

Micro-Paper 43: *Tattoo as Literacy Practice*

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Defining the Term

Tattoos as the act of inking images or text on one's body have very deep historical roots in tribal societies, where tattoos usually symbolized status or heroics. In this sense, defining tattoo as a literacy practice has many implications because human beings have been using this practice to express themselves within their contexts.

But as long as many other ways human beings are using to express their experiences today, tattoos have once again overcome the stigma from previous decades to become once again a regular practice for individuals to remember, tell stories, or bring symbols on their skins. In other words, to think of tattoos as literacy practices means to view people's skin as canvases that are open to others' views and interpretation.

Tattoos are part of fashion, rebellion, expression of feelings. They are one of the new ways in which a word or a sentence is being used by a person within a context to express its perspectives, and how those words can be used to make further reflections on both the person and the society.

Connecting it to LSLP

We chose tattoo as a cultural route in our research. Through our participant observations, we have found that tattoos are a growing tendency where words are used to express different meanings for the inhabitants of Medellín. It is part of a new cultural aspect of the city that transcends age and status, symbols and religions, and it has become more visible in people's skin and how those are an

evidence of polylinguaging and superdiversity of our context.

When looking at tattoo as a literacy practice, we are not assessing whether tattoos are properly spelled. Instead, we are concerned about how people appropriate languages to have sentences inked on their skin, in a combination with words, colors and images that create increasingly complex meanings and deeper urban counter-narratives.

Expanding Second Language Research

Tattoos are becoming a conduit for people in the city to express themselves. This opens the door to a new context where language research can obtain new and genuine information on how words are being used inside real contexts as an evolving tool.

Another benefit of looking at tattoos in second languages is how we can relate expressions and features with studies that are aiming to solve or theorize new communicative tendencies. That way, we may contribute to a better understanding of new society dynamics through new literacy practices while reflecting critically on them.

References

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