

Applying Partner-Dance Techniques in a Primary School Body-Training Class through Doll and Bear Dance

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Abstract: This article presents a practice-based case study of adapting partner-dance techniques for a primary school body-training class through Doll and Bear Dance. Partner-dance techniques translates the Chinese pedagogical idea of double dance technique, but the aim is classroom cooperation rather than professional duet performance. The lesson for second-grade pupils moves from solo imitation to no-contact pair work and then to simple contact. It uses leading and following, negative-space filling, and point-contact negotiation to connect music, role imagination, spatial awareness, peer cooperation, and aesthetic perception. The article offers a concise teaching pathway, not intervention claims.

Keywords: partner-dance techniques; primary school dance education; creative dance; collaboration

1. Introduction

Primary dance education is not limited to fixed steps. It can help children understand rhythm, space, character, and social relation through the body. Current arts education policy emphasizes participation, creativity, and collaboration [1]. A body-training class can therefore become more than posture correction; it can connect music, movement, imagination, and peer interaction.

This article analyzes a lesson based on Doll and Bear Dance. Body-training class here means an elementary arts-and-movement class combining posture, coordination, simple dance vocabulary, musical response, and aesthetic cultivation. The key concept is partner-dance techniques, a classroom translation of the Chinese double dance technique. Professional partner work may involve weight and complex contact, but second-grade pupils need a safer version focused on relation, attention, and cooperation.

The question is deliberately modest: how might duet-based tasks be made usable for second-grade pupils? I treat the lesson as a case of teaching practice rather than a measured intervention. The discussion follows how a familiar tune, two roles and three movement relations help children move from copying alone to making a short phrase with a partner, a concern shared by recent work on creative dance in schools [2][3].

2. Pedagogical Context and Lesson Design

2.1 The musical and narrative affordances of Doll and Bear Dance

Doll and Bear Dance works well as a classroom source because the children do not need a long explanation before moving. The rhythm is easy to catch, and the two figures in the song already suggest different bodily qualities. In practice, the doll tends to invite a taller, lighter and more contained shape, while the bear invites lower levels, rounded arms and a more playful weight. The contrast is simple, but it gives pupils something specific to try.

The song also lets the teacher introduce choreographic choices without heavy terminology. A repeated rhythm may become a repeated step; a line about dancing together may lead to a hand-held circle. The teacher can ask where the bear might stand, how close the doll should be, or what changes when one child waits while the other moves. These questions keep the movement tied to the small story in the music, rather than to isolated shapes.

2.2 Learner characteristics of second-grade pupils

The class is for pupils of about seven or eight. At this age, children usually respond quickly to games, stories and imitation, yet they may lose focus when an activity is too long or too abstract. Partner work adds a further demand. A child has to notice another body, keep a small distance, wait for a cue and still stay with the music. For that reason, the tasks need to be brief enough to repeat, clear enough to see, and playful enough to keep hesitation from becoming embarrassment.

Recent studies on choreography and creative dance with young children have examined executive function and motor competence [4]. I do not use those findings as proof that this lesson produces the same outcomes. They are more useful here as a reminder that dance tasks can be planned with bodily and cognitive demands in mind, even when the class itself remains

exploratory and arts-based.

2.3 A progression from solo movement to partner work

The lesson does not begin with contact. It begins with solo imitation, so that children can find the doll and bear qualities in their own bodies. The next step is pair work without touching: one child offers a shape or pathway, and the other follows, mirrors or finds nearby space. Only after that do pupils try brief contact, such as holding hands for a circle or linking arms for a few counts. If timing breaks down or a pair looks uneasy, the teacher can return them to no-contact mirroring. Progression is guided by what is visible in the room, not by a fixed timetable.

3. Applying Partner-Dance Techniques in the Classroom

3.1 Leading and following for role allocation

For leading and following, the task is kept almost literal. One child draws a pathway with the arm, hand or upper body, and the partner traces the same route with a related movement. A pupil playing the doll might lift one arm as if holding a small wand, while the partner follows the curve rather than copying the whole body shape. After a short attempt, the pair changes roles. This small rotation matters because both children get a turn at choosing and at responding.

The point is not to make one child the permanent leader. The leader has to slow down enough for the route to be readable, and the follower has to watch before moving. When the doll leads, the movement may be held and upright; when the bear responds, the same line can become softer or funnier. Such differences keep the exercise from becoming a drill. Role exchange also changes the social tone of the pair. A quieter pupil can test a decision, while a more confident pupil has to listen with the body.

3.2 Negative-space filling for role contrast

Negative-space filling is introduced through stillness rather than explanation. One child freezes in a clear shape. The partner looks for an open area beside, under or between the limbs and places a second shape there without crowding. A star shape is enough for the first attempt, since the spaces under the arms and between the legs are easy to see. The response can then be adjusted toward the bear role, for example by lowering the level or rounding the back.

This task makes contrast visible. The doll may stay high and quiet, while the bear works in a middle or low level. Role difference then comes from level, distance, direction and stillness, not from a verbal description of character. The second child also learns a practical rule of cooperation: another body is not an obstacle to ignore, but a condition that shapes the next movement choice.

3.3 Point-contact negotiation for relationship and scene building

Point-contact negotiation is the only part of the lesson that asks for touch, so it needs clear boundaries. The contact is small: holding hands, touching palms, linking elbows or placing one hand lightly on a shoulder. There is no weight sharing or lifting. The teacher sets the count, the point of contact and the release, so pupils know when the touch begins and ends. This keeps the task musical and reduces the awkwardness that can appear when young children work in pairs.

Within Doll and Bear Dance, contact is not added for technical display. It helps the class show friendship and place. A circle dance can be made by holding hands and turning; a walk through an imagined park can be suggested by linked elbows and a light bounce. The contact gives the pair a shared pulse and a visible relation. This use fits work linking dance-based social-emotional development with nonverbal communication, synchrony and supportive environments [5].

4. Educational Value

4.1 Bodily coordination and spatial awareness

The most immediate value is bodily development. Leading and following require control of speed, direction, and gesture size. Negative-space filling requires attention to levels, gaps, and relations between bodies. Point-contact movement requires shared timing and gentle force. Together, these tasks train coordination, balance, flexibility, and spatial awareness in a playful form. They also make motor learning relational because pupils adjust to music, teacher instruction, and another child's movement [4].

4.2 Imagination and aesthetic perception

The lesson also cultivates imagination. Instead of treating posture training as mechanical correction, the teacher connects bodily form with character and scene. When pupils imagine the doll as elegant or the bear as friendly, they make aesthetic decisions about height, weight, rhythm, and expression. They learn that a body can communicate identity and feeling.

Creative dance is experiential because children transform movement into meaning [2][3].

4.3 Peer collaboration and classroom atmosphere

Partner-dance techniques can improve classroom atmosphere. Many pupils are used to moving independently or following the teacher as a whole group. Pair work asks for different attention: pupils must look, wait, respond, adjust, and sometimes accept another child's idea. It also gives quieter pupils a smaller social unit in which to try movement. Recent work on dance and social-emotional competence similarly emphasizes communication, synchrony, and supportive environments [5]. In the presentation stage, short pair phrases give the class concrete examples to observe. Teacher feedback can then name what worked, such as clear spacing, shared timing, or expressive contrast.

In this lesson, the shift from demonstration to pair exploration made the classroom more active. Pupils appeared more engaged when they could solve movement problems together. The lively rhythm and familiar narrative reduced the seriousness often associated with technical training. Children negotiated positions, corrected each other gently, and became more willing to present short phrases. Confidence and enjoyment support participation. This also helps the teacher adjust future tasks.

5. Conclusion

This article has shown how partner-dance techniques can be adapted for a primary school body-training class through Doll and Bear Dance. Leading and following allocates roles and trains attention. Negative-space filling composes contrast and spatial awareness. Point-contact negotiation expresses friendship, scene, and shared timing. Together, the three strategies create a progression from solo imitation to cooperative dance making.

The case suggests that partner-dance work can enrich primary arts education by combining bodily coordination, imagination, aesthetic perception, and peer collaboration. Its value lies in lesson design: choose familiar music, identify contrasting roles, set a no-contact task, introduce limited contact, and close with a short shared phrase. The approach is a pedagogical proposal rather than proof of measured learning gains. Future work could use observation rubrics, pupil interviews, teacher reflection, or comparisons across songs and grade levels [1][3].

References

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