Salsa Remixed: Learning Language, Culture and Identity in the Classroom

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In our increasingly globalized world, the notions of language, culture, community, and nation are more and more fluid. Considering the influence of globalization, new media, and current societal flux, sociolinguists have begun to examine how identity, language, and culture are negotiated through popular culture (Pennycook, 2010). Using a descriptive, interactional sociolinguistic approach, this paper explores this phenomenon by examining a small community of approximately 20-30 students who are members of a salsa club at a university in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. First, this case study explores student motivation for joining this community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Second, it considers the pedagogical practices within the classroom, which although informal in design, are traditional in style. Students learn how to move their bodies as well as interact on the dance floor. Finally, it will examine how gendered roles are defined and negotiated. The findings from this study suggest conflicting attitudes and ideologies about the agency each partner has (or does not have).

> "It's kinda like having a conversation. The man's like, 'Would you like to do a right hand turn?' and the girl's like, 'Sure.'"
>
> –Salsa Dance Instructor

In our increasingly globalized world, the notions of *language*, *culture*, *community*, and *nation* are more and more fluid. Bilingual schools educate already multilingual children. Multinational companies have their own cultures and languages that sometimes have very little in common with the community that geographically surrounds their buildings. Individuals can connect to and participate in multiple communities without leaving their homes. A *tweet* not only refers to the sound a bird makes but also signifies a typed message of 140 characters or less stating someone's opinion on some current event that can been seen around the world by millions of people. Needless to say, the idea of homogeneous, geographically-bound speech communities (e.g., Gumperz, 1962) has long been refuted and replaced by the repertoire approach (e.g., Gumperz, 1968), which sees speech communities as having diffuse boundaries.

Considering the influence of globalization, new media, and "the flows of people, language and culture" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 64), sociolinguists have begun

to examine how identity, language, and culture are negotiated through popular culture. Pennycook (2010) explains, "the languages and cultures that circulate within these flows are constantly mixed with other languages and cultures, so that new mixtures arrive in new places and remix once again as they become relocalized" (p. 70). This remixing of language and culture is not only blurring the lines between languages and cultures but also influencing the notion of identity. Pennycook explains that, "like popular culture, these new identities are performances that are always changing, always in flux" (p. 77).

Fluid identities, communities, cultures, and codes comprise our world. Stokes (2004) notes, "often music is used as a metaphor of global social and cultural processes; it also constitutes an enduring process by and through which people interact within and across cultures" (p. 47). Hip-hop culture could be considered an almost universal language because it transcends different languages (Pennycook, 2010, p. 72). Similar to hip-hop, salsa culture is beginning to cross social and linguistic borders. The *salsa craze* (Bosse, 2008; Wieschiolek, 2003) has gone global; salsa venues and events can be found throughout the United States, Latin and South America, Europe, and Asia, and people from a variety of ages, professions, and ethnicities can be seen dancing (and/or learning to dance) salsa (Bosse, 2008). Learning salsa, like hip-hop, is not only about familiarizing oneself with a new style of music and dance, but also requires immersing oneself in a new culture and community. Using a descriptive, interactional sociolinguistic approach, this paper will explore how salsa is taught (both as a skill and a culture), the communicative resources that are used, and how gender roles are negotiated within this localized community of practice.

Literature Review

In 1962, Gumperz defined a *linguistic community* as a mono- or multilingual social group "held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication" (p. 31). He stressed the importance of face-to-face interaction, while also acknowledging the possibility that this community could include larger regions where the speakers were not in direct contact. Six years later, after extensive work in India, he coined the term *verbal repertoire* to refer to "the totality of dialectal and superposed variants regularly employed within a community" (1968, p. 72). In contrast to his earlier understanding of geographically-bound communities, Gumperz's notion of repertoire implies that some speech communities have compartmentalized repertoires (i.e., homogeneous communities) whereas others are fluid (i.e., heterogeneous communities). In other words, he began to examine how language was used both among and across communities.

Building upon this notion of fluid boundaries among languages, Hymes (1972a) argued for a descriptive, ethnographic approach to exploring language and society. He stated, "the interaction of language with social life is viewed first of all as a matter of human action, based on a knowledge, sometimes conscious, often unconscious, that enables persons to use language" (p. 53). Like Gumperz, Hymes wanted to understand the function of language in particular contexts. He also stressed the importance of *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1972b), which is dependent on both knowledge about communicating in a particular context(s) and the ability to put that knowledge in practice.

Taking a slightly different angle from Hymes, Goffman (1979) developed a concept of the *participation framework,* involving elements of *production format* and *footing*, in order to explore interaction among participants within a particular setting. The production format (i.e., *animator*, *author*, and *principal*) describes the different kinds of voicing practices involved in producing speech; this taxonomy provides a means for analyzing utterances and how they are framed. Considering the principal, or voice of authority attached to an utterance, allows for an analysis of the ideologies of the individuals and/or institutions that a particular utterance represents. Likewise, footing is a "participant's alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self" (p. 4) in relation to the other participants. It is how an individual positions him- or herself within a given context.

Following this emphasis on participation, Lave and Wenger's (1991) *communities of practice* model links the negotiation of meanings with *participation*, *reification*, and *practice* (Wenger, 1998). A community of practice is a "set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). It has three components: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire. Wenger (1998) explains, "our engagement in practice may have patterns, but it is the production of such patterns anew that gives rise to an experience of meaning" (p. 52). Referring specifically to learning communities of practice, he then states, "it is not just the acquisition of memories, habits, and skills, but the formation of an identity. Our experience and membership inform each other, pull each other, transform each other" (p. 96).

In order to understand how identities are formed and performed, critical discursive psychology provides a means for examining language in use. Edley (2001) describes the paradoxical relationship between discourse and the individual using it by stating,"it acknowledges that people are, at the same time, both products and the producers of discourse (Billig, 1991), the masters and the slaves of language (Barthes, 1982)" (p. 190).

Looking specifically at language, gender, and identity as *community-based practice*, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) redefine *gender* as "a dynamic verb"(p. 462) and consider practices a way of "'gendering' people and their relations. That is, gendered practices construct members of a community 'as' women or 'as' men (or members of other gender categories), and this construction crucially "also involves constructing relations between and within each sex" (p. 463). Stressing the importance of "studying how people negotiate meanings in and among specific communities of practice to which they belong" (p. 472), they examine power and language and their influence on gender relations. Cameron (2005) echoes this notion of performed identity and shows how it is constructed both globally and locally: "'global' constructs such as gender and power are thus relevant only to the extent that participants in interaction make them relevant through their own words and action" (p. 487).

Social dance has been an increasingly interesting topic of ethnographic research (e.g., Bosse, 2008; Callahan, 2005). In her study of a West Coast Swing community of practice, Callahan (2005) found that participants viewed the dance as "a secret language" (p. 16); it served as a *shared repertoire* of knowledge, skills, and experiences through which they related to one another. Bosse (2005) traced a salsa dance team's formation and development in Illinois. In her case study,

she found that the group members were attracted to salsa because it "allowed members to try on new identities or perhaps explore and push the boundaries of the self" (p. 58) and provided "a means of acquiring the positive qualities they associated with Latin Americans" (p. 59). Salsa enabled them to not only explore but also appropriate new social practices and identities.

Wieschiolek (2003) encountered similar findings in a case study of salsa dancing in Hamburg, Germany. She describes its hybrid origin and how it has "reversed the attitude towards dancing in couples" (p. 123). Wieschiolek found most of her informants to have negative pre-salsa and positive post-salsa self images and attitudes: "German *salsa* dancers construct a self-image of a vivid, joyful person, in contrast to what they regard as the boring, stiff, and square German majority" (p. 129). She also found that despite salsa being hard to learn and very distinct from traditional German culture as well as having very specific gender-roles, the *salsa scene* is extremely appealing to both Latinos and Germans in Hamburg.

Leaving the dance floor and returning to the classroom, it is important to understand how pop-cultural trends, like the salsa scene, influence today's education. Looking at the relationship between mass media and classroom discourse, Rymes (2008) demonstrates how "communicative repertoires[1] that are circulated and recirculated via contemporary mass media channels such as the internet have become widely accepted as common parlance in today's classrooms" (p. 65) and notes their influence on classroom participation. Her study shows how mass media permeates the classroom; although not the explicit topic of the class, pop culture influences the classroom dynamic as it is often used by students to assert specific identities and interact with their peers. Rymes argues, "students' identities and actions are not unilaterally determined by policy definitions…or top-down mandates. Instead, through widely circulating metadiscourses, many of them kid-created and influenced by consumer culture, students are already active consumers and producers of classroom content" (p. 84–85). Rymes (2008, 2009, 2010) argues for the importance of focusing on classroom discourse and highlights the influence of mass media within the classroom.

Just as high school students use mass media in their class discussions (Rymes, 2008), pop culture and mass media permeate university walls. Outside of the top-down educational hierarchy of the traditional classroom, university students created an extracurricular club to learn salsa. Instead of being told what to learn in class, they have the agency not only to choose the subject matter but also to select the instructor. The club provides a space where undergraduates mix with graduate students and professionals from a variety of backgrounds. Learning salsa, like learning hip-hop, is not a matter of just knowing the steps, but rather embodying a new identity (e.g., Dyck & Archetti, 2003). There is little literature (if any at all) that examines pop culture, particularly salsa, as the subject matter within the field of Educational Linguistics. In order to gain a better understanding of how this occurs, this paper will explore a university salsa club as a community of practice, explore its communicative repertoire, and examine its pedagogy (what is being taught and how).

Context and Methodology

This project explored a learning community of practice at a university in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using methods of ethnographic inquiry from January 2013 through April 2013. As the researcher, I was both a participant and an observer in the class for the course of the study. I was a member of the salsa club, took classes, and attended social dance events.

The data collected for this project occurred during weekly, informal dance lessons offered by the salsa dance club at the university. The salsa club was two years old and was founded by a female student from Colombia the year before leadership was passed on to a male student from El Salvador. Two of the seven officers identified as Latino, and the other five came from various backgrounds including one Italian-American student and one South Asian-American student; the others identified as being of American/European descent. The salsa club's members shared similar demographics. Latino students were present, but were in the minority. The majority were students (some underclassmen, a few graduate students, and an alumna) and there were also an adjunct professor and two professionals who were affiliated with the university or a neighboring university.[2]

Participants can buy a semester-long membership or pay for the classes weekly. Two hour-long classes were offered each week at the intercultural center of the university and were open to the community. The intermediate class was held from 7:00 to 8:00 pm followed by the beginner class. The intermediate class was taught by a non-Latino[3] professional ballroom and Latin dance instructor who was hired by the university salsa dance club. On average, there were 6–12 participants in the intermediate class and 15–20 in the beginner class. Officers of the salsa club led the beginner class. Following each class, the featured dance combination was video-recorded by one of the club members and posted to the club's Facebook page. The page also has links to salsa etiquette, local salsa dance venues, social events, and other classes.

The findings reported in the paper include data samples from an audio recording of a one-hour intermediate lesson on February 13, 2013; semi-structured interviews with the instructor (March 21, 2013), the club president (March 4, 2013), and two participants (March 13, 2013); and the responses to a printed survey of 19 participants who were present in class on April 3, 2013. The survey provides a sample of quantitative data, which serves to triangulate the transcript data and researcher's observations.

The data from the survey showed that the majority of this community of practice is comprised of undergraduate students at the university. There are also alumni, professionals and graduate students from a neighboring university. The majority of the students surveyed identified as Asian (45%) and Caucasian (45%), and only one as Latino (5%), who is the president of the club. Occasionally, there are three to four Latino participants, but they are usually in the minority. Some

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[1] Rymes (2010) defines a *communicative repertoire* as "the collection of ways individuals use language and literacy and other means of communication (gestures, dress, posture, or accessories) to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate" (p. 528).

[2] Dance instructors tend to acquire loyal students who travel around communities to take their classes. The three professionals who attended the class at this university also take other lessons given by the same instructor at another local university.

[3] The ethnicity of the dance instructor is deliberately presented as ambiguous in order to protect her anonymity. Not being Latina shows that her interest in salsa is most likely something she has acquired rather than being part of her home culture.

participants in the survey chose not to specify their ethnicity. Members range in age from 18 to 65 years old; nine were undergraduate students at the university, one was an alumna, one was an adjunct professor, five were graduate students from a neighboring institution, and three did not specify. The number and gender of participants varies from week to week. On the day of the recorded class, there were nine men and four women (with the addition of the female instructor); the survey, which was conducted seven weeks later, shows that there were eight men and eleven women.

The classroom data will be analyzed using Rymes' (2009, 2010) *communicative repertoire* approach and Goffman's (1979) concepts of participation framework and footing. Verbal and nonverbal contextualization cues will also be examined using Gumperz's (1982) work. Data from the surveys and interviews will be explored using discourse analysis (e.g., Edley, 2001; Rymes, 2009). Using a descriptive, interactional sociolinguistic approach this paper presents a case study of a small community of practice and examines its members' motivations for taking the class, the classroom pedagogy they encountered, and how gendered roles were defined and negotiated among members.

Findings and Analysis

Membership and Motivation

Salsa, as a community of practice, is a joint enterprise among a diverse group of people (Wenger, 1998). In this case, it is a learning community. Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight the connection between learning and the self: "learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person" (p. 53). Before looking at the pedagogical practices of this community, it is important to understand who the students are and what their motivations were for taking classes and joining the university salsa club. The two principal reasons individuals joined this community of practice were (1) to learn how to dance and (2) to have fun (survey results, April 3, 2013).

In an interview with the president of the salsa club, which was not recorded as per the informant's request, the president confirmed that the mission of the club is to "make salsa fun" (personal interview, March 6, 2013) and help people learn. He explained how the club selected the current dance instructor because she was "fun, funny, energetic…gives positive feedback, and is a good instructor" (personal interview, March 6, 2013). Both male and female participants spoke about their various reasons for taking classes. They wanted to move around a bit, relax, connect and meet people, and get exercise. Having to travel frequently for his profession, one participant highlights how salsa is "everywhere" (line 13).

Excerpt 1: Interview with male participant (March 13, 2013)

7	…so I really lost track of everybody that I knew here (.) um and <u>so</u> this was
8	a way for me to establish some, some stuff, some connections back in the
9	neighborhood (.) um plus (.) if you're <u>traveling</u> you know, there's, "what do you
10	do?" You're stuck some place in a strange town, you can, you can eat calories
11	too many calories in a restaurant or you can go to a bar- uh both of those this

12	are pretty <u>bad</u> for you if you want to <u>perform</u> the next day (.) and so this is this
13	thing that, pretty much everywhere you go, one night a week, there's going to be
14	at least a salsa festival, uh more and more recently (.) so it's a thing to do when
15	I'm on the road (.)

Salsa is not only easy to find but it is also a healthy way for him to connect with people both on the road and at home. In other words, salsa gives this participant social agency by enabling him to interact with other social dancers in various communities.

Excerpt 2: Interview with male participant (March 13, 2013)

16	and it's also (.) and they say if you like to… (.) I used to go to a meditation group
17	and we used to do a lo::t of research on meditation (.) and one of the things they
18	said is if you want to keep your brain young- <u>do</u> something different like learn
19	another language and do something that you're <u>not</u> <u>good</u> at- get out of your
20	comfort zone (.) and so this is something that I'm really not good at and it got me
21	out of my <u>comfort</u> zone

Comparing dance to learning a language, he states another motivation as wanting to "keep his brain young" (line 18) and "get out of his comfort zone" (line 18). Salsa helps him to be sociable and healthy, and to challenge himself.

The dance instructor echoes this notion of challenging students while also helping them experience "the joy of dance" (personal interview, March 6, 2013). Her goal is to make dance fun, "…the joy of dancing is what we are trying to spread" (personal interview, March 6, 2013). She notes the range in students' motivations for taking classes, which reinforce the mass-mediated salsa culture.

Excerpt 3: Interview with dance instructor (March 6, 2013)

127	IN: why do people learn salsa?
128	DI: um well it's actually- a lot of times it's for multiple reasons (.) some people
129	want to learn it because they see it on Dancing with the Stars and they're like
130	"we've seen it and it looks sexy and I want to do it" (.) some girls are like "I want
131	to feel sexy" (.) some couples come in to me because they want to dance together
132	(.) um some couples come in to me because they're like "I went to El Son the other
133	day and and there were all these <u>people</u> who knew how to dance but I don't know
134	how to dance so I want to learn <u>that</u> skill (.) um some people do it for exercise (.)
135	like some men I teach (.) they literally just want twice a week where you know it's
136	like working out (.) but not at the gym (.) so for exercise (.) a lot of women do it
137	for weight loss also, because if you think about it (.) you take some lessons then
138	you got out for $10 a night and it's fours hours of exercise and you get to dress
139	up exercise that doesn't <u>feel</u> like exercise so a lot of women do it for weight loss
140	(.) to meet girls (.) to meet guys (.) a lot of reasons (.) some people want to perform
141	ex-ballerinas like myself want to look into doing something but something's that's
142	different (.) yeah

The instructor explains how some students want to be able to mimic what they have seen on television (lines 129–130), and equate salsa with looking "sexy" (line 130) and meeting people (line 140). Some want a reason to "dress up" (line 138) whereas others dance for exercise and weight loss (line 139). Salsa students

have many motivations for attending class, including embodying new identities including being sexier, more fashionable, slimmer, or more famous.

Despite their multiple motives, they shared a desire to learn. Learning to dance serves a common ground among them and connects them to the surrounding salsa community. The skills they acquire in class will serve them in salsa communities around the globe. This mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998) suggests participation in a more *translocal* or *glocal* (Rymes, 2011) salsa culture.

Classroom Instruction

While offering salsa classes at universities may be a new trend, the class, albeit informal, is taught in a very traditional way from a pedagogical perspective. The class is clearly teacher-centered (Rymes, 2009); there is very little discussion and students are expected to follow the steps of the combination. Trained in ballet and ballroom dance, the instructor likes to give "fast paced courses that challenge students" (personal interview, March 21, 2013). As mentioned above, classes are an hour-long and take place in the basement of an intercultural center. Each week the class follows the same sequence. After signing in and paying their dues, members gather on the dance floor. Sometimes the instructor asks the "ladies" to "grab a gentleman" (class transcript, February 13, 2013) and other weeks, she asks the men to "grab a lady" (field notes, Spring 2013).

Excerpt 4: Classroom transcript (February 13, 2013)

1	DI: ((music playing…small talk…some tokens in Spanish, laughter, students (P)
2	are gathered around DI)) alright guys- alright guys let's go ahead and get started
3	(.) men go ahead and make a circle around the room (.) ladies grab a gentlemen (.)
4	we should have partner (.) gentleman (.1) partner (.) gentleman (.) yadiyadiyada
5	(.3) alright ladies (.) initiative (.) grab a gentleman (.2) (laughs) (.) alright (.3) ok (.)
6	that's alright=

Sequence of class

I. Welcome & Sign-in
II. Warm-up ("Ok, we're gonna get started…grab a partner"; with music)
III. Demonstration of the first step of the dance pattern
IV. Practice first step (Initiation, Response Evaluation (IRE))
V. Demonstration of the second step
VI. Practice second step (IRE)
VII. Demonstration of the third-seventh steps
VIII. Practice third-seventh steps (IRE)
IX. Review and practice the entire pattern (with music)
X. Filmed demonstration of the entire pattern

Figure 1. Instructional sequence and classroom layout

After a brief warm-up, the dance instructor then explains and demonstrates the first part of the dance pattern, observes as the students try it, and then offers feedback. This is the traditional three-part pattern comprised of an *initiation* (usually in the form of a question and issued by the teacher), *response* (typically uttered by a student), and *evaluation* (offered by the teacher) (Mehan, 1985 as cited by Rymes, 2009). Sometimes corrective feedback follows the evaluation. The instructor then asks the students to rotate. This involves either the men or women moving in a clock-wise direction while the other sex remains stationary.

What is being taught and how? Pop culture as content

In Pennycook's (2010) discussion of hip-hop culture in the classroom, he cites the performance of new identities: "to be *authentic* in such contexts is a discursive accomplishment, rather than an adherence to a pregiven set of characteristics (p. 77). Citing Woolard (2004), Pennycook reasons, "language ideologies are about what it means to be a person in a particular context" (p. 77). Just as learning a language can position students as language learners and weaving hip-hop lyrics into speech can allow for self-expression and identity-exploration, students in a salsa club negotiate their identities as salsa learners and dancers. Learning how to dance is not only a matter of gaining knowledge (i.e., learning the basic principles of salsa and the names of the steps) and learning a skill (i.e., the specific steps and movements) but also understanding norms and shared attitudes (i.e., salsa etiquette; gendered roles). The classroom instruction in this community of practice involves each of these three components, which will be explored below.

Excerpt 5: Classroom transcript (February 13, 2013)

38	[awe:]some and can I have you tu:rn this way? oh, you're fine ((to another P)) so:
39	yeah. ready? fi:ve six (.) five. six. seven. (.) one.˘ two. three.˘ (.) five.˘ six. seven.˘ (.)
40	one.˘ two. three.˘ (.) five.˘ six. seven.˘ (.) and one.˘ two. three.˘ (.) five.˘ six. seven.˘
41	(.) one.˘ two. three.˘ (.) and fi:ve si:x. good. (.) the first thing we're going to do is
42	we're going to do a basic to a cross body lead to two hands (.) so (.) men. ba:sic
43	one.˘ two. three.˘ (.) five.˘ six. seven.˘ (.) cross body lead five.˘ six. two hands. (.)
44	alright? nice and easy for the guys(.) ladies- basic.˘ two. three.˘ (.) five.˘ six. seven.˘
45	(.) back and clo:se (.) left <tap left half turn> and close (.) alright so the cross body
46	is <left. step. close.> (.) alright(.) >let's give it another try< and fi:ve six seven (.)
47	one.˘ two. three.˘ (.) five.˘ six. seven.˘ (.) cross body lead and left and close (.3) same
48	partner one more time please (.) five.˘ six. seven.˘ (.) one.˘ two. three.˘ (.) five.˘ six.
49	seven.˘ (.) cross˘ body lead˘ and left˘ and close(.) goo:d job (.) let's rotate (.)
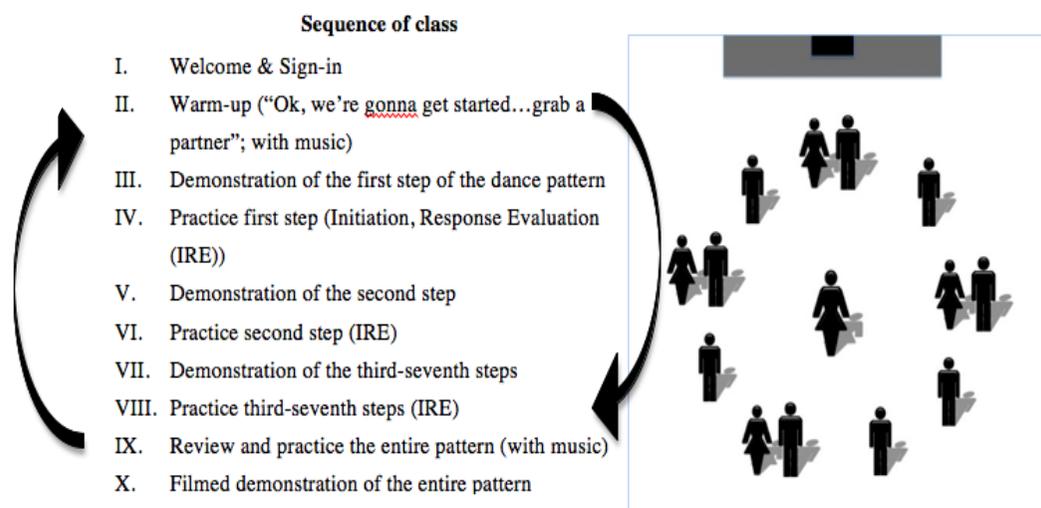
As this is an intermediate class, students are expected to know how to do a "basic" (line 42). This is the step the participants are practicing to warm up (lines 38–41). The dance instructor then introduces the first part of the new pattern (lines 40–41). She first states the name of the move, "a cross body lead to two hands" (line 42), and then demonstrates it. Individuals who are not familiar with salsa code would not easily understand the dance instructor's directions. Looking at Line 44, "so the cross body is left" may be syntactically acceptable in English, but the meaning is lost to those who are not dancers. This highly stylized way of speaking is unique to this community of practice.

Table 1. *Salsa code (compiled from February 13, 2013 class data)*

• Basic (noun and verb) • Back-break (noun and verb) • Block-step (noun) • Copa (noun and verb) • Cross body lead (noun and verb) • Cuddle (noun and verb) • Dip (noun and verb) • Grab a gentleman (verb) • Grab a lady (verb) • Hair comb (noun and verb) • Hammerlock (noun and verb) • Head roll (noun and verb) • Highjack (noun and verb) • Karate chop (noun and verb)	• Left-hand turn (noun and verb) • Lead the lady in (verb) • On (the) 1, on 2 • Progressive right, progressive left (noun and verb) • Right-hand turn (noun and verb) • Rotate (verb) • Side-break (noun and verb) • Turn (noun and verb) • Turn the lady under (verb) • Turn yourself (verb) • Two-hand turn (noun and verb) • Walk the lady in/out (verb) • Windmill (verb and noun)

Mixing ballroom and traditional dance terminology (e.g., "core," "center," and "spotting") with occasional words in Spanish (e.g., "copa" and "dile que no") as well as other elements of pop culture (e.g., "do the Michael Jackson turn"), the instructor's communicative repertoire also includes paralinguistic resources, such as prosody and nonverbal cues.[4] The dance instructor mirrors the rhythm of the music in the cadence of her speech (Excerpt 5, lines 37–39). This is a common coaching practice that uses musicality to reinforce students' learning (dance instructor, personal interview, March 21, 2013). This conglomeration of borrowed terms constitutes *salsa speak*, marks the members of this community as salsa dancers, and indicates their ability to *shuttle between languages* (Canagarajah, 2006) and cultures. This exemplifies Gumperz's (1968) description of speech community: "the greater the frequency of internal interaction, the greater the tendency for innovations, arising in one part of the speech community to diffuse throughout it" (p. 72). He continues, "when a social change caused the breakdown of traditional social structures and the formation of new ties, as in urbanization and colonialization, linguistic barriers between varieties also break down" (p. 72). In other words, salsa as pop culture transcends certain social boundaries and therefore allows diverse varieties of codes to mix in and beyond the classroom.

Forms of both verbal and nonverbal communication are used to assess students' progress. The instructor gives feedback by evaluating students using terms such as "awesome" and "good" (dance instructor, class transcript, February 13, 2013) as well as corrective feedback, which is verbal and nonverbal. She asks, "Can I have you turn this way?" (class transcript, February 13, 2013) and then repositions the student with her hands. Due to the nonverbal communicative aspect of dance, the participants physically respond to the dance instructor's directives instead of replying verbally. Goffman (1979) describes how in some circumstances "a conversation is not really the context of the utterance; a physically elaborated, nonlinguistic undertaking is one in which nonlinguistic events may have the floor" (p. 15). Dance is one of these occasions.

In addition to showing students how to move their bodies, the salsa instructor is also teaching them how to relate with one another socially. They need to engrain

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[4] This corpus of salsa code was collected from field notes throughout February and March of 2013.

the beat of the music into their minds and train their bodies to move to it. They also need to know the salsa terminology. Likewise, by addressing both groups separately (e.g., "nice and easy for the guys (.) ladies- basic," Excerpt 5, line 44), the instructor is implicitly communicating to the class that within salsa culture, men move a certain way and women move another. Styling is a term used to refer to the accentuated movements of more advanced dancers. In salsa culture, each gender has particular (or favored) ways of styling; women use moves such as caresses, body rolls, and very feminine and/or sexy gestures, whereas men tend to accentuate their masculinity with jumps, elaborate footwork, and use of their shoulders and arms. Therefore, students need to acquire and practice skills as well as attributes in order to become salsa dancers. In other words, they need to perform gendered identities.

Roles, norms and etiquette: Partnered, gendered roles

As mentioned above, one of the key components of salsa dancing is that it is a partnered dance. The roles of the "lead"[5] and "follow" are clearly defined both explicitly and implicitly in the classroom instruction. The "gentlemen" lead and the "ladies" follow. Men are instructed to "walk the lady in, walk the lady out," "turn the lady," and "hammerlock the lady." The "ladies" are instructed to turn and learn their own moves, but are only to execute those moves when cued by the men. There is a clear differentiation between the two roles in salsa, and this appears to be reinforced by the classroom discourse. Using the categories "ladies" and "men," the dance instructor discursively isolates the two groups, giving each gender different instructions.

Interestingly, although she teaches the notion of women having to follow on the dance floor, the female dance instructor is clearly in a position of authority and power in class. While her personal beliefs about who leads off the dance floor are unknown, from my observations, participation in class and conversations with her, she does not appear to be a passive person nor perceive herself as such. Goffman's (1979) *production format* offers an insight into this apparent contradiction. In order to glean a deeper understanding of the dynamic between *speaker* and *hearer*, Goffman developed the notion of a three-part *production format*. Any utterance can have an *animator* (i.e., the person who physically voices a word or phrase*), author* (i.e., the original source of the word or phrase), and *principal* (i.e., "someone whose position is established by the words spoken," p. 17). The instructor is the animator of these gendered norms, but she may not be the author or principal of them. She seems to be speaking on behalf of salsa norms and universal instruction. She is teaching the established rules of dance, but does not necessarily follow them outside the salsa context.

Critical discourse analysts may refer to these gendered roles (i.e., the man leads, and the woman follows) as interpretive repertoires attached to dance instruction (Edley, 2001). In other words, the members of this community use these terms to make sense of their experiences within the salsa context. Edley (2001) states, "interpretive repertoires are part and parcel of any community's common sense, providing a basis for shared social understanding (p. 198). When asked about men's and women's roles, the instructor replied, "dancing is like any relationship. It's

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[5] The following quotations were documented in the recorded class transcript from February 13, 2013.

like in any family unit, right? Whether it's the man or the woman, someone leads and everyone follows" (personal interview, March 21, 2013). Edley (2001) writes, "when people talk (or think) about things, they invariably do so in terms already provided for them by history" (p. 198). The instructor's analogy seems to be based in a broader historical and cultural context. She later states, "it's like building a house. The guy gives the basic framework of the house and the woman's job is to make it amazing. If the man's ok with decorating, that's fine too as long as there's only one builder" (personal interview, March 21, 2013). The gender hierarchy is quite evident in the instructor's words. The man's role is to provide a framework and the woman's is to make it "amazing." The man has agency to switch roles and "decorate" but only one person can lead.

Equating men with building and women with decorating reveals gendered ideologies that seem apparent within this community. One aspect of an individual's interpretive repertoire is the set of ideologies, or set of beliefs, he or she has. In their discussion on language ideologies, Irvine and Gal (2000) observe that ideologies "locate, interpret, and rationalize sociolinguistic complexity, identifying linguistic varieties with 'typical' persons and activities and accounting for the differentiations among them" (p. 36). Just as certain ways of speaking can be considered to have a particular social significance, terms like "lead" and "follow" can also be transformed, or *iconized* (Irvine & Gal, 2000), and take on new social meaning. In the salsa community, men lead and women follow, whereas in other communities, these roles are not necessarily attached to gender.

Participants echoed these iconized notions of gendered roles in their written responses to the three survey questions related to the leader and follower. Among the responses were "a good couple makes a good dance," "the leader has to show the way and the follower has to let the leader show the way," and "the ideal leader communicates the moves carefully and the ideal follower follows the lead well" (cited from three separate participants' responses, written survey, April 3, 2013). Most stated that both roles were important, some believed the leader to be more important, and no one cited the follower as the most important role.

The two participants who were interviewed had very different perspectives on the women's role as follower. One of the male participants shares an anecdote about a friend before acknowledging the strong differentiation between roles:

Excerpt 6: Interview with Male Participant (March 13, 2013)

47	I have- I have a friend who played in a salsa band, this guy I used to work with,
48	he won't dance with his wife cuz she backleads all the time (.) and she won't
49	she won't stop (.) and he won't dance with her (.) […] so I guess there really
50	is a strong role (.2) I would <u>like</u> to dance lady in class but I wouldn't like to be
51	<u>led</u> (.) in a (.)social setting (.2) so there <u>is</u> a gender thing (.) there is a ro:le (.1)

The friend refuses to dance with his wife because she "backleads" (line 48). The words used to refer to men and women differ: men lead and women backlead. Clearly, leading is preferred to backleading, and refusing to follow has consequences, such as not being asked to dance (line 48). The participant later offers that he would not mind "dancing lady" (line 50) in class, but would not feel comfortable being "led" (line 50) in public. In stark contrast to this excerpt, one of the female students had a very different perspective.

Excerpt 7: Interview with Female Participant (March 13, 2013)

15	yeah (laughs) (.) I think it's something to do with <u>gender</u> (.) (laughs) maybe
16	it's because I took that <u>course</u> Language and Gender so I'm very sensitive (.)
17	um during dancing I find that it's obvious that guys lead us to do <u>things</u> and
18	uh girls who are females don't have the say or right to decide anything- just
19	<u>follow</u> what the guys (.) um lead them to do (.) so I sometimes feel dominat-
20	ed and I don't like that feeling (.) I-I like dancing () it's relaxing () I just don't
21	like the way to be dominated all the way

Acknowledging the potential influence of one of her graduate courses, this student describes the partnered dance as the women following whatever the men decide to do. Her view seems to highlight the lack of agency that she occasionally feels on the dance floor. She describes feeling "dominated" (line 20) on the dance floor and does not feel that she has the right to "say or decide anything" (line 18). It would appear that she, in the words of the instructor, would like to build the house instead of decorating it, and may not even feel that she has the freedom to decorate it as she wishes. The data reflect multiple interpretive repertoires, attitudes and beliefs within this community, from viewing salsa as a mutual partnership, to one of hierarchy, to one of domination. From the data collected, it appears that there are competing discourses surrounding this notion and this may depend on the students' skill level as well as cultural and personal perception. This tendency is common within communities of practice, wherein "learning is never simply a matter of 'transmission' of knowledge or the 'acquisition' of skill; identity in relation with practice, and hence knowledge and skill and their significance to the subject and community, are never unproblematic" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 116). Thus, the salsa dancers are grappling with who they are on and off the dance floor and the implications of those identities and ideologies.

Implications and Future Study

This paper has attempted to provide snapshots of some of the key features of this particular community of salsa dancers and to explore salsa culture as code. While there is very little literature that has looked at salsa pedagogy, especially by taking an ethnographic approach (e.g., Bosse, 2008; Wieschiolek, 2003), this project aimed to further the ethnographic study of salsa as a learning community of practice. First, it examined students' motivation for being in the classroom. Second, it discussed the classroom setup, and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are being taught and how they are presented in class. Third, it explored how roles were defined as well as the interpretive repertoires that influenced the construction of those norms. Attempting to incorporate a range of sociolinguistic concepts and frameworks, this paper explored salsa as part of pop culture, as code, and as its own culture in hopes of exhibiting the complexity, diversity, and fluidity of language, culture, and society as well as the individuals who navigate and construct them.

As this was an exploratory study of this community of practice, more in-depth investigation and analysis is needed. Thus, this paper was only able to scratch the surface of the ideologies surrounding how men and women should interact on the dance floor. Future research could further examine the gendered roles of

participants and the varying degrees or types of agency they may have, as well as examining the nonverbal communication and contextualization cues that are used in social dances such as salsa. The findings in this paper connect to broader sociolinguistic themes such as the influence of pop culture and media in the classroom, the power of nonverbal communication, and also to second language acquisition. Although their end goal—salsa dancing—is nonverbal, dancers are learning a new means of communication as well as immersing themselves in a new community.

Acknowledgements

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