



## LSLP Micro-Paper 72: Socio-Critical Approaches to Literacy

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### Defining the Term

Socio-critical approaches, rooted in various forms of definitions of critical theory, have permeated [literacy](#) studies from its origins, working closely with the purpose of analyzing social power, dominant relations, and carrying out a critical analysis for social transformation and justice. The links between socio-critical theory and a view of literacy focused on social injustice and equity gave rise to "[critical literacy](#)" to discuss the impact of unequal power relationships among social groups. Socio-critical approaches in education, as a consequence, have illuminated studies of critical literacy in the construction of a conceptual framework to conduct research around educational policy as a practice of power.

Socio-critical approaches work with concepts that are part of the research interests of critical literacy, such as gender, class, race, language, ethnicity, inequality, oppression, and injustice. Those topics are considered as broader political concerns that teachers must connect with language classes as commitment to a more reflexive posture to interrogate and examine the ethics and politics of teaching and learning practices. That is why critical literacy as a social practice is linked with ideology, culture, knowledge and power. It allows to read, evaluate, dispute, and analyze the underlining power relations in the texts that create educational policies to then promote transformation and social action.

### Connecting it to LSLP

At LSLP, we are grounding our studies in a socio-critical vision as we question how unequal power relations affect learning and the types of participation that are accessible to people. Through our intersections of [multimodality and critical literacy](#) with [reading, social media](#), and language, our research team continues reflecting and connecting our reality with the methodological approaches of our research proposals.

Our studies on [urban](#) and [gaming literacies](#) rely on a socio-critical framing in order to understand how the

use of English in the cities and in the virtual world is related to the reproduction of power, knowledge, and authority, as well as the access to discourses and texts.

A socio-critical approach to literacy will allow us transcend a view of English as a mere communicative resource. Rather, it aims to critically analyze access to language, the purposes and consequences of its use, and its transformation to benefit more people. A stronger socio-critical view of our research invites us to reconceptualize our methodologies around ideological critique, cultural action, and [extended advocacy](#).

### Expanding Second Language Research

Socio-critical approaches to literacy must permeate second language research so that teachers and students work together to counter different social injustices. In order to change this reality, we need to first understand how texts and discourses create realities, representations and connections within economic and social systems.

Language teachers need to embrace their roles as explorers of the social effects of texts and practices in order to change education realities. They need to empower students with communication tools and knowledge for active engagement in their daily life. Finally, a socio-critical view of language learning will enable students and teachers to recognize how truth is presented and represented, by whom and in whose interests, as well as analyze the real social and cultural purposes for language use today.

### References

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