teachers may print off photographs

or share them on a projector of dancers engaging, or bands playing the different types of music for the dances. Note that the handouts, notes, and instructions are presented in the target language. At this time, the teacher may also display a map of the country where the music comes from, offering the opportunity for students to list the country of origin. The teacher may also identify the musicians that are credited with the song and any notable related items, which students can also note. In Appendix B, readers will find a handout that can be used for students of the Spanish language for note-taking on the different dances. This handout can be used for a single- lesson where a sampling of dances are provided or can be used one dance at a time over a period of time..

Once note-taking is completed regarding the music, the students stand up and regroup in lines in the center of the classroom (on the created “dance floor”) and the teacher introduces basic steps, instructing students in the target language regarding directions, body parts, and types of movement, while students imitate and practice until they are able to execute the steps independently (teacher monitors for comprehension). For example, in a *bachata*, the teacher might call out “*Vayan a la izquierda con el compás de la música... un, dos, tres, bum... Cuando llega el «bum» empujen con el pie en el suelo y levanten la cadera. Repitan el patrón, a la derecha...un, dos, tres, bum*” “Go to the left with the beat of the music...one, two, three, boom... When the “boom” arrives, push with the foot on the floor and lift the hip. Repeat the pattern to the right...one, two, three, boom.”

Teachers may offer the opportunity for students to ask questions to clarify instructions. Depending on the dance and rhythm, the teacher may elect to chant or create a mnemonic device in the target language which students can also imitate while they are moving. For example, there are five beats in a Tango dance, so spelling out T-A-N-G-O in the Spanish language works well for each step and for keeping the beat. Or, the beat of a cha cha can be kept with the words “*un, dos, cha cha cha, un, dos, cha cha cha*” “One, two, cha cha cha, one, two, cha cha cha,” and so on.

This pattern of sit and note, stand and dance is followed throughout the lesson. According to Kuczala and McCall (2011), the “average (high school) student will only be able to focus for approximately fifteen minutes while listening to a lecture... After that, the brain becomes bored, inattentive, and begins to day dream” (n.p.). These authors further explain that “sitting for long periods of time actually works against the ability of students to learn effectively” (n.p.). The method of using both a written (and seated) portion of the lesson and the physically active portion allows students the physical rest they may need to recuperate if they are out of breath.

When the students have successfully executed a basic step, they sit again and take notes on the handout about the steps, and may also note the type of clothing worn in the dance (the teacher may provide a picture or instruct students to find one if resources are available). At this point, students are rested, and regroup in lines to practice the basic step to the rhythm of the music. Once students can execute a step to music, they sit again and write about the steps or rhythm they hear. Finally, if the dance is a partner dance, students line up and partner dance to the music, rotating partners. On occasion, teachers may choose to include a video

of dance performers. This can be followed by a lesson that explores the country from which the dance originated, or perhaps a reading or writing activity that provides greater depth about the dance, country, clothing, or other related topic.

In order to minimize anxiety, it is best to refrain from assessments, or competitions in the classroom when integrating dance. The fear and anxiety of judgment and testing mentioned earlier by Du (2009) could negate any benefit of dancing if the dancing itself develops into an evaluated skill. If some students express interest in competing, teachers can opt to allow this through extracurricular organizations and clubs, removing the anxiety from the classroom.

If teachers wish to evaluate student notes after a dancing lesson for particular trends in student language comprehension, and to verify that language uptake is taking place, that is acceptable. Monitoring student ability to perform the dance moves upon command or to name them in the target language are valid and worthwhile forms of formative assessment designed to improve learning.

For paired dancing, students may be shy or feel awkward choosing a dance partner if the dance is a partner dance, and certain dance holds may prove too intimidating for young learners. Again, teachers can adapt the dances, so that students may execute the steps in a line-dance style, or hold hands loosely rather than in a close hold. Also, social anxiety can be reduced by having students line up in two or more lines and rotate partners, dancing with each person for only 15-30 seconds. This works much like an inside/outside circle or a conga line, pairing students with various partners but giving the teacher the option to determine whether pairings are heterogeneous or homogenous. These types of pairings serve to build confidence and also can reduce the stress on shy students for selecting a partner. If students are paired with someone they dislike, they can trust it will be only be for a moment.

In order to maintain a high level of professionalism, it is best to refrain from sexualized moves or expressions in the dances and from teaching students such moves. Additionally, it is wise to select music for dancing that is not only appropriate in terms of rhythm, beat, and origin, but also has tasteful or non-offensive words and messages. Students often become curious about the music they are hearing in class and may wish to further explore a song outside of class. It is best to select songs you would want them to learn more about, and ones that connect dancing to certain linguistic features, cultural themes, or other aspects of the song(s).

## **Conclusion**

*“Dancing is surely the most basic and relevant of all forms of expression”—Lyall Watson (goodreads.com, n.d.)*

If teachers are to effectively integrate dance into their world language curriculum, there are several components that are essential to success. These components include the skills to execute the steps, motions, and patterns associated with the dance, to identify the appropriate types of music, and to know about the history, culture, and origins of the music. Ideally, this would mean that it would be

desirable that a world language teacher would have at least a functional working knowledge and skill in the basic or more advanced steps of the dances they intend to integrate into their lessons, as well as knowledge of the music, history, and culture of the dances. However, if a teacher is not inclined to demonstrate dance moves first hand, multimedia can provide dance demonstrations, or the teacher can invite dance performers as guests to demonstrate dance moves. Pedagogical strategies such as jigsaw cooperative learning can be integrated, placing the learner in the role of discoverer of knowledge about various dance customs and their history, thereby alleviating the teacher from being the sole purveyor of knowledge and placing the learner in the role of active constructor of knowledge.

The integration of dance into the language classroom can serve as a valuable source of comprehensible input in language and cultural learning. The benefits of dance include cognitive, linguistic and cultural competencies that have been well documented in the research. The integration of dance in the language classroom, if used effectively, can contribute to creating an optimal learning environment that meets the affective and cognitive needs of its learners as well as promote an active and engaging learning approach that provides an authentic experience and life long skills that improves the quality of life beyond the classroom walls.

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**Appendix A****Table 1.** Dascomb, A. (n.d.). Benefits of Dance. <http://nrde.org/benefitsofdance.html>

<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>INTELLECTUAL</b>	<b>ARTISTIC</b>	<b>SOCIAL</b>	<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>
Fitness	Intellectual Stimulation	Arts Appreciation	Team Exploration & Cooperation	Confidence, Self-esteem
Coordination	Calculation & Planning	Musicality & Rhythmic Expression	Communication	Listening Skills
Cardiovascular Conditioning	Sequential Learning	Creative Expression	Camaraderie	Self-Discipline
Flexibility	Patterns	Imagination		Sense of Accomplishment
Strength	Spatial Development	Innovation		Persistence
	Increased Motivation to Learn			Accuracy
	Mental Flexibility, Problem Solving			Open to New Ideas
	Right & Left Brain Inclusion (Holistic Thinking)			
	Improved Academic Performance			

**Appendix B**

*Llenen los espacios con la información que falta mientras aprendemos los bailes, sus orígenes, y sus tradiciones.*

<b>Baile</b>	<b>Música: Título/ Autor</b>	<b>Origen</b>	<b>Compás/ Instrumentos</b>	<b>Ropa Tradicional</b>
	Santa María del Buen Ayre/  Gotan Project	Argentina	T-A-N-G-O;	Colores: Rojo y negro;  trajes y vestidos formales
La Cha-Cha	Oye, Como va/  Celia Cruz		Un, dos, cha-cha-cha; tambores;	Ropa cómoda, faldas flojas
La rumba		Cuba	Rapi-dito, nooo...	

	Será el quererte/	España	Castañuelas, las manos, la voz, ...	Colores: rojo y rosado Vestidos largos
La Cumbia	/ Celso Peña	Colombia	El acordeón, la guitarra, ...	
La bachata	Niña de mi corazón/			
	Salsa, salsa/		La guitarra, los tambores,	Ropa cómoda
El merengue	/Don Omar		Los tambores, ocho pasos/ocho tiempos	Ropa cómoda

**Comentarios sobre los bailes:**

