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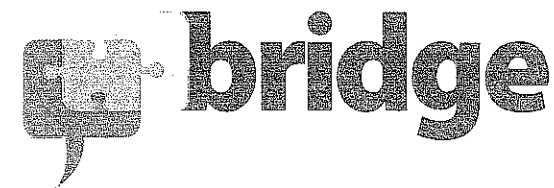
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Report Handbook on Autobiographical Pedagogical Approaches for working with Second Generation Migrants



Education and Culture DG
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Preface

The *Report Handbook on Autobiographical Pedagogical Approaches for working with Second Generation Migrants*, edited by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Liam Kane and Silvana Greco, is an outcome of an international research project *Bridge: Successful Pathways for the Second Generation of Migrants*. The project carried out at research and pedagogical institutions in seven European countries – Austria, Italy, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany. It analysed most common exclusionary and discriminatory policies and practices, for example in education, labour market etc., and considered what pedagogical and andragogical approaches and methods were most helpful for educators and trainers working with second generations migrants.

The volume *Report Handbook on Autobiographical Pedagogical Approaches for working with Second Generation Migrants* is a detailed account of the narrative and autobiographical methods and their potential in practical intercultural pedagogical work. Not only do narrative methods and genres provide qualitative tools for deeper and mutual understanding between second generation migrants and their educators, they also modes of representation. Autobiography thus empowers story-tellers because narrative enables them to construct their identity on their own terms. They are not only passive recipients of information and instruction but become active in the process of intercultural pedagogy.

Readers will find in the volume useful practical assignments and other materials for autobiographical approaches in educational work with second generation migrants. They will also inevitably be forced to think deeply their role of educators. All education is political and should aim at enabling socially excluded people to become themselves the subjects of change. The materials here that show that for many second generation migrants, social exclusion, discrimination and other forms of oppression constitute key components of their existence.

The volume on the one hand provides theoretical background on recent migration in Europe and various consequences, and on the other hand serves as an excellent intercultural manual for trainers and educators, who work with migrants and their descendants in various fields.

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Audiovisual support on oral history for adult educators and trainers

"I Can Almost See the Lights of Home": A Field Trip to Harlan County, Kentucky: An Essay-In-Sound. Charles Hardy III & Alessandro Portelli (1999) *The Journal for Multimedia History*, Vol 2. <http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol2no1/lightssoundessay.html>

"I Can Almost See the Lights of Home" offers a new way of thinking about and presenting oral history. Termed an 'aural essay' by joint authors Alessandro Portelli and Charles Hardy III, this extended and pathbreaking audio work explores place, form, time, and the act of historical interpretation; it is an attempt by two oral historians, one from Pennsylvania, USA, and the other from Rome, Italy to create a new aural history genre that counterpoises the voices of subject and scholar in dialogue—not merely the dialogue that takes place in the real time of an oral interview, but the one that occurs as interpretations are created and scholarship is generated". (Hardy and Portelli 1999)

<http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol2no1/lightssoundessay.html>

The Oral History Interview and its Literary Representations [audio] by Alessandro Portelli, Puwar (2009), website Darkmatter in ruins of imperial culture
<http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2009/07/29/the-oral-history-interview-and-its-literary-representations-audio/>

Autobiographical Approaches in Intercultural Pedagogy: Origins, Functions and the Effect on the person who is narrating his/her autobiography

(by Silvana Greco)

Introduction

In this part of the Handbook on Autobiographical Pedagogical Approaches for working with Second Generation Migrants, we will analyse in detail a particular genre of narrative: autobiography.

In the first section we will define what autobiography is and its functions. In the second section we will argue why autobiographical narratives are important for second generation immigrants. In the third section we will see some more practical suggestions on how to implement an autobiographical narrative interview which can be used by adult educators and trainers who teach other trainers or second generation migrants themselves. In the fourth section we will propose some useful assignments focusing on autobiographical narratives for adult educators and for second generation immigrants. Finally, a short video by the expert Laura Minnigerode will give some suggestions on how to write an autobiography.

What is an autobiography and what are its functions?

The word autobiography is a Greek word, composed of three terms. The first term of the word refers to *αὐτός*-*autos* which means 'Self'. The second term of the word refers to *βίος*-*bios* which means 'life' while the third term refers to *γράφειν*-*graphein* which means, 'to write'. Hence, autobiography is generally understood as a piece of writing about the life of a person or a specific life span, written by that same person.³³

According to the French scholar Philippe Lejeune autobiography may be defined as 'a retrospective narrative that a person does of his/her own life highlighting his/her personal life and in particular focusing on his/her personality'³⁴. Moreover, for Philippe Lejeune autobiography is an organic but at the same time fragmented piece of writing based on the retrospective vision of what the writer has thought, discovered and felt during a long period of his/her life or a period

³³ For more information about autobiography refer to the following literature: Birren, J. E., and Birren, B. A. (1996). 'Autobiography: Exploring the Self and Encouraging Development', in J. E. Birren, G.M. Kenyon, J.E. Rath, J.J.-F. Schroots and S. Torbjorn, *Ageing and Biography: Explorations in Adult Development*. New York: Springer Publishing, pp. 283-300; Cambi, F. (2002). *L'autobiografia come metodo formativo*. Roma-Bari: Laterza; Demetrio, D. (1995). *Raccontarsi. L'autobiografia come cura di sé*. Milano: Cortina; Demetrio, D. (2002). *Il metodo autobiografico*. Milano: Guerini; Demetrio, D. (2003). *Scritture erranti*. Roma: Edup; Demetrio, D. (2003a). *Scritture erranti. L'autobiografia come viaggio del sé nel mondo*. Roma: Edup; Demetrio, D. (2003b). *Autoanalisi per non pazienti*. Milano: Cortina; Demetrio, D. (2006). 'Scrivere di sé oltre la perdita. L'autobiografia del cordoglio e le sue implicazioni nell'elaborazione del lutto', available at <http://www.scuolaphilo.it/docs/demetrio1.pdf>; Jedlowski, P. (2000). *Storie comuni. La narrazione nella vita quotidiana*. Milano: Bruno Mondadori.

³⁴ Lejeune, P. (1986). *Il patto autobiografico*. Bologna: il Mulino [1975], p. 12. The number of pages refer to the Italian edition.

that has been significant for him/her’.

In order to be able to write about oneself, a person has to distance him/herself from everyday life in order to re-discover the different parts of oneself, in order to become more aware about the different Selves of which a person is ‘composed’.³⁵

According to Duccio Demetrio the re-discovery process is constituted both by an initial process of de-construction of the Self and then a re-composition (re-construction) of the Self. According to recent sociological and pedagogical literature, autobiography has several aims.

The first aim concerns *knowledge about one’s own identity*. Autobiography allows us not only to investigate more profoundly our personal identity, with all its complexity and contradictions, but also to revisit the present moment analysing the past. Analysing the past and going through the past in order to find some ‘hints’ (more than causes) to explain present actions, to discover the continuity and discontinuity with the past, to find what has been definitively finished and what questions are still not yet solved in one’s life.³⁶ Autobiographical narration helps the author give sense to his/her life course thanks to the chronological reconstruction of the events.³⁷ Thanks to this narration some aspects of a life course are highlighted, other are re-dimensioned, new connections are found, and new hypotheses are developed while others are rejected.³⁸

The second aim is the *social recognition of one’s own identity*. Indeed, all autobiography in its written but also in its oral form, is not only knowledge about oneself but also knowledge of oneself in relation to other social actors. Autobiography tells the story of someone who does not live in isolation but is embedded in different social relations in which other social actors are involved. These actors are represented in the autobiographical writing. In addition, autobiography also permits the writer to represent him/herself to others. Hence, as Duccio Demetrio and Laura Formenti have pointed out, autobiography is not only ‘private writing’ but also ‘public’ writing.³⁹ Writing or narrating about oneself to others, also means to expose oneself but also to receive social recognition from the other. The different Selves are recognized by others and this is crucial for a positive development of identity and self-esteem. Indeed, as Axel Honneth has demonstrated drawing on Mead’s social psychological identity theory and on Hegel’s theory of struggle for recognition, identity-formation needs recognition. There are different ways and levels of recognition: different forms of love and affection inside the primary relationship, different forms of rights (social, political etc.) in legal relations and solidarity inside the broader community in which the individual lives. Indeed, as Axel Honneth affirms for Hegel, ‘love represents the first stage of reciprocal recognition, because in it subjects mutually confirm

35 Demetrio D. and Formenti L. (1995). “La ricerca autobiografica in educazione: dalla teoria alla didattica” in Demetrio, D. (ed). *Per una didattica dell’intelligenza*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp.13-32.

36 Ibidem, p. 21.

37 Mariotti, G. (2002), “Empatia e comprensione del dolore”. in Formenti, L. Giusti, M. and Mapelli, B., *Narrazioni*. Quaderno, n. 3 di Adaltità. Milano: Guerini, pp. 103-115.

38 Poggio, B. (2004). *Mi racconti una storia? Il metodo narrativo nelle scienze sociali*. Roma: Carocci, p. 61.

39 Demetrio D. and Formenti L. (1995). “La ricerca autobiografica in educazione: dalla teoria alla didattica” in Demetrio, D. (ed). *Per una didattica dell’intelligenza*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, p. 18.

each other with regard to the concrete nature of their needs and thereby recognize each other as needy creatures. In the reciprocal experience of loving care, both subjects know themselves to be united in their neediness, in their dependence on each other. Since, moreover, needs and emotions can, to a certain extent, only gain ‘confirmation’ by being directly satisfied or reciprocated, recognition itself must possess the character of affective approval or encouragement. The consequences of receiving love and affection from primary relationships enhances the basic *self-confidence* of a person.⁴⁰ In addition, being entitled to different rights – economic, political and social – encourage people to affirm themselves and express themselves in society. It enhances the *self-respect* of the person while receiving social recognition inside the community for one’s ability and competences enhances *self-esteem*. More precisely, in modern societies solidarity is connected to the social relationship between two people who feel a profound esteem for each other. Indeed, to hold a person in esteem means to appreciate his/her abilities and competences which are seen as valuable for society. The person who esteems another shows not only tolerance for the values and abilities of the others but also affection towards the other person. Only if one shows affection to the other can he/she express his/her abilities and solidarity.

The third aim of an autobiographical narrative is *amusement*. As Barbara Poggio affirms narrating or writing his/her own story is amusing not only for the story teller but also for the listener.⁴¹

The fourth aim is a *normative* one. Indeed, it gives the opportunity to the story teller to express him/herself and let the listener know about one’s own values and norms and which rules are important or should be followed.⁴²

The fifth aim of is a *moral aim*. Through the narrative the story teller expresses his/her *Weltanschauung*, his/her particular moral and ethical frame, his/her evaluation of other actors and their actions.⁴³

The sixth aim of autobiography is that it supports a *healing process*. Indeed, retrospection helps the individual to renovate him/herself because revisiting the past gives the opportunity to produce a new interpretation of one’s life, to overcome traumas, psychological blocks and internal wounds. Hence, it helps people come up with new projects in their lives.

40 Honneth, A. (1996). *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

41 Poggio, B. (2004). *Mi racconti una storia? Il metodo narrativo nelle scienze sociali*. Roma: Carocci, p. 45.

42 Poggio, B. (2004). *Mi racconti una storia? Il metodo narrativo nelle scienze sociali*. Roma: Carocci, p. 45.

43 Poggio, B. (2004). *Mi racconti una storia? Il metodo narrativo nelle scienze sociali*. Roma: Carocci, p. 45.

This healing function is particularly important for second generation immigrants who often have to 'make peace' with many wounds coming from the past - leaving their home country and relatives, often being victims of racism, difficulty in building their own identities. As Demetrio and Formenti affirm 'autobiographical writing is not only about looking backwards, to what someone has been and what he or she has left in the place of origin, but also the desire to look forward and explore the future'.⁴⁴

The seventh aim of an autobiographical narrative, especially when narratives are widespread inside a community, is to create *a sense of belonging to a particular community*.⁴⁵ Indeed, the person who listens to or who reads an autobiographical narrative can usually identify with the events, values, and social norms of the storyteller, in particular if he/she belongs to the same ethnic community.

The eighth aim of autobiographical narratives is *a pedagogical one*. With its retrospection, through the selection of the autobiographical materials and the re-ordering of memories, events and emotions, autobiography is itself an educational process. Retrospection is 'active' thought because it constitutes a synthesis of one's life, searches for equilibrium and also creates new scenarios and perspectives for the future.

Why are autobiographical narratives useful for second generation migrants?

We have seen in the previous section that an autobiographical narrative gives storytellers an opportunity to start a personal 'journey', discovering or re-discovering events in their lives, critical moments, emotions and to become more aware of their own values, competences and abilities, which are often hidden.

In addition autobiographical narratives offer people an opportunity to discover their own identity, understood here not as an essential and stable entity during the whole life story but as an ongoing process which changes during the life span. The formation of identity is both an individual and a social process which changes through and with the interactions of other actors.

Autobiographical narratives are particularly useful for second generation immigrants because as evidence shows, not only from our empirical qualitative research but also from the sociological and anthropological literature, it is clear that the biographies of children of immigrants are very complex, very often characterized by critical events, so-called 'turning points' in life. Turning points are those critical moments in one's life when the choices you make can affect the rest of your life, such as emigrating from one country to another, to have a child or to get divorced. Afterwards people often need to reflect on these moments, to make sense of them, evaluate them

44 Demetrio D. and Formenti L. (1995). "La ricerca autobiografica in educazione: dalla teoria alla didattica" in Demetrio, D. (ed), *Per una didattica dell'intelligenza*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, p. 24. The translation from the Italian has been realized by Liam Kane.

45 Poggio, B. (2004). *Mi racconti una storia? Il metodo narrativo nelle scienze sociali*. Roma: Carocci, p. 79.

and reach a 'new equilibrium'.⁴⁶ Hence, autobiographical narratives provide storytellers with the opportunity to reflect on and analyze these critical moments. Indeed, many autobiographical narratives start exactly from these turning points.

As we have seen from the analysis of second generation migrants, it emerges clearly that very often these turning points are experienced by second generation migrants in their early childhood. Indeed, with the exception of those children of migrants born in the country from which their parents have emigrated, second generation migrants face difficulties when they are very young, emigrating to another country with their parents or later, after their parents have migrated and settled. As we have seen this is a particularly difficult moment, full of suffering and sorrow because second generation migrants have to leave the country in which they are born, separating themselves also from the care of grand-parents (usually the grand-mother) and friends. But they also have to start a long and difficult process of integration into a new country with different values, social norms, rules and another language. There are new opportunities but there is a constant risk of being made to feel marginalized or excluded.

The first years at school are often very hard because second generation migrants have to deal with a new school system, a new process of socialization, a new language and new classmates who often find it difficult to come to terms with 'diversity'. In many cases, during their first years at school, second generation migrants experience strong racist attacks, such as verbal aggression, because of the color of their skin or their different origins compared to native born classmates.

Hence, autobiographical narratives are particularly useful because they offer second generation migrants the opportunity to understand their lives better, to make sense of some events of the past to recall and articulate past suffering that could not have been expressed at the time. Indeed, from our findings the children of migrants very often don't express their pain to their parents (when they are victims of racism, for example) because they feel ashamed but also because they do not want to be a 'burden'. Indeed, the parents generally have to struggle for their daily survival, working all day long and have usually very little time to dedicate to the problems of their children.

Hence, autobiographical narratives can help second generation migrants to heal negative experiences from the past, especially those related to different forms of ignorance or disrespect such as physical harassment, denial of rights, exclusion, denigration or insults which threaten the physical and social integrity of a person and his/her honor and dignity.⁴⁷

In addition autobiographical narratives help to encourage a positive affirmation of one's own 'diversity'. As Duccio Demetrio affirms there is a 'right to express' the 'foreign' part of the iden-

46 Poggio, B. (2004.) *Mi racconti una storia? Il metodo narrativo nelle*. p. XX. Memmi, A. (1989). *Il razzismo. Paure dell'altro e diritti della differenza scienze sociali*. Roma: Carocci, p. 75.

47 Honneth, A. (1996). *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

tity.⁴⁸ Indeed, the causes of the psychological suffering which many second generation migrants experience, especially those with somatic traits and with skin-colour very different from those of the indigenous population, are due to this lack of awareness of their 'differences or diversity' (Otherness). Indeed, even the look that second generation migrants feel they receive from many natives is judgmental, based on a simplified, distorted and ridiculous version of their identity. Native populations very often have pre-judices against second generation migrants' based on a belief that their identity has some predefined traits inherent to their ethnic group. In the words of Memmi the individual 'is not considered as a single individual for him/herself but as a member of a social group of which he/she has to possess some common traits'.⁴⁹

What competences and abilities does the autobiographical educator have to have? Some practical suggestions

There are a few practical suggestions which may be helpful to educators interested in using autobiographical narrative, written and oral, in their work.

First of all, location: it is important to consider where interviews should take place. The best thing would be to agree with the interviewee a place where he/she is at ease and feels comfortable, for example at home, in their office etc.

Secondly, prepare yourself well for the autobiographical narrative and decide what kind of narrative interview,⁵⁰ you are going to conduct.

Study very well the structure of your interview and memorise the main topics by heart. Keep the goal of the interview in mind for at least two reasons. First, during good autobiographical narrative interviews the respondent starts to narrate a lot about him/herself but can easily digress to other topics in which the interviewer is not interested. Hence, the interviewer has to hold the narration on 'track'.

Secondly, the respondent can spontaneously start to answer a question that was due to come up later. It is very important in this case not to interrupt the respondent. Make sure that you have all your 'tools' with you before you go or before he/she comes to you. A check list would be:

- tape recorder
- batteries
- cassettes
- notebook
- pen/pencil (that writes!)

48 Demetrio, D. (1997), *Agenda interculturale*. Roma: Meltemi, p. 16.

49 Memmi, A. (1989), *Il razzismo. Paura dell'altro e diritti della differenza*. Genova: Edizioni Costa e Nola. [or. ed. *La Racisme: Description, définition, traitement*. Paris: Gallimard, 1982]. p. 82.

50 Spencer, L. (2001), 'Qualitative interviewing and focus groups: A Practical introduction', *Paper of Essex Summer School*. Essex: University of Essex.

- description of the project
- authorisation for the interview: 2 copies. Affirm confidentiality.

If you are well prepared you will be more relaxed, spontaneous, open and friendly and will manage the interview better. This makes the interviewee feel more at ease and respected and thus more willing to answer your questions in-depth.

An interview is a relationship, a social and emotional relationship. A good relationship is always based on:

- recognition of the Other:
- mutual respect (respect their times, their silence, their emotions etc.):
- good communication. This implies understanding each other's position (hence use appropriate language) and the use of active listening.

The interviewer should follow and develop these skills:

- a) put the interviewee at ease (you are there for him/her, so don't look nervously at your watch thinking how many things you have to do when you go home...)
- b) look interested
- c) take notes during the interview
- d) watch for non verbal signals
- e) ask questions which are:
 - simple
 - single
 - open-ended, inviting detailed description and elaboration
 - non directive
- f) allow time for people to answer
 - don't rush to fill the silence
 - don't assume you know the answer.
- g) Listen actively and probe fully
 - try to really understand what the respondent is telling you, not only listening to the words but also how he/she expresses them (is he/she moved, nervous, looking at his/her face, what are her/his emotions?)
 - don't accept a passing mention, ask for elaboration
 - don't assume you know why
 - use only agreed prompts.

Example of probing:

- Encouraging the respondent to continue
 - Inviting a respondent to elaborate ('Can you tell me a little be more about that?')
 - Returning to earlier questions
 - Drawing out a reticent respondent
- h) Pursue questions that have not been adequately answered
- i) Keep the goal of the interview in mind: keep the interview on track
- j) Keep a record of key points and your impressions
- k) Don't pass judgement or comment

The skills and abilities to keep in mind at the end of an autobiographical interview are the following:

- Attention: very often just at the end when you put off the tape recorder, the respondent tells you something significant and interesting for the purpose of the interview. Take note immediately after.
- Thank your respondent and keep in touch with him/her (keeping his/her email, telephone number).

Once the autobiographical narrative has finished listen to the interview and transcribe it word by word. Indicate in brackets the pauses, silences, shows of emotions, if possible. If you don't do it personally but let someone else do it, read the transcription immediately after the interview. If someone else is writing it down ask them to do it immediately and to see it the next day, to check everything is correct.

Assignments for adult educators and their participants

Writing an autobiography: description of the activities for adult educators

This assignment will focus on writing an autobiography, concentrating on different aspects of a person's life such as his/her family, education, work etc. and different moments during the life-course. Indeed, everyone has significant moments which suddenly lead to a change in the life course. For example, the birth of a first child, the death of a parent, difficult health problems, marriage or divorce.

Having done that, the adult educator then hands out to each participant a layout of the autobiography (see worksheet 1).

Second, the adult educator asks other trainers or second generation migrants to write their own autobiography. remembering their family, the country of origin of their parents (for second generation migrants), the school they attended, their classmates, their work and career, their friends and loves, moments of great change and so on.

They start to time-travel, through their memories.

This assignment may demand strong guidance when the participants are beginners. Be sensitive to the personal stories of participants: some may bring out traumatic stories which then demand psychological support and guidance. In this case trainers need to check if the participants are willing to share their intimate experiences. Sometimes it is good to avoid events which are too traumatic. In certain classrooms, moreover, it might be better to suggest that people tell a story which belongs to someone else (like role playing a friend with a different ethnic background). This assignment is also very useful for self-reflection among adult educators.

Duration: 30 – 45 minutes

Write your autobiography: worksheet 1

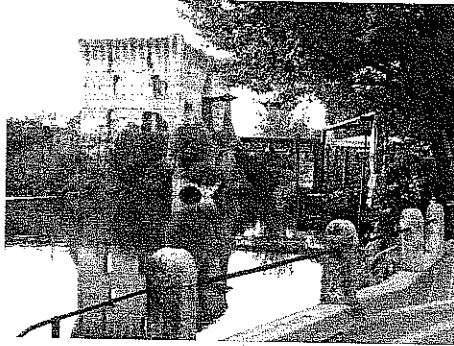


Photo by Silvana Greco

Remembering my family

Remembering the country of origin of my parents

Remembering my school and classmates

Remembering my work and my career

Remembering my friends and my loves

Remembering important moments of change and difficult times

Writing a letter to a friend about a person with whom one is in conflict: description of the activities for adult educators

Letters are an important instrument in an autobiographical pedagogical approach. The types of letter that one writes to a friend can be very different depending on the content. They can be non-autobiographical letters (when the main focus of the letter does not concern the person who writes the letter) or autobiographical letters (when the main focus of the letter does concern the person who writes the letter).

This assignment will focus on an autobiographical letter. Moreover, as we shall see in the next lesson, autobiographical letters vary widely, in accordance with the definition of autobiography being used.

On the one hand, the subjective dimension of autobiography refers to how the writer of the letter shows his/her Self to the friend. Paolo Jedlowski indicates different ways in which autobiographical writers can present themselves: the '*presentation of the Self*' or '*research about the Self*'.⁵¹ In the first case, the writer pays more attention to the impression that he/she wants to make on his/her friend who receives the letter. In the second case, the writer will explore in-depth his/her own identity, will analyze him/herself and in this research into his/her deeper Self, he/she also involves his/her friend.

On the other hand, the objective dimension of autobiography refers to the content and the way in which subjects narrate their understanding of their development within their social and cultural context and in the broader context of society.

Having done that, the educator firstly hands each participant a layout of the letter (see worksheet 2). Second, bearing in mind the different parts of the Self that the writer of a letter can show to his/her friend, the teacher asks second generation migrants to write a letter to a friend about a person with whom he/she is in conflict. It could be someone from his/her family, someone at the workplace, another friend.

The writer of the letter should address the following questions:

- Who is the person with whom she/he is in conflict?
- What happened exactly and where?
- Why is there conflict?
- What emotions and feelings did she/he experience?

⁵¹ Jedlowski, P. (2003), 'Condividere storie: amicizia e narrazione' in P. Jedlowski, *Fogli nella valigia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, p. 34. For more information on this point see: Jedlowski, P. (2000), "Autobiografia e riconoscimento", in Q. Antonelli and A. Iuso (eds), *Vite di carta*. Napoli: L'Anchora.

Third, the teacher invites all participants to sit in a circle and share with the others some feedback on their experience of writing a letter to a friend. Asking them the following questions:

- How was this experience?
- What did you feel?
- What did you discover about yourself?

This assignments may be demanding when serious conflicts are brought out. We recommend this activity for those teachers who are well trained in psychology and solving conflict situations. In addition, this assignment demands good literacy skills and this may be a problem for some participants. Sometimes it is easier to adapt this to the audio media – people can use recorders in their mobile phones to record a narration of this exercise.

Duration: approximately 1 hour.

Audiovisual support in autobiography for adult educators and trainers

'Writing Lessons: How to Write Your Life Story'

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYZy1KbP7L8&feature=relmfu>

Expert Laura Minnigerode gives some suggestions about how to write autobiography. She states: 'When writing your life story, take notes and consider some of the most meaningful events in your life that you would like to convey. Learn to write your life story with tips from a well-qualified teacher in this free video on writing lessons'.

Autobiographies of second generation immigrants

Adult educators could read parts of autobiographies by second-generation immigrants written in different national languages, such as:

Djouder, Ahmed (2006), *Disintegrati. Storia corale di una generazione di immigrati*.

Milano: il Saggiatore.

Vojnović, Goran (2008), *Čefurji Raus*. Ljubljana: Študentska založba.

A brief summary of the ideas of Paulo Freire and their Relevance for Educators Working with Second Generation Migrants

(by Liam Kane)

One way or another, even if we are unaware of it, when we work as educators there is always some theory, philosophy or set of ideas and beliefs about education which underpin our practice. As individuals, we absorb and synthesise ideas from a wide range of sources and weave them into our own personal philosophies. Sometimes our philosophy is explicit and highly visible in what we do; sometimes it is only implicit, though always present in the background. This short paper argues that the ideas of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire have much to offer those of us working with second generation migrants and that our practice will improve if we can absorb these ideas (or some of them) into our basic, fundamental educational philosophy.

The paper attempts to provide a brief and accessible introduction to the ideas of Freire and a justification of their relevance to this particular project. Hopefully, readers will be interested enough to go on and read the full article on Paulo Freire, which discusses the ideas in more depth, includes biographical details and provides references for further reading.⁵²

The Ideas of Paulo Freire: a brief introduction

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) worked as an educator amongst the poorest sectors in Brazil until he was exiled by the dictatorship which seized power there in 1964. He then worked in other countries in Latin America, Africa and throughout the globe. His book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' is one of the seminal texts of educational thought. Though his ideas sprung from his experience of working with the 'oppressed' in what used to be called the 'third world', many have argued that his ideas are also relevant to richer countries too, as the 'third world' also exists within the 'first world', and vice-versa.

The experience of second generation migrants, illustrated in the biographies of those who were interviewed for this project, show that for many, social exclusion, discrimination, isolation, marginalisation and alienation - all of which might arguably be called forms of oppression - constitute key components of their existence. In analysing the situation of the 'oppressed' (nowadays we might say 'socially excluded', though it sounds less harsh) and thinking about how education ought to address this reality, Freire came up with a number of ideas about how to think about education and how to practice it. Here are some of them:

⁵² The full article on Paulo Freire is available on the website.