## Micro-Paper 39: *Photography as Data*

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### Defining the Term

Photography is a way of representing reality. It captures the world of others. It freezes a situation or event on a specific time, the same as books, novels, and movie scenes. Over the years, photography has also provided a means for memory and historical preservation.

From a research perspective, qualitative researcher and ethnography have turned to photographs as a very valuable data source. Photography is a bridge that connects ethnography and the researcher's perspective. The photographer seeks to document reality and preserve in an image social constructions to endure the remembrance of them.

Any technique applied on data collection is always subjective and pragmatic, because they are context-dependent. In that sense, photography is important to provide evidence of a researcher's inquiry and to preserve otherwise transient texts. Considering its recognition as an effect device for collecting elements, photography is both a narrative and interpretive tool in order to explore how one can read the living context in different ways.

### Connecting it to LSLP

We have relied on photography as one of our main data sources for our research on urban literacies. Taking photos of the different places is both a data source in and of itself and an exercise in observation. Having the photos available has also become a valuable resource for our data analysis, as well as a source of polyangulation. A good amount of our analysis involves comparing images taken in different places and intervals in the city. Through our revision of the images, we have also managed to refine our key categories and refine our interpretive process.

In our research, we have also recognized the perils of capturing the images because it all depends on where, how and whom we photograph. Sometimes it is forbidden or dangerous, because of the place where you at, or it is conceived as a disturbing action.

### Expanding Second Language Research

Nowadays, photography has moved toward other stages because of technologies for editing and transforming content; nonetheless, it is currently applied in the research fieldwork for its verisimilitude on data analysis.

As a number of studies have already shown, we can use photography to integrate and incentivize schooling practices that are not well seen by students, like reading and writing. In fact, we can use this research tool to keep on track of how languages change throughout time.

We can also use photography in teaching, creating a direct connection between learners and what one wants to achieve, thus attracting student's attention and developing visual literacy. This way, we can engage them in using observation as an entry point for a research project. Photography can be a captivating motivation to involve others as direct participants in research.

### References

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