



## LSLP Micro-Paper 75: Affinity Spaces

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### Defining the Term

Current generations have transformed how they meet friends and create relationships. In the past, people used to visit physical places to find a new friend or talk about a common topic and the number of close friends would not exceed a three-digit quantity. If you ask a teenager today how many friends or contacts they have, the amount could surpass thousands. Screen-based technologies have open opportunities through virtual settings to socialize with those thousands of friends, defeating distances, nationalities, ages and time.

There have been different attempts to define what defines these spaces and their features. One of these attempts is the idea of affinity spaces. We can define them as spaces (usually online) where participants connect and share information with many people with similar interests and passions from diverse places. Within those locations, users look for information about topics they are interested in and where they can share their knowledge using different modes.

Participants assume diverse roles within the affinity spaces. One day, they are experts and the next day they turn into newbies and require other participants' skills with the intention of achieving a goal. Inside these virtual spaces, there are no high or low positions: they are a team that works hard and together to solve questions and research about their passions.

### Connecting it to LSLP

In our school literacies research, we have explored different tactics to connect our students' interest with social networks and virtual communities. Specifically, my research focused on how the idea of affinity spaces can help students be makers and generators of their knowledge, create multimodal compositions, and read and assess their peers' creations. Inside my classroom, affinity spaces were the bridge between students' academic performance and daily activities. It helped my students to find new hobbies and tools for practicing English because they went home to look for the information (pictures, words, sounds, gifs), they composed their post, and found the apps that they needed for their multimodal texts.

In our cities, neighborhoods, and countries, these virtual settings could promote a renewed sense of belongingness, membership, and affiliation among their participants and another significant proposal for expanding our classroom from conventional and regular educative settings. Affinity spaces may thus generate communities where students may explore, exchange opinions, learn and offer information about their topics of interest, playing with the multiple uses and forms of a language.

Affinity spaces and the language interactions within them may also offer possibilities for language interaction that can benefit both learners in urban and rural settings in Colombian and worldwide locations. This way, participants in these virtual spaces can explore how their interactions and negotiations establish new forms of inquiry.

### Expanding Second Language Research

Although the idea of affinity spaces first started inquiring about social and entertainment purposes, there is potential to explore this notion as support or scaffolding of language learning processes. As English becomes a tool that facilitates the search for new content of interest, there is a great deal of information we can acquire from the usage of these virtual locations and how they support how second language users improve their communicative competence.

Second-language researchers should pay attention to how the idea of affinity spaces may foster a strong link among students' cities, English classrooms and other learning scenarios and how this association contributes to the appropriation of second languages.

### References

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<https://www.literaciesinl2project.org/expandingourdream.html>