



## LANGUAGE AND PHILOSOPHY OF DANCE

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### Abstract

Είναι δυνατόν να μελετηθεί η σχέση γλώσσας – χορού; **Γλώσσα – Χορός – Επικοινωνία**: είναι η τριάδα που διαμορφώνει την έννοια του πολιτισμού. Στην *Ποιητική* (*Poet.* 1447a), ο Αριστοτέλης αναφέρει ότι ο χορός είναι ένα είδος ρυθμικής κίνησης, για την αναπαράσταση του ανθρώπινου χαρακτήρα, των ανθρώπινων πράξεων και αισθημάτων.

Ο χορός είναι η γλώσσα του σώματος, ένα είδος επικοινωνιακού κώδικα και «πολιτισμικού παλίμψηστου». Συνεπώς, η μελέτη του χορού είναι εφικτή μέσα από την σύγκρισή της με την γλώσσα. Ο Saussure τονίζει ότι η γλώσσα είναι ένα σύστημα σημείων που εκφράζουν ιδέες και ο χορός μέσα από την κίνηση δημιουργεί σημεία που εκφράζουν συναισθήματα και ιδέες. Στην παρούσα εργασία δύο είναι οι μελέτες περίπτωσης που παρουσιάζονται:

1. Ο χορός της Ανατολής (Oriental)
2. Η ταραντέλα (Tarantella)



Οι ερευνητικοί στόχοι που τίθενται σε αυτή την μελέτη είναι οι ακόλουθοι:

1. Ο χορός είναι πολιτισμικό επιβίωμα (cultural relict)
2. Ο χορός αποτελεί ένα σύστημα ιδεών και συμβόλων
3. Ο χορός είναι επικοινωνιακό μέσο, με ιστορία, δομή και λειτουργία

**Keywords:** language, dance, communication, dance semiotics

## Introduction

In history, linguistics<sup>1</sup> and classical philology,<sup>2</sup> dance is considered as a cultural element, as a lexeme and as a term related with theatre, public feasts, ceremonies, private or public performances and philosophical theories. Scholars in Classical Philology, Ethnography, Linguistics, in Greece, didn't study dance systematically, but they stressed on the following research points. These are: the relation between Ancient, Medieval and Modern Greek, the development of the Unity of the Greek Language by G. Hatzidakis and the conception of language as a factor that leads to the maintenance of national identity. People, in the recent past, considered dance as something "strange", as something that is not an object of research.<sup>3</sup> This mentality

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Alinei (2006) considers dance as part of the performance of the Etruscan actors (histriones) and illustrates the semantic fields of this term: [...] Il nucleo comune alle due nozioni dell' *histrion* e del *ludio*, insomma, rappresenta il punto di incontro fra diversi campi semantico-concettuali: (i) il 'gioco', in generale, inteso come ripetizione di un rito *sui generis* sulla base di un complesso di regole; (ii) tutte le diverse forme concrete del 'gioco', cioè principalmente la 'recitazione', il 'mimo', la 'danza', la 'musica' e ogni forma di 'competizione' o 'gara', sia intellettuale che fisica; (iii) la 'scuola', intesa come luogo in cui si imparano tutte le regole." (Alinei, 2006 : 13).

<sup>2</sup> Delavaud – Roux, M. – H. 1991. Recherches sur la danse dans l'Antiquité grecque. Thèse de doctorat, 3vol. Marseille : Université d'Aix – Marseille. Latte, K. 1913. *De Saltationibus Graecorum Capita Cinque – Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*, 13 Giessen: A. Topelman. Farrington, B. 1947. *Head and hand in Ancient Greece*. London: Watts. Festa, V., *Sikinnis: Storia di un'antica danza* – Memoria letta alla R. Accademia di Archeologia, Napoli, 1915:37 – 74.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in Greece, in the past, the fact that a researcher used to study the performance of the Greek dances was considered as "strange" or "one who appreciated part of the popular Greek sub - culture" (gr. υποκουλτούρα). From the point of view of the people of the lower strata, the researcher is seen with sympathy and many people want to help him. The same thing happened to me, when i was doing field research in Apulia and Basilicata for the Tarantella, but also in Greece, while i was doing field research for the history of belly dancing and tsifteteli. For many years, in Greece, the



persists, unfortunately, in our days, either in school and academic environment.

I think that Classical Philology, Linguistics, and History can unite their forces, to explain the origin and the development not only of the Greek Dance, but of all the forms of dance in every culture.

### **Hypotheses/Research Questions**

I was asking myself for a long time, if there is a relationship between language and dance. So, I formulated the following questions. Is it possible to study the relationship between language and dance? Is dance a form of language? Can Semiotics be a useful instrument for dance research?

### **Theoretical frame/Methodology - Language and Dance: one relationship – many aspects**

Language and Dance constitute the basic elements of the human civilization. All ancient civilizations attached great importance to the dance as a ritual or artistic kind. Dance was a complement of linguistic expression which accompanied the "rituals of transition" (rites of passage).<sup>4</sup> The rituals of transition covered all the expressions of social life. For linguistics and anthropology, dance is communicative medium. Dance constitutes a channel of communication of messages, of ideas, of myths, of feelings and of historical events. Every people have its own dances that constitute a kind of 'sociolect'. In every dance, there are codified structures that can be interpreted through the procedure of codification. Codification is necessary for the

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dancer was part of the lower strata of social structure. Male dancers were considered as marginal and effeminated, and female dancers were considered as prostitutes. Every attempt to describe the social status of the dancers was an effort to describe the world of the marginal people. Only in the '90s these taboos ceased to exist, due to the research conducted by scholars (such as the Dora Stratou scholars) and by university professors, like Tyrovola (2001) and Lazou (1989).

<sup>4</sup> The term «rites de passage» refers to linguistic and anthropological research, to express the changes of a person during his life, i.e. the transition from a socio-cultural situation to another. Furthermore, the term may indicate changes associated with the cycle of life and changes in social roles (e.g. the passage from high school to university, graduating from university, doctorate, and others).

Arnold Van Gennep (1873 – 1957) a French linguist and anthropologist, introduced for the first time the term "rite de passage" in linguistics and anthropology. cf. Van Gennep, A. 1909. *Les rites de passage : étude systématique*. Paris, E. Nourry.



comprehension of dance structures, called ‘patterns’. People that watch a dance performance can use the decodification procedure, to analyze and understand the sequence of dance movements. Every sequence of rhythmic dance movements is called «patterns»<sup>5</sup> and organized as a system. Patterns are formed by a sequence of steps and movements that create different shapes, either on air, either on the floor (Jones, 2013: 18).

Many groups of steps and movements form the «routine»<sup>6</sup> (Jones, 2013: 18).

The study of the language in relation to the dance is part of the theory of communication and can be defined in the following pair:<sup>7</sup>

**Formula - [Lang + Da = W + En]<sup>8</sup>**

### Language and dance: approaches and theories

To highlight the relationship between language and dance, the following methodological approaches can be used:

<sup>5</sup> Cf. «Encyclopedia Britannica»: **Root and Pattern System** In linguistics, one of several methods for creating the stems, or most elementary forms, of words. (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1462433/root-and-pattern-system#ref1023817>) [pāt-tern] n.m. invar. **1.** schema che rappresenta un modello di riferimento.

**2.** (inform.) modello che definisce la disposizione di caratteri di una stringa

**3.** (mus.) giro armonico o melodico dato da un numero di battute (che varia a seconda del genere e dello stile musicale) che si ripetono

**Etimologia:** ← voce ingl.; propr. ‘modello, tipo’.

<http://www.garzantilinguistica.it/ricerca/?q=pattern> cf. also Rastall (2006: 30 – 31):

"[la langue] est un objet bien défini dans l'ensemble hétéroclite des faits du langage. On peut la localiser dans la portion déterminée du circuit où une image auditive vient s'associer à un concept...

"La langue, distincte de la parole, est un objet qu'on peut étudier séparément." [...]

<sup>6</sup> Cf. OED. s.v. routine /roo'tēn/A sequence of actions regularly followed; a fixed program. A set sequence in a performance such as a dance or comedy act.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rastall (2006: 23 – 28) Hjelmslev [23] Louis Hjelmslev, 1968, *Prolégomènes à une théorie...* points out, this analytical orientation towards the means of communication, as opposed to the content, is difficult because "le langage veut être ignoré. C'est sa destination naturelle d'être un moyen et non un but". This analysis of language as communication leads us to language *as pattern*. It is the sense of "language as pattern" [...] It is easy to see that different researchers might devote their attention to one or other of these phases of the linguistic process. "Language"

can be seen in

— the communicative event;

— the rational analysis of the communicational event, and

— the rational analysis of the *content* (or indeed the logical form) of the frozen communicational event.

<sup>8</sup> Analysis of the formula: Lang (Language) + Dan (Dance) = W (Work) + En (Energy).

Language is work, the production of the writing or the oral discourse, that can be transformed into energy (dance).



## 1. the philological method

## 2. the etymological method

## 3. The Theory of Anthropological Competence

## 4. Jakobson's theory of language functions

Philology combines literary criticism, history, and linguistics. With the help of this method it is possible to record the written sources that include testimonies about dance history.<sup>9</sup>

Etymology is useful for a detailed analysis of all these terms that are related to dance (i.e. dance terms, steps names, names of dance movements). Giannakis states that etymology is:

« [...] Η ετυμολογική διαδικασία είναι ουσιαστικά μια διαδικασία ανά – λυσης και διά – κρισης (πβ. τη σημασία του ρ. κρίνω 'ξεχωρίζω, διαχωρίζω, αποφαίνομαι· βγάζω απόφαση'). Παράλληλα οι διαδικασίες της ανάλυσης και της διάκρισης αποτελούν μέσα για τον καθορισμό των σχέσεων ανάμεσα στα μέλη ενός συνόλου. Με τον τρόπο αυτό, τα μέρη είναι λειτουργικά στοιχεία ενός συνόλου, και αυτό οδηγεί σε μια αμφίδρομη διαδικασία ανάλυσης και σύνθεσης.

<sup>9</sup> Contini, s.v. Filologia (*Enc. Ital.* 1977), declares that philology is a reconstruction of a past:

“Per un lato essa è ricostruzione o costruzione di un ‘passato’ e sancisce, anzi introduce, una distanza fra l’osservatore e l’oggetto; per altro verso, conforme alla sentenza crociana che ogni storia sia storia contemporanea, essa ripropone o propone la ‘presenza’ dell’oggetto. La filologia moderna vive, non di necessità inconsciamente, questo problematismo esistenziale.” ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/filologia\\_\(Enciclopedia-del-Novecento\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/filologia_(Enciclopedia-del-Novecento))).

The term «dance history» is part of a discipline, called «dance studies». For a complete presentation of the history of the term, cf. Adshead – Lansdale, J., Layson, J. (1994: 1 – 5). Adshead – Lansdale and Layson (1994: 5) give a scientific definition of the term “Dance Studies”: “Dance history as a body of knowledge and the study of dance history as a scholarly activity constitute in some respects a hybrid discipline [...] A convenient way of characterizing dance history as a body of knowledge and as a disciplined activity is by means of a three – dimensional model. Here it is used to explore different modes of engaging in dance history” [...]. The research on the history of dance includes three dimensions:

1. Dance through time
2. Dance types
3. Dance contexts (Adshead – Lansdale, Layson, 1994: 5 – 10)



Έτσι, υπό μια διευρυμένη έννοια του όρου, η ετυμολογία είναι και αυτή μέρος της κριτικής του κειμένου, δηλαδή της φιλολογίας. Από την άλλη, οι λέξεις δεν είναι μεμονωμένες οντότητες αποκομμένες από το ευρύτερο περιβάλλον χρήσης τους, δηλαδή αποκομμένες από τη γλώσσα εν χρήσει. Αυτό σημαίνει ότι οι λέξεις είναι μέρος της γλώσσας ως συστατικού στοιχείου του πολιτισμού της γλωσσικής κοινότητας.» (Γιαννάκης, 2011: 79)

Therefore, the study of the history of words, which is the etymology, is part of the sociocultural study of language. This study includes the use of semantics, sociolinguistics, and anthropological linguistics.

### **The Theory of Anthropological Competence (Dell Hymes theory)**

Anthropology, unlike linguistics, believes that the rules of the language are not sufficient for the creation of articulate speech, but the context, in which it lives and acts the man who speaks a language. The term 'context' is a term coined by Bloomfield (1933) (< lat. contextus).<sup>10</sup>

The context forms the basis for the study of dance, supported by pragmatics and anthropology. These data allow us to interpret the various proposals.

For Bambiniotis (Μπαμπινιώτης, 2002: 1672), the Greek term “συγκείμενο” constitutes the rendering of the engl. Context < med. lat. contextus (gr. συναρμοσμένη δομή – engl. assembled structure). The term context comprises intra – linguistic and extra – linguistic factors which shape a wider context (facts, statements, information, etc.). In this context, a piece of information is placed.

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<sup>10</sup> Pragmatics is the area of linguistics that explores the ways in which they contribute to the contextual meanings. This term includes the theory of linguistic acts, the theory of conversational implicature (Grice, 1975), the theory of politeness and other approaches to language behavior in philosophy, sociology, linguistics, and anthropology.



Thus, it is easier to understand the factual environment, the context.

### **The theory of language functions**

Jakobson (1896 - 1982) states that six are the functions performed by language. These define every communicative act. Of the six constitutive factors of communication (transmitter, receiver, code, object reference, message and channel), the referential function focuses on what we mentioned, the reference object, and in this sense, informs something. Through dance movements refer to concepts such as: love, joy, love, sadness, resentment, and human suffering.<sup>11</sup>

For that reason, dance is associated with the poetic function. This function focuses on the message, providing information, and giving importance to the form. The stylistic characteristics contribute to the transmission and the perception of the message from the public. The performer creates steps, movements, which in turn create forms in the air or on the ground. These express the meaning of the dance. The body of the dancer and the dance groups act as transmitters of messages, which are then decoded by viewers in their own way.

Another element that connects dance with the inner world of man is the emotional function (emotive function).

### **The relation between language and dance through etymology and philosophy**

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<sup>11</sup> For the language functions, cf. [http://www.greeklanguage.gr/greekLang/modern\\_greek/education/dokimes/enotita\\_a2/03.html](http://www.greeklanguage.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/education/dokimes/enotita_a2/03.html). Jakobson's theory on language functions was published for the first time in the U.S.A. in 1960 under the title "Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics" (in Thomas A. Sebeok, *Style in Language*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1960, σελ. 350–377).



## Χορός – Dance: an etymological approach

For Chantraine (DELG, 1968: 229 - 230), language is something long and sharp. It is like a choreography : *Γλῶσσα signifie “langue”, depuis Homère jusqu’au grec moderne, la langue étant considérée comme pointue [...]*

Dance is an art form, which belongs to the genre of ‘performing arts’. It is the result of the movement of the human body, in accordance with a predetermined pattern or an improvisation (e.g. freestyle). Any plan or improvisation called choreography. Dancing since ancient times along with theater and music was part of the everyday life. Music or sound compositions also accompanied people’s life. Dance in popular language and folklore called "folk dance" or "ball" (ital. *ballo*). From ancient times until today, the dance is part of a ritual, a liturgy, a prayer, and part of public meetings, for example, modern dance or the dance performed in theatres and clubs.

“As in all ancient culture, dance played an important role in the Ancient Orient as well as in Egypt; the documentary evidence for the latter, however, is incomparably better, both in pictures and in texts - there was hardly a part of life not involving dance: dances accompanied ‘rites of passage’ were magic - apotropaic, ecstatic, worshipful, amusing, entertaining, and even eroticizing.” (BNP, 4: 2004: 71)

In Greek, *χορός* (\*chor -) indicates the dancing ground and the positive energy released during the dance performance. Cf. ital. *coro*, *coreuta* / engl. *carol* (BNP, 4: 2004: 71). Beekes also relates *χορός* to the noun *χόρτος* and refers (2009: 1644):

ETYM. *χορός* may originally have been a choral dance, but the original meaning of *χορός* cannot be established with certainty. *Χορός* has been connected together with > *χόρτος*, with a verb “to seize, grasp” in Skrt. *hárati* “to bring, carry”. On the other hand, lith. *Žãras*, “row, twig, etc.”, is phonetically identical with *χορός*. Meier –



Brügger 2002 connected the root of *χαίρω* “to rejoice”, ie. g<sup>her</sup> – which seems reasonable.<sup>12</sup>

During the medieval period, the Roman Catholic Church had banned the dances of the Greeks and Romans, because they considered a relic of pagan religion and contrary to the spirit of Christianity. This led to fall into disuse the Latin words. However, during the Holy Roman Empire, the Roman dances were introduced again in Europe with other forms by the Germans. The Germans then invented a new verb, which comes from the Old French, the verb *\*dintjan*, “danser” (dance, move forward) to register any kind of dance. From this verb, a whole group of words derived in all Romance and Germanic languages and idioms, which express the idea of the popular dance, such as: ital. *danza, danzare*, fr. *danser, danse*, engl. *dance, to dance*, germ. *Tanz* etc., but AG *χορεύω, ὀρχοῦμαι* and MSG *χορεύω*.<sup>13</sup>

However, during the Holy Roman Empire, the Roman dances were introduced again in Europe with other forms of the Germans. From this verb came in all the Romance and Germanic languages and idioms conditions: ital. *danza, danzare*, fr. *danser, danse*, engl. *dance, to dance*, germ. *Tanz* etc.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Although Beekes makes a detailed etymological approach, on the other side Bambiniotis (Μπαμπινιώτης, 2002: 1959) s.v. χορός, reports: [ETYM. αρχ. αββ. ἐτύμου, επειδή δεν έχει προσδιοριστεί η αρχική σημ. της λ., αν δηλ. ως χορός περιγραφόταν αρχικώς το σύνολο των χορευτών που πιάνονται χέρι – χέρι ή ο χώρος που διαμορφώθηκε για χορό. Έχει προταθεί η σύνδεσή με τους τ. χώρα, χώρος, που όμως είναι αββ. ἐτύμου. Ισχυρότερη φαίνεται η σύνδεση με το αρχ. χόρτος μέσω του ετεροιωμ. βαθμ. του I.E. \*g<sup>her</sup> – «κρατώ, περιβάλλω» δηλώνοντας είτε τον περιφραγμένο χώρο είτε την συνήθεια των χορευτών να πιάνονται χέρι – χέρι. Σε αυτήν την περίπτωση πλησίον βρίσκεται το λιθ. *žaras* «τάξη, σειρά», πβ. και σανσκρ. *hárati* «φέρνω, τραβώ»]

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Κουμανούδης (2006: 987) *redamptruo*. - are, *ἀντορχοῦμαι, ἀντιχορεύω* (ἐν ταῖς τῶν Σαλίων τελεταῖς). Cf. Κουμανούδης (2006: 1045) *salto*, - avi, - atum, - are (θαμιστ. τοῦ *salio*), *ὀρχοῦμαι* (καὶ μάλιστα μετὰ μιμήσεως), *χορεύω, saltare Cyclopa, ὀρχεῖσθαι τὸν Κύκλωπα*. For further details, see also *salio* (Dell, 2001 : 590).

<sup>14</sup> cf. Dauzat (1963 : 220) *danser* fin XIIe s., Loherains (*dencier*), du francique *\*dintjan*, se mouvoir de – ci de – là (néerl. *Deinzen*); les danses romaines ayant été proscrites par le christianisme, la danse, sous autres formes, dut être réintroduite par les Germains || *danse* XIIe s., Delb. ; *danse de Saint – Gui*, 1819, Boiste. || *danseur* 1440, Ch. d’Orléans – Devoto (1979), s.v. *danzare*. franco *\*dintjan*. Il termine italiano *danzare* invece deriva dal francese antico *danser*, da cui il francese odierno *danse* e l’inglese *dance*; l’origine di *danser* è discussa; c’è chi pensa a una derivazione dal franco *\*dintjan* (dalla medesima forma deriverebbe il tedesco *Tanz* con la seconda rotazione consonantica) e molto probabilmente da un latino *\*deantiare* ‘andare avanti’ (Battisti – Alessio, 1950 – 57). Cf. Pianigiani (1993), s.v. *danzare*.



The evolution of this term indicates that the German domination reintroduced dance as a cultural element and recognized its value as an artistic genre, while on the other hand did not use the terms of Classical Latin and Ancient Greek. In this way, the term *dance* lost the sense of *χορός*. Consequently, Western Europe lost the meaning of dance, as the Greeks and Romans established it.

### **Language - Dance: verbal and non - verbal way of communication**

For De Saussure (2009, 45) language is a system of signs that express ideas, but for Martinet (1985, 78) language is an instrument of communication, which has a double articulation and character has primarily voice. Sapir (1884 - 1939) characterizes the language as merely human, but non-instinctive method for transmitting ideas, emotions and symbols that produce voluntary.<sup>15</sup> One of these elements is the dance that is a special kind of language. For Hanna (4: 1987), dance is a kind of language, contributing to the non - verbal communication. However, Plato (*Laws* 7, 816 A) is the first that defines dance as a kind of imitation of words using 'forms', i.e. gestures – «Διὸ μίμησις τῶν λεγομένων σχήμασι γενομένη τὴν ὀρχηστικὴν ἐξηργάσατο τέχνη σύμπασαν».

In the *Laws* (2, 653D - E, 672 D, 673D), Plato mentions the view that dance came from the natural desire of all young creatures to move their body to express their emotions, especially joy. Thus, Plato says in the *Laws*, the word *dance* is derived from the noun "joy" (*χορός* < *χαρά*). Apart from *ὀρχοῦμαι*, in ancient Greek the verb

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prov. cat. sp. e port. *dansar*; fr. *danser*; ted. *tanzen*; [oland. *dansen*; engl. *to dance*, di provenienza romanza]; [all' a.a. tedesco *DANSON*: got. *THINSAN* (pass. *THANS*) tirare, stendere, perché etimologicamente la voce *Danzare* denota stendersi in catena, in fila ed è simile a tal maniera al ted. *Reigen*, *Reihen* fila: dalla rad. indoeuropea *TA*, *TAN* distendere, stirare, che è nel scr. *TANOMI* [= gr. *TANYMAI*]stendere, *TANTUS* filo ecc. (v. *Tendere* e cfr. *Coro*).

<sup>15</sup> cf. Sapir (1921: 8): Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.



μορφάζω is also used as a synonym of *ὀρχοῦμαι* (gr. use body movements to emphasize the importance of words).

The study of the dance phenomenon can also be done, using the Proxemics Theory. E.T. Hall (1963) coined the term *proxemics* (lat. *proximus* (near) + -emics). This term refers to the way in which different cultures use space and how they perceive the distances of space associated with the communication aspect. This theory describes the way in which people use a space for important purposes.

The spatial analysis is done through the "discrete parts" (movements, gestures, steps). These phenomena examine the branch of linguistics called "Paralinguistics".

### **Dance and non – verbal communication**

Dancing is social behavior and is a key element of non - verbal communication. Even in it is possible to identify elements and linguistic communication and social life.<sup>16</sup> The dancer is possible, for example, to play a specific role in a specific social situation, because the role of the dancer and its social position are determined by society's standards, which shape the behavior of the dancer.

The study of language and dance inevitably involves reference to written or oral sources, which are useful for knowledge of history and tradition.

### **Dance – Value – Identity**

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<sup>16</sup> Dance is still used to describe methods of non - verbal communication between humans or animals (bee dance, mating dance), to represent the various movements of inanimate objects with poetic way to describe physical phenomena in which inanimate beings seem to dancing and the musicians, in addition to musical composition or as a complement to the song. For the accented movements in Freestyle dance cf. Jones (2013: 19): accented movements, movements that are used to emphasize a piece of music, e.g., an 'explosion' or highlight could be used for a strong piece of music using, for example, a Leap or Box Splits Jump. For the eight-shaped and circular dance of bees cf. Veloudis (Βελουδής, 2008: 11).



Dance is a sign system that expresses different values. It is a form of language that is based on social and linguistic patterns. Dance is characterized by dynamic, beauty and grace. Every dancer expresses through its movements some “traces”.

**Oriental dance** (fr. Danse du Ventre /engl. Belly Dance).<sup>17</sup>

The term "belly dance" (MSG «ο χορός της κοιλιάς»<sup>18</sup> - is a *claque* – a loan word in MSG – in SE is the translation of the French term "danse du ventre", a term invented during the Victorian era.

The French conquerors of Algeria coined this term. This term denoted the female dancers Ouled Nail of Algeria that used to move rhythmically their belly, while they were dancing.

Belly dancing is a kind of dance that expresses fertility and love. The dancer is wagging the abdomen and the hips. The abdomen symbolizes the earth and the hips the power of fertility of the mother earth (Pratelli, 2014: 4).

Oriental dance is divided into (Shakallis, Shakalli, 2014: 4 – 6), (Pratelli, 2014: 1 - 3):

1. **Raqs sharqi** (Arab.: رقص شرقي. engl. oriental dancing) is the kind of dance that is familiar to all Europeans and Americans. Female and Masculine dancers use to dance this kind of dance in cafeterias and night clubs all around the

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<sup>17</sup> For the history of the Oriental dance, cf. Raftis, A. 2011. *Orientalist Dance*. Αθήνα, Εκδόσεις Τρόπος Ζωής, Bonaventura, W. 1983. *Belly dancing, the serpent, and the sphinx*. London, Virago Press και Zuhur, S. 1998. *Images of enchantment: visual and performing arts of the Middle East*. Cairo, American University in Cairo, Coluccia, P., Paffrath, A. and Putz, J. 2005. *Belly Dancing: The Sensual Art of Energy and Spirit*. Rochester, Vt, Park Street Press και van Nieuwkerk, K. 1995. *A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*. Texas, University of Texas Press.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also Bambiniotis (Μπαμπινιώτης, 2002: 910): χορός της κοιλιάς, ανατολίτικος χορός που βασίζεται στην κίνηση της κοιλιάς και των γοφών.



world. This dance is taught in all the dance schools and dance studios, but also in the universities and it is an improvised dance.

2. **Raqs baladi** (Arab.: رقص بلدي. engl. local dance or traditional dance).

This is a traditional kind of dance that pair of women and men use to dance in all the countries of the Middle East, usually in social events and weddings. However, in Egypt, the term is used synonymously with the term “Raqs sharqi”, to declare the “belly dance”.<sup>19</sup>

### **Tarantella – History**

Elba Farabegoli - Gurzau (1981) observes that the name *tarantella* began to be used in the last four to five centuries.

The dance is known to romance and Greek idioms of Southern Italy as:

1. **Lucia**

2. **Sfessania**

3. **Villanella**

But *tarantella* has also other names, such as *pizzica - pizzica*<sup>20</sup> (Tarantella of Puglia and Basilicata) or *tammurriata* (Tarantella in Napoli).

Each dance follows the frantic and fast-paced rhythm, which does not follow a specific pattern (Μπεκάκος, 2016: 167). De Martino concluded that the myth of

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<sup>19</sup> Tribal dance fusion was invented in the U. S. A. in the ‘70’s by Jamila Salimpour. For further information, cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Tribal\\_Style\\_Belly\\_Dance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Tribal_Style_Belly_Dance) and Tazz, R. 2000. *The Belly Dance Book: Rediscovering the Oldest Dance*. Concord, CA: Backbeat Press. Tribal Fusion Dance is a hybrid dance. In this dance, Freestyle, Hip Hop, Breakdance, Egyptian, Cabaret, Flamenco and other influences can be found. Tribal Fusion Dance is a method of improvised choreography and can be used as communicative mean for the dancers. Through Tribal dance fusion dancers express their feelings and their thoughts. This dance belongs to the category of modern dances and is defined as the most dynamic and communicative dance in the whole world.

<sup>20</sup> An oral tradition says that the bite of a spider on the skin of a person is called *morso* (engl. bite, sting), and the tarantella in Salento, is called *pizzica* from the verb *pizzicare* (gr.τσιμπάω – engl. to sting). Another oral tradition reports that the tarantula nibbled a peasant in the fields. But the treatment, in this case, for someone who had been stung was a kind of musical exorcism.



biting spider, that is the symbol of the dance, is based on the similarity of the two terms rather than in real life.

### ***Tarantella*: the ritual – interpretation**

The peninsula of Salento, in Apulia, is the region, where De Martino, a famous Italian ethnographer (1908-1965), did field research, to write a study on the tarantella. He sets as the title of his essay, the concept of continuous biting (ital.*il rimorso*/ engl. *pang of remorse – sting*). The designation refers to the constant bites, that symbolize the return of the evil past, the past that was not the choice for the person who was bitten by the spider, for De Martino and which returns to "re-bite" him, to harm him.

*Tarantism* is a culturally constructed exorcism of evil, a magical-religious expression that contains ancient elements that get different symbolisms and meanings.

In relation to the above, De Martino (2009: 82) observes:

“Taranta, morso, veleno hanno dunque nel tarantismo un significato simbolico: danno orizzonte a pulsioni inconscie alle reazioni che esse suscitano nella coscienza individuale”.

Therefore, every summer, when the feast of St. Paul arrives in Galatina and in all the villages of Salento, in late June, the revival of mythical-ritual order takes place. The simple spider bite or mental illness is a simplistic kind of interpretation. Instead, as part of rural life, the phenomenon acquires a cultural hypostasis. For this reason, De Martino connects the dance with the crisis of puberty, forbidden love or other vulnerable social aspects of life. *Tarantella* is a symbol, which indicates the strong cultural conflict due to strong pressure on Christian pagan orgiastic cults. It is no coincidence that in the chapel of St. Paul in Galatina, accept in their church *tarantati* (tarantella dancers), to show that the presence of St. Paul works as a means of purification. Church pressure and Christianity spreading process encountered



resistance by the populations of Southern Italy.<sup>21</sup> People thought that the same tune corresponds to the size and color of the spider that stung the patient. Then the “ill man” began to hit the ground, dancing a frantic mimetic dance that imitated the movements of a spider. This could keep three whole days without interruption. At the end, he fell on the floor tired and exhausted but cured.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusions

So, each dance will say it is a text 'on the go' or ‘text in motion’.

Hanna (1989: 19) defines dance as:

1. **Human behavior**
2. **Purposeful**
3. **Intentionally rhythmical**
4. **Culturally patterned sequences**

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<sup>21</sup> This was the cause for the emergence of new local expressions, which were formed on the ruins of the old orgiastic cults. In Southern Italy, during the Classical times, the people introduced in their dances the concepts of “inspiration” (gr. *οίστρος*) and “swing” (gr. *αιώρησις*) (De Martino, 2009: 98). *Tarantella Pizzica* (ital. *Pizzica - Pizzica*) is the most characteristic ritual dance of Southern Italy. It is a ritual dance, a dance of ecstasy. This dance is connected to the ancient Greek colony of Taranto located very close to Brindisi and Lecce. *Taranto, tarantella, tarantula* gave origin to the term *tarantismo* (engl. *tarantism*). *Tarantism* is a form of mania, a crisis.

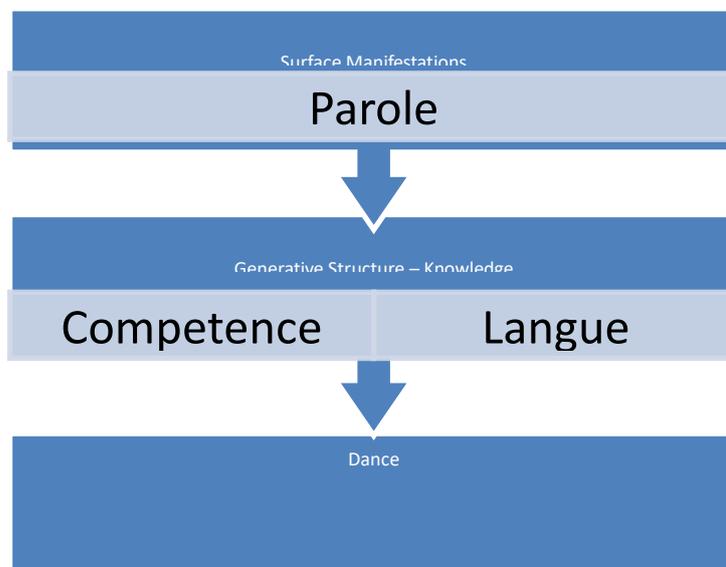
<sup>22</sup> *Tarantism* is present in the dance of Southern Italy, and is very popular in the Greek-speaking villages of Salento. Several movements are reminiscent of the images of ancient Greek pottery that illustrate women dancing. On the Greek vases, young women are playing the tambourine (ital. *tamburello*). On the Greek vases of Southern Italy, there are also dancers (the *menads*) keeping swords, torches, and a vine branch. The same elements can be found in the tarantella today. All these elements were used in ancient Greece by the drunken woman, the “bacchides” (gr. *βακχίδες*), the followers of Dionysus (De Martino, 2009: 72, 184 - 185). De Martino (2009: 184) connected the Greek ritual of Dionysus to the dancing ritual of *tarantella*. This ritual is a cultural relict and documents his theory, relying on the report of Baglivi. Baglivi states: “Coloro che danzano con pamponi di vite erano morsi dalla taranta, mentre quelli che danzano con spade nude erano morsi dallo scorpione”. The Italian verb *scazzicare* indicates the psychology of the dancer (De Martino, 2009: 84). This verb is also present in the romance dialect of Lecce meaning “to nettle, to sting, to use gestures with passionate feelings” [ETYM.s neg. + *cazzare* (hit) + - *icare*, an italian suffix denoting repetition], because through the dance, the dancer “beats” the spider, the symbol of evil and destroys it with the dance figures.



For linguistics, dance is a structured system (frame), formed by sociocultural patterns. It is a performance, a representation of linguistic, social, and cultural elements. The summation of dance figures, according to Hanna, creates «phrases» (< gr. *Φράσεις* – lit. “Spoken words”).

“A phrase is the expression of a partial ‘thought’, a group related movements in a pattern where there are alternations of activity (speaking) and quiescence (pose, rest, energy diminution) [...]” (Hanna, 1989: 259).

**Table 1. Dance structure (Hanna, 1989: 259)**



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### Abbreviations

AG = Ancient Greek

AUTH = Aristotle University of Thessaloniki – Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο  
Θεσσαλονίκης

BNP = Brill's New Pauly

CID = Conseil International de la Danse

CL = Classical Latin

DELG = Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque

IDTA = International Dance Teachers Association



*Τόμος Πρακτικών Φιλοσοφικού Forum «Ανάδρασις»*

ISBN: 978-618-82935-0-2



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ΑΡΧΑΙΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑΣ

INS – ΙΝΣ = Ινστιτούτο Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών – Institute for Neohellenic Studies

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LEW = Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch

MSG = Modern Standard Greek

OUP = Oxford University Press

OED = Oxford English Dictionary

OCD = Oxford Classical Dictionary

SE = Standard English

SG = Standard Greek