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PARANG AS A MEDIUM FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN TRINIDAD: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY.

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ABSTRACT

Parang as a Medium for Second Language Learning in Trinidad:
An Exploratory Study

Tenille St. Louis

This undergraduate thesis explores the use of parang as a medium for the implicit and explicit learning of Spanish as a second foreign language on the island of Trinidad. The thesis also attempted to determine whether parang affected the cultural identity of the island’s inhabitants, and whether or not the exposure of this musical genre at least a quarter part of the year influenced the listeners to study Spanish. A mixed methods approach was used, so that both qualitative and quantitative data could be used in the analysis and interpretation of findings. Fifty people of varying educational backgrounds were emailed questionnaires in order to ensure anonymity. Then thirteen Spanish teachers (six Trinidadians and seven Latin Americans) were interviewed. Finally, four parranderos were interviewed. It was found that almost half of the respondents interviewed considered parang to be an important part of Trinidad’s history, therefore an integral part of Trinidadian culture. Parang was largely considered by the participants to be an indigenous element of Trinidadian culture which stemmed from Venezuelan influences, and not as an appropriated part of Venezuelan culture; hearing the music made half of the respondents feel a stronger connection to Trinidad, rather than a connection to Venezuela. However, the vast majority of Trinidadians who elected to study Spanish as a second language did not use parang as a method of language learning and reinforcement. It was also found that most teachers (who were either native Trinidadians or native Latin Americans) did not use parang in the classroom as a teaching aid. Furthermore, it was found that parang did not influence the decision of Spanish students to study Spanish in the first place, nor did at any point ever inspire Trinidadians who had absolutely no interest in studying a foreign language. It was therefore concluded that while parang was considered to be an important aspect of Trinidad and Tobago’s culture, and can be considered a part of Trinidadian identity, it has very little to no effect on the participants’ desires to study Spanish as a second language, and does not seem welcome in a classroom setting.
Acknowledgements

I think it is fitting to acknowledge several parties, considering that I do not think that this work could have been completed without their help. It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the following persons for their contribution to this research project.

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I would finally like to thank my mother for her strength and support. It is to her that I dedicate this thesis.
Chapter 1
Introduction

Music is one of the most important aspects of a culture. On the topic of music and art, David Elliot posits that music not only provides the listener with entertainment, but can also be considered “indispensable symbols of our national existence…but essential symbols that have helped define what we collectively are. (147)” But not only is music an important cultural aspect which reflects our history and progress over the decades, but it can be an important scholastic tool. Marilyn Abbott states that “music plays an important role in culture and communication . . . Cultures have musical traditions because of the enjoyment people receive from creating rhythms and expressing their feelings, ideas, thoughts, and cultural values through lyrics . . . Evidently, then, music activities have the power to excite, move and soothe learners in the language classroom. (10)”

This study aims to further expand on the idea of explicit learning through music, with simultaneous focus on the possibility of accidental and implicit learning through annual exposure of content. It also aims to research the possibility of a genre of music influencing and motivating a culture to embark on the journey to acquire another language and possibly, by extension, the culture of another country. The focus of this research paper is possibly a unique one; considering that the second language of Trinidad and Tobago is Spanish, does not mean that the citizens all speak or are willing to learn Spanish. Yet, regardless of this, ‘parang’ (a genre of music native to the twin Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago, whose lyrics are Spanish) is a widely accepted part of Trinidadian culture.

Fifty participants were randomly distributed questionnaires over the course of three months. They were asked about the impact that parang had on their desire to learn Spanish, as well as state the relationship between parang and their identity as Trinidadians. Then thirteen Spanish teachers (six native Trinidadians and seven Latin Americans) were interviewed and asked whether they would use parang in an academic setting. The Trinidad teachers were also asked questions about the impact of parang on their identity. Finally, parranderos were interviewed and asked questions about their opinion of parang.

The following chapter will present further literature expanding on the use of music in second language acquisition, and present the history of the music genre of ‘parang’.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents literature found on the use of music in general education as a method of explicit teaching, and then narrows the focus to music in second language learning, with special focus on implicit learning. Then literature on the history of ‘parang’ will be presented, and its place in modern ‘Trinbagonian’ culture will be mapped. Throughout the literature review it will be shown how the literature found shapes the scope of this research paper, as well as how this study aims to fill any gaps left by the limitations of past researchers.

2.2 Music in Education

According to the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), incorporating music with education can add many benefits to the overall education of a child. Apart from improved cognitive, social, and emotional development, increased attention spans and improved grades, students exposed to music “will develop the areas of the brain related to language and reasoning. The left side of the brain is better developed with music, and songs can help imprint information on young minds.” In understanding theories of brain plasticity, one can assume that this theory can be applied in the scope of music culturally relevant to Trinidad and Tobago; it is quite possible that teachers use parang as a medium to teach their students. However, the focus of the NAfME seems to be on primary and secondary level students, rather than adults. This research paper on the other hand intends to study the use of parang by teachers as a method of teaching adults Spanish.

Additionally, NAfME posits that “introducing music in the early childhood years can help foster a positive attitude toward learning and curiosity”. Conversely, Dr. Joseph Mainzer states that the appreciation and impact of music on a single human results in subjective response, and reinforces this by offering anecdotes on the effects of varying sounds and music genres on different individuals. Yet at the same time, he posits that music can be used with education to assist learning. “Music then, as we have shown, stands in connection with education, with classical and popular education (63)”. This indicates that while it is possible that parang, a culturally relevant aspect of Trinbagonian life, would have inspired locals to actively seek out
instruction in learning Spanish, it could also mean that parang could have absolutely no effect at all, since its appreciation is not mandatory.

The following section defines implicit and explicit learning, and analyzes research which links music to second language learning.

2.3 Music, Language, and Learning
According to Marc Ettlinger, Elizabeth H. Margulis and Patrick C. M. Wong in their article *Implicit memory in music and language*, “[i]mplicit memory is generally defined as acquired knowledge that is not available to conscious access (Schacter and Graf, 1986; Schacter, 1987). This contrasts with explicit memory, which is characterized by knowledge that involves conscious recollection, recall or recognition. (159)” In their research, Ettlinger et al. posit that music is an integral part of implicit learning, and “plays an important role in acquiring the grammar, or rules, of language at all levels of linguistics structure. (159)” They also researched the effect of music on learning syntax by introducing them to a fake grammatical structure via a corresponding musical sequence. It was noted that the participants were able to predict the pattern of the subsequent notes and therefore prove the Chomskyan notion of finite grammar.

Similarly, Ray Jackendoff in his article *A Comparison of Rhythmic Structures in Music and Language* stated that it is possible for music to parallel phonology through prosody. He used both music and syntax trees to parallel the prosodic stress in both music and words. Yet even Jackendoff admitted that his research had its own limitations, saying “in retrospect it is clear that this was a makeshift, dictated by the standard conception of grammar in which syntax stands between all phonological structure and all semantic structure. (42)” One can argue that this statement can also refute Chomsky’s theory of universal grammar, and therefore bring into question the study of the link between music and syntax done by Ettlinger et al.

However, the research of Ettlinger et al. used participants who suffered from developmental and nervous disorders, which may have affected both their implicit and explicit learning ability. Neither did they include information on the native language of the participants, nor specify the target language(s) used, nor if the music used throughout their study had song lyrics which would have added to their study of implicit lexicon learning. Additionally, though their study focused only on the implicit acquisition of syntactic structures, my study prefers to focus on Spanish lexicon. The music in question has also been exposed to the participants over
the course of many years; a scenario definitely different from the controlled case studies of Ettlinger et al. Suzanne Medina conducted research studying the possibility of the acquisition of English lexicon on “limited-English-proficient children”, and stated that “a musical medium promotes language acquisition to the same extent as a non-musical medium. (3)” Using logic based on Medina’s research, one can predict similar results for this study; that it proves that the annual exposure of parang does indeed add to the participants’ corpus of Spanish words, thereby proving that it has some impact on second language learning.

2.4 What is parang?

Daphne Pawn Taylor describes parang in Parang of Trinidad as “a term which identifies a custom belonging to Trinidad’s Hispanic heritage. The word itself is neither Spanish nor English. It is the colloquial term for parran, the abbreviation of parranda, the Spanish word which means a spree, or carousel, or a group of more than four people who go out at night singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments. (8)" While Taylor goes on say that the origins of the music genre itself is uncertain, and theorized that the music either came directly from Spain, or from Spain via Venezuela, Francisca Carol Allard gives a more concrete history; “Initially, parang is placed within the Hispanic/Latin American world and is viewed contextually as an offspring from Spain, manifesting the inherited characteristics of the indigenous musical forms of the Americas and the Spanish Caribbean. More specifically, later on, the parang art-form is strongly identified with that of neighbouring Venezuela (Oriente), from where it was directly transported. (i)”

The presence of parang is definitely a reminder of the country’s colonization by Spain in the 14th century, even though the genre’s presence on the island does not date as far back as that. Given this information, one can hypothesize that in terms of national identity, the typical modern Trinidadian would identify parang as a Venezuelan influence due to the island’s close proximity, and would feel a sense of identity (during the Christmas season) and kinship with their Venezuelan neighbours due to their shared colonization and history, rather than feel a connection to the colonizers, Spain. On the other hand, it is quite possible that this is not the case, and that there is less interest altogether in parang and a link to a hispanic identity and past, considering that Marcia Herndon and Norma McLeod, like Dr. Mainzer, reinforce that taste is subjective, and human nature is ever-changing. “The distinction between music and noise is never an absolute
one, but rather, a matter of cultural conditioning, personal idiosyncrasies, and group identity. What is accepted as music by one group or generation may be ignored or dismissed by another. (12)“.

2.5 Conclusion

Dr. Mainzer and the NAfME seemed to focus only on using music as a method of explicit learning, referring to the active and conscious acquisition of knowledge within a determined study space. This paper intends to strike a balance between studying the implicit and explicit learning of Spanish through the use of parang as a medium of second language and teaching, as well to determine whether annual exposure to parang affected motivation to learn Spanish as a second language. This study hypothesizes that parang, which has been exposed to all citizens of the country at all ages at some point in their lives, influences listeners to attempt to learn Spanish in some capacity, and even make explicit attempts to culturally appropriate elements of Hispanic (specifically Venezuelan) culture.
Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to determine whether or not the annual exposure of parang has an impact on learning Spanish implicitly, its use in explicit Spanish learning, and its impact on Trinidadian identity. This chapter will present the methodology in three sections. Section 3.2 presents the research method that was used. Section 3.3 outlines the procedures used to gather the data, and Section 3.4 presents the limitations encountered during the course of the study.

3.2 Research Method

This study was employed using a cross-sectional design. This design allowed for data to be collected across several different groups at a specific point in time. This approach allowed for the retrieval of data from people of different educational backgrounds, and also from different areas of Trinidad. This design also allowed for the assumption that the random choice of participants would reflect the sentiments of at least one of the two islands in terms of the link between parang and the citizens’ feelings of identity.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were employed in order to receive as much information from participants as possible. A Mixed methods approach was chosen as it was the best qualitative approach to use that would allow for collecting the data surrounding the participants’ opinions on parang, as well as its influence on their culture and linguistic interests. Native Spanish speakers were also the target of interviews in order to gain a more objective insight into the use of parang in education.

This study was conducted using primary and secondary data. The primary data used refers to the quantitative and qualitative data collection employed on Trinidadians and Latin Americans, while the secondary data refers to newspaper articles found discussing the impact of parang on modern society.

3.3 Procedures

Data was collected between the months of December, January and February. To collect the data, both questionnaires and interviews were used. The questionnaires were distributed to
secondary and tertiary level students, as well as non-students. Both Trinidadian and Latin American teachers of Spanish as a second language were then interviewed and asked open ended questions. Finally, four parranderos were interviewed about the impact of parrang on their identity and linguistic goals.

Firstly, questionnaires were distributed to twenty students at the University of the West Indies who are in their second and third years of reading for a Spanish degree. Then the same questionnaires were distributed to twenty students of the U.W.I who were not pursuing an undergraduate Spanish degree and claimed to have had little to no formal tutelage of Spanish. Then the questionnaires were given to ten adult participants who also claimed to have had neither any experience learning Spanish explicitly as a second language, nor a tertiary level education. Next the questionnaires were given to ten high school students of varying schools and ages.

The questionnaires contained two sections. Section one related to questions concerning the participants’ biodata, the impact of parang on their identity, and its impact on their desire (past or present) to study Spanish. There was a mix of open and close ended questions in order to ensure that the participants could divulge as much information as possible. Section two was also open ended, and involved participants indicating their level of comfort translating (some, if not all) the words of popular Spanish songs typically heard on the radio at Christmastime. Only the choruses of four songs were presented.

Finally, six Trinidadian teachers who taught Spanish as a second language were interviewed. They were asked questions regarding the effect of parang on their desire to learn and teach Spanish, as well as their opinion on the use of parang in the classroom as a method of teaching Spanish as a second language. Seven Latin American Spanish teachers were also interviewed, however they were not asked questions about parang’s influence on their identity, but instead asked about their opinion on the parang’s intelligibility, and whether or not they would use parang as a medium of second language learning in the classroom.

3.4 Limitations

Of the sixty questionnaires distributed, fifty questionnaires were returned. Due to the confidential nature of the questionnaires, it was impossible to ensure that the questionnaires distributed were returned on time. Nevertheless, the quantity of responses collected is not a
major issue, since the purpose of the cross-sectional design was to ensure that the data gathered would have indicated the opinions of respondents from various educational levels.

In spite of the questionnaire containing clear instructions to provide the knowledge of any Spanish words that could come to mind while translating the songs in the second section, respondents preferred to not provide any words at all. However, while this may be a gap in the knowledge of the words that parang has taught citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, it can be interpreted as an ambivalence toward linguistic study. It could also be interpreted as the respondents’ unwillingness to spend more time than necessary on the questionnaire. It is also near impossible to ensure the validity of the responses, since

It was originally planned for ten parranderos to be interviewed, however contrasting schedules allowed only for the interviewing of four parang singers, while the others did not return responses to the questions sent via emails. Nevertheless, considering that the majority of responses were returned by other respondents, it was felt that the data collected accurately depicts the cultural and linguistic identities of the island’s inhabitants.

It was also initially planned for the research to span both islands of Trinidad and Tobago, however, due to the limited time and size restrictions of the research, only the bigger island of Trinidad was chosen, especially due to its proximity to the coast of South America. However, the research done on the island of Trinidad regarding the impact of parang on the identity and linguistic capacity of its inhabitants will act as a gateway to other researchers to incorporate other islands in this sociolinguistic project.
Chapter 4
Data Presentation

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data gathered will be presented in the following sections: Section 4.2 will present the data collected from the distributed questionnaires, while Section 4.3 will summarize and paraphrase the responses given by the Spanish teachers. Section 4.4 will summarize the interviews held with the parranderos.

4.2 Questionnaire Data

Of the fifty questionnaires gathered, the majority of respondents fell into the 18-24 age bracket at 46% (twenty-three respondents), followed by the 25-34 age bracket at 38% (nineteen respondents). Out of the ten questionnaires aimed at students under eighteen years old, seven responses were recorded, while only one respondent was over forty-five. Moreover, there was a near equal male-female ratio of respondents, with twenty males and twenty-nine female respondents. There was only one non-binary respondent.

The religion of the participants varied. The majority of the respondents indicated Catholic beliefs (seventeen participants), while seven participants identified as Christians, and six participants identified as Pentecostals. Six participants stated they were not religious at all, while five participants indicated that they did not follow any set religion, but considered themselves to be spiritual. Only one respondent each pertaining to the Anglican, Agnostic, Hindu, Muslim and Presbyterian belief systems participated in the research. Four participants did not indicate any religion at all.

Regarding the educational levels of the fifty participants, ten attend secondary school, while eight participants finished their formal education with either a certificate or a diploma. There were twenty-nine undergraduate participants (ten of which indicated that they are currently studying Spanish at a tertiary level), and three post graduate participants.

When asked if they considered parang to be a part of their identity as Trinidadians twenty-nine participants (58%) stated that it did. These responses indicated that parang should influence Trinidadian culture, since it was considered to be a unique and intrinsically Trinidadian result of Trinidad and Tobago’s history, and should be appreciated as a method of bringing
people together during the Christmas season. On the other hand, fifteen participants (30%) indicated that parang music generally had no influence on their identity as Trinidadians. One of these respondents indicated that since parang was only relevant during the Christmas season, it could not have any significant impact on Trinidadian identity. Six participants (12%) determined that the influence of parang on their identity depended on the situation, but that parang most definitely impacted their identity as Trinidadians when they were abroad, and acted as a link between them and their homeland.

As aforementioned, fifteen respondents stated that they felt absolutely nothing out of the ordinary in terms of their identity when hearing or listening to parang during Christmastime. On the other hand, twenty respondents indicated that parang made them feel more Trinidadian only, with no feelings of connection to Latin America. Only eight respondents felt a stronger connection to Latin America when hearing parang music; with four respondents indicating feeling a stronger connection to Venezuela, and three respondents indicating feeling linked to Spain. Moreover, eight respondents stated that they felt a connection to both Trinidad and Latin America while listening to or hearing parang music. The following pie chart illustrates the identities of the respondents while listening to parang during the Christmas season:

![Figure 1](image.png)  
**Figure 1** A chart representing the respondents' feelings of identity when hearing parang music.

Concerning the participants’ perception about the countries associated with parang music, half of the participants determined that parang is solely of Trinidadian origin. Conversely, ten
participants stated that they associate parang with Venezuela, while five participants associate parang with Spain. Only one participant associates parang with both Trinidad and Spain, four participants associate parang with Trinidad and Venezuela, and ultimately five participants consider parang to be related to the Caribbean as a whole.

The majority of respondents (68%) stated that they would not learn Spanish just to appreciate or sing parang. Furthermore, the majority of participants (48%) stated that they currently study Spanish (or have studied Spanish willingly in the past), but not at all because of parang’s influence. Seventeen participants (34%) of the participants stated that parang was never an influential factor in their Spanish language learning, and they were never interested in learning Spanish. Only two respondents were inspired to study Spanish in order to understand the lyrics of their favorite parang songs, while seven respondents stated that while their interest in Spanish did not lie in the realm of parang’s influence on their culture, they stated that parang was a good tool to aid in their Spanish studies, and inspired them to continue. On the other hand, when asked if the respondents would learn parang songs as a way to learn Spanish, the responses resulted in a near even split, with twenty-six respondents (52%) answering yes, and twenty-four respondents (48%) answering no.

The following pie chart provides a visual aid of the responses provided, indicating the link between parang’s influence on the respondents’ desire to learn or study Spanish:

![Pie chart](image)

*Figure 2* The impact of parang on respondents' desire to learn Spanish as a Second Language.
Concerning the participants’ opinion of parang as a genre of music, most of the participants (54%) stated that they limited their exposure to parang to during the Christmas season (November to December). Conversely, eight participants (16%) listened to parang during the year, while nine participants (18%) preferred to not listen to parang at all. Six participants stated that their appreciation for parang is based on their mood, and would only search out parang music if they feel so inclined to at the time.

Furthermore, only eleven participants stated that they generally associated Spanish songs with Christmastime, while nineteen students did not. Twenty students (which formed the majority of thought at 40%) stated that the rhythm and tempo of a Spanish song would determine whether or not they would associate it with the Christmas season. However, in spite of this, the majority of participants (84%) stated that the song’s content did not have to be about the Nativity in order for it to be considered parang. Three respondents even stated that since they did not know what parang songs are about, they would not care about the content of the genre. Most of the participants (86%) also knew that there were many popular parang songs not about the Nativity, nor relating in any way to Christmas tradition. Furthermore, in spite of this knowledge, the majority of respondents (68%) did not know that some popular Spanish songs played only at Christmas time in Trinidad are not in any way related to Christmas or the Nativity, and are not considered Christmas songs in their country of origin. Eighteen participants (36%) state that they associate these songs with Christmas, while twenty-one participants (which make up the majority at 42%) stated that they did not particularly care about the content of the songs. Only three participants (making up the minority at 6%) preferred that parang songs be about the Nativity due to religious beliefs, while five participants preferred not to listen to parang at all.

When asked to translate lyrics of choruses of four popular Spanish songs (three of which are well known parang songs), twenty respondents adequately provided translations for all four songs, stating that their understanding came from previous or current study of Spanish at a tertiary level. On the other hand, approximately twenty participants indicated that they had not studied Spanish in any official capacity for some time, did not provide any translated words, but did indicate that they understood the gist of the song lyrics. Only one participant in this group offered an attempt at translating the lyrics. Finally, approximately ten participants stated that they did not understand any of the lyrics at all, and made neither attempt to translate the lyrics.
literally, nor offer any assumption as to what the song was about. The following graph illustrates the ability of the study’s participants to translate the lyrics provided:

![Figure 3 Participants' Comprehension of Parang Lyrics](image)

4.3 Teacher Interviews

Of the thirteen Spanish teachers interviewed, all were employed by tertiary level institutions. Six teachers were native Trinidadians, while the other seven came from various areas in Latin America; One participant originated from Cuba, another from Spain, two from Colombia, and three from Venezuela.

Only the six Trinidadian teachers were asked questions regarding the link between parang and their linguistic and cultural identity. When asked if parang music influenced their desire to learn and teach Spanish, all six local Spanish teachers stated that parang did not in any way influence their desire to learn or teach Spanish. Furthermore, when asked if they associated parang with Latin America, or if they ever experienced any strong feelings of identity to Latin America when hearing parang, all six teachers stated that they associated parang with Trinidad, as they viewed it to be an indigenous production of Trinidad. Two teachers said that they especially felt this connection to Trinidad when abroad, as parang acted as a direct and unique link to their homeland. Two other teachers said that they did not consider parang to have a
Venezuelan link, since villancicos (traditional Latin American Christmas carols) sung during Christmas time in Venezuela have no resemblance to parang.

When the local Spanish teachers were asked if they understood what was being sung about in popular parang songs, only one out of six teachers said they understood the lyrics to all parang songs, be they traditional or modern. Two teachers said that they did not understand anything that was being sung, especially regarding older parang songs. Three teachers indicated that more modern parang groups were easier to understand because their pronunciation was better, and that there was a better chance that newer groups would have better grammar, and slower lyric delivery. However, they stated that there is usually much difficulty in understanding the older parang and more popular parang songs due to garbled pronunciation, strange syntax, and possibly made-up words. On the other hand, only the Spanish teacher did not understand any parang songs at all, stating that the pronunciation is usually so bad, it is unintelligible. The other Latin American teachers stated that they understood only some songs, but not that many. They all said that the grammar and pronunciation of the parrang singers usually prevented them from identifying any Spanish words at all.

All teachers were asked if they would use parang to teach Spanish as a second language, or if they had ever used parang as a medium for second language learning. The following graph indicates the responses:

Figure 4 Responses reflecting whether or not a teacher would use parang in the classroom to teach Spanish.
The above graph shows that 100% of Latin American respondents would not use parang as a medium for second language learning. They determined that the language was riddled with phonetic, syntactic and lexical errors which hindered their own comprehension of the lyrics, so they would not consider using it as a method of teaching a language. On the other hand, Trinidadian teachers were more lenient, with one teacher saying that he would most definitely use parang to teach Spanish, even though he had never considered doing it before, and could see no reason why parang should not be used in the classroom. Two teachers rejected the idea of using parang in the classroom however, as they determined that if it was too difficult for them to understand, then they would not subject their students to a possibly incorrect and unintelligible form of the language. Three local teachers indicated that the use of parang as a method of teaching Spanish was tentative, saying that even though they had never used parang in their teaching before, they could perhaps see how it could be used in a listening comprehension lesson, but not as a constant method of language reinforcement. However two teachers said that the parang song chosen as a method of teaching Spanish would have to be the least grammatically incorrect, and most clearly pronounced.

4.4 Parranderos Interview

Of the four parranderos (three females and one male) interviewed, all four identified as Catholic Christians. Two of the parranderos had undergraduate degrees, while two had postgraduate degrees. Three of the interviewees sang both lead and backup vocals, while one parrandera identified herself as a player of the ‘box bass’, ‘shack shack’, ‘toc toc’, and other percussion instruments. Two parranderos stated that they had been involved in the parang industry for approximately three years, while the two others stated that they had been a part of the industry for at least fifteen years.

When asked for the reason why they chose to perform parang, all four members stated that they had involved themselves in parang groups because either a friend or family member was already involved in the industry. One parrandero stated that both his interest in the music and a friend’s encouragement initiated his entrance into the parang industry. Two parranderas indicated that they had studied Spanish, and was interested in involving themselves in the performing arts. They viewed parang as an opportunity to practice Spanish as a second language. One parrandera stated that she came from a long line of parranderos, and it was only natural that
she also participates in the parrang culture as well. She also added that she is also a part of other music groups, and does not consider herself to be a parrandera exclusively.

However, when asked if parang has ever influenced their identity as Trinidadians, the interviewees gave varying answers. One parrandera stated that it absolutely did not, while the other three indicated that it did. Another went on to comment upon the unique nature of parang as a music genre, saying that “it is unique for us to perform in a language that most of us do not speak.” All four parranderos believed that parang was influenced by the first Venezuelans who moved to Trinidad, bringing with them music that gradually “gained a life of its own and became an integral part of our own culture.” While only one parrandera stated that she felt a connection to Venezuela while singing parang, two parranderas stated that they felt more Trinidadian while singing parang, and the fourth parrandero felt nothing out of the ordinary. He furthermore stated that while he felt that parang was a part of Trinidadian culture, it was just a hobby to him, and a way for him to celebrate the Nativity. The other parranderas agreed, with one adding that to her, parang was a lifestyle, and a celebration of the country’s history and heritage.

When it came to the creation of new parang songs, all four parranderos (two of which came from the same band), stated that the bands to which they belong compose new parang songs. They all agreed that the songs did not necessarily have to be about the Nativity. They all indicated that the audience influenced the songs that they produced and chose to perform. One parrandera stated that her personal preference did not count when it came to the parang selection, and that the most important factors were the audience, and the interest of the band as a collective whole. They all agreed that it was imperative to have a repertoire of songs whose content varied. They also all agreed that the grammatical accuracy of newly composed parang songs was imperative. All four interviewees stated that even though their bands had members who had studied Spanish extensively, their respective bands still consulted with native Spanish speakers in order to assure grammatical and phonological accuracy. Moreover, there was unanimous agreement that they greatly desired to sing parang in the presence of native Spanish speakers, in order to gain their approval or validation of their linguistic ability and mastery of the Spanish language.

There seemed to be an inconsistency when it came to parang’s influence in their desire to learn Spanish. Two parranderas stated that they had previously studied Spanish before deciding to involve themselves with the parang music industry, while the other two parranderos stated that
parang music never influenced their desire to learn or study Spanish. Nevertheless, in spite of this statement, all four parranderos stated that practicing and singing parang was a method for them to learn Spanish. They all indicated that they could only understand some traditional parang songs, due to the seemingly garbled pronunciation of the older singers. Regardless, they all indicated that they knew that not all parang songs centered around the Nativity. Furthermore, all four singers stated that they did not think that parang was a dying art form. On the other hand, only two out of the four singers indicated that they think that parang should most definitely be used as a method of teaching Spanish, as it is a part of Trinidadian culture. The third parrandera rejected the idea outright, stating that parang lyrics might not be clear enough for students to understand. The fourth singer was undecided, stating that “Students already feel forced to study Spanish. Yes, it can be a useful tool in the classroom, but I don’t think that they should be forced to study a language if they never had that interest in the first place. Parang might not necessarily help them get to that point.”
Chapter 5
Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to analyze the data produced from the research. The following section, Section 5.2 will discuss the effect of parang on their identity, as well as whether or not parang has an influence on the second language acquisition and learning of Trinidadians, while Section 5.3, will seek to answer the question of whether or not parang is an appropriate method of second language teaching.

5.2 Parang’s Influence on Identity and Language

According Michael Lezama, the PRO of the National Parang Association of Trinidad and Tobago, who was interviewed in December, 2015, by the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, parang is a dying art form in the twin islands due to “a disconnect between communities and parranderos” (Doughty), as well as the lack of financial and social promotion by government agencies and the media. On the other hand, Marcia Miranda, a well-known Trinidadian soca parang singer, was also interviewed in December, 2015, by the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday. She indicated that she didn’t think that parang was a dying art form, since she thought that the younger generations appreciated the genre as a multicultural fusion. This even split in opinions on the possible death of this genre is also reflected in this study, since almost half of the respondents state that parang influenced their identity.

The research shows that a slight majority of participants, at 58%, considered that parang definitely plays a part in Trinidadian identity, as it reflects the historical ties that Trinidad and Tobago has had with Venezuela during the colonial era. This group (hereafter referred to as Group Y) contrasts against the nineteen participants (who make up 32% of the study, and will be referred to hereafter as Group N) who stated that parang had absolutely no effect on their identity as a Trinidadian. The six participants who stated that parang’s influence on a person’s identity depended on the situation (and therefore the final 10% of this study) were not counted toward a definitive stance on the matter of parang being an influential power on Trinidadian culture, and therefore do not count as members of either Group Y or Group N, since their answer neither voted for nor against the fact. It is interesting to note that Group Y consists mostly of females,
while Group N consists of mostly males. The disparity in age and sex is displayed in the following graph:

Judging from the graph above, one can argue that it is impossible to note whether or not the younger generations are more or less influenced by parang. However, it would seem clear that more young females between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four consider themselves to be influenced by parang, while males, typically between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, do not consider themselves to be influenced by parang. One could argue that gender plays a part in this disparity, and claim that women are gendered to hold on to tradition, while men are encouraged to revolutionize ideologies. However, the results of this research do not account for the reason for this age/sex disparity, and cannot confirm such a theory. It would still seem that parang indeed plays a part in Trinidadian cultural identity to some extent due to the majority, and can therefore be considered an influential aspect in Trinidadian lives.

However, in spite of parang nurturing feelings of indigenous heritage and cultural linkage to Latin America for the respondents of Group Y, a vast majority of these participants were not inspired or influenced at all by parang to study Spanish as a foreign language. This contrasts against the study done by Medina, especially since she posits that music promotes linguistic development. Of Group Y (and also of the total sixty participants), only three Trinidadians were
influenced by parang to study Spanish at an Undergraduate level. This low figure contrasts against both that of the nineteen Spanish students pertaining to Group Y, the overall twenty-four participating Spanish students, who all stated that their current study of the Spanish language had absolutely no link to the influence of parang in their lives, and rejected the idea that parang ever played a part in their desire to study Spanish. Seven members of Group Y stated that in spite of their appreciation for parang as a cultural aspect in their lives, they had absolutely no interest in studying Spanish because of their appreciation for parang, and would never seriously study Spanish. This therefore indicates that even though parang has some influence over Trinidadian identity, it most definitely does not have an overwhelming influence on a typical Trinidadian’s desire to study Spanish as a second language.

5.3 Use of Parang as SLA/SLL medium

According to Adam Sinicki, in an article about memorization, “[w]hen we hear a new piece of music and like it, we will then tend to listen to it again and again. Even if you don't like it, you will probably hear it a good thirty times before it stops playing on the radio. Then subsequently, it will be as though you are hearing the song again every time you remember it.” This would indicate that music plays an important part in memorization and memory recollection. However, according to the data, even though Trinidadians hear a foreign language repeatedly on the radio, only seventeen participants (which includes one parrandera) ever considered learning Spanish in order to sing and appreciate Spanish. This does not mean, however, that this meagre 28% was influenced by parang to study Spanish. On the contrary, only one participant of the seventeen indicated that they decided to study Spanish due to a love for parang. The remaining forty-three participants, at 72%, indicated that they had absolutely no interest in studying Spanish in order to appreciate parang. This lack of interest or curiosity suggests that parang barely influences linguistic curiosity in Trinidadians, and plays little to no role in the linguistic or polyglottic development of Trinidadians.

Furthermore, it is quite possible that Sinicki’s theory cannot be applied in this case. Parang songs are only played during between the months of October and December, constituting a quarter of the year. Furthermore, eleven participants indicated that they did not care for parang music, which could mean that they would not pay attention to parang music when it is being played. Only eleven participants play parang music outside of its traditionally designated time
period, which could mean that these persons would, according to Sinicki, be able to recall lyrics and words taught by the songs. However, five of these individuals are currently studying Spanish at an advanced level, and could provide translations of the lyrics, while six participants did not exhibit high enough levels of linguistic competence, opting to not attempt any translation. It is possible that this means that listening to a music genre pertaining to a foreign language, neither consciously nor subconsciously, will not result in implicit language learning, and in the case of parang, either explicit language learning or prolonged exposure at a higher frequency is required in order to be competent enough to acquire lexicon.

There was also a discrepancy in the understanding of parang lyrics, compared to the comprehension of Spanish songs. Of the sixty participants, fifty-three persons (making up 83%) knew that some popular parang songs were not about the Nativity, yet thirty-four persons (making up 57%) did not know that some Spanish songs typically played on the radio at Christmastime had nothing to do with the Nativity, and were not considered Christmas songs in their home country. It is possible that this proves that parang does not teach enough Spanish for listeners to discern the meaning of other songs. One can arrive at this conclusion since some participants claimed to know the meaning of at least one type of song played during Christmas time, yet could not translate the chorus of any of the popular songs provided. Twenty participants were Spanish students, and translated the choruses easily. While these students did not know that some Spanish songs were not actually considered Spanish songs in their home country, this can be solely attributed to not knowing the cultural practices of the country in question. On the other hand, the rest of participants, making up 50%, were unable to translate the majority of the song choruses, with ten participants (20%) refusing to attempt to translate the lyrics. This further reinforces the result that linguistic competence could not be proven without formal training in Spanish, and that the exposure to parang for a quarter of the year over the course of many years does not increase one’s linguistic competence in Spanish. It would then appear that implicit Spanish learning does not necessarily take place when Trinidadians are exposed to parang.

Lastly, it is important to note that all Latin American teachers interviewed would not use parang as a method of second language learning. On the other hand, only one teacher would definitely use it to teach Spanish, while two would not. Three teachers indicated that their use of parang would depend on the class objectives that they were trying to accomplish. This discrepancy is perhaps due to the Latin American teachers not considering it important to
incorporate aspects of Trinidadian culture into their classes. This is due to the fact that the Trinidadian teachers who indicated that they could consider using parang in the classroom would only do so due to the importance of linking their classes to relatable, cultural elements. The Latin American teachers, on the other hand, favored purely linguistic elements, such as clear phonology, and correct syntax and morphology use, instead of prioritizing cultural elements in their teaching of Spanish as a second language. The majority of local teachers who opted to not use parang to teach Spanish used similar rationales, prioritizing clear linguistic elements that could better facilitate teaching. In order to determine whether local teachers who use parang as a method of second language learning are influenced by their feelings of identity to use unclear audio material, more studies must be done focusing on such an aspect.

5.4 Conclusion

This section provides a brief summary of the results found in this study. With regards to a link to cultural identity, this study revealed that most Trinidadians, while recognizing a colonial history with Venezuela, consider parang to be an indigenous product of Trinidad, and mostly feel their cultural connection to Trinidad when hearing the music. Furthermore, the study revealed that there is almost a 50-50 chance (with the odds in favor of a positive outcome) that parang be considered to be a part of a Trinidadian’s identity.

With regards to the linguistic elements of the study, it revealed that parang does not in fact influence the Trinidadian sample population used to learn Spanish as a second language. Furthermore, it revealed that the exposure of parang for at least a quarter of the year is most likely not enough exposure to result in adequate implicit language learning, and has not produced substantial proof of language transference on its own (i.e without supplemental explicit language learning). Lastly, the study revealed that parang does not seem to be a welcome aid in explicit language learning, as it was not favored by Latin American teachers, but could be used in a classroom setting by Trinidadian teachers once certain criteria are met.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

This thesis studied the effect of parang on the cultural identity of Trinidadians, as well as attempted to determine whether or not parang could be used as a method of both implicit and explicit language learning. Lastly, the study attempted to determine parang’s influence on a typical Trinidadian’s desire to explicitly study Spanish. Fifty people of varying educational backgrounds were questioned regarding parang’s influence on their culture, as well as whether parang had ever inspired them to study Spanish more seriously. In addition to these respondents, six Trinidadian teachers and seven Latin American teachers were asked about their use of parang in the classroom. The Trinidadian teachers were also asked questions regarding parang’s influence on their feelings of identity. Lastly, parranderos were asked about parang’s influence on their linguistic development and identity.

It was found that parang held importance for little more than half of the respondents studied, and was considered an indigenous and unique aspect of Trinidadian history, reflecting historical ties to Venezuela. However, parang did not influence most of the respondents linguistically, as it did not contribute to any implicit or explicit Spanish learning. Spanish teachers, both local and Latin American, stated that they would prefer not to use Spanish in the classroom due to its unintelligible pronunciation, and improper use of syntax and lexicon.

This study paves the way for future research that could map the importance of parang in the lives of future Trinbagonians. It is possible that parang appreciation and popularity is dwindling due to globalization and its traditional use that confines its appreciation to only three months per year. Future studies can determine the possible place of parang classrooms of Trinbagonians, and determine whether there will be an increase or decrease in the quantity of those who appreciate parang linguistically and culturally.
Appendix 1

In this section, a sample of the questionnaire and interview questions will be presented.

Questionnaire

Effect of 'parang' on Spanish learning and identity (2 Sections)

Section 1: General questions. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. These questions are to be answered as truthfully as possible, reflecting your personal opinion.

* Required

1.Age *

* Mark only one oval.

Under 18

- 1824
- 2434
- 3544
- 45 and older

2.Gender *

* Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Prefer not to say

3.Religion/Belief? *

* Mark only one oval.

- Not Religious
- Not Religious (but Spiritual)
- Agnostic
- Anglican
- Atheist
- Catholic
- Christian
- Hindu
- Muslim
- Pentecostal
- Presbyterian
- Shouter Baptist
- Spiritual Baptist
5. Highest level of education (current or completed)? If you have selected 'tertiary', please ALSO indicate your field of study on the 'other' line. * 
*Check all that apply.
- Primary
- Secondary
- Certificate/Diploma
- Undergraduate
- PostGraduate
- Other:

6. Do you think parang influences you/our identity as a Trinidian? Please state your answer, and tell me why in the 'Other' field if you can. * 
*Check all that apply.
- Yes
- No
- Depends
- Other:

7. Listening to/hearing parang during Christmastime makes you feel * 
*Check all that apply.
- more Trinidadian.
- more Spanish (a link to Spain). more Spanish (a link to Venezuela).
- nothing out of the ordinary in terms of your identity.
- Other:

8. What country do you associate parang with? In the 'other' field, you can explain why. * 
*Check all that apply.
- Trinidad
- Venezuela
- Spain
- The entire Caribbean
- Other:

9. Did listening to/being exposed to parang influence your desire to learn Spanish at all? * 
*Mark only one oval.
- Yes! I decided to learn Spanish because of love for parang.
I am currently studying Spanish (or have studied Spanish willingly in the past), but not at all because of parang.
Parang didn't influence me at all! I never became interested in learning Spanish seriously.
Other:

10. Do you think you would learn Spanish just to appreciate/sing parang? *
Mark only one oval.
   o Yes
   o No

11. Would you learn parang songs as a way to learn Spanish? *
Mark only one oval.
   o Yes
   o No

12. How do you feel about listening to/singing parang OUTSIDE of Christmastime? *
Mark only one oval.
   o I do it all the time! I don't need it to be December to sing/listen to parang.
   o I keep my parang appreciation during Christmastime.
   o I actually don't care for parang, and don't listen to it very much.
   o Other:

13. Would you say that you generally associate Spanish songs with Christmastime? *
Check all that apply.
   o Yes
   o No
   o It depends
   o Other:

14. Would you say that the song's content MUST be about the Nativity in order to be considered parang? *
Mark only one oval.
   o Yes
   o No
   o Other:

15. Are you aware that some popular parang songs are not about Christmas/the Nativity? *
Mark only one oval.
   o Yes
16. Are you aware that some popular songs played in Trinidad during Christmastime are not considered Christmas songs in their home country? (e.g. Burbujas de Amor by Juan Luis Guerra from the Dominican Republic, etc.) *
Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

17. How do you feel about listening to these non-Nativity songs during Christmastime? *
Check all that apply.

- I associate these songs with Christmas!
- I usually prefer not to listen to them, and prefer traditional parang songs about the nativity.
- I generally don't care for Christmas songs, even around Christmas time.
- I feel neither here nor there about it.
- Other:

Section 2: Do you understand? ¿Entiendes?
Here I present to you the chorus of some songs which are popular during Christmastime. Can you identify how well you understand the content of the songs?
OPTIONAL: Translate the lyrics in the 'other' field, or at least provide the meaning of the words that you are sure you know. PLEASE do NOT use a translator for this section. This section is to be answered truthfully using your own knowledge.

18. "Rio Manzanares, déjame pasar, que mi madre enferma me mandó llamar." *
Check all that apply.

- I know what it means! I am studying/have studied Spanish, so I know what it's talking about.
- I haven't studied Spanish at all, but I can pick out a few words here and there.
- I have absolutely no idea, and don't even want to try.
- Other:

19. "Quisiera ser un pez, para tocar mi nariz en tu pecera, y hacer burbujas de amor por donde quiera. Oh! Pasar la noche en vela, mojado en ti." *
Check all that apply.

- I know what it means! I am studying/have studied Spanish, so I know what it's talking about.
20. "Alegría, alegría, se nació el Señor para salvar el hombre y ser su Redentor. En Belen de Judea, la Virgen María "Eso es el niño del Rey" decía. * 
*Check all that apply.*

- I know what it means! I am studying/have studied Spanish, So I know what it's talking about.
- I haven't studied Spanish at all, but I can pick out a few words here and there.
- I have absolutely no idea, and don't even want to try.
- Other:

*Check all that apply.*

- I know what it means! I am studying/have studied Spanish, So I know what it's talking about.
- I haven't studied Spanish at all, but I can pick out a few words here and there.
- I have absolutely no idea, and don't even want to try.
- Other:
Appendix 2

Teacher Interview Questions

Questions for Trinidadian Spanish Teachers

1. Do you usually understand what is being sung in popular parang songs?
2. Do you think that listening to or hearing parang makes you feel more Spanish (Venezuelan) or Trinidadian? What would you say is the effect of parang on your identity?
3. Did parang music influence your desire to learn or teach Spanish?
4. Would you use parang to teach Spanish in a classroom setting? Why/Why not?

Questions for Latin American Spanish Teachers

1. Do you usually understand what is being sung in popular parang songs?
2. Would you use parang to teach Spanish in a classroom setting? Why/Why not?
Appendix 3

Parrandero Interview Questions

1. Name and age:
2. What religion are you?
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
4. What is your role in your parang group?
5. How long have you been involved in the parang industry?
6. Why did you choose to perform parang?
7. Do you think that parang has influenced your identity as a Trinidadian?
8. What motivated you to take up the practice of performing parang songs?
9. Did parang influence your desire to learn Spanish?
10. Would you say that practicing/singing parang is a way for you to learn Spanish?
11. Do you understand traditional parang songs?
12. Where do you think parang comes from?
13. Does parang make you feel...
   - More Trinidadian
   - More Spanish (a connection to Venezuela)
   - More Spanish (a connection to Spain)
   - Nothing out of the ordinary when it comes to your identity.
   - Other:
14. What is parang to you? What feelings/ideas does the word evoke for you?
   - A hobby
   - A lifestyle
   - A time to sing in Spanish, Trinidad's second language
   - Celebrating the Nativity
   - Culture
   - Heritage, the past
   - Just a way to earn money
15. What factors come into play when you choose parang songs to practice and perform?

16. Do you only choose songs about the Nativity?

17. Does your group compose new parang songs?

18. If your group composes new parang songs, how important is grammar to you?

19. If your group makes new parang songs, how do you know that what you're singing about is legitimately correct Spanish?

20. How do you feel about performing parang in front of native Spanish speakers?

21. Are you aware that some popular parang songs are not about the Nativity in any way?

22. Do you think parang is a dying art form?

23. Do you think that parang should be used as a method of teaching Spanish?
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