



## LSLP Micro-Paper 86: New Literacies

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### Defining the Term

The idea of new literacies, initially inspired by the ethnographic research and conceptual work of Brian Street, refers to the new ways and scenarios where we inquire, find, and engage with [literacy](#) practices. Talking about new literacies entails moving away from one singular way to frame "Literacy" and acknowledge the plurality of ways to conceive reading and writing in our society, hence the need to talk about literacies. In this pluralization, we recognize that literacy practices are social and socially situated, meaning that [who](#) and [where](#) we are matters when it comes to our relationship with texts.

To study new literacies also implies recognizing that literacy practices are a key component of our society at large, as opposed to narrowing down literacy to a school-only event. From a new literacies perspective, the acts of reading and writing happen anywhere we build [communities](#) and everywhere we are. This does not mean that what we do in school is less important. Rather, it is an invitation to rethink [what we do in school](#) and how, even if we talk about in-school and out-of-school literacies, these are not binary oppositions but two ends of a continuum of practices. After all, schools are an integral part of our communities, and our communities need to be [deeply linked to our schools](#).

Finally, the idea of new literacies is a call to rethink the idea of text, moving past standard and monomodal ways to create it, instead seeking creative and [multimodal](#) ways to play with it. In a new literacies perspective, there is room for all the ways in which our youth, our adults, our schools and our communities are using texts to create the very world in which we live.

### Connecting it to LSLP

LSLP has found a great deal of inspiration in the notion of new literacies: Our research around the [city as literacy](#) has used new literacies research spanning three decades as the basis to add new layers to explore

the nexus between cities and literacy practices. Our [gaming](#) research, including recent work on [gamifying](#), draws from new literacies to recognize and validate what [gamers](#) bring to classrooms, whether as [learners](#) or as [teachers](#). Our work in schools and teacher education uses new literacies as the conduit to engage our teachers with these new [tools](#) and [scenarios](#) to play with texts. The new literacies tradition, in fact, is one of the foundational blocks of most of our research. Thus, we expect to keep contributing to this tradition as we bring our work as language teachers into the mix.

### Expanding Second Language Research

The idea of new literacies has opened more possibilities for research and practice in second language education. As we validate all the spaces where literacies happen, we also learn more about what our students do with those [second languages](#) they are learning. In turn, this expanded awareness helps up come up with better ways to teach the language, not in opposition to or denial of what happens outside of our classrooms, but as way to support those practices and create more realistic ways for our students to use that language as part of their classroom events.

### References

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