



## LSLP Micro-Paper 79: Meta-Analysis

Natalia Ramírez

MA Candidate in Learning and Teaching Processes in Second Languages, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín | LSLP Advanced Researcher  
nataliaandrea.ramirez@upb.edu.co

### Defining the Term

A meta-analysis is the systematic and comprehensive secondary analysis of studies that address similar research questions or social/educational phenomena. Meta-analyses provide a comprehensive overview of the findings and conclusions of the original studies and their methodological influences. A meta-analysis can generate new conceptualizations based on the original results that allow a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon. There are two categories of meta-analysis: *interpretive* and *integrative* studies. Interpretive studies aim to conceptualize and develop new interpretations. Integrative studies aim to summarize the data.

A meta-analysis or systematic review comprises three stages, quite similar to those of a field-based research report:

- (a) Problem formulation to develop the systematic review question and identify critical aspects of eligible studies such as the population, interventions, outcomes, and study designs.
- (b) Data collection to search the literature, to identify the eligible studies, and to code the information.
- (c) Data analysis and interpretation to synthesize the collected studies and to interpret the analysis results.

A meta-analysis is a way of understanding a phenomenon through different studies already carried out, which will be treated as data. For this reason, due to the amount of research that addresses the same topic or research field, a meta-analysis emerges as a review that allows us to go beyond the original results to find the answers to some questions from existing research. A meta-analysis can also become a helpful tool for researchers who may not have access to a site for fieldwork. It can be a space for reflexivity about how we are conducting research and provide new avenues for expanded research.

### Connecting it to LSLP

We find it relevant to explore alternative forms of research that go beyond traditional fieldwork and that allow us to answer research questions and explore

phenomena of current interest from existing research. Adding meta-analysis to our current research methods provides a broader understanding of findings and methodological influences across different studies of literacies in second languages in our country. Additionally, we are interested in providing a comprehensive overview of findings across our own studies and evaluating the impact of our methodological choices on the results.

### Expanding Second Language Research

As a result of the increasing number of L2 studies in recent years, meta-analyses have become more relevant in order to better understand the findings and methodologies of existing research. They are also helping researchers develop new and deeper understanding of educational issues in our field that we have explored under different methodologies. Meta-analyses may help shed some light about new directions in areas such as bilingualism, learning motivation, autonomy, or language acquisition process, to name a few.

A meta-analysis is a useful tool for teachers to approach second language research to identify emerging concepts, theories and methodologies that can be applied to their real contexts, potentially solving their problems and improving their teaching and learning practices. A meta-analysis provides us a more holistic perspective that enables us to reflect on the discussions, definitions and frameworks that have been created in our local educational contexts.

### References

- Schreiber, J. (2008). Meta-analysis. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 507-507). SAGE.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n261>
- Timulak, L. (2014). Qualitative meta-analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (pp. 481-495). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n33>
- Toye, F., Seers, K., Allcock, N., Briggs, M., Carr, E., Andrews, J., & Barker, K. (2013). Trying to pin down jelly'-exploring intuitive processes in quality assessment for meta-ethnography. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 13(1), 46.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-46>