Micro-Paper 23: *Second Languages*

Sara Uribe

María Alejandra Gómez

Students at Licenciatura Inglés-Español, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

SRG-L2/LSLP Student Researchers

Defining the Term

The idea of second languages describes communication systems present in a specific context that operate next to (sometimes with) the mother language in that location. In this sense, we recognize that while there may be a predominant language that people use in that particular place, there may be others that people use as a resource for communication. This way, second languages emerge because the context itself and its inhabitants make it happen.

This idea (and the use of the plural form) take distance from the traditional understanding of second (in singular) and especially foreign language. The idea of second languages moves from ideas such as official/unofficial, giving more importance to use and practice (instead of proficiency). In that sense, second languages contribute to the enrichment of the community's diversity. We understand that language use always implies not just words but different ways to think the world.

Connecting it to LSLP

Second languages is the overarching concept of LSLP. It has helped us to comprehend the dynamic of languages in the city, as well as how people interact in physical, virtual, and cultural spaces with them. The idea of second languages has helped us take into account the diversity and complexity in language expressions that allow communication among people.

This concept has allowed us to expand our research lines, making connections with other important concepts as literacy, multimodality, or polylanguaging. The idea of second languages, through our different research lines, has become one of the most important tools for establishing contact between the city and the people who belong to it.

Expanding Second Language Research

There is plenty of potential to explore research using the idea of second languages in our field. First, as we continue breaking the traditional ideas of second/foreign languages, we can begin to look more carefully at how languages contribute to a person's identity development. In this new understanding, second languages are not just a tool to analyze culture and communicate ideas. They can also help to interpret how languages may define identities from the appropriation of another culture and how it can redefine mental structures. Through second languages, researchers may think about doing and using research to re-configure schools' pedagogical practices.

References

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