

Micro-Paper 7: Literacy

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Defining the Term

Literacy is a notion that has suffered a great deal of evolution over the past 50 years. In a traditional sense, many scholars equated literacy to reading, sometimes to writing, usually in a very canonical sense and connected to schooling and school practices. From the 1960s onward, and thanks to the contributions of fields such as anthropology, social science, psychology, linguistics, and sociology, to name a few, literacy has moved from these traditional notions to explore reading *and* writing in a much broader sense, always from the notion that an understanding of literacy today cannot ignore that reading and writing are complementary and inseparable processes.

In addition, literacy today entails the discussion of the multiplicity of forms in which individuals and communities construct and interpret oral and written texts. It is through the recognition of this complexity and multiplicity that some scholars have also chosen to pluralize the term and, rather than talk about literacy as a monolithic notion, they talk about *literacies*.

This new understanding also implies a consciousness that, while the print word remains essential to text construction, the way society plays with text today also requires the integration of other signs and modes of expression. Literacy, then, also studies how individuals create texts relying on these new modes and forms of expression that both transcend and complement text.

Finally, in the definition of literacy, there is also an interest to explore and understand how texts today should appear as possibilities to empower and facilitate equitable communication among societies and communities.

Connecting it to LSLP

The concept of literacy is at the core of our project. LSLP has embraced from its outset this new definition of literacy (as reflected in our choice to use the plural form), using it as the conceptual foundation of all the projects in our three research lines.

Every project in LSLP intends to explore all these new manifestations, interpretations, and new ways to create texts that are emerging in and around our schools and cities. While the projects embrace the current definitions, it is also our interest to inquire what additional notions or concepts are missing to provide more complex frameworks to understand text creation and interpretation today.

Expanding Second Language Research

The field of literacy at large has increasingly become more interested in the intersections with fields such as second language studies. Questions about how literacy practices in and through second languages are becoming more frequent issues of discussion in academic journals and conferences. Literacy professional associations around the world have made discussions on second languages a fixture in their own work, as they see the potential for advocacy and expansion of their research agendas.

References

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