



LSLP Micro-Paper 82: Community-Based Literacies

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Defining the Term

Community-Based Literacies (CBL) refer to the set of initiatives/actions that individuals implement with the purpose of contributing to the improvement of [literacy](#) skills of children, adolescents, or adults. A distinctive characteristic of CBL is that literacy practices appear in formal or non-formal contexts.

When CBL practices take place within formal contexts, school and classroom instruction gain relevance. However, CBL in non-formal contexts benefits communities who did not have the chance to finish their schooling yet wish to receive literacy instruction either to continue their educational journey or to improve their daily activities. Therefore, CBL practices are inclusive (open to all types of publics), adaptable (applicable to both formal and non-formal scenarios) and liberating (as space for individual empowerment and agency).

CBL permeates other areas in the field of literacy. Out-of-school literacies and adult literacies are two areas that CBL intersects with. Although adult literacies and out-of-school literacies appear to go in the same direction sometimes, we can consider CBL as the umbrella term that encompasses all these events and settings.

Connecting it to LSLP

CBL aligns with two of the main interests that we have as a research community at LSLP. On the one hand, we aim to visibilize literacy practices that are taking place in real-world scenarios where children, youth, and adults can partake and profit from. On the other hand, we intend to promote divergent literacy practices that transcend formal settings. Most recently, CBL has begun to inform our research on literacy practices in our [cities](#), as we explore how our local communities rely on second languages to emerge and grow organically.

At LSLP, we reaffirm our commitment to keep exploring and promoting literacy practices developed and implemented within local communities as a manner to

honor the new ways in which individuals are making meaning of the world while expressing themselves.

Expanding Second Language Research

The notion of CBL contributes to understanding how local communities are appropriating and shaping their own literacy practices to express themselves and make meaning of the world. On the other hand, it helps understand that non-formal contexts may make worth contributions to the field of literacy.

In this sense, CBL can provide pedagogical alternatives to looking at language learning and teaching that transcend the traditional cognitive-based models that second language studies has long favored, instead exploring a stronger socio-cultural and [socio-critical](#) views about language learning and use.

Also, examining and understanding more deeply CBL may shed light on new directions in areas related to literacy, second language education, or multilingualism, among others, as these keep evolving and now context-embedded elements are gaining new ground.

References

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