LSLP Micro-Paper 76:
Global Popular Culture and Literacies

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Defining the Term

Popular culture is present in daily life through entertainment, performances, and symbols, which reflect and define human societies. Social groups maintain their ways of life surrounded by their own popular culture, customs, and trends. Through the prevalence of online social groups, people all around the world have started enjoying pop-culture of all kinds and creating new customs and trends beyond their local pop-cultures. In this sense, the current global explosion of pop-culture implies that the recognition of forms of power and social changes has been transforming. People's means of linguistic communication and their social, linguistic, and cultural boundaries are becoming blurrier than political borders. Global pop-culture can thus be considered as one of the social movements that has affected global citizens and connects multiple traditional societies across physical, cultural, and lingual borders.

In terms of literacies studies, global pop-culture is meaningful in that it allows people from different national, cultural, and lingual backgrounds to build communities, interact, and create, use, practice, and learn translingual and multimodal forms of social language. It ultimately makes people construct and represent identities that influence the ways social groups perceive the lives around them. For instance, K-pop is a part of a phenomenon in which the influence of global pop-culture is presented. In a more particular example, Colombian K-pop fans construct their identities as K-pop fans by using and practicing so-called K-pop social language, which consists of a variety of second languages, such as Korean, Spanish, and English. It is notable because these types of literacies are new ways of learning and using languages, through participation rather than through formal and traditional schooling, in the current online and global real world.

Connecting it to LSLP

Most research projects at LSLP have involved approaching and analyzing literacy practices in their actual contexts. As local pop-culture is expanding to become global, LSLP needs to look at the impact of global pop-culture to understand literacy practices in real-world contexts. Given particularly that literacies in global pop-culture are closely associated with language variation, hybrid languages, translanguaging, and multimodality, this is also aligned with LSLP's perspectives and fundamental goals.

Expanding Second Language Research

Global pop-culture is transforming and diversifying our use of second languages in online spaces. On the one hand, the social language used in global pop-culture involves a new type of translanguaging. People from different cultural and lingual backgrounds interact using their own social language, and this social language shows characteristics of translanguaging. However, this way of translanguaging tends to be constructed primarily by its users' shared global pop-culture rather than their heritage languages or foreign languages. For this new type of translanguaging, the social group members do not need to be traditionally defined multicultural people, as in typical case of translanguaging. Rather, anyone who enjoys global pop-culture can be a transcultural person. In this respect, social languages in global pop-culture make a new impact on a growing body of second language research on translanguaging.

On the other hand, people in these spaces learn and use second and additional languages spontaneously through situated learning. Those who share a certain global pop-culture want to belong to its online social groups. The autonomous motivation to become an insider of the group and use its unique social language that is constructed from a variety of languages makes people in the spaces learn this social language voluntarily. This type of situated learning through participation rather than formal schooling could suggest a new way of learning languages in the field of second language studies.

References

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