

Linguistic autobiography in multilingual classrooms of adult migrants: a case study at CPIA Palermo 1

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Since 1980s the linguistic autobiography has been used as a didactic tool activity conducted in different pedagogical settings and with learners from different socio-cultural and educational background: from primary schools (Cognigni, 2014) to Universities students (Telmon, 1984, Canobbio 1990), from L2 teachers (Busch, 2012) to language courses for L2 learners (Groppaldi, 2010), from university students attending languages courses (Corti, 2012) to young adults with a low literacy background (Di Benedetto, 2017).

In the last few years, linguistic autobiography has proved to be a useful pedagogical tool also in language courses for migrants in both formal and informal settings. As ItaStra (School of Italian language for foreigners of the University of Palermo) research team has shown, linguistic autobiography can be used with Unaccompanied Minors with a low literacy background for raise awareness about the advantage of their plurilingualism (Di Benedetto, 2017). However, little research has been done so far on the potential of such a tool with adult migrant learners in multilingual classes in formal settings.

In this paper, I will address the use of the linguistic autobiography with adult migrant learners in the formal setting of *Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli adulti* (CPIA), an Italian educational institution financed by the national Ministry of Education offering day and evening courses to young adults and adults willing to receive a formal education and obtain their qualifications.

We are carrying out this research at CPIA Palermo 1. The testing of the use of linguistic autobiography in such context is part of my PhD at the University of Reading, a project within the Multimind Consortium.^[1] Within this context, I will assess

- 1) the use of the linguistic autobiography in multilingual classrooms where students have different language repertoires and competence;
- 2) to what extent linguistic autobiography activity may not imply a written production but can be delivered also orally with the help of visuals (Language portrait).

I will then demonstrate how linguistic autobiography activities can make the process of collecting information and data about the students' linguistic repertoire and I will compare this approach to the more formal sociolinguistic interview, to assess data collection methods for adult migrant learners.

Finally, I will show how the linguistic autobiography could fruitfully be used to investigate sensible topics such as the migratory journey. Trialled by the team of scholars at ItaStra in the form of class activities ("language and the journey"), this use of the linguistic autobiography opens up further possibilities for in-depths analysis of language practice in migratory trajectories and urban ethnography in migration settings.

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