scrittura/lettura/ascolto

"Finding oneself" in another language: understanding translingualism and building tools for dealing with trauma in educational contexts

Andreina Sgaglione

Università per Stranieri di Siena
sgaglione@unistrasi.it

Abstract. In the disjointed context of our multicultural globalization, marked by large-scale mass migrations and a rapidly changing anthropological and cultural landscape, educational settings should provide, in learning/teaching pathways, suitable tools to foster a necessary capacity for multicultural rootedness and recognition. The complexity of the present and the conflicts that characterize it confront us with the urgency of carefully observing the diverse plural histories that identify our societies and of welcoming and valuing the wealth of voices and languages that inhabit the world. Often the situation of disorientation in which immigrant learners, both newcomers and second-generation, find themselves, is not perceived as an integral part of a larger dimension that is that of translingualism, a condition of crossing languages, a significant form of multicultural multilingualism. Translingualism through its articulations, namely translanguaging, translingual writings and translingual imaginary, represents a lens through which to better understand the condition of translingual learners and the possible traumatic component intertwined with the migration experience. This paper will examine translingualism in its fundamental aspects with a focus on those traits that have potential for application in multilingual educational settings. The issue of migratory trauma will be addressed by proposing teaching strategies that help develop some fundamental tools for success in learning, such as resilience and hope, as outlined in some recent internationally tested protocols.

Keywords: translingualism, trauma, new applications in educational settings.

Riassunto. Nel contesto disgregato della nostra globalizzazione multiculturale contraddistinto da grandi migrazioni di massa e da un paesaggio antropologico e culturale in rapido mutamento, i contesti educativi dovrebbero fornire, nei percorsi di apprendimento/insegnamento, strumenti adatti a favorire una necessaria capacità di radicamento e di riconoscimento multiculturale. La complessità del presente e i conflitti che lo caratterizzano ci pongono di fronte all'urgenza di osservare con attenzione le diverse storie plurali che individuano le nostre società e di accogliere e valorizzare la ricchezza di voci e di lingue che abitano il mondo. Spesso la situazione di disorientamento nella quale si trovano gli apprendenti immigrati, sia neoarrivati che le seconde generazioni, non viene percepita come parte integrante di una più ampia dimensione che è quella del translinguismo, una condizione di attraversamento di linguaggi, una significativa forma di plurilinguismo multiculturale che, attraverso le sue articolazioni, ovvero il translanguaging, le scritture translingui e l'immaginario translingue rappresenta una lente tramite la quale poter comprendere meglio la condizione degli apprendenti translingui e l'eventuale componente traumatica intrecciata all'esperienza migratoria. In questo contributo si analizzerà il translinguismo nei suoi aspetti fondamentali con particolare riguardo ai tratti che hanno una potenzialità d'applicazione nei contesti educativi plurilingui. La questione dei traumi migratori sarà trattata proponendo strategie didattiche che aiutino a sviluppare alcuni strumenti fondamentali per la riuscita nell'apprendimento, quali la resilienza e la speranza, così come indicato in alcuni recenti protocolli sperimentati in ambito internazionale.

Parole chiave: translinguismo, trauma, nuove applicazioni nel contesto educativo.

The multilingual reality, a now stable element in Italian educational contexts, but which over time has undergone numerous narrative metamorphoses, leads us to question the suitability of the teaching/learning processes of Italian L2 underway in the contexts frequented by immigrant learners. While on the one hand there is an undeniable trend towards the recognition and inclusion of plural linguistic repertoires in the scholastic world, there is no shortage of notable critical issues and still unresolved problems linked to the challenges that the current mobile and continuously evolving context constantly poses. This study intends to propose a reflection on some points: in section I the complex aspects that characterize language learning in relation to the new scenarios of globalization are examined; the relationship between educational policy documents at an international level and their impact in the context of teaching Italian L2/LS; the importance of individual linguistic-cultural heritage as a capacity for rooting and mutual multicultural recognition; the complexity of the changes that have affected the profile of immigrant learners. Section

II analyzes the main characteristics of translingualism, its implications in the context of teaching Italian as a foreign language and the relationship with migratory trauma; translanguaging and related teaching applications; the particularities of the texts of translingual authors and their usability in L2/FL study contexts; translingual writings and translingual imagery as crucial elements for designing new syllables and using different teaching strategies. In section III, observations are proposed on the following aspects: trauma and its implications for translingual learners; the contents of specific training on trauma aimed at teachers; the recent protocols successfully tested in educational contexts characterized by the presence of learners who have undergone traumatic experiences. The objective is to offer a different perspective that can be translated into new teaching practices that can generate fair, safe, sustainable study contexts, capable of enhancing the experience of translingualism in all its facets.

I. The challenges of language learning today

Migration has increased worldwide in recent years for a variety of reasons, including globalization, conflicts, climate emergencies, and growing inequalities in living conditions within countries and between one country and another. As a result of these shifts, international migrants today number approximately three hundred million. According to recent data from UNICEF Italia[1] two and a half million refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe since 2014. Since the EU-Turkey agreement of March 2016 and the closure of the Balkan borders, the central Mediterranean route – from Libya to Italy – has emerged as the main escape route from war, persecution and despair. As of Dec. 31, 2023, arrivals in Italy accounted for about 58 percent of the more than 269,300 recorded along the Mediterranean migration routes. As of the same date, more than 139,800 refugees and migrants were reported to be in the Italian immigration system: among them, more than 24,200 unaccompanied minors. Such huge flows include people seeking better jobs or educational opportunities and those moving to a new country in order to escape heightened crisis situations that have long been recorded around the world. In 2022, for the first time in history, a record one hundred million forced migrants were recorded. International mobility is growing, along with situations of vulnerability, which have grave consequences on migrants' integra-

---

[1] *Rifugiati e migranti in Europa*, in «Unicef.it», https://www.unicef.it/emergenze/rifugiati-migranti-europa/#:~:text=L%27Italia%20C%3A%8%20il%20primo,numero%20pi%C3%B9%20alto%20dal%202017. (last access: 12/2/2024).

tion processes in destination countries. The phenomenon of migration is a hallmark of our time and is becoming increasingly crucial. Moreover, studies in the field point to an aspect not captured by statistics: people's desire to migrate has reached the highest level of the last ten years. In 2021, about 16 percent of global adults, equivalent to nine hundred million people, expressed an intention to leave their home countries permanently, if they could find a concrete opportunity.[2] This is an astonishing figure, which is five times higher than the total estimate of expatriates in the world. It demands careful reflection about the fact that if these intentions, which are for now only imaginary, were to be realized, they could revolutionize the current world balance. Understanding migration means crossing a range of demographic, economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental elements with the concrete actions of various stakeholders and international organizations, but it also means taking an active look at the dreams and concerns of those who migrate and considering the critical issues faced by those living in the countries of destination when they interact with migrants. The complexity of the picture sketched so far, however, is even more evident in relation to other forms of mobility related to various kinds of displacements that are not necessarily permanent. Suffice it to think of transportation and infrastructure workers, digital neo-nomadism, tourism, study, global events (exhibitions, expos, concerts, fairs, the fine food and wine industry, sporting events, etc.), missionary travel, international collaboration, summer vacations, but also urban commuting – a symptom of our nomadic and hyperactive lives. We are witnessing a global cycle of human beings on the move, within different interpretative frameworks that, rather than acting as alternatives to one another, accumulate: immigration, emigration, diasporas, exile, seasonal and temporary migration, expatriates, return migrants, sunset migration (the migration of retirees), long-distance relationships of various kinds, movements of cross-border commuters and students, and many other forms of discontinuous and occasional mobility for which we do not have precise definitions, but which strongly affect and change our lives.[3] It is impossible to stop these flows, just as it is crucial not to forget that we too come from hybrid confluences: «scavando per cercare le fonti più pure della nostra identità, ciò che troviamo è un intreccio virtuoso. Un meraviglioso, fecondissimo meticciato».[4]

---

[2] A. Ricci, *Migrazioni globali, demografia e sviluppo*, in *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2023*, ed. Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2023, pp. 25-31: p. 26.
[3] S. Allievi, *Trasformazioni della mobilità umana: perché parlare di migrazioni non basta più*, in *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2023* cit., pp. 32-35: p. 33.
[4] T. Montanari, *La seconda ora d'arte*, Torino, Einaudi, 2021, p. 6.

Mobility, a characteristic feature of human history, appears today as a possible regenerative resource in a globalized world, as long as we learn how to adequately deal with the difficulties it presents. Among these, the challenges of language learning are among the most relevant. Quality, equitable, and inclusive education is Goal 4 of the UN 2030 Agenda.[5] By including education among the pillars of humanity's future, the UN emphasizes the ability of education to contribute to sustainable development and the realization of just and inclusive societies:

> Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. Major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools particularly for women and girls. Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides for achieving universal education goals. For example, the world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education.[6]

Specifically among the global educational emergencies to be addressed are priorities such as ensuring access to elementary school for all. In developing countries, the target is 91 percent achieved, but 57 million children are still excluded. Another pressing need is to be able to literate some 103 million young people around the world who lack basic reading and writing skills, more than 60 percent of whom are women. The theme of quality education is also declined in other key points in the document:

> 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for […] human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation […] especially [in the] least developed countries and small island developing states.[7]

Individual linguistic heritage is, therefore, a precious and fundamental resource which allows for participation and integration. In the fragmented panorama of our multicultural globalization, an anthropological and cul-

---

[5] *Quality Education*, in «UN Sustainable Development Goals», https://www.un.org/sustainable-development/education/ (last access: 7/4/2024).
[6] *Ibidem*.
[7] *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*, 4. *Quality Education*, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/ (last access: 7/4/2024).

tural landscape undergoing change at a dizzying rate, the cognitive ability to decipher "frames" and "scripts",[8] that is, frameworks and actions in which one use the right words in appropriate contexts, gives rise to a capacity for multicultural rootedness and mutual recognition. This situation creates the need to act on the training needs for adults and their children who experience Italian as a *contact language*:

> Per i ragazzi di origine straniera, nati in Italia, o arrivati nella prima infanzia, l'italiano non è spesso nettamente né lingua madre, cioè lingua dell'identità primaria, né lingua straniera o seconda, cioè oggetto di una sovrapposizione acquisizionale successiva al processo di primario sviluppo della competenza linguistica. L'italiano, per questi locutori, contribuisce a creare un ambiente di contatto, dove costruisce e ricostruisce la propria identità innanzitutto linguistica. L'italiano diventa allora lingua di contatto […] e anche lingua identitaria.[9]

For years, in Italian learning contexts, there has been an ambivalent attitude towards issues related to plurilingualism and the enhancement of linguistic plurality in schools, beginning with the legitimization of dialectal varieties.[10] On the one hand, since the 1970s there has been a strong impetus for the recognition, respect, and inclusion of multiple languages in schools thanks to the momentum created by networks and associations of teachers and academics; on the other hand, at the national level, there has been a tendency to favor an idea of institutionalized monolingualism, favoring the exposure to and use of a language that adheres to a model of standard Italian, thereby relegating dialects and regional varieties of the language to a negligible role in the classroom.[11] A similar stance has also emerged vis-à-vis the increasing presence of immigrant languages in school contexts in some areas of Italy:

> In the case of Italy, the absence of a solid and agreed political framework impacts negatively on policies concerning the Italian language, historical minorities and new linguistic policies regarding migrants. [...] The phenomena considered in this chapter confirm the existence of: education policies that concentrate entirely on preserving and promoting Italian; projects in which the valorization of the linguistic and cultural diversity of migrants is not considered to play a key role in democratic coexistence, but in which such diversity is treated as a problem, as something that is

---

[8] S. Calabrese, *Neuronarrazioni*, Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2020, p. 34.
[9] M. Vedovelli, *Il plurilinguismo oggi: il caso Italia*, in *Il plurilinguismo come risorsa etica e cognitiva*, a cura di Id. *et al.*, Perugia, Guerra, 2010, pp. 11-36: pp. 33-34.
[10] *Ibidem*
[11] T. De Mauro, *L'educazione linguistica democratica*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2018.

hard to manage; a "linguistic schizophrenia" with, on the one hand, a quite significant number of studies emphasizing a scenario of multilingualism in the country, and the role and economic impact of the presence of different languages in a given territory, etc., and on the other hand, an evident weakness in language policy and planning regarding migrants and immigrant languages.[12]

Meanwhile, all European documents, starting already in the 1990s, proposed reflections and indications that gradually contributed to outlining an interpretative theoretical axis according to which member nations could rethink national language policies and ways of valuing multilingualism in education:

> Respect for our linguistic diversity is not only to take due account of a cultural reality stemming from history. It is the very basis of the European ideal as it emerged from the ashes of the conflicts which marred the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. While most of the European nations have been built on the platform of their language of identity, the European Union can only build on a platform of linguistic diversity. This, from our point of view, is particularly comforting. A common sense of belonging based on linguistic and cultural diversity is a powerful antidote against the various types of fanaticism towards which all too often the assertion of identity has slipped in Europe and elsewhere, in previous years as today.[13]

Such reflections have been received in Italy thanks to a growing attention to multilingualism in educational contexts: an important direction, in this regard, came from the 2018 Recommendation of the Council of the European Union[14], concerning key competences for lifelong learning, emphasizes the importance of multilingual competence, which includes a historical dimension and intercultural skills. Such competence is based on the ability to mediate between different languages and means of communication, as indicated in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.* According to the circumstances, it may include maintaining and further developing skills related to the mother tongue, as well

---

[12] S. Machetti, M. Barni, C. Bagna, *Language policies for migrants in Italy: Tension between democracy, decision-making and linguistic diversity*, in *Language Policy and Linguistic Justice: Economic, Philosophical and Sociolinguistic Approaches*, eds. M. Gazzola, T. Templin, B.A. Wickström, Berlin, Springer, 2018, pp. 477-498: p. 491.

[13] Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *A rewarding challenge, how language diversity could strengthen Europe*, 2007, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7f987cdd-dba2-42e7-8cdf-3f4f14efe783/language-en (last accessed: 23/2/2024).

[14] *Raccomandazione del Consiglio del 22 maggio 2018 relativa alle competenze chiave per l'apprendimento permanente*, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01) (last access: 10/6/2024).

as acquiring the official language or languages of a country[15]. Many of the important documents circulated at the European level, however, have not been sufficiently recognized and consulted by teachers and school leaders.[16] The presence of pupils with different linguistic and cultural repertoires, who deserve appreciation, is certainly an issue that remains open even today and that is impacted by many factors. Recent surveys by the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR), carried out in collaboration with the ISMU Foundation,[17] illustrate how multiple and ever-changing realities coexist within schools: incoming newly arrived pupils (NAI) constitute a substantial body and are flanked not only by Italian students, but also by second-generation students, who are constantly increasing in Italian classrooms. According to 2022 estimates by MIUR, first- and second-generation students add up to more than 865,000 individuals (10 percent of the total), 66.7 percent of whom were born in Italy. These numbers, in the context of the five million immigrants present nationally, show the extent of what has become a structural phenomenon. The school careers of students whose native language is other than Italian are, however, often characterized by a drop in motivation and scholastic failure. The causes of such failures are often found in the languages of the countries of origin, in the linguistic discontinuity between school and home, and in the economic and socio-cultural status of the family. Yet, the impact of teaching practices, school organization, and unbalanced and belittling relationships with families remains underestimated and hidden in the shadows.[18] Instead, we must focus on students with migrant backgrounds who are for the

---

[15] A key concept in the realm of multicultural competence is that related to the multilingual and intercultural education, which aims to promote understanding, respect, and appreciation of cultural diversity within a community or society. This type of education focuses on raising awareness and educating individuals so they can interact effectively and respectfully with people of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds, with the aim of fostering fair and inclusive social contexts. Multilingual and intercultural education responds to the need and demands for quality education: acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes, diversity of learning experiences and construction of individual and collective cultural identities. It involves making educational systems more effective and improving their contribution to the academic success of the most vulnerable students and to social cohesion (J.C. Beacco *et al.*, *Guida per lo sviluppo e l'attuazione di curricoli per una educazione plurilingue e interculturale*, in «Italiano LinguaDue», 8, 2, 2016).

[16] A. Scibetta, V. Carbonara, *Translanguaging as a pedagogical resource in Italian primary schools: Making visible the ordinariness of multilingualism,* in *Translinguistics. Negotiating Innovation & Ordinariness*, eds. J. Won Lee, S. Dovchin, London and New York, Routledge, 2019, pp. 115-129.

[17] MIUR-ISMU, *Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. La scuola multiculturale nei contesti locali. Rapporto nazionale A.S. 2014/2015,* in «Quaderni Ismu 1/2016», a cura di M. Santagati, V. Ongini, Milano, Fondazione Ismu, 2016, pp. 3-183:32.

[18] G. Demaio, F. Di Lecce, *Gli studenti stranieri e di origine immigrata nelle scuole italiane*, in *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2023* cit., pp. 233-238: p. 237.

most part very diversified within the classroom. If the learning of Italian as L2 unites their experiences in guided learning contexts, their complex linguistic biographies, on the other hand, are very different from one another and give rise to the activation of non-homogeneous learning strategies. The biographical paradigm and its centrality to the inquiry into how learners build and re-build their identities has been increasingly applied in inquiries into multilingualism.[19] Language learning processes, investigated from the perspective of linguistic biographies, have taken on a fundamental role in the way we identify learners, no longer considered as abstract entities, but as subjects with opinions, emotions, anxieties, aspirations and capacities for action in social contexts.[20] On the basis of these reflections, teacher training has become critical from the point of view of methodology: traditional, transmissive teaching, whose operational model is the frontal lecture and whose mode of exposition is verbal and one-way, in fact drastically reduces the chances for understanding and active participation of students who do not have Italian as their first language:[21]

> i ruoli fortemente asimmetrici per definizione, il gap accentuato tra la competenza linguistica di insegnanti e compagni e quella dell'allievo straniero, la presenza di routine e schemi di comportamento comunicativo caratterizzati dal punto di vista culturale e sociale, la massiccia presenza di domande di esibizione, che non hanno autenticità né permettono di far leva su motivazioni pragmatiche che vadano al di là di mostrare la propria bravura nello studio, la preponderanza della lingua in generale e della lingua italiana in particolare, sia essa orale sia scritta, come mezzo di comunicazione: sono tutti elementi che rendono il contesto classe fortemente problematico per chi non possiede la madrelingua che caratterizza la scuola.[22]

The linguistic and cultural pluralism present in schools invites a critical and constructive reflection on the language policies to be implemented, both to redefine teaching strategies and to equip ourselves with tools capable of accommodating and appreciating different cultural and linguistic heritages within a broader and more strategic vision of future educational contexts.

---

[19] B. Bush, *The Linguistic Repertoire Revisited*, in «Applied Linguistics», 33, 5, 2012, pp. 503-523.
[20] E.M. Thüne, R. Luppi, *Lingua, identità e memoria. Il lavoro con biografie linguistiche nella didattica universitaria. Un'introduzione*, in *Biografie linguistiche. Esempi di linguistica applicata*, a cura di Idd., Bologna, Amsacta, 2022, pp. 1-14: p. 1.
[21] F. Caon, *La gestione degli studenti di italiano L2 nella CAD*, in *Educazione linguistica nella classe ad abilità differenziate*, a cura di Id., Torino, Loescher, 2021, pp. 10-208: p. 165.
[22] M.C. Luise, *Italiano come lingua seconda. Elementi di didattica*, Torino, UTET, 2006, p. 136.

The issue of teacher training and of reception is fundamental not only for the public that flocks to the Italian school system, but also for the segment of adult immigrants who have chosen to invest a part of their migration plan in education, which, in their case, is aimed above all at achieving language proficiency. Language is, in fact, considered one of the main conditions that allows for the potential success of the migration experience. The first step is to facilitate access to learning contexts:

> Occorre precisare che la fascia di chi fa rientrare la formazione nel proprio orizzonte di vita sociale nel paese ospite è ristrettissima: la situazione, allora, non è semplicemente divisa fra il pubblico che risponde all'offerta formativa (il **pubblico reale** della formazione) e tutto il resto degli immigrati (il presunto **pubblico potenziale** della formazione), ma è tripartita fra il pubblico reale (fascia ristrettissima), il pubblico potenziale (fascia ristretta di coloro che, venuti a conoscenza dell'esistenza dell'offerta formativa, possono decidere di rispondervi) e il **non pubblico** della formazione, che è l'area dove si concentra la stragrande maggioranza degli immigrati. Il primo obiettivo della formazione è, allora, di far uscire il non pubblico dalla loro condizione e, avendolo messo in grado di sapere, trasformarlo in soggetto che può decidere. Metterlo in grado di sapere dell'esistenza delle opportunità di formazione significa entrare in contatto comunicativo con il non pubblico, che è uno dei principali nodi di ogni politica di educazione permanente. Di nuovo, la fase di accoglienza e di informazione va spostata fuori dalle strutture formative, che devono essere soggetti dinamici, capaci di delineare la rete degli scambi dei gruppi immigrati, entrarvi in contatto tramite le lingue degli immigrati […] una fase di contatto con gli immigrati tramite le loro lingue, fa sì che si possa parlare davvero di lingue in contatto e non di assimilazione e annientamento delle identità espressive originarie.[23]

In essence, the challenge is to intercept and reach the *nonpublic* through initiatives that overturn the traditional paradigms according to which schools and other educational entities are an end point for learners, pursuing a model in which individuals and marginal groups who experience disadvantages are excluded or subordinated to institutions. Once they have entered an educational setting, it is essential that those who will be involved in the training them not underestimate the enormous potential of the learners. The moment when the formal experience of language learning begins, the learner will be caught between two dimensions: that of the progressive development of guided competence in a language and spontaneous linguistic ability, which is quantitatively superior in terms of

---

[23] M. Vedovelli, *Guida all'italiano per stranieri. La prospettiva del Quadro comune europeo per le lingue*, Roma, Carocci, 2002, pp. 164-165.

input because it occurs in the social dimension. Such a situation involves dense and complex processes of linguistic elaboration and reflection that can lead to a broader, more developed, creative, and elaborate competence in the language:

> Un modello teorico che dia conto di tali fenomeni può essere capace anche di affrontare i problemi degli apprendenti più avanzati, facendo rientrare in tale categoria anche gli immigrati, non più considerabili solo alla stregua di deprivati fra due lingue e culture.[24]

Thus we see emerge the urgency of an epistemic breakthrough that must lead to reconsidering immigrant learners in the light of their peculiar metalinguistic sensitivity, an impetus for the development of so-called "language awareness",[25] i.e., an explicit linguistic knowledge, a conscious perception of and predisposition to language learning and use that stimulates the performance of positive activities and behaviors. It is fundamental to reshape teaching methods and to value even partial achievement of skills by students, without running the risk of translating achievements and difficulties as deficits, failures, and errors. The choice of appropriate language-teaching methodologies and techniques is necessary to remove obstacles from the learning process and to stimulate meaningful and quality language learning.

II. Translingualism and the teaching of Italian as a foreign language

The path towards a rethinking of teaching methodologies in the direction of greater personalization and differentiation of teaching with the aim of creating «un progetto di politica linguistica e culturale che includa strutturalmente gli immigrati e si rivolga a tutti i componenti della società italiana»[26] can arise from intersection with a broader dimension which is that of translingualism.

As for the Italian perspective on translinguism, with such a category

si presenta e si rappresenta, sul piano storiografico e critico-letterario, la letteratura prodotta da autori di origini culturali e di madrelingua non

---

[24] *Ivi*, p. 168.

[25] See the definition provided by the Association for Language Awareness, *About*, in «ALA», https://www.languageawareness.org/?page_id=48 (last accessed: 26/2/2024).

[26] Commissione Migrantes Toscana, Università per Stranieri di Siena, Centro Internazionale Studenti Giorgio La Pira, *Carta di Siena. Chiesa e Istituzioni per una città dell'integrazione oltre l'emergenza*, 2013, https://www.migrantes.it/chiesa-e-istituzioni-civili-per-una-citta-dellintegrazione-la-carta-di-siena/ (last accessed: 28/2/2024).

italiane […] ovvero quella di autori "transnazionali" e "translingui". […]
L'aspetto della transnazionalità italiana è costituito dunque dalla presen-
za di autori di origine straniera che utilizzano l'italiano quale lingua di
espressione letteraria, perciò translingui, e dalla ricorsività delle loro opere
nel panorama editoriale e critico italiano, in particolare degli ultimi venti
anni, ma non solo. [27]

The paradigm of transnationalism also

sheds light on the productions of contemporary literary authors who have
multicultural and multilingual backgrounds, live and operate in a specific
national context or in different periods, move from one nation to another,
or even follow intercontinental trajectories.[28]

In this context, it is appropriate to mention the contribution of Nora
Moll[29] who, following the path laid out by previous studies, reconsiders
the ideal boundaries of literature and the national canon through a reflec-
tion on the Italian language as a new form of literary and socio-political
citizenship. The research on the Italian realms of transnational, diasporic
and postcolonial modernity is already very advanced and represents an
essential point of reference.[30] As for the academic reception of transna-
tional literature on a European scale, there has been significant develop-
ment and an increase in studies and specific bibliography.[31]

[27] F. Sinopoli, *Caratteri transnazionali e translinguismo nella letteratura italiana contemporanea*,
in «La modernità letteraria», 8, 2015, pp. 53-63: p. 53.
[28] F. Sinopoli, *Reflexiones sobre la dimensión transnacional de la literatura contemporánea en
Italia y en Europa*, in «El hilo de la fábula. Revista anual del Centro de Estudios Comparados»,
20, 2020, pp. 57-68: p. 57.
[29] N. Moll, *L'infinito sotto casa. Letteratura e transculturalità nell'Italia contemporanea*, Bologna,
Patròn, 2015.
[30] WIthout claiming to be exhaustive, cfr. *Italian Diaspora Studies*, eds. M. Ganeri, in «Moder-
na», XII, 1-2, 2020, pp. 3-200; *Transcultural Italies. Mobility, Memory and Translation*, eds. C.
Burdett, L. Polezzi, B. Spadaro, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2020. It is also necessary
to consider the following studies: D. Comberiati, *Scrivere nella lingua dell'altro. La letteratura
degli immigrati in Italia (1989-2007)*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2010; U. Fracassa, *Critica e/o reto-
rica. Il discorso sulla letteratura migrante in Italia*, in *Leggere il testo e il mondo. Vent'anni di
scritture della migrazione in Italia*, eds. F. Pezzarossa, I. Rossini, Bologna, Clueb, 2011, pp 169-
181; *Storie condivise nell'Italia contemporanea. Narrazioni e performance transculturali*, eds. D.
Comberiati, C. Mengozzi, Roma, Carocci, 2023.
[31] For illustrative purposes only, cfr. *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and New Literary
Spaces in Postcolonial Europe*, eds. S. Ponzanesi, D. Merolla, Lanham, MD, USA, Lexington
Books, 2005; *Contemporary Developments in Emergent Literatures and the New Europe*, eds.
C. Dominguez, M. O'Dwyer, Santiago de Compostela, Servizo de Publicacións e Intercambio
Científico da USC, 2014; *Ècrivains en transit. Translinguisme littéraire et identités culturelles*,
eds. F. Bruera, in «CoSMo», 11, 2017.

A work that constitutes a turning point, laying the foundations for the creation of a bridge between linguistic and language teaching studies on the one hand and the translingual universe on the other, is *Homing/Ritrovarsi. Traumi e translinguismi delle migrazioni in Morante, Hoffman, Kristof, Scego e Lahiri* by Tiziana de Rogatis.[32] Translingualism understood as «una pratica di transito e adozione tra i linguaggi, culture e spazi. […] Una forma importante di plurilinguismo multiculturale […]: un punto di vista sul mondo generato dalla coesistenza e dalla tensione tra le lingue»[33], becomes, through its declinations, i.e. *translanguaging*, translingual writings and translingual imaginary, a new perspective through which to understand more deeply the position of those who are in transit between languages.

The dimension of translingualism is potentially intertwined with trauma as a condition linked to the crossing of worlds[34], to the reality of deprivation and dispossession that is closely connected with the migration experience.[35] Migration trauma also includes a kind of interdependence between immigration and emigration and, to quote the French title to Abdelmalek Sayad's study of migrants' suffering, generates a «double absence»[36] of the emigrated/immigrated person, a physical, real absence from one's country of origin, along with an absence intended as an extraneous presence in the country of immigration.[37] The emigrated/immigrated person is ultimately trapped, similar to an alpinist who is dangerously clinging to a mountain wall, without any possibility of descending or ascending: he or she thus finds him/herself "a mezza parete".[38] Translingualism, on the other hand, can also be a prerequisite for creativity and rebirth because it creates an in-between zone, generated by contact and hybridisation, which the postcolonial essayist Homi Bhabha calls the «Third Space».[39] This idea can denote both a physical and symbolic place. It can be embodied by an individual, but it can also be a standpoint from which one looks at language and life, and which encompasses divergences whilst also transcending them, an attempt to hold differences together

---

[32] T. de Rogatis, *Homing/Ritrovarsi. Traumi e translinguismi delle migrazioni in Morante, Hoffman, Kristof, Scego e Lahiri*, Siena, Edizioni Università per Stranieri di Siena, 2023

[33] *Ivi*, pp. 41-42.

[34] N. Moll, *Translinguismo e trauma infantile. Le memorie linguistiche di Marica Bodrožić e Francesco Micieli*, in «Comparatismi», 7, 2022, pp.1-12.

[35] D. Frigessi Castelnuovo, M. Risso, *A mezza parete. Emigrazione, nostalgia, malattia mentale*, Torino, Einaudi, 1982, p. 123.

[36] A. Sayad, *The Suffering of the Immigrant*, eng. transl. by D. Macey, Cambridge, Polity, 2004.

[37] T. de Rogatis, *Homing/Ritrovarsi* cit., p. 33.

[38] D. Frigessi Castelnuovo, M. Risso, *A mezza parete* cit., p.189.

[39] H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 37.

by building a shared belonging.[40] The «Third Space » provides an alternative between assimilation and isolation of diversities and their inequalities inside migrant communities.[41]

Interpreting from an educational perspective these interconnected domains, which «often overflow into one other»[42] and in which the dimension of translingualism is articulated, means translating certain elements so that they are useful for remodulating teaching processes in educational contexts. The following analysis, therefore, proposes an examination of the above-outlined aspects from a perspective that highlights their repercussions in teaching practices.

The term "translanguaging", widespread in North American circles, refers to the dynamic use of all the linguistic resources of a bi/plurilingual speaker/learner. Thanks to translanguaging and to the greater sensitivity generated by the European debate on plurilingualism, unprecedented forms of plurilingual teaching have also been implemented in Italy, which have promoted the recognition of plurilingual repertoires at school and thus have given rise to the so-called "translanguaging classroom". Such a space is collaboratively constructed between bilingual teachers and students who use their entire linguistic repertoires to teach, learn, and co-construct meanings.[43] The goal is to integrate the students' languages and dialects into everyday teaching and to eliminate hierarchies between languages in school by employing strategies based on translanguaging pedagogy. These are inclusive teaching practices that respect the linguistic rights of learners with migrant backgrounds, within a framework of symbolic and educational legitimization of multilingualism.[44] In some ways, translanguaging makes possible what De Mauro had already theorized in 2006, namely a «crisi del monolitismo linguistico»:

> assistiamo oggi alla crisi forse definitiva del monolitismo linguistico. Nuovi spazi e nuovi compiti si offrono alla vita delle lingue meno diffuse e, più in generale, alla più completa affermazione dei diritti linguistici umani. […]
> Tra le forme estreme di monolitismo linguistico vi è la convinzione secondo cui la propria lingua, la propria *mother tongue*, è l'unica vera lingua. Essa è anche la forma più ingenua. E in effetti in molte tradizioni culturali entrò in crisi già nei millenni prima di Cristo, con l'avvio delle prime

---

[40] T. de Rogatis, *Homing/Ritrovarsi* cit., p. 72.
[41] *Ivi*, pp. 67-69.
[42] *Ivi*, p. 4.
[43] O. Garcìa, S. Ibarra Jhonson K. Seltzer, *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning*, Philadelfia, PA, Caslon, 2017.
[44] V. Carbonara, A. Scibetta, *Imparare attraverso le lingue. Il translanguaging come pratica didattica*, Roma, Carocci, 2020.

riflessioni sulla molteplicità delle lingue. Essa tuttavia pare che continui ancora a giacere nell'inconscio collettivo: a causa del profondo e continuo legame che, per i caratteri intrinseci che ogni lingua ha, ciascun individuo intrattiene con la propria lingua materna.[45]

Translanguaging, moreover, has the advantage of placing learners at the center of the learning process, confirming an important current trend in theoretical studies in language-teaching, which had once adopted as its main focus the target language and the role that L1 could play in determining success or failure in learning. Today, however, theorists agree that it is better to focus attentions on the language learner. The intent is to value learners' biological and neuro-linguistic characteristics, motivations, needs, cognitive style, sociocultural peculiarities, aptitude for languages, and prior knowledge about the world,[46] in order to propose sound approaches and tools that are responsive to their needs.

A pivotal point in the initial phase of educational planning, which is useful for establishing an identikit for learners, is the analysis of their needs, which, in the case of adult immigrant public, usually coincides with immediate communicative needs. Later on, instructional choices may be oriented around a selection of linguistic inputs related to the possible contexts in which the immigrant will interact in Italy. The basic idea is organize one's teaching primarily for a communicative use of the language, without excluding other educational, cultural and affective needs.[47] Teaching is usually adjusted to aim for content that is useful for short- and medium-term goals, partly because learners' attendance in the classroom fluctuates and is closely linked to practical concerns, such as fitting into the work environment, speaking with their children's teachers at school, integrating socially, etc. At the same time, however, one should not neglect those learning strategies that may prove crucial even beyond guided study, accelerating and optimizing those processes of spontaneous acquisition of Italian that occur in the outside world:

Il *bisogno* di italiano, percepito dallo stesso soggetto straniero come strumento indispensabile di sopravvivenza, potrebbe così aprire la strada al *piacere* di apprendere, di scoprirsi sempre più padroni dei propri mezzi espressivi, di acquisire autonomia e consapevolezza del funzionamento dei codici comunicativi della comunità ospitante.[48]

---

[45] T. De Mauro, *Crisi del monolitismo linguistico e lingue meno diffuse*, in «LIDI – Lingue e Idiomi D'Italia», 1, 2006, pp. 11-37.
[46] *Insegnare italiano a stranieri*, a cura di P. Diadori, Milano, Mondadori, 2015, pp. 2-29.
[47] *Ivi*, p. 226.
[48] *Ibidem*.

The pleasure of learning combined with appropriate responses to learners' needs are very effective tools for increasing motivation, without which there can be no acquisition whatsoever. This assumption is a cornerstone of psychopedagogy and language pedagogy[49] and is recognized as an essential prerequisite for any act of teaching and learning. What is clear from de Rogatis' work is that there is an opportunity to integrate the new categories related to the processes of translingualism with the building blocks of language acquisition, so that we might foster a strong motivation for the study of Italian as a foreign language that is attuned to the real and multifaceted needs of translingual learners. In addition to taking advantage of learners' linguistic backgrounds, we must a redefine course syllabi from the perspective of the teaching of Italian as a foreign/second language, especially for the intermediate and advanced levels, so that they include texts by translingual authors, especially linguistic autobiographies, that is, texts written by those who choose to write in at least one other language than their mother tongue.[50] Translingual writing, which has been practiced by countless authors since antiquity and which is regarded as the fulfillment of «una idea trasversale *ante litteram* di translanguaging»,[51] has many potential uses in education also because a translingual imaginary is grafted in it and characterizes it:

> una categoria olistica, tridimensionale e cinetica. Esso va visto cioè come uno spazio inclusivo, stratificato ed esteso, dislocato di volta in volta nella relazione dinamica e posizionale che il parlante stabilisce con la propria madrelingua e con le proprie altre lingue attraverso esperienze, pratiche corporee, codici extra-linguistici, universi cognitivi e narrazioni. Questa dimensione è un «Terzo Spazio», un «in-between» all'interno del quale possono coesistere e dialogare appartenenze, estraneità e conflitti. Esiste quindi un immaginario translingue del translanguaging e delle scritture translingui, vale a dire […] di chi scrive in una lingua diversa da quella primaria.[52]

The ability of translingual writers to narrate multicultural coexistence, but also to explain, through their life stories, the position of those who are constantly in translation either out of necessity or by choice, can take on a self-mirroring function for learners. Working on these texts makes it possible to create a network of solidarity of experiences within which they can see their own experience. It sharpens their ability to recognize

[49] P.E. Balboni, *Didattica dell'italiano a stranieri*, Roma, Bonacci, 1994, pp. 75-79.
[50] S.G. Kellman, *Scrivere tra le lingue*, trad. it. di F. Sinopoli, Troina, Città aperta, 2007, pp. 7-9.
[51] T. de Rogatis, *Homing/Retrieving* cit., pp. 43-44.
[52] *Ivi*, p. 44.

the estrangement and difficulty that arise from continually being located both outside and inside the boundaries of a new language. Furthermore, it offers a space for considering the inner conflicts, failures, and frustrations about what cannot yet be said or recounted in a different language. At the same time, they can refine that awareness that allows them to recognize the enormous creative potential that emerges as one learns a new language and begin to restore a new relationship with their mother tongue. Such a perspective makes it possible to explicitly consider those elements that can foster or hinder the process of approaching another linguistic universe through new modes of conceptual elaboration. It also opens the way for work focused on their own linguistic autobiography. A fertile space is created where they may confront both acquisition and loss, a sense of rootedness and uprooting, disappointment and hope, in an alternating interplay between affinity and discontinuity that breaks up the solitude of the learning experience.

Working on the texts of translingual authors amounts to placing «l'uso espressivo»[53] of language at the center of teaching, reaffirming its power. Translingual texts then become the focus of multiple activities that develop, among other skills, a deeper awareness of one's own needs, a better ability to negotiate learning goals, and a different ability to get involved, reducing the affective filter that may be placed between the teacher's work and the mental activity of the learner.[54] The conditions are met for making linguistic-communicative competence into a place where dissimilar linguistic and cultural codes meet and produce new individualities and different ways of dealing with conflict. This methodology weakens the chronic urge for monolingualism that not only affects the plane of linguistic structures, but also radically collides with plane of subjectivities, cultural values, and heritages on which individual and collective identities are founded.[55] But the resources provided by the texts of translingual authors do not end with this brief outline. To fully explore their potentialities and multidimensional features, one must refer to leading[56] studies on

---

[53] M. Palermo, *I nuovi italiani e il nuovo italiano*, in «Lingua italiana», 2016, numero speciale *La lingua italiana di domani*, https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/speciali/domani/Palermo.html (last access: 14/3/2024).

[54] A. Villarini, *Didattica delle lingue straniere*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2021, p. 193.

[55] M. Vedovelli, *Guida all'italiano per stranieri* cit., p. 175.

[56] Cfr. C. Benussi, G. Cartago, *Scritture multietniche*, in *Scrittori stranieri in lingua italiana dal Cinquecento ad oggi*. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi di Padova, 20-21 marzo 2009, a cura di F. Brugnolo, Padova, Unipress, 2009, pp. 395-420; G. Cartago, *Italiano e altre lingue: due omografi e un neologismo*, in *A carte per aria: problemi e metodi dell'analisi linguistica dei media*, a cura di M. Piotti, M. Prada, Firenze, Cesati Editore, 2020, pp. 191-198; L. Ricci, *Lingua matrigna. Multidentità e plurilinguismo nella narrativa postcoloniale italiana*, in *Lingua e cultura dell'Italia coloniale*, a cura di G. Frenguelli e L. Melos, Roma, Aracne, 2009, pp. 159-

the subject that provide lexical and structural analyses, but also examinations of function and communication. The observations that emerge from such scholarship are fundamental to the effective use in the classroom:

> La propensione alla riflessione metalinguistica ha, naturalmente, un peso notevole presso tutti gli scrittori in lingua diversa da quella nativa e i nostri autori e le nostre autrici volentieri si soffermano sulle loro svariate motivazioni per l'uso dell'italiano e sui loro percorsi di apprendimento; così come volentieri osservano comportamenti e abitudini comunicative degli italiani. Altro tratto distintivo è l'influenza delle culture di partenza nel ricorso a similitudini e metafore con comparanti inediti (*era così buio che riuscivano a malapena a intravedere il bianco dei loro denti*; *un cuore grande come una moschea*). Quanto ai prestiti esotici, proprio i romanzi e i racconti di cui stiamo parlando saranno indispensabili per costruire la storia dei *migratismi*, tecnicismo della linguistica coniato da Laura Ricci, vale a dire quegli elementi provenienti dall' altrove della migrazione che si sono insediati nelle abitudini del paese d'arrivo, frutto di episodi di contatto di cui andrà misurata l'intensità. I migratismi sono nuove entità lessicali che entrano in italiano dall'esterno; ma si registra, anche, nei testi in questione, la formazione di nuove parole, dall'interno, secondo le regole della morfologia derivativa italiana, indizio di integrazione matura ai meccanismi dello strumento espressivo. […] Infine, va ricordato che questi autori non sporadicamente affrontano temi di questione della lingua riguardanti, cioè, non il loro rapporto con l'italiano, ma l'italiano in genere. Si interrogano, infatti, sulla dialettica tra la lingua standard, le varietà regionali, i dialetti e vari gerghi (specialmente quello giovanile); la conoscenza delle lingue straniere in Italia; la diffusione dell'italiano all'estero.[57]

It is an Italian, therefore, close to that of our students because it is born from the words and conversations of everyday life, from the struggles that arise in particular from their limited capacity for expression and from their relationship with languages often very distant from our own.

192; L. Ricci, *Neoislamismi e altri "migratismi" nei romanzi di Amara Lakhous*, in «Carte di viaggio. Studi di lingua e letteratura italiana», VIII, 2015, pp. 115-141; L. Ricci, *Parole migrate nel lessico italiano. Neoesotismi dal blog 2G Yalla Italia*, in *L'Italiano dei nuovi italiani*. Atti del XIX Convegno nazionale del Giscel di Siena, 7-9 aprile 2016, a cura di M. Vedovelli, Roma, Bulzoni, 2017, pp. 127-145; L. Ricci, *Migratismo*, in «Lingua italiana», 2019, https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/articoli/parole/Migratismo. html (last access: 14/3/2024). It is also worth noting that the Accademia della Crusca has added to its "Scaffali Digitali" the new version of BASILI&LIMM, the principal Database of Immigrant Writers in the Italian Language and of Italian Literature of World Migration, currently directed by Marco Biffi, Gabriella Cartago, and Cristina Mauceri, https://www.basili-limm.it/ (last access: 8/5/2024).

[57] G. Cartago, F. Fabbri, *Parole, storie e suoni dell'italiano senza frontiere – 1. Da migran(t)i a transculturali a Ø*, in «Lingua italiana», 2019, https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/articoli/percorsi/percorsi_198.html (last access: 14/3/2024).

Along with the problems of identity and control, recurring themes in the context of multiculturalism and multilingualism, «anche gli apporti innovativi al codice, aggredito dalla dimensione antitradizionale, […] dell'oralità»,[58] a phenomenon that generates «una scrittura nella quale l'impronta dell'oralità sia ben visibile e che più in generale fa riferimento ad un rapporto molto stretto fra comunicazione orale e scritta».[59]

Reading these texts can guide learners on a journey within a language full of oscillations, borrowing from other languages, and neologisms based on the migrant experience – a journey in which the reflection on their relationship to their native languages, on Italian, and on non-Italians remains central and is probed in the various nuances of the characters' experiences. These adventures sometimes finish in dead-end streets, facing walls that depict the alien language and evoke marginalization and exclusion, or they end with dramatic choices, such as abandoning one's native language. The way out lies in seizing the creativity generated by an unprecedented position that can give rise in educational contexts to a powerful form of counter-storytelling, when it is recognized and seen from another perspective, that is, through the different yet similar stories of others. In a world totally immersed in the narratives of dominant cultures, counter-storytelling can be used to reevaluate the stories, experiences, narratives, and truths of disadvantaged communities.[60] Counter-storytelling combats the sense of exclusion that arises when faced with narratives that do not correspond to one's own life.[61] It generates a space in which individuals can express their own voices and define their own lived experience. In this scenario, the category of the translingual imaginary helps explore narratives with attention to words with meanings laden with diverse symbolic experiences, but it also enhances learners' linguistic production, «non cedendo all'impulso di semplificare e di ridurre l'apprendimento ad addestramento meccanico e alla conoscenza di un unico modello di lingua considerato immutabile e altro da sé».[62] The decoding of the elements that transfer the category of the translingual imaginary into the words and expressions of the pages of the texts is not

---

[58] G. Cartago, *Prefazione*, in J. Ferrari, *Parole migranti in italiano*, Milano, Milano University Press, 2023, pp. 9-14: p. 10.

[59] D. Comberiati, *Scrivere nella lingua dell'altro. La letteratura degli immigrati in Italia (1989-2007)*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2010, p. 173.

[60] T. de Rogatis, *Transnational Perspectives, Gender and Storytelling. Elena Ferrante, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Margaret Atwood*, in «Allegoria», 86, 2022, pp. 130-131.

[61] R. Delgado, J. Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: an introduction*, New York, NYU Press, 2017, pp. 2-5.

[62] Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa, *Manifesto per una educazione linguistica democratica. Educare alla parola per coltivare umanità e costruire cultura*, Trieste, Asterios Abiblio Editore, 2019, pp. 1-4.

an easy task for those with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but it can make an excellent ground for comparison and analysis for translingual learners at the intermediate/advanced level, preferably in the same native language as the author being considered. Students take on an active and indeed crucial role in the interpretation of the components of the translingual imaginary, enacting a displacement (in their own favor) of that typical asymmetry that is created in the classroom between teacher and learner. The learning process should be based on a continuous, fruitful exchange of negotiation and decoding of the meanings in the pages of translingual writing, with specific attention paid to the intrinsic power of the translingual imaginary. Such a method makes it possible to reevaluate the complex cognitive task that our learners face and to make teaching more effective by designing personalized and more inclusive educational settings.

III. Teaching strategies and applications for dealing with trauma in educational settings

In educational settings that include translingual learners, it is necessary to consider the possible impact that trauma may have on learning. The trauma of migration, of course, is not always the same for everyone, but it is related to the dramatic contexts of migration and is intertwined with factors related to gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, religion, and race, as well as each individual's circumstances of migration (whether as an individual, group, family, or part of chain migration), financial resources, mental health, and social and cultural conditions.[63] Trauma is not fully encompassed by the categories of certified and recognized mental health disorders; rather, it presents itself in insidious and not always identifiable ways. Its symptoms are pervasive and often hidden, having a direct impact on the atmosphere and quality of life of migrants. It can give rise to a transgenerational «microtraumatismo quotidiano»[64], that is, a trauma capable of extending temporally from one generation to another and spatially, involving the communities of departure and arrival. These traumatic events do not cease to exist within schools and teaching environments, but they arrive with those who have experienced them,[65] creating complex disruptions, as Judith Herman, one of the world's leading

---

[63] T. de Rogatis, *Homing/Ritrovarsi* cit., p. 30-31.
[64] V. De Micco, *Trauma migratorio*, in «La ricerca. SpiWeb», 2017, https://www.spiweb.it/la-ricerca/ricerca/trauma-migratorio/ (last accessed: 6/12/2023).
[65] E. Dutro, A.C. Bien, *Listening to the Speaking Wound: A Trauma Studies Perspective on Student Positioning in Schools*, in «American Educational Research Journal», 51, 1, 2014, pp. 7-35.

trauma experts, has explained, «Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life».[66]

Recent research indicates that trauma alters learning ability in adults by eroding their identity and interfering with memory, relationships, and creativity.[67] Even if the traumatic event occurred in the past, people continue to react as if the stress or trauma were still present, experiencing a constant feeling of fear that reduces curiosity, exploration, and learning new concepts.[68]

Learning spaces represent a place where the right kind of communication can unlock a feeling of empowerment and self-control in individuals that allows them to make sense of their negative experiences. The goal is not to expose learners to trauma, but to reflect on effective new approaches to adopt in processes of teaching and learning. In Italy, there are numerous studies that have focused on educational research, offering reflections and experiences related to the profile of foreign adults who have immigrated to Italy[69]. In recent years, there has also been a specific production of educational materials for this type of audience. From the perspective of teaching strategies, reference can be made to guidelines for designing specific training interventions. Among the suggested criteria, some are emphasized: action-oriented teaching; instruction that is communicative, pragmatic, and intercultural in nature; linguistic input appropriate to the learners' level and including examples of regional varieties; the enhancement of learners' prior competencies; the centrality of metalinguistic reflection; and the development of cognitive strategies that can be utilized outside the classroom as well.[70]

[66] J.L. Herman, *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence-from domestic abuse to political terror*, New York, Basic Books, 1997, p. 33.

[67] L. Lee Douglas, *Introduction*, in *Trauma in Adult and Higher Education. Conversations and Critical Reflections*, eds. L. Lee Douglas, A. Threlkeld, L.R. Merriweather, Charlotte (NC), Information Age Publishing, 2022, p. XV.

[68] B. van Der Kolk, *Il corpo accusa il colpo. Mente, corpo e cervello nell'elaborazione delle memorie traumatiche*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2015.

[69] The first article on the subject dates back to Vedovelli in 1981: M. Vedovelli, *La lingua degli stranieri immigrati in Italia*, in «Lingua e nuova didattica», 3, 1981, pp. 17-23. Since then, the research has enormously expanded.

[70] P. Diadori, *Insegnare italiano L2 a immigrati*, in *Insegnare italiano a stranieri*, a cura di Ead., Milano, Le Monnier, 2015, pp. 218-231, pp. 228-230.

Many teachers, however, report feeling unprepared to deal with students who have experienced trauma in a meaningful and sustainable way[71] and confirm the need to receive more training on the subject.[72]

In many schools and districts, especially in English-speaking countries,[73] curricular changes have been introduced regarding the incorporation of trauma-informed practices into pedagogy. Such practices are holistic and provide teachers with effective tools to interpret behaviors associated with traumatic responses, such as adaptive reactions that help deal with the student's trauma, so as to manage such responses in the right way.[74]

The first step is to provide appropriate training that includes, among other possible topics: the biology of trauma and the study of its pervasive impact, the identification of the symptoms of trauma and of the ways it can manifest in the classroom, the use of trauma skills in teaching practices, the analysis of strategies to avoid re-traumatization or the creation of new sources of trauma for learners,[75] the identification of trigger reactions and ways to defuse them as soon as possible. The training process also focuses on how to develop resilience, foster social and emotional learning, create a safe environment in which equity, cultural humility, safety, compassion, empowerment, and collaboration are experienced,[76] without neglecting the development of skills that help traumatized individuals' to gradually adapt their minds to new forms of self-regulation.[77] It is a set of practices, policies, and procedures that support the educational needs of trauma-affected individuals while also addressing the collateral (or vicarious) traumatic stress of educators. According to recent research,

---

[71] J.C. Caringi *et al.*, *Secondary traumatic stress in public school teachers: Contributing and mitigating factors*, in «Advances in School Mental Health Promotion», 8, 4, 2015, pp. 244-256

[72] A. Sgaglione, *Health Literacy, Migration Traumas, Narrative Medicine and the Language Desk. New practices in translingualism and educational processes*, in «Italianistica Debreceniensis», XXIX, 2024, pp. 77-94: p. 87.

[73] S. Overstreet, S.M. Chafoulas, *Trauma-informed schools: Introduction to the special issue*, in «School Mental Health: A Multidisciplinary Research and Practice Journal», 8, 1, 2016, pp. 1-6.

[74] Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (US), *Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services*, 2015, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207201/ (last accessed: 14/3/2024).

[75] P. Gorski, *How trauma-informed are we, really? To fully support students, schools must attend to the trauma that occurs within their own institutional cultures*, in «Educational Leadership», 78, 2, 2020, pp. 14-19.

[76] J.S. Dorado *et al.*, *Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A Whole-School, Multi-level, Prevention and Intervention Program for Creating Trauma-Informed, Safe and Supportive Schools*, in «School Mental Health», 8, 2016, pp. 163-176.

[77] J.L. Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed Compassionate Classroom. Strategies & Activities to Reduce Challenging Behavior, Improve Learning Outcomes, and Increase Student Engagement*, Eau Claire WI, PESI Publishing & Media, 2020, p. VII.

50-75% of teachers experience this kind of stress, which can manifest in the form of feelings of helplessness or of being overwhelmed by working with students who have experienced trauma.[78]

After having illustrated the importance of providing teachers with a preliminary, but accurate and specific training on trauma, it is necessary to identify teaching practices that can promote learning success and increase the active involvement of learners. Such measures have already been tested in some U.S. educational settings and have achieved satisfactory results from a learner's perspective. They have also been successful in creating a more sustainable classroom environment in which all participants feel welcome, supported, and more willing to learn. There are many initiatives in this regard, a few are worth mentioning as models that can be adapted to individual educational settings. J.L. Bashant[79] proposes a structured process within educational programming that consists of both teachers and students being given questionnaires and worksheets to fill out on certain topics. Some of the topics on which teachers are asked to respond are:

– the qualities of a collaborative classroom environment;
– relationships with students;
– the factors that can trigger traumatic reactions;
– their own strengths;
– ways of strengthening learners' potential and of increasing their motivation.

Instead, students are asked to reflect on the following points, among others:

– conscious communication;
– the profile of the model teacher;
– expectations in the school environment;
– their own interests and strengths;
– relaxation techniques;
– the precise definition of their feelings;
– compassion for themselves;
– formulas and thoughts that can help in times of difficulty.

---

[78] *Developing Trauma-Informed Teachers. Creating Classrooms That Foster Equity, Resiliency, and Asset-Based Approaches: Reflections on Curricula and Program Implementation*, eds. O. Castro Schepers, M. Brennan, P. E. Bernhardt, Charlotte (NC), Information Age Publishing, 2022, p. 282.
[79] J.L. Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed Compassionate Classroom* cit.

Other proposals that recur in various studies related to trauma involve focused work on hope, understood as a tool that increases resilience and that can compensate for negative lived experiences. An elevated sense of hope is consistently associated with better outcomes in academics, sports, and mental and physical health.[80] These observations have their foundation in the so-called "hope theory"[81] of Charles R. Snyder, professor of clinical psychology at the University of Kansas. Snyder's theory takes shape as a process in which three determining characteristics converge: the perception of one's own ability to envision goals to pursue (*goals*), the cognitive processes to use in achieving them (*pathways*), and the ability to produce the inner mental energy that activates, orients, and maintains the self on the way to desired goals (*agency*). Further studies in the field of medicine, in the area of positive psychology, are based on the theory of hope, which is regarded in lifestyle medicine as a factor with a positively impact, in as much as it contributes to changing patients' behavior and building agency in those with chronic diseases. Such a theory can, therefore, have practical applications on direct patient care:

> Based on the works of Charles "Rick" Snyder and his colleagues, hope theory centers on the processes and outcomes of goal-oriented thinking and how this thinking leads to dispositional hope. This means that higher levels of hope are associated with a stronger inclination for goal setting and attainment (eg, following a discharge plan or adhering to lifestyle change recommendations) while lower levels suggest increasing despair and subsequent apathy when contemplating goals. As we strive toward our goals, we tend to think constantly about what we are doing and how we are going to move from one point to another, making the process of goal pursuit cognitive in nature. Individuals with high educational attainment tend to have higher hope as a result of their history of goal attainment. […] On the other hand, some patients may not share this level of hope; some may have a low level that limits their ability to identify and achieve goals and make necessary health-related changes. Snyder's hope theory is based in cognition rather than emotion, which means interventions can tackle augmenting hope through activities that affect thinking patterns.[82]

In the teaching process, integrating work on hope results in the adoption of a number of strategies: mistakes are treated as opportunities to

---

[80] C.R. Snyder *et al., Hope Theory, Measurements, and Applications to School Psychology*, in «School Psychology Quarterly», 18, 2, 2003, pp. 122-139: p. 26.

[81] C.R. Snyder, *Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind*, in «Psychological Inquiry», 13, 4, 2002, pp. 249-275.

[82] A.R. Duncan, P.A. Jaini, C.M. Hellman, *Positive Psychology and Hope as Lifestyle Medicine Modalities in the Therapeutic Encounter: A Narrative Review*, in «Am J Lifestyle Med.», 15, 1, 2020, pp. 6-13: p. 8.

learn, the teacher's attention in class is focused primarily on best practices, goals are always reinforced, optimism is encouraged as a privileged way to rebel against the status quo and as the basis for forming relationships in the classroom, and discussions with others on the concept of hope and on ways to apply it in life are constant food for thought.[83] The results obtained can be summarized as follows: higher levels of self-esteem and autonomy, more active participation, increased optimism, more satisfactory evaluations, a higher degree of gratification and well-being, improved physical health and increased social skills.[84] The prerequisite to such a process is that the teacher develop a specific attitude toward hope, identifying his or her own resources and cultivating them: «It is difficult to model hope for others if you do not have hope yourself».[85] Teachers play an active and proactive role: they can use activities and teaching materials that foster the kind of resilience that students need and they can find texts that offer different expressions of the theme of hope and that help to maintain high levels of motivation throughout the learning process. Initiatives such as watching videos and films, conducting photography and creative writing workshops, listening to songs, promoting moments of discussion, carrying out oral production activities associated with the expression of desires and feelings, and staging interviews can all be linked to storytelling and narration. The classroom becomes a space in which language is a medium that contributes to communicating social reality, but also to constructing it:

> Il racconto porta con sé l'esperienza dell'ascolto che abitua a stare in relazione e a pensare in silenzio, a sentir risuonare dentro di noi, come un'eco profonda, immagini e parole che ci attraversano, mondi possibili ed impossibili che possiamo immaginare. Momento di conoscenza e di intreccio di esperienze, è, nello stesso tempo, un evento reale e una testimonianza che porta la memoria di altri luoghi, persone, eventi. Ogni narrazione può avere cittadinanza nella scuola: le narrazioni della letteratura e del mito, come le narrazioni che ciascuno/a può offrire all'ascolto o incontrare nella lettura. La narrazione che ha per contenuto la quotidianità è fondamentale, aiuta la conoscenza reciproca e rafforza l'identità del gruppo, rivelando come ciascuno/a sia diverso e unico e nello stesso tempo simile a tutti/e gli/le altri/e, condividendone la comune umanità.[86]

---

[83] J.L. Bashant, *Building a Trauma-Informed Compassionate Classroom* cit., p. 73.
[84] *Ivi*, p. 69.
[85] C.R. Snyder *et al.*, *Hope Theory, Measurements, and Applications to School Psychology*, cit. p. 132.
[86] Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa, *Manifesto per una educazione* cit., p. 4.

The works of translingual authors again hold a privileged position: they favor the development of a cognitive emotional approach[87] since they give space to a plurality of voices, ideas, ways of being and living that make up the fragmentary nature of their experiences without losing their richness. In sum, they generate a community within the class made up of shared stories. The course of study becomes a way to seek out those channels that propose a valid model of reception, helping learners become capable of active participation. The classroom can become, through the teaching of language and culture, a place where weights become balanced again, where the burdens of the past are made less heavy while the values, relationships, and cultural notions that are learned today are made more weighty and substantial. The classroom becomes a fruitful space where teachers help build stronger individuals and citizens.

---

[87] On the theme of students' emotions in language learning there are authoritative studies that begin in 1994 with G. Porcelli (the first author to use the expression «umanistico-affettivi» in relation to language teaching and learning) and that continue with M. Cardona, *Il ruolo della memoria nell'apprendimento delle lingue. Una prospettiva glottodidattica*, Torino, UTET, 2001; Id., *L'errore linguistico in una prospettiva umanistico-affettiva. Valutare l'errore nell'insegnamento dell'italiano come lingua straniera*, in *Cultura italiana, educazione linguistica, Università europee. Un seminario di studio e un corso di formazione*, a cura di P. Guaragnella, Lecce, PensaMultimedia, 2002; A. Nardi, *Cognizione, emozione e interazione nell'apprendimento della lingua straniera*, in «Lingua e nuova didattica», 4, 2003; P. Mazzotta, *Gli aspetti psico-affettivi nella didattica dell'italiano come lingua straniera*, in «ITALS: Didattica e linguistica dell'italiano a stranieri», 1, 2003; E. Borello, *Dalla competenza comunicativa alla competenza emozionale nella didattica linguistica della scuola dell'infanzia*, in «Rila», 2005, numero monografico *Le lingue straniere nella scuola dell'infanzia*. Atti del convegno del Centro di linguistica dell'Università Cattolica (Brescia, 24-25 ottobre 2003), a cura di C. Bosisio, B. Cambiaghi; F. Caon, *Pleasure in language learning*, Perugia, Guerra, 2006; Id., *Aimes-tu le français? Percezione dello studio obbligatorio del francese nella scuola media*, Venezia, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2012; L. Landolfi, *Emotività e visualizzazioni in contesti formali di apprendimento linguistico*, in *Aspetti linguistici della comunicazione pubblica ed istituzionale*. Atti del 7° Congresso AItLA, Milano, 22-23 febbraio 2007, Perugia, Guerra, 2008; P. Torresan, *Emotional intelligence and education: An interview with Peter Salovey*, in «Formazione&insegnamento», 1.2, 2009; *Facilitare l'apprendimento dell'italiano L2 e delle lingue straniere*, a cura di F. Caon, Torino, UTET, 2010; P.E. Balboni, *Fare educazione linguistica: Insegnare italiano, lingue straniere e lingue classiche*, Torino, UTET, 2013.