Renegotiating socio-cultural identities: the case of the new Italian migrants living in London

After the 2008 economic and financial crisis, Italian mass emigration has re-started after a long period of dormancy. This paper presents the findings of a study that sought to investigate the linguistic behaviour of a sample of post-2008 crisis Italian migrants living in London.

In particular, the paper aims to shed light on the link between the development of new identities and multilingual communicative practices such as translanguaging. My discussion is based on the analysis of two sets of data. Firstly, audio recorded data were collected during natural events (such as dinners) organised by the research participants. Subsequently, the participants were interviewed. This study shows that translanguaging, explained as the fluid mixing of two (or more) languages, is a means the informants exploit to construct, to strengthen and, ultimately, to display their polyphonic and fluid identities informed by their migratory experience. In addition, the analysis of the migrants’ narratives suggests that, after the migration, previous identitary affiliations are renegotiated.

In the last decade, in literature on the new Italian migration and in the Italian media, the new migrants are generally presented as a brain drain, hence as a highly educated élite. Participants in this project challenge this image in their reflections on their identity and migratory status. The paper shows how these new Italian migrants re-negotiate the identities attributed to them by the socio-cultural Italian set of values and ideologies.

Biographical Note

I was born in Italy in 1990. When I was in primary school, my amazing teacher of Italian and History instilled the love for Humanities into me. From then on, my scholastic career was decided. Once I finished high school, I studied Italian Literature and Humanities at the University of Milan, where I developed my interest in Linguistics. I post-graduated at the University of Westminster in English Language and Linguistics. The stimulating academic environment captured me, and I thus applied for a PhD position. I am currently a doctoral researcher in the School of Humanities at the University of Westminster. My doctoral project, started in 2015, aims to explore the socio-cultural and linguistic dynamics characterising the new wave of Italian migration towards London. The project is funded by the University of Westminster.