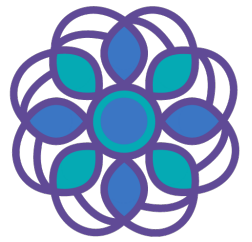


*A Constructivism-Influenced Approach  
for Beginning-Level Online  
Middle Eastern Dance Students*

Prepared by Jennifer Alton

*Master of Education in Instructional Design Capstone  
Presented to the Teachers College Faculty of Western Governors University*

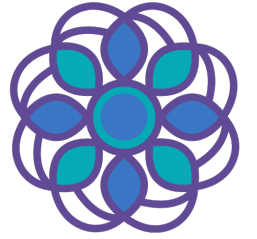


Through experiences in teaching adult female beginning-level Middle Eastern dance students, the study author has found that these students struggle to have any confidence in their ability to begin creatively participating in the art, like through the creation of their own simple choreography. This general lack of creative confidence is then compounded for students using online pre recorded beginning-level Middle Eastern dance instruction for several reasons:

1. Pre recorded online material does not provide the physical presence of the instructor or allow for direct feedback.
2. Available pre recorded classes are usually a one-time experience (e.g. single presentation in a full 60-90 minute style class such as would be available on a DVD or digital download) or a series (e.g. collection of demonstrated beginning-level material such as would be available on YouTube) with a particular instructor, and these classes typically do not offer any plan for ongoing practice with the material learned after the student has completed the single class or series.
3. The goal of the instruction is usually for the student to sufficiently master the presented steps, combos, and/or choreography in order to perform them simultaneously with the instructor on the screen. No instruction on creatively using what has been taught to produce new dance material is given.

In keeping with current trends toward constructivist-style teaching practices in dance pedagogy (El Raheb et al., 2019) (Chao et al. 2021), the study author has wanted to explore a constructivism-influenced approach to beginning-level online Middle Eastern dance instruction.

# *Problem*

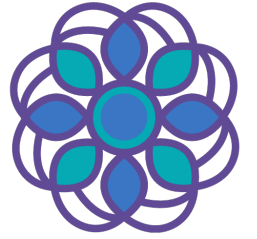


Many beginning-level adult female Middle Eastern dance students struggle to have confidence in their ability to create their own simple choreography, which would allow them to start participating creatively in the art.

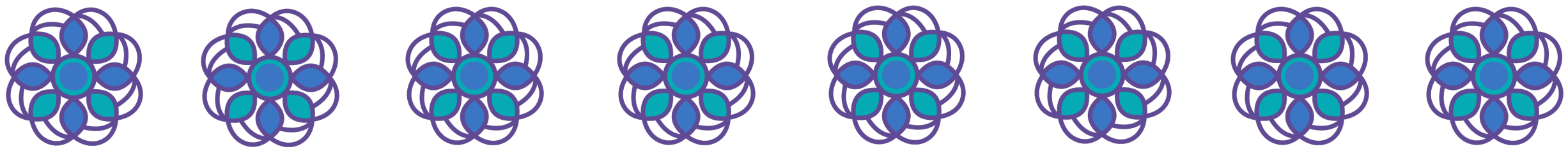
The study author believes this prevalent lack of creative confidence is problematic because it denies students the following:

1. Reaching the deeper understanding of what they are learning that would come from generative interaction with the material
2. Feeling any personal ownership of the art form because the dance is purely disseminated to them by the instructor
3. The creative outlet that Middle Eastern dance can provide and the encouragement to keep dancing which this creative outlet can feed

## *Research Question*



What is the impact of teaching a six-hour online instructional unit with constructivist elements on the confidence levels of beginning-level adult female Middle Eastern dance students to create their own simple choreography as measured by a pre- and post-instruction survey?

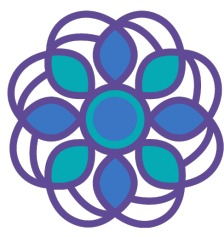
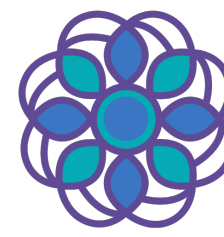
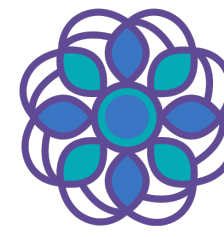
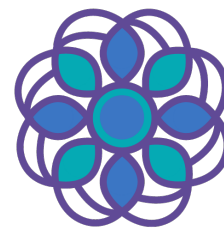
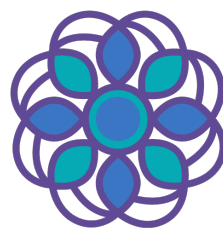
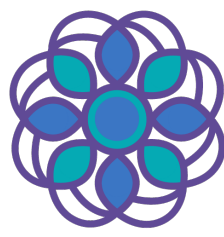
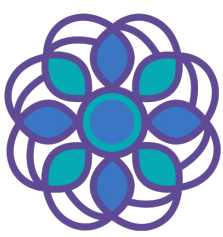
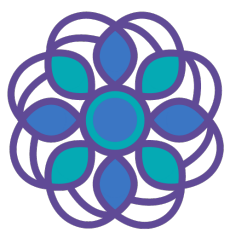


## *Instructional Unit: “Learn to Speak Basic Middle Eastern Dance”*

Following the language-learning analogy, this constructivism-influenced course sought to bolster the creative confidence of beginning-level online Middle Eastern dance students through six-hours of instruction with these methods:

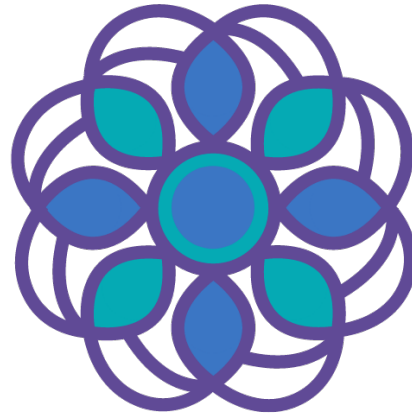
1. A systematic approach to building students’ base “vocabulary” of dance steps
2. Modeling of the effective use of dance step “vocabulary” to create combo “sentences” and choreography “statements”
3. An expansion on the demonstration-only instruction model of many dance classes by guiding the students in methodology for making their own combo “sentences” and choreography “statements”

The course was delivered through the Thinkific online learning management system (<https://www.thinkific.com/>), which allowed the students participating in the research study to complete the material in their own homes at times of their choosing. The study was scheduled to run for three and a half weeks.



# *Instructional Unit Outline*

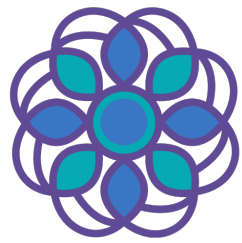
- **Introduction**
  - Welcome, Before You Start Dancing, Course Companion Guide
- **Chapter 1: Slides, Lifts, and Drops**
  - Warm-up, New Steps, Combos, Cool-down
- **Chapter 2: Circles and Crescents**
  - Warm-up, Review, New Steps, Combos, Cool-down
- **Chapter 3: Twists, Figure 8s, and Shimmies**
  - Warm-up, Review, New Steps, Combos, Cool-down
- **Chapter 4: Undulations, Arms, Traveling, and Turns**
  - Warm-up, Review, New Steps, Combos, Cool-down
- **Chapter 5: Choreography Part 1**
  - Warm-up, Review, New Choreography, Cool-down
- **Chapter 6: Choreography Part 2**
  - Warm-up, Review, New Choreography, Cool-down
- **Conclusion**
  - Memorizing the Choreography, What's Next?



## *Data Collection*

A single quantitative self-assessment survey created by the study author (“Beginning-Level Middle Eastern Dance Confidence in Choreography Creation Assessment”) was administered before and after the beginning-level online Middle Eastern dance course materials.

- The survey consisted of 10 four-point Likert scale items.
- The survey items asked the research participants to numerically rate their confidence levels about tasks related to simple Middle Eastern dance choreography creation, like their abilities to perform various types of steps, put those steps into simple original combos, and connect those combos into simple original choreography.
- The pre- and post-instruction scores for each participant were compared to demonstrate whether or not the course provoked a change in the students’ confidence levels for choreography creation.

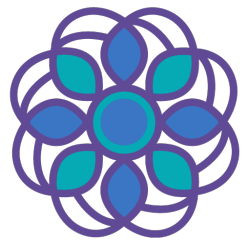


## *Analysis*

- 13 students signed the informed consent document. Of those, eight took the pre-instruction survey and began the Learn to Speak Basic Middle Eastern Dance course in Thinkific. Only five participants completed the course and took the post-instruction survey. The study was extended to four and a half weeks in order to accommodate the learners' busy schedules.
- Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the data from the five participants.
- As shown in the following tables, each participant's answers to the individual 10 items on the Beginning-Level Middle Eastern Dance Confidence in Choreography Creation Assessment pre- and post-instruction surveys were added together to create an overall pre- and post-instruction choreography creation confidence score.





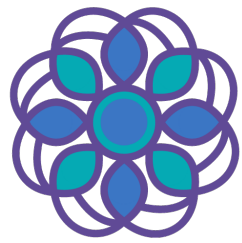


# Analysis

Table 2

*Post-instruction Survey Individual Answer Data*

Participant	ID Number	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
1	465	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	40
2	206	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	27
3	203	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	34
4	314	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	40
5	460	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	35



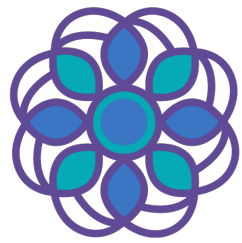
# Analysis

- The pre-instruction overall score was then subtracted from the post-instruction overall score in order to calculate the amount of change that occurred for each participant.

Table 3

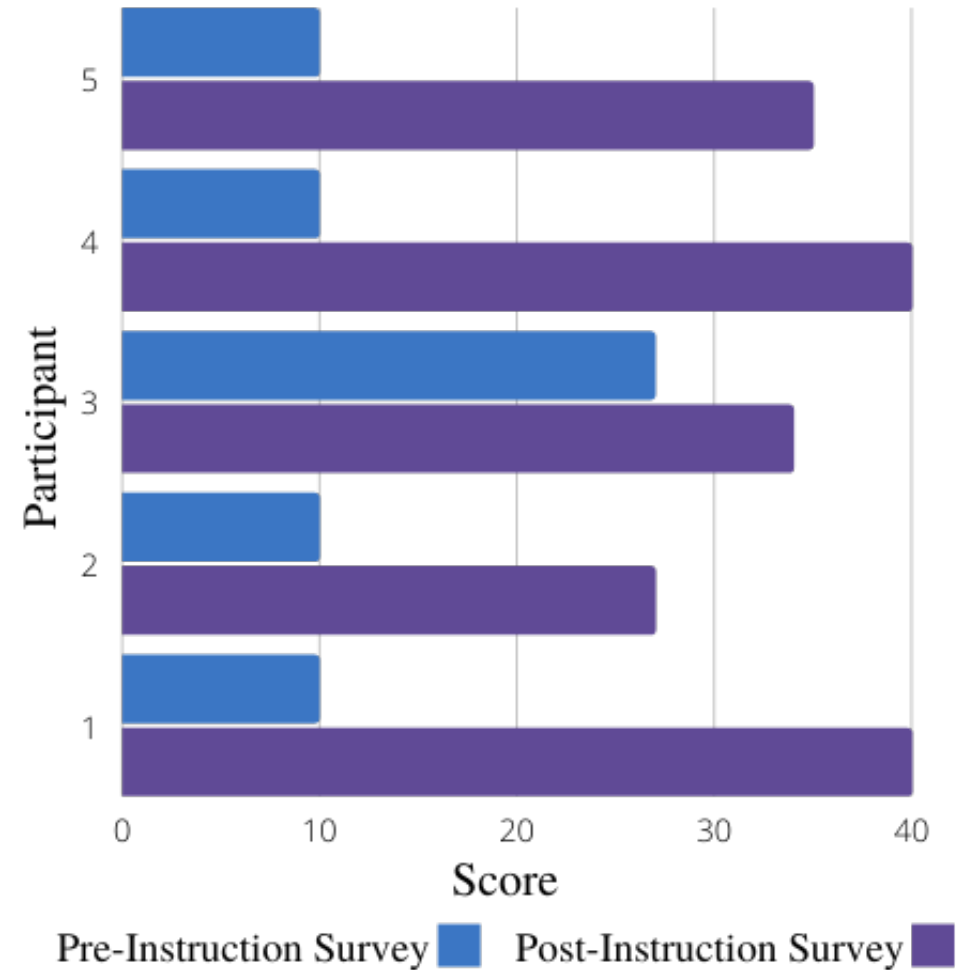
*Post-instruction Survey Individual Answer Data*

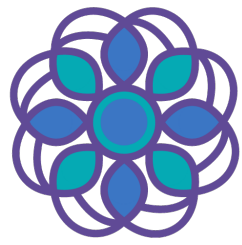
Participant	ID Number	Pre-Instruction Score	Post-Instruction Score	Difference
1	465	10	40	+30
2	206	10	27	+17
3	203	27	34	+7
4	314	10	40	+30
5	460	10	35	+25



# Analysis

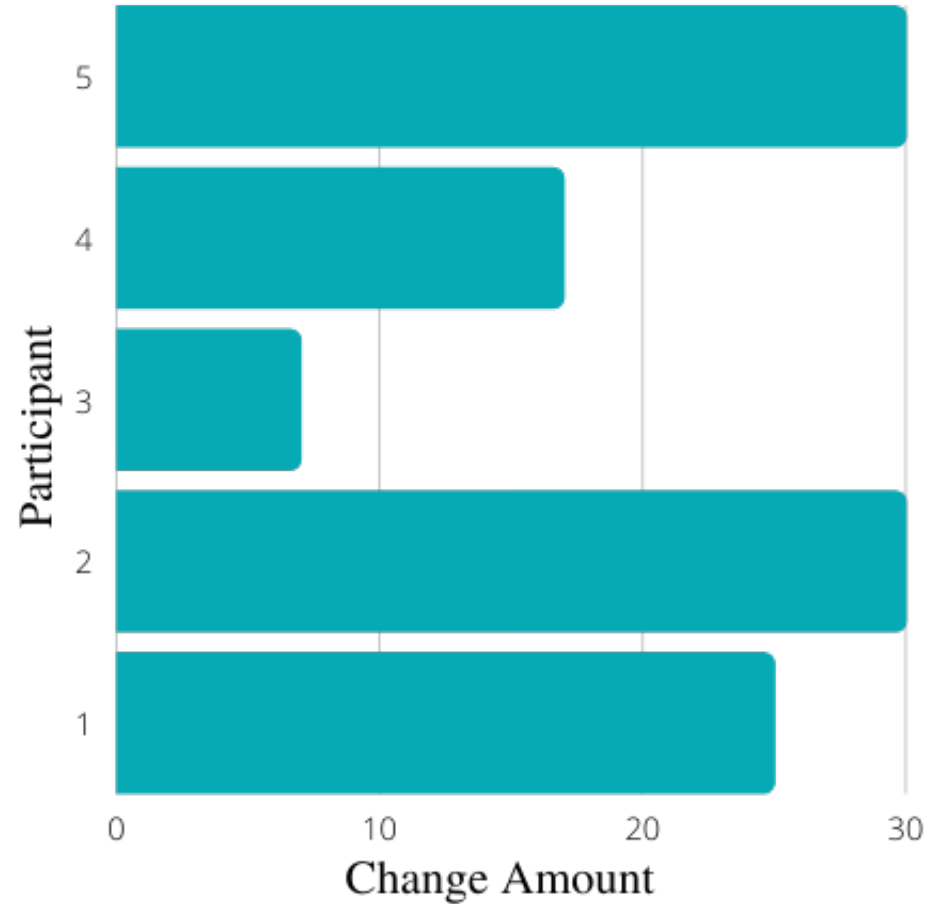
Pre- & Post-Instruction Survey Score Comparison

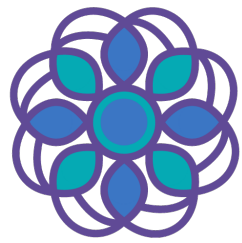




# Analysis

Change Between Pre- & Post-Instruction Scores





# *Analysis*

- The mean, median, and mode of each data type (pre-instruction, post-instruction, change amount) were calculated.

## Mean

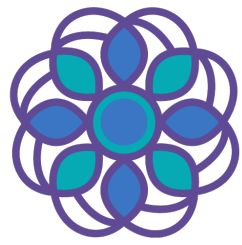
- Pre-instruction: 13.4
- Post-instruction: 35.2
- Change: +21.8

## Median

- Pre-instruction: 18.5
- Post-instruction: 33.5
- Change: +15

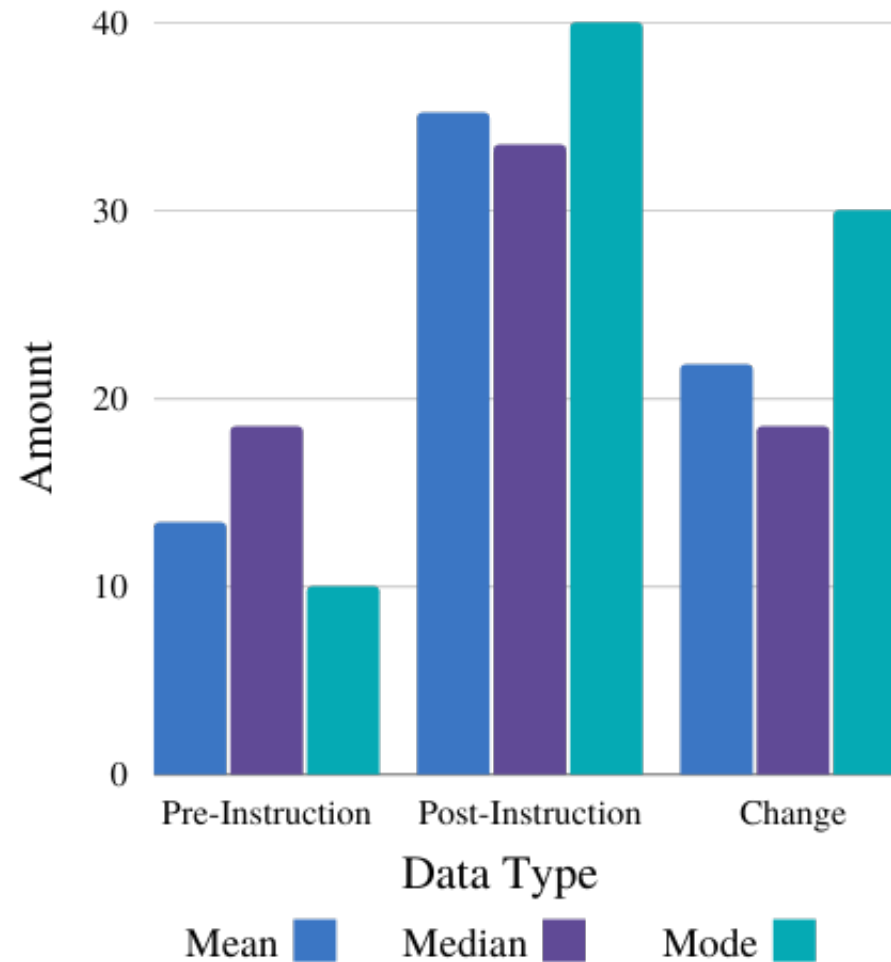
## Mode

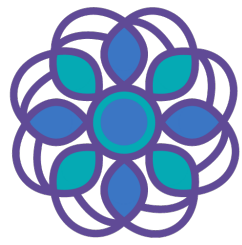
- Pre-instruction: 10
- Post-instruction: 40
- Change: +30



# Analysis

Mean/Median/Mode of Survey Scores & Change



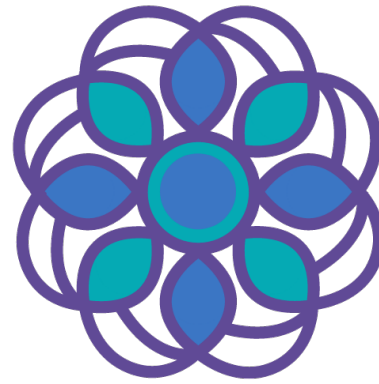


## Results

The research question for this study inquired about the impact of teaching a six-hour online instructional unit with constructivist elements on the confidence levels of beginning-level adult female Middle Eastern dance students to create their own simple choreography as measured by a pre- and post-instruction survey. While this study's design was not sufficiently strong to provide conclusive proof of a direct cause-and-effect connection, the study does suggest that this constructivism-influenced instructional approach contributed to the rise in the choreography creation confidence of the study participants. 100% of the participants logged an overall positive change in choreography creation confidence after the course, although the amount varied from student to student.

**Mean Change Amount: +21.8 choreography creation confidence points**





# *Strengths and Weaknesses*

## STRENGTHS

- The study exhibited a good alignment of its research question on choreography creation confidence with the assessment and course.
- The study married constructivist theory with dance teaching practice (Acrobatiq, 2018, p. 47).
- The study provided useful information for promoting creative choreography confidence at the local level of the study author's classes (Acrobatiq, 2018, p. 47), .

## WEAKNESSES

- The study used a small participant group with 13 participants and only five completing the study.
- The adult female students found it difficult to finish the course in the time provided.
- The study quantified a self-reported construct of choreography creation confidence instead of using an outside objective evaluation of a measurable skill.



Regardless of its strengths and weaknesses, the study provided an interesting look at the use of constructivism-influenced instruction for beginning-level Middle Eastern dance students.

The study may have been skewed by not having a completely unbiased participant group, which could have led to overreporting of positive course effects.

Participant #3's high pre-instruction survey score was another influential factor. Why that score was high is unclear, but it significantly raised the median and moderately raised the mean of the pre-instruction scores and contributed to a much lower change value for this participant.

## *Conclusions*



There are several subjects that could warrant further investigation related to this study:

- A version of this study with a larger participant group
- A version of this study with instructor-graded assessments of student performance for greater objectivity
- A version of this study with a control group of participants who received the beginning-level online Middle Eastern dance course without the constructivist elements in order to give a clearer picture of whatever differences the constructivist elements did or did not make
- A version of this study incorporating the use of simple combo and choreography creation in a face-to-face beginning-level Middle Eastern dance class, as well, in order to compare what impact the method of course delivery has on the efficacy of the constructivist elements
- A new study using these types of constructivist course elements with beginning-level students of other types of dance in order to examine whether this constructivism-influenced approach could be helpful to more than just Middle Eastern dance students

## *Conclusions*

Based on the results of the study and the study author's wishes to continue to promote creative ability and a deeper understanding of Middle Eastern dance among beginning-level students, it would be prudent for the study author to continue to include constructivist elements, like simple combo and choreography creation, in teaching this type of student. This study demonstrated how these elements might be incorporated in an online course format. When teaching face-to-face beginning-level courses that include a performance opportunity, the study author could utilize student suggestions for steps and/or combos in practice sessions and then blend them into the course choreography to be performed. Whatever the course delivery format, though, it would be easy to incorporate at least some small constructivist elements so that the students could start participating creatively in the art from the beginning of their Middle Eastern dance journeys and receive all of the benefits that this creative participation would initiate.



*Application*

# References

Acrobatiq. (2018). Research Foundations. Online Courseware accessed through Western Governors University.

Chao, H.-W., Wu, C.-C., & Tsai, C.-W. (2021). Do socio-cultural differences matter? A study of the learning effects and satisfaction with physical activity from digital learning assimilated into a university dance course. *Computers & Education*, Article 165.  
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El Raheb, K., Stergiou, M., Katifori, A., & Ioannidis, Y. (2019). Dance interactive learning systems: a study on interaction workflow and teaching approaches. *ACM Computing Surveys*, 52(3), 1-37.  
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