



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comprehensive Study of Imagery Practices in Turkish Folk Dances from a Socio-Cultural Perspective

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 18, 2024 Accepted: Jul 21, 2024	This study comprehensively examines the meaning and utility of visual techniques used in Turkish folk dances in a socio-cultural context. Folk dances are an important cultural heritage that leaves deep traces in social memory and keeps cultural identity alive by reflecting societal values, beliefs and social structures. Imagery techniques play a crucial role in the performance and learning of folk dances, enhancing their aesthetic and artistic value and ensuring that they are performed accurately and authentically. These techniques help dancers to better understand and execute the movements and improve their memory and comprehension. Folk dances play an important role in strengthening social bonds, promoting social interaction and solidarity. In addition, these dances enable the transmission of cultural values across generations. The study shows that the increased use of visual techniques in the teaching of folk dances will help to pass on cultural heritage to future generations in a healthy way. In this context, it was concluded that pictorial techniques enhance the aesthetic and artistic values of folk dances and strengthen social bonds.
Keywords	
Aesthetic and Artistic Values Cultural Heritage Imagery Techniques Socio-Cultural Impact Turkish Folk Dances	

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INTRODUCTION

Turkish folk dances have remained an important part of cultural identity throughout history and have left deep traces in our social memory. These dances are not only a means of entertainment, but also an important cultural heritage that reflects the values, beliefs and social structures of society. Alyılmaz and Er (2016) investigated the influence of folk dances on social structures and emphasized the crucial role these dances play in the cultural transmission process (Alyılmaz & Er, 2016; Mete, 2020). Similarly, Ertural (2006) examined the effects of folk dances on the protection and survival of local cultures and pointed out the importance of these dances in maintaining social memory. In addition, Güneş (2013) emphasizes the role of folk dances in strengthening social bonds and passing on cultural values from generation to generation (Güneş, 2013). Uzunkaya and Akbal (2014) discussed the effects of folk dances on strengthening social interactions and their potential to ensure cultural continuity. In this context, the study of visual techniques used in folk dances is of great importance for the protection and transmission of this heritage to the future (Uzunkaya & Akbal, 2014).

Imagery refers to the mental visualisation techniques used in the performance and learning of a folk dance (Murray, 1938; Porter & Foster, 1990; Güneş, 2013; Yarayan & Gülşen, 2023; Çeviker et al., 2024). These techniques not only enhance the aesthetic and artistic value of folk dances, but also ensure that the dances are performed correctly (Karacan-Doğan & Durmuş, 2023). Tarcan (1992) emphasises the importance of these techniques in preserving the originality of the dances by focusing on the dilemma of improvisation and fiction in the staging of folk dances (Altun, 2019). Similarly, Özdiñer (2010) stated that image techniques play a crucial role in the mediation and staging of folk dances. Kaya and Günay (2020) investigated the relationship between mental training and performance motivation and showed the positive effects of imagination techniques on dancers (Yalçın et al., 2022). In addition, Ertural (2006) emphasises that these techniques are important to increase the aesthetic values of dances and improve the quality of performance. Uzunkaya and Akbal (2014) found that imagery techniques significantly increase the aesthetic and artistic values of folk dances. They concluded that these techniques increase the visual and artistic quality of the performances.

The role of folk dances in the process of cultural transmission is also very important. On the one hand, these dances strengthen social bonds and, on the other, they enable cultural values to be passed on. Özdiñer (2010) points out the importance of the teaching process in the transmission of folk dances and states that the four-stage teaching process effectively leads to success (Özdiñer, 2010). This process is structured in such a way that it provides students with the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors and aims to protect the cultural values of the dances. Similarly, Ertural (2006) and Güneş (2013) also emphasize the importance of folk dances for cultural transmission. In his study on the folk dances of Gaziantep, Ertural examined the crucial role of these dances in the preservation and survival of local cultures. Güneş states that folk dances occupy an important place in society by strengthening social bonds. In addition, Uzunkaya and Akbal (2014) discussed the effects of folk dances on strengthening social interactions and their potential to provide cultural continuity. Alyılmaz and Er (2016) also examined the effects of folk dances on social structures and emphasized the crucial role that these dances play in the process of cultural transmission. Folk dances are not only a means of entertainment, but also contribute to the transmission of society's values, beliefs and traditions across generations (Alyılmaz & Er, 2016; Mete, 2020).

The role of imagery techniques in education is of great importance. When transferring Turkish folk dances to the future, scientific methods and teaching-learning approaches can be used to teach these dances in a healthy way. Imagery enables dancers to better understand and perform the movements in folk dances and improves the quality of performance (Yalçın et al., 2022). For example, Porter and Foster (1990) demonstrated the positive effects of mental imagery techniques on athletic performance and showed that these techniques can provide similar benefits for dancers in folk dance. Similarly, Murray (1938) investigated the effects of imagery techniques on personality and explained how these techniques can be used to enhance an individual's abilities. Imagery contributes to the development of physical movements, but also to emotional and mental processes (Murray, 1938).

Mariani et al. (2019) investigated mental skills training to increase sports motivation in young people and found that these techniques significantly improved athletes' performance. Implementing similar mental skills training in folk dances can increase dancers' motivation and performance (Mariani et al., 2019). In addition, Willis (1982) investigated the effects of imagery techniques on athletes using the scales he developed to measure sport-related motivations and showed that these techniques can also be beneficial for dancers. These studies demonstrate the importance of imagery techniques in education and their role in passing on folk dances to future generations. Finally, the preservation of the aesthetic and artistic values of folk dances is also of great importance. Uzunkaya and Akbal (2014) investigated the effects of the techniques used in the performance of folk dances on aesthetic values and showed that these techniques increase the artistic value of the dances (Altun, 2019). Pictorial

techniques provide aesthetic enrichment to the dances and increase the artistic value of the staged performances.

This study aims to make an important contribution to the body of knowledge in this field by examining the role of imagery techniques used in Turkish folk dances in a socio-cultural context and the significance of these techniques in the process of cultural transmission. The examination of the existing studies in the literature will help to understand the effects of imagery techniques on different aspects of the dances. In this context, the role of folk dances in education, enactment and strengthening social bonds will be better understood (Özdiñer, 2010; Altun, 2019; Uzun et al., 2021).

Socio-cultural benefits and effects of imagery practices in Turkish folk dances

Turkish folk dances are an important cultural heritage that has left deep traces in social memory throughout history. These dances keep cultural identity alive by reflecting the values, beliefs and social structures of society. Folk dances are not only of great importance for entertainment purposes, but also as a means of cultural transmission. Imagery techniques stand out as mental animation methods used in the performance and learning of folk dances. These techniques not only enhance the aesthetic and artistic value of folk dances, but also ensure that the dances are performed accurately and authentically (Porter & Foster, 1990; Murray, 1938).

Imagery representations have various socio-cultural advantages and effects. Güneş (2013) discussed the contributions of imagery techniques to the learning process in the context of visual literacy education and stated that these techniques improve individuals' memory and comprehension skills. These methods help dancers to better understand and perform the movements during the teaching of folk dances. Similarly, Hall (2001) investigated the effects of imagery techniques on student performance and showed that these techniques help students to better understand and execute dance movements.

Imagery techniques are of great importance in education and enable the use of scientific methods and teaching-learning approaches to transfer folk dances into the future. Kaya and Günay (2020) investigated the effect of mental training on performance motivation and showed the positive effects of imagery techniques on dancers. In addition, Hall (2001) investigated the effects of imagery techniques on student performance and showed that these techniques help students to better understand and apply dance movements.

Turkish folk dances are an important artistic activity that reflects the cultural heritage and identity of a society. These dances keep cultural identity alive by reflecting the values, beliefs and social structures of society (Çobanoğlu, 2012; Oğuz, 2021). Folk dances contribute to social integration and are considered important for the transmission of cultural values (Karabulut & Doğan, 2018). These dances are not only a means of entertainment, but also an instrument that strengthens the common values of society and consolidates social bonds (antalyahomes.com).

Turkish folk-dance festivals and events are important platforms for the preservation and dissemination of this cultural heritage. Various regional dances are exhibited and competitions are organized at these events. In this way, the richness and diversity of folk dances are highlighted. These events encourage people to come together to keep this traditional art alive and ensure the transmission of Turkish culture to the next generations (Web 2).

The history of folk dances also plays an important role in the protection of cultural values. Folk dances are a tradition whose origins date back to antiquity and which have developed in different eras. Although the origin of these dances cannot be precisely determined, it is known that they emerged as a result of the nomadic way of life and interaction with different cultures. Many of these dances are still performed today and are of great importance in daily life (Web 1).

Protection and transfer of cultural heritage

The influence of imagery techniques on the correct and authentic performance of folk dances and their contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage is evidenced by many sources. Batson and Schwartz (2007) stated that imagery techniques play an important role in the development of students' motor skills and that the use of these techniques in performing arts such as folk dances contributes to a correct and fluent execution of the movements. Similarly, Cumming and Williams (2012) emphasized that imagery techniques improve memory and comprehension skills, allowing dancers to remember and perform complex choreography more easily. In addition, Hanrahan and Vergeer (2000) discussed how imagery techniques contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage in the teaching and performance of folk dances. According to Hanrahan and Vergeer, these techniques contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage by helping dancers to understand the historical and cultural context of the movements. These sources support the contribution of visual techniques to the accurate and authentic performance of folk dances and the preservation of cultural heritage from a broader perspective. Güneş (2013) discussed the contribution of imagery techniques to the learning process in the context of visual literacy education and stated that these techniques improve individuals' memory and comprehension skills. This helps dancers to better understand and perform the movements when teaching folk dances (Güneş, 2013).

Strengthening social bonds

Folk dances play a role in strengthening social bonds. By bringing together different segments of society, they increase social interaction and solidarity (Satılmış et al., 2023). Özdiñer (2010) points out the importance of the teaching process in the teaching of folk dances and states that the four-step teaching process is effective in achieving success. This process is structured in such a way that it provides students with the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors and aims to protect the cultural values of the dances. In this context, the use of technology also supports the learning process. For example, Kico and Liarokapis (2020) find that mobile augmented reality applications help students to learn dance movements more easily.

Increasing aesthetic and artistic values

Imagery techniques considerably increase the aesthetic and artistic value of folk dances. Uzunkaya and Akbal (2014) investigated how imagery techniques enhance the aesthetic and artistic values of folk dances and concluded that these techniques increase the visual and artistic quality of performances. This helps folk dances to be more appreciated by spectators and cultural activities to reach a wider audience (Uzunkaya & Akbal, 2014). Studies on the aesthetic and artistic values of Chinese folk dances also emphasise how the dance preserves traditional cultural elements and integrates them into modern dance forms (Yan & Wang 2023). The aesthetic value of folk dances enhances the visual and artistic quality of the dance and generates strong emotional responses from the audience (Kico et al., 2018). This helps us to understand how the aesthetic appreciation and artistic values of folk dances are perceived in society. Moreover, folk dances are important tools to preserve cultural identity and ensure intergenerational transmission (Web 3).

Educational contributions

The role of imagery techniques in education is of great importance. When transferring Turkish folk dances to the future, scientific methods and teaching-learning approaches can be used to teach these dances in a healthy way. Kaya and Günay (2020) investigated the effect of mental training on performance motivation and showed the positive effects of imagery techniques on dancers. These studies show that imagery not only increases aesthetic and artistic values, but also significantly improves the quality of performance (Kaya & Günay, 2020).

Psychological and emotional development

Imagery techniques also contribute to the psychological and emotional development of the individual. These techniques strengthen the individual's self-confidence and help develop important skills such as stress management (Hammermeister & VonGuenthner, 2005). Mariani et al. (2019) investigated mental skills training to increase sports motivation in young people and found that these techniques significantly increased athletes' performance. Implementing similar mental skills training in folk dances can increase dancers' motivation and performance (Mariani et al., 2019; Röthlin et al., 2020).

Social interaction and solidarity

Folk dances create strong bonds between communities by promoting social interaction and solidarity (Diker & Dinç, 2023). These dances help individuals to improve communication and harmony within the group. Imagery techniques play an important role in strengthening social bonds in folk dances. These techniques help dancers to communicate better with each other and strengthen group dynamics. Savci (2017) and Sezer (2019) studied the team cohesion and communication skills of athletes and emphasized the positive effects of these factors on team success. This increases social solidarity and harmony (Güneş, 2013; Savci, 2017; Sezer, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study examines in detail the meaning and utility of imagery techniques used in Turkish folk dances in a socio-cultural context. It is emphasized that folk dances are an important cultural heritage that leaves deep traces in social memory and keeps cultural identity alive by reflecting societal values, beliefs and social structures. It is noted that imagery techniques play a crucial role in the staging and learning of these dances, enhancing their aesthetic and artistic value and ensuring that the dances are performed correctly and authentically.

Imagery practices have been shown to help dancers better understand and execute movements, thereby improving the quality of the performance. These techniques have also been shown to improve memory and comprehension, making it easier for dancers to remember and execute complex choreography. It has been found that scientific methods and teaching-learning approaches should be used in the training of folk dances so that the dances can be taught in a healthy way.

The role of Turkish folk dances in the process of cultural transmission is of great importance. These dances not only strengthen social bonds, but also enable the transmission of cultural values across generations. It was emphasized that the teaching process is crucial in the transmission of folk dances and that the use of imagery techniques is effective in this process. Imagery techniques were also found to boost dancers' self-confidence and contribute to the development of important skills such as stress management.

The fact that folk dances strengthen social bonds and increase social interaction and solidarity is also an important finding. These dances have been found to strengthen social cohesion and group dynamics by bringing together different segments of society. Enhancing the aesthetic and artistic values of folk dances helps them to be more appreciated by the public and cultural activities to reach a wider audience.

As a result, in this study has shown that the imagery techniques used in Turkish folk dances have many benefits, from enhancing aesthetic and artistic values to strengthening social bonds. These techniques contribute greatly to the correct and authentic performance of folk dances and the protection of cultural heritage. In this context, the increased use of imagery techniques in folk dance education will help to pass on cultural heritage to future generations in a healthy way.

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