

## Emerging literacy in multilingual digital practices of young African learners.

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Limited literacy is a significant factor in the recent migration from Africa to Europe across the Mediterranean (UIS 2017). However, this is not an isolated component in new migrants' profile. Rather, limited literacy clusters with other variables, with which it co-acts in acquiring additional languages. These variables include multilingualism, which characterises the African linguistic space (Lüpke 2015) and increases along the migratory journey (D'Agostino 2021a, 2021b). A growing number of studies are insisting on the relevance of multilingualism in the acquisition processes and the specific ways in which multilingual speakers' repertoires are reconfigured (Blommaert 2010; Canagarajah, Wurr 2011).

Multilingualism also invests the dimension of writing, especially when practiced in spontaneous forms, as is usual in young adult migrants' digital communication (Androutsopoulos 2015; D'Agostino, Mocciaro 2021; Diminescu 2008). Crucially, not only experienced writers are involved in the intense digital networking that accompanies (and often supports) migration, but also those with only emergent writing. Therefore, places such as Facebook become impromptu spaces of writing in which even individuals with limited skills learn to identify and reuse multilingual writing chunks in ways not only increasingly complex but also very similar to those reconstructed for oral acquisition (Bybee 2008).

Against the backdrop of recent research and based on an ethnographic approach, we will analyse the Facebook writings of 10 young adult migrants, who landed on the Sicilian coast in the last few years, whose limited writing skills emerged through ad hoc literacy tests. We will answer the following questions: 1. What role does multilingual input on digital media play in literacy acquisition (considering that this may be the only context of naturalistic exposure to language, in a generalised situation of low contact with the local population). 2. How spontaneous writing practices can be taken into account and included in designing additional language and writing programmes aimed specifically at this learner population?

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UIS 2017 = UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Literacy rates continue to rise from one generation to the next. Fact sheet n. 45, September 2017.* <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs45-literacy-rates-continue-rise-generation-to-next-en-2017.pdf>

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