



LSLP Micro-Paper 99: Embodied Literacies

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Defining the Term

Traditional understandings of [literacy](#) and its meaning-making processes have placed literacy practices as mental exercises, often silent and static. This may give the impression that literacy practices are individual manifestations, instead of [collective](#) instances of play and creation. When we talk about embodied literacies, we are talking about reclaiming life, feelings, and the motion that comprises textual creation and meaning-making processes.

Embodied literacies revisit the role of our bodies as a knowledge form and a meaning-making site, as well as the expression of multiple literacy practices. They also invoke practices that enable us to make sense of our and other bodies, taking a stance about how we talk about them while taking critical stances to [discourses](#) that place us in a negative light against them.

This embodiment also suggests that literacies are not foreign to our bodies and [identities](#), and it becomes an invitation to revisit our relationship with the different places we inhabit, as well as with our landscapes and the environment. Embodied literacies invite us to explore and reinvent our relationship with objects, animals, materials, or plants (i.e., the more-than-human) and move past standard, monomodal forms of textual interpretation and creation.

Embodied literacies remind us that textual creation and interpretation become a play with multiple resources available, as well as the use of all of our senses as tools to engage with meaning-making, bringing back the importance of play and social connections as part of how we envision literacy practices in schools, our cities, and even our world.

Connecting it to LSLP

We find multiple connections between the notion of embodied literacies and our research. One initial connection lies within our research about the [city as literacy](#). From its inception, this notion has played with the idea of the city as a more-than-human where texts help shape it as that space we inhabit. We have also explored the possibilities of embodiment in the exploration of fashion and [tattoos](#) as literacy practices

and how [fandom](#) uses texts as a form of identity. We can also see how embodied literacies will catalyze our current expansion of ideas such as discourse and [third space](#) in our ongoing exploration of second language literacies in the cities and landscapes we inhabit.

A second layer where embodiment plays out in our research lies in our efforts to use literacies theory in language education. Ideas about [multimodality](#) and the importance of voice, movement, and gestures in meaning-making become useful when we want our students to develop more agency in the language they are learning.

Expanding Second Language Research

Language use is not just an exercise of the mind. Body and non-verbal language have always been essential to any language we learn. Embracing embodiment as part of these instructional practices may provide teachers with more tools to bring language to life in their classrooms and invite students to engage in their learning process actively.

In addition, as we consider the possibilities of art and play as spaces for language learning, we can see the potential for embodied literacies to challenge the rigidity of some instructional practices. Unless we help our students embody the languages they are learning, they will never find reasons to use the language to communicate what truly matters to them.

References

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author wrote the different drafts of this text without AI assistance. Before uploading the micro-paper, final edits were made using Grammarly. The author takes full responsibility for the publication's content.



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