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# IMPROVING THE TECHNICAL TRAINING OF SPORT DANCERS AT THE SPECIALIZED BASIC TRAINING STAGE

**Lysenko A.O.,**
*sen. lect., post graduate student*
*ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7235-9985*
**Mishyn M.V.,**
*c.sc.phys.educ., as.prof.*
*ORCID: https://0000-0002-8908-6861*
*Scopus ID: https://57204430627*
**Horbenko O.V.,**
*c.ped.sc., as.prof.*
*ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5194-6141*
*Kharkiv State Academy of Physical Culture, Kharkiv, Klochkivska, 99, 61058*
**Shkuryeyev K.I.,**
*c.st.art.*
*ORCID.ORG/ https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6574-7955*
**Shyrokovska O.M.,**
*sen. lect.*
*ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8021-9472*
*Kharkiv State Academy of Culture, Kharkiv, Bursatskyi yzvviz, 4, 61000*

*Abstract. The article discusses the improvement of the technical training of sport dancers at the stage of specialized basic training. Through the analysis of scientific and methodological literature, a number of classifications used in sport dances were identified, which contribute to a deeper understanding of the structure and technique of performing dance movements. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the developed technique models are based on the use of single actions that consider the specifics of learning and training each figure and element. These models were tested in the training process of an experimental group of athletes at the stage of specialized basic training. Expert evaluation and statistical analysis of learning outcomes were carried out to assess the effectiveness of using single actions. The obtained data confirm the effectiveness of the developed models, manifested in significant statistically reliable differences in the levels of technical preparedness and competitive results between the main and control groups in favor of the former (p<0.05). This allows concluding that the technique of performing figures in the control and main groups differs significantly in favor of the latter. According to the proposed classification of movements in sport dances, a system of preparatory exercises for studying the figures of the Latin American program was developed. The use of these preparatory exercises at the stage of specialized basic training showed high efficiency in six out of seven figures, compared to the generally accepted methodology (p<0.05). It has been proven that the use of single actions in the technical training of sport dancers at the stage of specialized basic training is effective.*
*Keywords: sport dances, technical training, single actions, specialized basic training stage.*

**Introduction**

Modern competitive programs place high demands on sport dancers, particularly in the development of key physical qualities such as coordination, speed, flexibility, and endurance. They also require a high level of functional capabilities of the body,

which ensures the effective performance of complex dance elements. The integration of exercises from other related sports is important for achieving maximum results, as it contributes to the formation of a universal physical base necessary for the performance of competitive programs [1, 19, 25].

The current level of development of sport dances requires a scientifically grounded approach to the creation of specialized methods that cover all aspects of sport dancers' training. The development of such methods will contribute to the formation of athletes who can achieve the highest results at the international level [2, 6, 9, 18].

In sport dances, performance results are determined by judges based on subjective evaluation, which considers the accuracy of movement execution, the level of their complexity, aesthetic appeal, harmony, and artistry of the dance program. This approach emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the performance, combining sports and artistic aspects, but at the same time, it may depend on the judges' personal preferences and professional experience [4, 8].

Technical training in sport dances is complicated by the need to master a significant number of complex motor actions that require not only individual skill but also harmonious interaction with a partner. An additional difficulty is the performance of these actions to musical accompaniment, which requires maintaining rhythm, tempo, and synchronicity, as well as preserving aesthetics and style in each movement [5, 15, 21].

To date, there are insufficient studies related to technical training in sport dances, which leads to the spontaneous organization of the training process. This requires more in-depth scientific study and the development of clear training methods.

Thus, the purpose of the research is to substantiate the effectiveness of technical training of sport dancers at the Specialized Basic Training Stage (SBTS) based on the use of preparatory exercises and single actions as key methods that contribute to the improvement of technical training quality.

**Main text**

The issues and various aspects of improving the special physical and technical training of athletes in different sports and at different stages of sports development are

studied by a large number of both domestic and foreign scientists. Among them, it is worth noting the works of Demidova O. [3], Hrytsyshyn T. [5], Kaluzhna O. [6], Kizim P., Gumeniuk S., Batieieva N. [9], Osadtsev T. [18], Platonov V. [20], Todorova V. [25], Trakaliuk T. [27], Gider P. (2012), Nystrom A. (2019), Trautz R. (2021), Novak A. (2021), Setsuko T. PhD (2022), Chan C. (2023), Dr. Rehder O. (2023) and others. In particular, their research focuses on the development of optimal training programs, methods for developing key physical qualities, improving technical skills, and taking into account the specifics of each sport.

Modern sport dances are classified as a type of sport and include 10 different dances, which are divided into two main programs: European (Standard or Ballroom) and Latin American (Latin). Competitions in sport dances are held in three programs: European, Latin American, and the Ten Dances program [16].

One of the key aspects of technical training of athletes is the ability to maintain body stability in static poses and during various movements. This includes balancing skills and body control during turns, which are important for achieving movement quality, elegance, and technical mastery [2, 25, 27].

Today, the basis for describing the technique of sport dances is various classifications of figures and variations, which allow systematizing dance elements depending on their complexity, technical characteristics, and principles of performance. Such classifications are important for the training process as they help organize learning, plan competition programs, and assess athletes' technical achievements [20, 22].

The classification of figures for each dance by level of difficulty is used in training programs, qualification competitions, and during exams for teacher qualifications. The simplest figures belong to the BRONZE program – classification level N-class and E-class, from which the study of dances begins. The more complex SILVER program has a classification level of D-class. For highly qualified dancers, the GOLD program figures are provided with a classification level of C-class [16, 23, 28].

In the scientific and methodological literature on training in sport dances, there is not enough systematic information, most of which is fragmentary. Usually, it is limited

to descriptions of basic positions, figures, and simple compositions [16, 18]. Meanwhile, little attention is paid to methods, means, and the sequence of their study and performance. Therefore, it is necessary to develop additional methodological approaches and means of technical training of athletes, which should take into account the specifics of competitive activities and be based on the general patterns of forming motor skills and abilities.

Summarizing the opinions of various authors, it can be argued that the process of learning motor actions consists of three main stages, corresponding to different levels of mastering the technique: representation, ability, and skills. Each of these stages involves the gradual acquisition and improvement of motor actions, starting from their awareness and representation, through the formation of basic abilities, to automated and highly accurate skills.

Each stage of athlete training has its specifics, which the coach must take into account, particularly by drawing the athlete's attention to those action elements being studied, as their successful performance depends on them. The objects that require attention during motor actions are called "Basic Single Actions" (BSA). Their combination forms the "Orientational Foundation of Action" (OFA).

In the case of spontaneous learning or learning by trial and error, the athlete independently and randomly highlights BSAs, which may include both correct and incorrect Single Actions, and the number of these actions may be either insufficient or excessive. Therefore, a comprehensive training program is one that provides the necessary and sufficient number of correct Single Actions to achieve high technical mastery and effective performance of movements [3, 16].

For creating a movement technique model in sport dances, they were systematized by three criteria: movement complexity, involved body parts, and the nature of partner interaction.

Based on Single Actions (SA), verbal models of the technique for performing figures of the Latin American program were developed and experimentally tested for their effectiveness at the SBTS.

A set of preparatory exercises aimed at effective mastering of the technique for performing figures of the Latin American program using the method of SA was developed.

To improve the technique for performing figures of the Latin American program dances, models of the technique for performing figures and elements in the Cha-Cha-Cha, Jive, and Rumba dances were developed. The models are presented in the format of a system of SA, with indications of possible mistakes in their performance. The effectiveness of using SA was experimentally confirmed.

The use of SA in sport dances is an effective tool, considering the features of competitive activity, as it requires focusing on individual moments during performance.

Based on a detailed analysis of many figures, those figures and elements that have different structures and performance features were selected for checking the effectiveness of using SA. These figures are part of the training program for sport dancers and serve as a basis for further improvement of more complex elements at the SBTS.

The SA was analyzed by us for the following figures and elements [11, 12, 24]:

1) In the Cha-Cha-Cha dance: the Forward Lock and Backward Lock elements.

2) In the Jive dance: Fallaway Rock ( "Basic Step") and American Spin.

3) In the Rumba dance: Closed Basic Movement (ISTD).

According to the general patterns of skill formation, the learning process is divided into three stages:

1) The initial study stage, lasting 3-4 sessions, aimed at forming the basics of ability, including mastering BSA and performing basic motor actions without errors.

2) The in-depth detailed study stage (5-6 sessions) involves forming the ability and relatively complete mastering of both individual details and the technique as a whole, with a partial transition to skill.

3) The consolidation and further improvement stage ensures perfect mastery of the action in real performance conditions, as well as, if necessary, its further improvement.

At the first stage of studying the Closed Basic Movement in the Rumba dance, we propose four SA:

1) The body weight (BW) is always on one (immovable) leg, the other leg without BW (movable).

2) On the count of "1" – pause, continue standing on the immovable leg.

3) All steps are performed from the ball of the foot, the foot is flat (no rises and falls).

4) During the transfer of the movable leg from one position to another, it must be brought to the immovable leg.

At the second stage, four SA are also developed:

1) The movable leg is placed to the side, or back, or forward on the ball of the foot; heel turned inward.

2) The movable leg is brought to the immovable leg on the floor on the ball of the foot.

3) The knee of the immovable leg is always straight, i.e., "locked".

4) During the transfer of BW from one leg to another, it is necessary to push off with the ball of the immovable leg to quickly transfer BW, while the movable leg should remain straight with the toe pointed.

Finally, at the third stage, the technique for performing the figure is perfected over time until the athlete reaches the following evaluation criteria:

1) Each step is performed using the work of the hips and shoulders. The shoulder-to-hip distance during contraction should decrease (contraction), i.e., the right shoulder lowers to the right hip, the left shoulder to the left hip.

2) When bringing the movable leg to the immovable one, the bent knee should be lowered as low as possible. At the same time, the vertical axis of the body, which passes along the spine, should remain straight, without tilting.

When mastering this figure, it is important to consider potential mistakes:

a) Sometimes the immovable leg bends.

b) Steps are performed from the heel.

c) Sometimes the leg is not brought when transferring from one position to

another.

d) A step is performed on the count of "1".

e) The body is too tense.

f) The vertical axis of the body is constantly changing and tilting.

As mentioned earlier, each figure studied using basic single actions forms the basis for mastering more complex elements. For example, on the basis of the Closed Basic Movement of the Rumba dance, figures such as Alemana, Check from Open CPP, Spot Turn to R, Spot Turn to L, Fan, etc., can be improved [13, 24].

Each SA in training has its own keyword, which becomes understandable for the athlete and contributes to faster movement correction.

It should be noted that, in addition to studying SA, typical mistakes were also identified, as well as ways to prevent and correct them.

As our observations show, most sport dance coaches gradually improve basic figures and practically do not use special Preparatory Exercises (PE). Special PE allows athletes to focus on individual elements of movements, improving coordination, accuracy, and efficiency of figure execution, which in turn contributes to faster mastery of complex technical aspects.

Preparatory physical exercises are specially designed exercises that help athletes easily master the technique of complex basic (competitive) exercises. The main requirement for PE is their similarity in the coordination of the neuromuscular system to the corresponding basic exercises [10, 26].

In the conducted studies, the feature of training athletes was the use of specially designed PE aimed at effectively mastering and improving the technique of performing Latin American dance figures. Based on the detailed analysis of various figures to check the effectiveness of using PE, the main dance figures with differences in structure and performance features were selected: 1 – Cucarachas; 2 – Volta; 3 – Whisks to L and R; 4 – American Spin; 5 – Flicks in to Break; 6 – Check from Open CPP, Check from Open PP (L.); 7 – Three Threes finished in Fan Position. They are improved at the stage of specialized basic training and serve as the basis for further study of more complex elements.

The positions and work of the feet are shown in Table 1 [17]. However, this is not the case for the figure Cucarachas Forward, where all steps: ball, flat.

The first step of the Cucarachas Forward figure is a broken forward step.

**Table 1 – Figure Cucarachas (Pressure Steps)**

| Step | Foot Position | Footwork | Turn Amount | Count |
|------|--------------|----------|-------------|-------|
| 1 | Left foot (LF) to the side, partially transfer BW | Ball, Flat | None | 2 |
| 2 | Transfer BW to RF | Flat | -- | 3 |
| 3 | Close LF to RF | Ball, Flat | -- | 4.1 |

*Source: [17]*

The partner starts from a closed position facing each other, feet together, Body Weight (BW) on the Right Foot (RF).

To improve this figure, the following exercises are suggested:

• For the head (Dosage: 6-8 times over 4-5 sessions).

• For arms (Dosage: 8-10 times each arm over 5-7 sessions).

• For the torso (Dosage: 10-15 times each exercise over 3-5 sessions).

• For legs (Dosage: 15-20 times over 3-5 sessions).

These exercises were studied in the following sequence: first exercises for legs and torso, then for arms and head. Once mastered, all suggested exercises are included in the warm-up during sessions of the Latin American sport dance program. It is important to note that the description of PE used our developed classification of movements in the Latin American sport dance program, which helped systematize the approach to learning and technique improvement.

To determine the quality of the execution of the main figures, the criteria for judging (mistakes in element execution) in sport dances were taken as the basis and adapted [8]. Considering the specifics of sport dances, we differentiated the evaluation criteria of figure execution in general technique and details. As a result, a seven-point scale for expert evaluation of figure execution quality was developed (Table 2).

**Table 2 – Scale for expert evaluation of figure execution quality**

| Score | Evaluation Criteria |
|---|---|
| 1 | Non-performance of the dance figure |
| 2 | Incorrect structure of figure performance |
| 3 | Gross errors in the basic technique or a series of significant errors in its details |
| 4 | Significant errors in the basic technique and gross errors in the details of the technique |
| 5 | Minor errors in the basic technique and details of the technique |
| 6 | Minor errors in the details of the technique |
| 7 | Flawless performance of the figure |

*Source: [8]*

Testing was conducted before and after the improvement of figures such as Whisks to L & R, Volta, and Cucarachas. The quality of technique mastery of the remaining four selected figures (American Spin, Flicks in to Break, Check from Open CPP, Check from Open PP, and Three Threes finished in Fan Position) was determined once – after, as their study and improvement occurred in parallel.

In the MG, improvement was done using our developed preparatory exercises, while in the CG, traditional methods of repeated practice and error correction were used.

Comparison of the mean scores of the quality of performance by athletes in the MG and CG for the first three figures before improvement (Table 3) shows that overall results do not have significant differences. However, the Whisks to L & R figure was generally better performed by athletes in the CG, while the Volta and Cucarachas figures were slightly better performed by athletes in the MG.

After improving the figures over nearly four months, with different training methods in each group, a significant improvement in the results of the MG athletes compared to the CG was observed. This indicates the positive impact of the applied training methods, particularly the use of preparatory exercises, on the technical preparedness of the athletes.

**Table 3 – Results of Statistical Analysis of Figure Performance Technique Scores by Athletes in the CG and MG**

| Figures | $X\pm\sigma$ Control Group | | Abs. Diff. | $X\pm\sigma$ Main Group | | Abs. Diff. | $t$ | $p$ | $t$ | $p$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Before | After | | Before | After | | Before | Before | After | After |
| Whisks | 3,26±1,1 | 4,0±1,00 | 0,7 | 3,07±1,07 | 4,19±1,14 | 1,2 | 0,628 | 0,533 | 0,633 | 0,529 |
| Volta | 3,07±0,78 | 3,78±0,75 | 0,7 | 3,22±0,93 | 4,44±0,93 | 1,2 | 0,632 | 0,530 | 2,891 | 0,006 |
| Cucarachas | 3,63±0,97 | 4,33±0,92 | 0,7 | 3,67±0,83 | 5,0±0,88 | 1,3 | 0,151 | 0,881 | 2,725 | 0,009 |

*Author's Development*

Such results highlight the effectiveness of the developed methodology in the context of specialized basic training and give grounds to assert that the use of single actions in the training process promotes faster mastery and improvement of technical elements, which directly affects the competitive results of athletes (see Table 3). As can be seen from the table, the nature of changes in scores in relative values is similar. This means that the trend towards improving the results of athletes in the MG compared to the CG is stable and consistent, regardless of whether we are talking about absolute or relative changes (Figure 1).
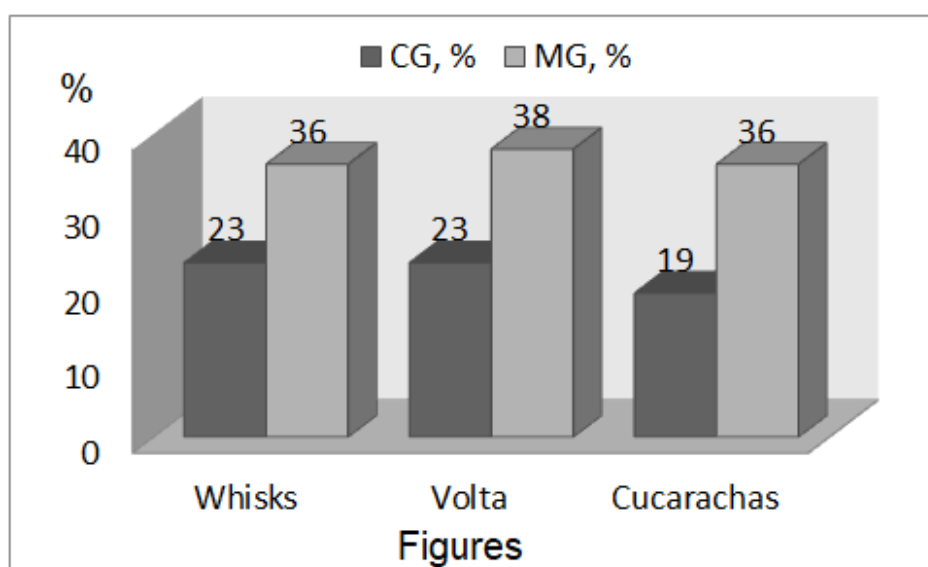


**Figure 1 – Dynamics of Performance Technique Growth Indicators of Sport Dance Athletes**

*Author's Development*

After the experiment, a significant difference between the groups was found in the scores for performing the Whisks to L & R, as well as the Volta and Cucarachas figures. The significance level for these figures is much lower than the generally accepted value of 0.05, and the calculated t-value of the Student's t-test is higher than the critical value. This indicates that the effectiveness of using preparatory exercises for training the Whisks to L & R figure in this experiment was insufficient. However, the positive effect of using PE is clearly manifested during the training of the Volta and Cucarachas figures. In particular, this result indicates that the PE used in the experimental group significantly improve the performance of dance figures and elements compared to traditional training methods, confirming their effectiveness in the process of specialized basic training of athletes.

The assessment of the reliability of the difference in mean scores for the other four figures involves comparing the performance results of the figures: American Spin, Flicks in to Break, Check from Open CPP, Check from Open PP, Three Threes finished in Fan Position.

**Table 4 – Results of Statistical Analysis of Technique Performance Scores of Figures by Athletes in the CG and MG**

| Figures | Indicators | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Control Group | | | Main Group | | |
| | $X\pm\sigma$ | SW-W | $p$ | $X\pm\sigma$ | SW-W | $p$ |
| American Spin | 3,63±0,88 | 0,8766 | 0,0041 | 4,85±0,77 | 0,8031 | 0,0002 |
| Flicks in to Break | 3,26±1,26 | 0,8756 | 0,0039 | 4,56±1,01 | 0,9074 | 0,0198 |
| Check from CPP/PP | 3,44±0,89 | 0,8830 | 0,0056 | 4,67±0,96 | 0,8811 | 0,0051 |
| Three Threes | 3,33±1,14 | 0,9359 | 0,0965 | 4,63±1,15 | 0,8919 | 0,0088 |

*Author's Development*

The statistical processing of the research results was conducted using parametric statistics methods. The Student's t-test and the Shapiro-Wilk test were used for comparing arithmetic means, allowing us to check whether there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores in the CG and MG.

Let's analyze the technique performance scores of athletes in the MG and CG for the following four figures: American Spin, Flicks in to Break, Check from Open CPP,

Check from Open PP, Three Threes finished in Fan Position. Recall that these figures were studied simultaneously in two groups: in the MG, special PE was used, while in the CG, these exercises were not applied. This approach allows us to assess the effectiveness of using PE in the training process. When comparing the arithmetic mean scores of the CG and MG for each figure based on the data in Table 4, we note a difference in the results in favor of the MG. This confirms the effectiveness of using special PE in the learning and training process.

**Conclusion**

Special attention should be paid to the scientific and methodological justification of specific techniques for the technical training of sport dancers, which will allow improving the educational process and increasing training efficiency.

The identification of SA and the development of PE contributed to the creation of models for performing dance movements and the improvement of the technical training program.

Experimental research on the application of the model for performing figures and elements of the Latin American program at the SBTS, using the fragmentation of figures in the form of a system of SA, demonstrated a significant advantage of this methodology compared to traditional approaches to figure study ($p < 0.05$).

According to the proposed classification of movements in sport dances, a system of PE was developed for studying the figures of the Latin American program. The use of these PE at the SBTS showed high effectiveness in six out of seven figures, compared to the generally accepted methodology ($p < 0.05$).

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**Анотація.** *У статті розглянуто вдосконалення технічної підготовки спортсменів спортивних танців на етапі спеціалізованої базової підготовки. За підсумками дослідження можна зробити висновок, що розроблені моделі техніки базуються на використанні одиничних дій, що враховують специфіку навчання та тренування кожної фігури й елемента. Здійснено експертне оцінювання та статистичний аналіз результатів навчання для оцінки ефективності використанні одиничних дій. Встановлено, що отримані дані підтверджують ефективність розроблених моделей, що проявляється у суттєвих статистично достовірних відмінностях у рівнях технічної підготовленості та змагальних результатів між основною та контрольною групами на користь першої (р<0,05). Це дозволяє зробити висновок, що техніка виконання фігур у контрольній і основній групах суттєво відрізняється на користь останньої. Згідно запропонованої класифікації рухів у спортивних танцях, було розроблено систему підвідних вправ для вивчення фігур латиноамериканської програми. Використання цих підвідних вправ на етапі спеціалізованої базової підготовки показало високу ефективність у шести з семи фігур, порівняно із загальноприйнятою методикою (р<0,05). Доведено, що застосування одиничних дій у технічній підготовці спортсменів спортивних танців на етапі спеціалізованої базової підготовки виявляється ефективним. значення меморіально-етнічного туризму як на національному так і на міжнародному рівні.*

**Ключові слова:** *спортивні танці, технічна підготовка, одиничні дії, етап спеціалізованої базової підготовки.*