
Educational Practice Studies on Rhythmic Training in Taiyuan Luogu Drum Art

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the educational practices and rhythmic training methodologies used in the teaching and transmission of Taiyuan Luogu drum art. This study responds to the lack of documentation on teaching contemporary rhythmic pedagogy and how teachers scaffold modern learners. In qualitative research, data are field notes and audio-visual recordings and interviews with 24 informants, including one key cultural bearer, three senior practitioners, and 20 general informants, which were obtained at rehearsal halls, community cultural centers, and Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, ensemble training areas. In the study, data analyses were rhythmic exercise sequencing, instructional framework, and learner agency. This study determined a complete system of demonstration teaching pedagogy where students are trained in layered rhythms, call and response, pragmatic rhythm training on various instruments with rhythmic coordination, and community or ensemble learning. This complex cultural practice pedagogy study concludes that Taiyuan Luogu rhythmic pedagogy integrates conventional oral traditions with contemporary teaching frameworks, and thus cultural and learner growth are compatible. Possible future research directions would include cross-regional studies on rhythmic pedagogy, learner cognition, and the use of digital rhythm analysis to enhance the traditional percussion education pedagogy.

Keywords: Percussion Pedagogy, Cultural Transmission, Ensemble Learning, Instructional Methods, Qualitative study, Traditional Music

1. Introduction

Different cultures use different emphasis on rhythm in their music and for the Chinese drum art, Taiyuan Luogu is recognized for its intricate, vibrant, and rhythmically intricate practices. While Taiyuan Luogu is very much rhythm centric, it also requires deep collaborative focus, as an ensemble, through an intricate interdependency of one to the primary tempo and balance to perform the numerous variations in rhythm (Hou, 2024; Jia & Isaiah, 2024; Shi et al., 2025). While Taiyuan Luogu incorporates an ART aspect, the performers still require very strong primer and technical rhythm performance. Increasing adaptation of cultural practices, and varying audience integration with improvisational music, heightens the need to evaluate the incorporation of cultural improvisational rhythm patterns. The emphasis here is the deep integration of improvisational rhythm as the foundation of Taiyuan Luogu. Along with the emphasis, the need for contextual structural adaptation of Taiyuan Luogu teaching (Guo et al., 2024; Robledo et al., 2021). This illustrates, emphasis of improvisational rhythmic patterns. Simultaneously of to assist in cultural adaptation of practices.

Rhythmic training for Taiyuan Luogu has recognized the effects of modernity and new cultural participation changes. In the past, rhythmic training was passed down in a close master-disciple system through long imitation and repetition. Today, learners are more diverse and require systematic group instruction, albeit for shorter periods, and with modern efficiency standards (Blum, 2023; Feldman et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2024). There are also many communities hoping to preserve Taiyuan Luogu as cultural heritage. This has created a convergence of formal Western rhythmic training and transitional education. New incorporative instruction synthesizes the paradox of authenticity and accessibility created by these transformations. This provides a compelling case for the need to understand, document, and assess current pedagogy in rhythmic training (Aryandari, 2024; Bauer, 2020; Zhang & Moonswan, 2025). Taiyuan Luogu has stayed current with traditional pedagogy to understand the scaffolded rhythmic pedagogy, along with Western fusion. Accordingly, the study's objective is to examine the educational practices and rhythmic training methodologies used in the teaching and transmission of Taiyuan Luogu drum art, which emerges as essential for understanding how teachers navigate tradition and modern instructional demands.

While there has been some scholarship on the history, music, and performance aspects of Chinese drum art, the educational aspect has received little attention. The literature describes the extensive repertoire, the technical challenges, and the integration of Taiyuan Luogu with local festivals and community life. Discussions on how learners achieve rhythmic proficiency and teachers accomplish and adapt their pedagogical frameworks in practice are, however, scarce (Intanin et al., 2025; Tan, 2024). How teachers sequence their classes, which types of rhythmic patterns they take up as their main focus, how they teach ensemble rhythmic and tonal coordination, and which practice exercises promote the passage of learners from simple to complex and advanced forms of performance are all conspicuous within their absence. This situation calls for scholarship to focus on rhythmic practice as an educational phenomenon independent of other aspects of the music (Álamos-Gómez et al., 2023; Dakka, 2024; Ismail et al., 2021). This will complement the study of Taiyuan Luogu as an art and as an educational system in practice, in which the teacher's artistry and the learner's participation sustain the art as an evolving system.

To address such gaps, this study focuses on how educators approach rhythmic training in the art of Taiyuan Luogu drum teaching, as well as the other educational practices. To do this within a qualitative design, the study involves observations in the various practice learning environments, interviews with the teachers, and documentation of practice-based learning environments. This framework is intended to understand the teaching of rhythmic training through the prism of pedagogy, instructional approach, and learner engagement. This line of inquiry examines how teachers articulate rhythmic understanding, the instructional methods used, and the responsiveness of learners to given techniques; in addition, how these elements are embedded in the broader teaching context to influence the learning transmission process. Together with the study's focus, the design allows the documentation of rhythmic practices and offers a perspective on the pedagogic aspect of rhythmic training as an underpinning element of bridging artistic practices within the Luogu to contemporary Taiyuan.

2. Methodology

A qualitative approach was taken to study the educational practices and approaches to rhythmic training for the instruction and transmission (Dawadi et al., 2021; Kutthalaeng & Nuangchalerm, 2025; Meng & Chuangprakhon, 2024) of the Taiyuan Luogu drum art. Focus was placed on the unearthing of genuine instructional practices through fieldwork, practitioner involvement, and the meticulous capturing of instructional cycles. Embedding the study in real environments made it possible for the exploration of the ways in which learners, in both formal and informal contexts, demonstrate, articulate, and assimilate rhythmic knowledge.

2.1. Research Design

The research design integrated observational study and interview-led research to provide the researcher with the needed insight to capture the instructional sequence, methods of rhythmic demonstration, practices of ensemble coordination, and the reactions of students. This helped in painting the entire picture of how rhythmic training is organized, taught, and learned in these educational settings.

2.2. Research Site

The fieldwork for this project took place in Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, which is a cultural hub for Taiyuan Luogu drum art and has a rich tradition of training in the art form. Research took place in rehearsal halls and community cultural centers as

well as in training rooms and ensemble practice venues. During regular rhythmic instruction, the researcher was able to witness environments and interactions of more focused teaching, encompassing lessons and the structured organization of group rehearsals and even informal practice. As a cultural site, data collection guaranteed the practice of teaching was authentic and the social interactions as well as performance- centered learning were genuine.

2.3. Informants

A total of 24 informants participated in the study. They were selected to represent different levels of expertise and experience in Taiyuan Luogu rhythmic training, enabling a multi-layered understanding of instructional practices. Informants were categorized as follows, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Informants

Type of Informant	Number	Description
Key Informant	1	Senior cultural transmitter with extensive teaching and performance experience
Casual Informants	3	Practitioners with more than five years of training and involvement in ensemble activities
General Informants	20	Students and audience members familiar with Taiyuan Luogu practices

2.4. Data Collection

The techniques for data collection were a combination of direct observation, informal conversations, structured and semi-structured interviews, and audio-visual materials. The focus of my observation was on rhythmic drills, ensemble rehearsals, and preparation for performances, particularly the teaching of rhythmic patterns, student execution and students' coordination of the groups. The interviews were framed around the objectives of instruction, the strategies around teaching, and methods and the significance of moving the body, voice, and rhythm, and gestures in the composition. Informal conversations gathered as much data as the structured interviews, providing insights of learners and practitioners. Field notes, sound recordings, and videos were systematically generated right after each of the sessions to preserve the integrity and dependability.

2.5. Data Management

The gathered information was organized into three categories: observation notes, interview transcripts, and materials associated with evaluations. Each data set was time and location stamped and categorized by informant to facilitate future analyses. To aid in comparative analyses, I stored video and audio files in separate folders from their transcripts. For each rehearsal, I took notes and organized snapshots based on the lesson cue actions and arrangements for the ensembles. This organized approach to managing data ensured that I could code, contrast, and interpret the materials with ease.

2.6. Data Analysis

The data analyses focused on aligning themes to the instructional patterns, methods for demonstrating rhythm, and behaviors exhibited by learners as responses. I coded the materials based on the instructional elements, which included tempo, imitation, cueing and gestures, verbal instructions, ensemble synchronization, and feedback. I analyzed data across informant clusters to examine convergence and divergence patterns in rhythmic instruction. I was particularly interested in the lesson structuring techniques by instructors, learners' internalization of rhythmic patterns, and cohesion as a group through rhythmic repetition in their practices. The rhythmic instruction and lesson sequence techniques for teaching Taiyuan Luogu that was presented in "Chang Liushui" substantiates the thematic findings.

To strengthen analytical rigor, the coding process followed a hybrid inductive-deductive approach: deductive codes were derived from the research objective and interview protocols, while inductive codes emerged from repeated readings of field notes and transcripts. A thematic analysis framework was employed to identify patterned meanings across the dataset, with constant comparison used to refine categories and ensure analytical consistency throughout the coding process. Coding reliability was supported through the maintenance of an audit trail, iterative memo writing, and peer debriefing sessions with a research advisor who reviewed coding decisions and theme development. These procedures ensured that themes were grounded in the data rather than inferred solely from the researcher's expectations, while also clarifying how instructional practices converged across different informant groups.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

In line with the planned fieldwork, ethically acceptable procedures for qualitative fieldwork were followed. Informants were given outlines of the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of their decision to participate. For interviews, observations, and audio-visual capture, consent was gained, and even during the interaction, participants were given the option to any step of the process. The identities of the informants were kept confidential, and the statements and field notes were reported with terms such as "key informant" and "general informant" to avoid identification. Data were kept confidential, and participants were informed that their input would be used exclusively for the Taiyuan Luogu educational research as claimed.

3. Results

The findings for this qualitative study indicate that Taiyuan Luogu rhythmic training comprises a systematic approach of integrating pedagogical frameworks of musical technique, cultural insight, bodily coordination, and ensemble discipline. This

study draws on seasoned teachers' interviews, rehearsal process observations, and the representative work "Chang Liushui" analyses (see Figures 5.1–5.6) to understand a cohesive set of instructional frameworks that constitute Taiyuan Luogu rhythmic teaching. Informants repeatedly highlighted the essential nature of rhythmic performance in the learning process, emphasizing that learners need to internalize the rhythm aurally and embody it through embodied movement, imitative learning, and intensive repetition. Furthermore, the classification of Chinese Luogu music described in Figure 2.1 represents a crucial conceptual lens for understanding and teaching the Taiyuan Luogu rhythmic framework.

3.1. Rhythmic Structure and Its Role in Training

Taiyuan Luogu's rhythmic framework is illustrated in the larger context of the classification of Chinese Luogu music genres. The diagram in Figure 1 visually represents the national context within which the Taiyuan Luogu fits, depicting how the Taiyuan Luogu is part of the Northern School of percussion ensembles and elaborating on the denser rhythmic textures and forceful articulations characteristic of the Northern School. This explanation enables students to situate the Taiyuan Luogu within a broader national cultural context and appreciate its distinctive rhythmic character.

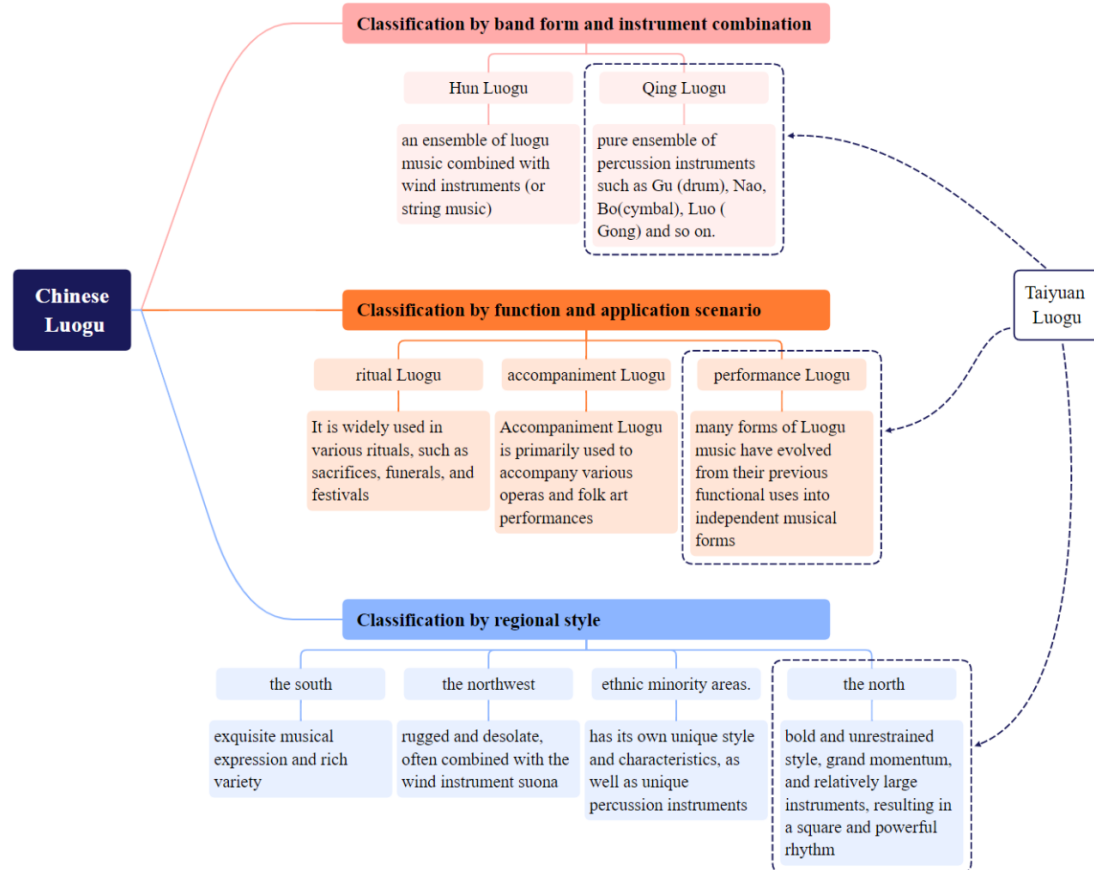


Figure 1. Chinese Luogu Music Classification

In terms of explaining how the rhythmic patterns are taught, the core patterns of Taiyuan Luogu and their teaching goals are summarized in Table 2. The instructors described these patterns as key rhythmic components that students need to receive focused practice on to automate them and use them as building blocks for more extended formal arrangements.

Table 2. Core Rhythmic Patterns in Taiyuan Luogu and Their Training Functions

Rhythmic Pattern	Description	Function in Training
Yi zijie	One-beat-per-syllable unit	Introduces basic pulse and tempo control
San zijie	Three-subdivision rhythmic flow	Builds endurance and creates rolling-water effect
Qi zijie	Seven-syllable rhythmic pattern	Teaches transitional momentum and dynamic shaping
Syncopated variation	Accent on off-beats	Develops flexibility and rhythmic awareness
Alternating accents	Exchange between Nao and Bo	Trains timbral contrast and ensemble balance

The representative work "Chang Liushui", transmitted and performed by Li Naizhong and the Tai Zhong Luogu Performing Art Troupe, serves as the primary example through which rhythmic instruction was analyzed in this study. As a foundational

training piece, it provides clear rhythmic units, layered developmental techniques, and ensemble coordination elements essential for beginner and intermediate learners.

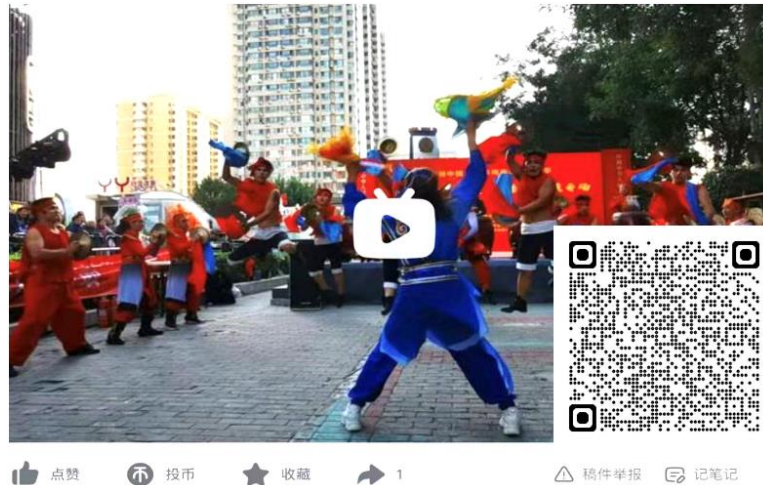


Figure 2. Chang liushui's media file QR code

3.2. Demonstration-Based Teaching

Demonstration emerged as the most fundamental instructional method in Taiyuan Luogu rhythmic training. The practice of “teaching through showing” aligns with traditional oral transmission, where the master models both rhythm and movement for learners to imitate. During field observations, instructors consistently began each lesson by performing a rhythmic phrase vocally, gesturally, or using instruments.

Vocal demonstration, known locally as “kou da,” uses syllables such as “dong,” “qiang,” “cha,” and “ba” to represent instrument timbres. Students reported that these vocalizations helped them memorize rhythmic patterns before playing them. Gesture demonstration was equally important; instructors demonstrated arm height, wrist motion, stick angle, and rebound technique, which students imitated repeatedly.

3.3. Progressive Rhythmic Layering

A second major finding is that Taiyuan Luogu uses a sequencing approach called progressive rhythmic layering, where learners advance through increasingly complex rhythmic patterns in structured stages. Training begins with simple pulse exercises using yi zijie patterns, which develop internal timing. Instructors often required students to clap or tap these rhythms before applying them to instruments. After the pulse becomes stable, learners progress to san zijie, the most important rhythmic pattern in Taiyuan Luogu. This pattern dominates the A section (Figure 3), where the rolling-water texture symbolizes continuous flow. Students practiced this section slowly at first, then gradually increased tempo to 120 bpm, ensuring consistency and endurance.

Figure 3. The Introduction (measures 1-4) of “Chang Liushui”

The Transition section (Figure 4) introduces rhythmic variation through accent displacement, syncopation, and dynamic shaping. Instructors divided this passage into segments of two to three measures, allowing learners to focus on difficult rhythmic changes. Students explained that these short, segmented drills helped them internalize complex rhythmic movements without becoming overwhelmed.

Figure 4 shows the musical score for measures 13-19 of "Chang Liushui". The score is for four instruments: Tanggu, Danao, Dabo, and Luogujing. Measures 13-19 are shown. A "Muffled strike" is indicated by a purple circle on a note in measure 13. A blue box highlights measures 14-16, labeled "Qi zijie". A red box highlights measures 17-19, labeled "Rhythm change". A green circle highlights a note in measure 19. A blue arrow points to a note in measure 18, labeled "Instrument rhythm swap".

Figure 4. The Transition (measures 13-19) of “Chang Liushui”

The Phrase b1 section (Figure 5) illustrates a pedagogical device where instrument roles are reversed. Instead of Danao leading the rhythm, Dabo becomes the dominant instrument. Instructors emphasized that this reversal trains students to shift their auditory focus, reinterpret rhythmic accents, and accommodate new timbral patterns. During field observations, learners practiced A1 repeatedly while instructors monitored the consistency of sound quality and accent placement.

Figure 5 shows the musical score for measures 20-23 of "Chang Liushui", labeled "Phrase: b1". The score is for four instruments: Tanggu, Danao, Dabo, and Luogujing. Measures 20-23 are shown. A red bracket above the score indicates "Phrase: b1". The lyrics "chu cha cha cha" are written below the notes.

Figure 5. The Phrase b1 (fan liushui) (measures 20-23) of “Chang Liushui”

Finally, the Coda (Figure 6) requires students to integrate rhythmic elements learned from all previous sections. The predominance of alternating instrumental accents in the final measures helps reinforce timbre contrast while training students to execute unified ensemble endings. Instructors described the Coda as a “culmination” phase, evaluating whether students had fully integrated all rhythmic concepts introduced earlier.

Repetition **Phrase: c1**

28 Tanggu
Danao
Dabo
Luogujing

cang cha chu cha chu cha qi
仓 叉 处 叉 处 叉 起

Qi zijie

cang qi yi cang cang cang qi
仓 起 衣 仓 仓 仓 起

Phrase: d **D.S.**

33 Tanggu
Danao
Dabo
Luogujing

cang chu cha chu cha chu qi
仓 处 叉 处 叉 处 起

cang cang cang cang
仓 仓 仓 仓

Yi zijie

37 Tanggu
Danao
Dabo
Luogujing

cang chu cha chu qi
仓 处 叉 处 起

cang cha chu cha qi
仓 叉 处 叉 起

Figure 6. The Coda (measures 28-40) of “Chang Liushui”

3.4. Call-and-Response Interaction

Call-and-response emerged as another key instructional approach. This method encourages students to develop immediate rhythmic recall, acute listening, and ensemble sensitivity. During fieldwork, the instructor played a rhythmic fragment, and students responded instantly by imitating it. This practice ranged from short rhythmic cells to entire measures or phrases. Students stated that this form of interaction helped them “stay alert” and recognize rhythmic nuances. Notably, call-and-response often mirrored the musical logic of Taiyuan Luogu itself, where instruments “answer” each other through alternating accents, as seen in Figures 3 and 6.

Peer call-and-response was frequently used in ensemble rehearsals. Students alternated between leading and following, building mutual awareness and reinforcing rhythmic accuracy across the group. This peer-based interaction was essential in developing ensemble unity, as learners needed not only to reproduce rhythmic patterns but also to anticipate them. Call-and-response was also used during the practice of the Transition and Coda sections (Figures 4 and 6), where rhythmic changes occur frequently. By engaging students in rapid-response exercises, instructors strengthened their rhythmic adaptability and responsiveness to unexpected accent shifts.

3.5. Summary of Instructional Approaches

The combination of instructional practices identified in this study reflects a comprehensive system that supports rhythmic mastery in Taiyuan Luogu. Table 3 summarizes these approaches. These findings collectively indicate that Taiyuan Luogu rhythmic training is a deeply embodied, culturally grounded, and socially interactive process.

Table 3. Summary of Instructional Approaches Used in Taiyuan Luogu Rhythmic Training

Instructional Approach	Educational Function
Demonstration-based teaching	Establishes precise rhythmic models for imitation
Progressive rhythmic layering	Builds rhythmic complexity and musical structure

Call-and-response	Enhances responsiveness and rhythmic retention
Instrument-specific technique training	Develops technical and timbral accuracy
Ensemble-based learning	Cultivates unity, listening, and expressive coherence

The findings suggest that the approach to rhythmic training in Taiyuan Luogu stems from a multifaceted educational system that includes the aural, visual, bodily, and social dimensions of learning. Attention to each teaching method demonstration, layering, call-and-response, technique instruction, and ensemble practice attests to the cultural imprint of meticulousness, coherence, and the ability to harmonize. The balance between performance and practice of rhythmic elements and the accompanying instructions reinforce the integration of these dimensions throughout instruction. This illustrates how balanced, rhythmic practice of Taiyuan Luogu is aligned with the techniques of instruction. Instructors use this method to maintain focus on traditional rhythmic Taiyuan Luogu and preserve its performance practice. This allows students to continue advancing to high-level performance.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study's findings indicate that rhythmic training in Taiyuan Luogu is a deeply culturally integrated and educationally rich process, in keeping with previously researched rhythm-focused traditional music education. The demonstration-based techniques noted in the results correspond quite closely with the traditional oral pedagogy outlined by Ismail et al. (2021), in which imitation and physical modeling assist rhythmical recollection and the formation of technique. Likewise, the gradual rhythmical pattern development from yi zijie through san zijie and the syncopated variants corresponds with the scaffolding sequencing described by Feldman et al. (2020) as a means of building learner confidence and structural comprehension in percussion. The focus on ensemble learning coordinates with and responds to the improvisation described by Robledo et al. (2021) as a means of inter-personal synchronization. This suggests that the Taiyuan Luogu pedagogy works rhythmically and culturally integrates improvisatory social functions. It also relates to the work of Blum (2023) and Tan (2024), who wrote on the intertwined nature of a piece's musical form and cultural meaning in the Chinese tradition, as in the case of "Chang Liushui." Its rhythmic structure exemplifies this with a flowing-water texture and intricate, role-based syncopated counterpoint.

This study highlights gaps in the existing literature by confirming most of the established theoretical frameworks. Although literature on traditional rhythmic arts is extensive, few have described the concrete instructional frameworks employed in contemporary Luogu teaching. This is why the study's documentation of demonstration, layering, and ensemble coordination is so valuable. The juxtaposition of Western-influenced structured teaching and traditional rhythmic practice is a hybrid pedagogy, confirming modern adaptation described by Bauer (2020) and Luogu specific research. New research should focus on cross-regional drum traditions, studies on learner-centered cognition, and tech approaches like digital rhythm modeling to deepen the understanding of rhythmic mastery in hybrid cultures and educational settings.

Overall, the study demonstrates that Taiyuan Luogu training is grounded in a coherent pedagogical system that merges traditional oral transmission with systematic, contemporary instructional design. Through demonstration-based methods, rhythmic layering, call-and-response, and ensemble coordination, instructors foster both technical precision and cultural understanding. These findings not only align with existing research on rhythm education but also fill a gap in the literature by documenting concrete instructional practices in modern Luogu teaching. By articulating how cultural knowledge is transformed into teachable frameworks, this study contributes to the preservation and evolution of Taiyuan Luogu. Future research should continue to explore cognitive internalization of rhythmic structures, cross-regional pedagogical comparisons, and digital tools for rhythm analysis and cultural conservation.

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