



# Dialect use in migration and multilingual scenarios: building identities in diaspora

*Keywords: dialect use, identity construction, negotiation,  
multilingualism, language practices, Luxembourg, Gubbio*

# Terminology and acronyms

- Eugubino dialect = dialect spoken in Gubbio city, Italy
- Eugubinian = adj., a person claiming affiliation with Gubbio
- Content Analysis = CA
- Identity = ID
- Language practices = LPs

# Outline

- Aims of the study
- Research questions
- Identities and language practices
- Methodology
- Data and results
  - Overall results
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# Aims of the study

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- (macro)
  - To contribute to the existing literature on IDs + LPs
- (micro)
  - To investigate Eugubinians' IDs and LPs outside of Italy
  - To start a new tradition in studying Italian migrants' IDs and LPs in Luxembourg (sociolinguistics)

# Research questions

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- 1a. Are IDs constructed and negotiated through LPs within a Eugubinian community in Luxembourg?
- 1b. What do Eugubinian migrants in Luxembourg report in self-identification?
- 1c. Which LPs Eugubinian migrants in Luxembourg imply in constructing and negotiating their identities?

# Identities and language practices

In a globalized, **poststructuralist**, postmodern world, identity is considered to be fluid, multiple, diverse, dynamic, varied, shifting, subject to change and contradictory. It is regarded to be socially organized, reorganized, **constructed**, co-constructed, and continually reconstructed through language and discourse. It is unstable, flexible, ongoing, **negotiated**, and multiple.

(Kouhpaenejad and Gholaminejad 2014: 200)

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  - A speaker *plays a role* in a context
  - A speaker positions his or her *self* when it is contested (e.g., code-switching)

# Methodology

- February 2017, Luxembourg and France
- Qualitative case study (6 respondents, 3 M – 3 F)
  - snowball sampling
  - individual and group-focused semi-structured interviews
  - audio-taped, transcribed, coded data
- Content Analysis
  - data are sorted by a categorization matrix

# Data and results

- Gianluigi “Gigi”, 68, M, retired
  - feels Eugubinian and Italian
  - constructs his ID starting with his nickname
  - negotiates his ID through Eugubino dialect on the Internet and at home
  - dialect makes him reconnect with his youth
  - “*dialect does not have to die out*”

# Data and results

- Beatrice, 78, F, retired
  - 59 years in Luxembourg, feeling Eugubinian and Italian
  - she negotiates her Italian and Eugubinian IDs by speaking Italian and Eugubino dialect at home and in public
  - for her, being Eugubinian means being able to speak the dialect and vice versa
  - “*it comes out spontaneously many times* [speaking the dialect]”



# Data and results

- Daniele, 55, M, self-employed
  - controversy in ID: Eugubinian, Italian, Luxembourger, and European
  - he converges and adapts to the interlocutors, thus positioning as a multilingual speaker
    - Eugubino with friends, Italian at the workplace
  - it is through language that he constructs his ID
  - “*dialect matters a lot to me (...) it is enjoyable*”

# Data and results

- Anna, 56, F, school teacher
  - feels Eugubinian, Italian, Luxembourger, and European
  - it is through language (e.g., code-switching) that her ID is negotiated and clear
  - “[Eugubino dialect] is like another language, it has its entity, its importance, as the same level than formal Italian”

# Data and results

- Emanuele “Lele”, 24, M, school teacher
  - feels Eugubinian, Italian, Luxembourger, European, and Western
  - by speaking and learning languages, he fulfills his *global ID*
  - feels belonging to a country because through languages, he can understand what happens there
  - “*dialect is easier to speak than Italian*”

# Data and results

- Gaia, 27, F, healthcare assistant
  - feels Italian, Eugubinian
  - tends to absorb dialects, constructs and negotiates her ID with Eugubinian and Italian interlocutors
  - for her, being a community member means understanding and speaking the language variety
  - “[my mother] knows I am speaking with my father or grandmother [because I speak in dialect]”

# Overall results

- identities are constructed, and negotiated in LP (see Gianluigi and Beatrice)

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- one constructs his or her identity as a language speaker, and negotiates it through discourse (see Daniele and Anna)
- identity is strictly connected to the one's ability to understand and reproduce a language (see Lele and Gaia)

# Conclusions

- Identities are constructed and negotiated within a community of Eugubinian migrants in Luxembourg
- The respondents are likely to preserve Eugubino dialect across time and space
- Eugubinian migrants in Luxembourg show strong affiliation with Gubbio
- Multilingualism is a benefit and does not interfere with one's self-identification



# References

- Kouhpaeenejad, Mohammad Hossein and Razieh Gholaminejad (2014) “Identity and Language Learning from Post-structuralist Perspective”. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 5/1: 199 – 204.