

SALSA MEETS SCIENCE:

A Case Study on Improvisational Skills of Salsa Dancers

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INTRODUCTION

Dance and Improvisation have been marginalized topics in scholarly discourse for a long time. Fortunately, this is changing due to the realization that these domains provide essential insights about creativity, interaction and intersubjectivity (Łuczniak 2015, Kimmel 2009, Kimmel 2016).

Salsa dance leans as a Cognitive Science topic of investigation because - just like Tango Argentino - it can be viewed as a co-regulative system that seeks 'dynamic stability' (Kimmel 2009) through a 'loop of constant reciprocal causation based on bidirectional information flow' (ibid. 2016).

This project is primarily concerned with mapping the cognitive skills of Salsa dancers that enable improvisation and an experience of flow in the dyad. It also aims at **bridging science and (dance) practice**, using the results to reconceptualise didactics in Salsa that take into account the inherent creative character of improvisation.

METHODOLOGY

This project draws on first-person and second-person methods using interview techniques that aim at a detailed description of subjective experience. The interest in these methods is just beginning to increase. Criteria of validation are defined techniques for conducting an interview and intersubjective aspects (Petitmengin 2006).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How can cognitive processes of Salsa dancers be elicited using second-person interviews?
- How can this data be used for mapping the cognitive skills?
- Finally, is it possible to translate a 'cognitive theory of joint improvisation' (Kimmel 2016) into the practical realm and define a teaching strategy?

RELATED RESEARCH

The current research project "Embodied Creativity in Dyadic Interaction" of Michael Kimmel, Dayana Hristova and Christine Irran (University of Vienna) is concerned with the improvisational skills in Tango Argentino. Their methodology and theoretical framework is informed by Cultural and Social Anthropology and Cognitive Science (Affordance Theory, Dynamic Systems Theory and Enactivism).

[http://cognitivescience.univie.ac.at/projects/projects/project/article/embodied-creativity-in-dyadic-interaction/?tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=126262&cHash=728cfa34fb52bc48a9e9b229abea725f](http://cognitivescience.univie.ac.at/projects/projects/project/article/embodied-creativity-in-dyadic-interaction/?tx_ttnews[backPid]=126262&cHash=728cfa34fb52bc48a9e9b229abea725f)

Another current research project conducted by Jon May, John Sikorski and Klara Lucznik (University of Plymouth) is concerned with "Delving inside the Minds of Dancers". This group of psychologists aims at an in-depth analysis of the mental imagery contemporary dancers use. They will also examine how these mental techniques can be taught effectively.

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/news/delving-inside-the-minds-of-dancers>

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Michael Kimmel and Dayana Hristova for their support as well as Günther Greindl and his team for participating this project.

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