

A multi-method approach to research language practices amongst foreign residents in the Algarve

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Resumo

O Censos de 2011 indica que cerca de 13% de população residente no Algarve é estrangeira e dois terços destes estrangeiros provêm de países do norte da Europa e de países do leste da Europa. O objetivo deste artigo é descrever criticamente o nosso processo de pesquisa com base na aplicação de uma metodologia mista com recurso a vários instrumentos (questionários, entrevistas e análise da paisagem linguística) para explorar os usos da(s) língua(s) no quotidiano destes residentes, aferir os contextos de prática e o conhecimento da língua portuguesa destas comunidades e o valor simbólico e instrumental atribuído ao conhecimento da língua portuguesa.

Palavras-chave: migração intraeuropeia; práticas linguísticas; estrangeiros residentes; Algarve; métodos mistos

1. Introduction

In order to understand social life in the 21st century we need to understand mobility, and understanding mobility requires attention to the movement of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space.

Blackledge & Creese (2017a: 31)

Until recently, much of the history of migration studies has comprised research focused on particular ethnic or national groups, their migration processes, community formation, trajectories of assimilation or integration, and patterns of transnationalism (Blackledge & Creese 2017b: 16). In such studies, migration in Europe was viewed in terms of apparently homogeneous groups moving from one country to another, whereas recent patterns have brought a change in the nature and profile of migration to Western societies (*ibid.*: 32).

The study of mobility implies not merely analysing movement of people from one country to another to make a new life, but also the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space (*ibid.*: 34). We consider the study of language to be interlinked with mobilities, *i.e.* human action in terms of temporal, spatial and social trajectories. Therefore, our focus is on both language-in-motion and language-in-place. For the study reported here, the Algarve is the destination place for increasing numbers of migrants and their languages. With a population of 441 929, the Algarve accounted for just 4.2 per cent of the total national population in 2015. However, according to the SEFSTAT data (2015), a total of 58 246 foreign born residents inhabited the Algarve region. Meaning that the Algarve has the highest percentage of foreign residents in Portugal – around 13.2 per cent compared to the national average of 4 per cent to 5 per

cent. These residents are from various origins and migrate to the Algarve for various reasons, including lifestyle, retirement, and work. Taking this multinational context into account it would be safe to assume that contact and interaction (physical or virtual) between nationalities, ethnicities, languages, cultural modes, media, and practices are the norm, affecting the ways people communicate in all contexts of life. What we propose here is a possible starting point for a study on the sociolinguistics of mobility, entailing «a sociolinguistics [...] of actual language resources deployed in real sociocultural, historical, and political contexts» (Blommaert 2010: 5).

To conduct sociolinguistic studies on migrants in the Algarve we are convinced that the research agenda must include: (1) an understanding of mobility in the constitution of social life; (2) an understanding of migration as not marginal but central to social life in the Algarve and (3) an understanding of the centrality of language practices in migration contexts. We also believe that the prevalence of macro-sociolinguistic and quantitative research approaches in studies on migration and languages does not provide sufficient data on language practices and language use. Even though large-scale macro-sociolinguistic studies are useful tools, on their own they fail to give an adequate account of a sociolinguistic situation when not supported by micro-sociolinguistic research (Verschick 2005).

The main goal of this paper, therefore, is to propose a methodological framework to study the rich and complex phenomenon of language practices in the region of the Algarve, thus setting some guidelines on how to approach the study of language practices in specific socio-geographical contexts. As such, we present a mixed methodological approach conducted among the European foreign resident population in the Algarve, with a particular focus on how this approach contributes to the understanding of language practices of two broad groups of migrants: northern Europeans and eastern Europeans.

In the following sections, we briefly present the research context, migration patterns and research rationale. This is followed by the description of our multi-level method approach applied to the research of language practices. The next sections present some data as illustrations of the type of findings such a study may lead to. Lastly, the implications of the findings are briefly discussed.

2. Research context and migratory flows to the Algarve in the 21st century

The Algarve context provides a rich research site to investigate how tourism, migration and languages are interrelated, supporting on the one hand the recent literature on contemporary mobilities which often points to the blurred boundaries and increasing interplay between tourism and migration. On the other hand, the literature also demonstrates how the development of tourism in many destination areas around the world has seen a corresponding increase in migrant workers, who are attracted to the employment opportunities afforded by the tourism industry and perhaps also by the prospects of living in a place with a perceived high quality of life due to development of tourism infrastructures.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Portugal was becoming a «new» destination country for two main types of European migrants, who have come to be defined in academic discourse by both their motivations and geographical region of origin: the «lifestyle migrants», or «residential tourists», from northern European countries and the «economic» migrants from eastern Europe (Torkington & Ribeiro 2017) (see Table 1). This region is a favoured destination for both these groups of migrants, being the second most sought out region in Portugal after Greater Lisbon (SEFSTAT 2015) with migrants settling across the entire region, both along the coastal belt and further inland. On the one hand, the Algarve has, for the past decades, been a popular destination for what has variously been termed «international retirement migration» (e.g. King *et al.* 1998); «residential tourism» (e.g. Huete, Mantecón, & Mazón 2008), or «lifestyle migration» (e.g. Benson & O'Reilly 2009). On the other hand, the Algarve also offers employment and business opportunities, particularly in the construction industry and in the service sector, and this makes it an attractive destination for relocation. So-called «economic migrants» from the east of Europe have been arriving, living and working in this Portuguese region in fairly large numbers from 1999 to 2009, initially attracted by immigration laws which granted «permits of stay» for any immigrant with an employment contract. The numbers of foreign nationals originating from countries such as the Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, and the Russian Federation steadily increased, reaching a peak in 2009. With the economic crisis in Portugal, however, which led to high levels of unemployment, failing businesses (many of which were related to the tourism sector) and imposed austerity, the official number of incoming migrants has been dropping since 2009 (see Table 1), although this

decrease also reflects the acquisition of Portuguese citizenship by many migrants (Peixoto 2014). On the whole, this rich and multilingual context is «sensitive to influences at both macro- and micro- levels, leading to highly complex, «messy» and hybrid sociolinguistic phenomena that defy established categories» (Blommaert 2014: 4).

Table 1. Evolution of foreign residents in the Algarve 2008-2015

Country of origin	No. Residents			
	2008	2009	2013	2015
UK	10791	11608	10110	10498
Romania/Moldova	13765	13291	9744	8670
Ukraine	10562	9676	7458	6352
Germany	3485	3650	3230	3191
Holland	2394	2522	2492	2717
France	1056	1031	1104	2361
Scandinavia	513	661	689	1102
Russia	1247	1147	864	912
Spain	511	536	716	786
Italy	436	534	534	649
Finland	95	112	139	451

Source: SEFSTAT (2008; 2010; 2013; 2015)

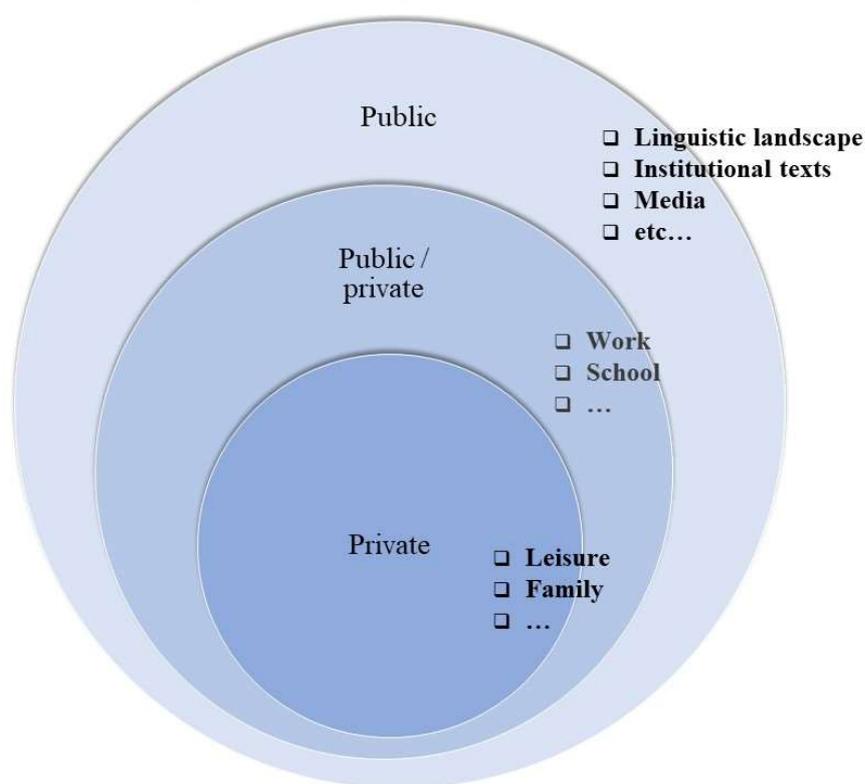
3. Multi-method approach to the study of language practices

We chose language practices as our starting point in order to draw attention to the ways in which the process of migration is locally lived and produced in terms of language practices, which are an unavoidable part of everyone’s everyday social life. Because languages are embedded in a social context, language use and language choices are prone to attitudes and judgments (Mesthrie *et al.* 2000); in other words, social practice and social processes reproduce, reshape and reframe unequal relationships through language in use and this study also aims to capture this inequality. In fact, in today’s globalized environment «many people find their linguistic resources to be of very low value» (Blommaert 2010: 3; see also Heller 2010) whereas this is certainly not the case of the very highly valued English language.

To gain a better understanding of how language practices are embedded in a political economy of language, we need to focus on various levels of context or spheres and explore various intertwined levels in order to link those levels to discourse practices and

language practices. Starting with the public sphere, the focus should be on language in public texts such as media, institutional texts, or the linguistic landscape (billboards, advertisements, etc.). In fact, to gain a thorough understanding we need to examine the economic, political, geographical and historical contexts of the place, as well as the socio-cultural settings and the large-scale institutional factors that impact on language practices at this level, although this is beyond the scope of this paper. At the intersection of the public and private spheres, we should focus on the language practices of/in those institutions where the private meets the public, *e.g.* work or school. Finally, and equally important, in the private sphere, we ought to examine how individuals interact linguistically in more private settings such as the home or when engaged in leisure practices. Figure 1 illustrates the various levels of context of practices and interactions – public, public/private or social and private.¹

Figure 1. Contexts of practices and interactions



As we stated above, we are interested in proposing possible analytical tools to explore the (multi)lingual practices of the different communities of Europeans living in the region. Therefore, we propose a combination of the macro and micro perspective, using

¹ We are considering the public/private distinction of what is individual and pertains only to the individual versus what is collective and affects the interests of a collectivity of individuals, even though they might overlap. At the same time, we are also drawing on the distinction between what is open, revealed or accessible versus what is (partially) hidden or withdrawn (Weintraub 1997: 4-5).

different tools of data collection and of data analysis. Table 2 displays the two approaches – micro and macro – and the focus of analysis, and Table 3 shows the multi-methods used for data collection and analysis.

Table 2. Micro-sociolinguistic and macro-sociolinguistic approach

	Micro-sociolinguistic approach	Macro-sociolinguistic approach
Units of analysis	- Individual speakers - Micro-communities	- Speech communities as a whole
Main factors	- Attitudes and preferences of individual speakers - Sociolinguistic experience - Language choice on an individual scale	- Sociocultural and demographic changes - Macro-functions of languages

Source: adapted from Verschik (2005: 381).

Table 3. Multi-methods approach

Data collection methods	Aims	Methods of analysis
Questionnaire	- Sociodemographic and linguistic profile - Languages(s) used in everyday language practices - Attitudes to languages and language learning	- Quantitative; descriptive statistics and comparative statistics (between migrant communities)
Interviews (non-structured)	- Exploring daily language practices and attitudes in the context of migration and post-migration stories - Strategies for learning languages	- Discourse analysis and content analysis
Linguistic landscape analysis	- How the presence (or absence) of languages in the public sphere is linked to patterns of social interaction of the different communities in particular spaces.	- Quantitative (counting texts) - Nexus analysis (combining ethnographic, sociolinguistic and discourse analysis approaches)

We first applied a questionnaire survey to obtain profiling data, including socio-demographic data (age, nationality, place of residence, education; employment status), reasons for choosing the Algarve as a destination, length of time living in the Algarve, intention to stay in the foreseeable future, and data on language learning and skills and everyday language practices. The questionnaires were made available in four languages (Portuguese, English, Romanian and Ukrainian), and were advertised on social media and by emailing various local associations and organisations which have close ties to the migrant communities in the Algarve. We also sent the questionnaire to various personal contacts asking them to pass it on to friends and acquaintances, using a snowball sampling technique, therefore non-probabilistic. For the purposes of this paper, we focus on the European sample (n=198), and within this group we consider only what we defined as northern and eastern Europeans, (hereafter NE and EE respectively) in order to briefly compare the profiles of these two groups (see Table 4).

Table 4. Number of questionnaires collected by nationality

Nationalities	No.	M	F
UK; NL; DE; FRA; IRL; DNK; SWE; CHE	86	31	55
ROU; UKR; MDA; BGR; HUN	112	44	68
Total	198	75	123

Following on from the questionnaire survey, we conducted interviews with migrants: in-depth, face-to-face interviews, aimed at eliciting loosely narrated migration stories. Although some participants were previously known personally to at least one of the researchers, most were recruited through networking, using what is perhaps best described as an «opportunistic» sampling method (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam 2003: 81). The sample is also criterion-based, in that participants had to satisfy some criteria, namely: 1) to have lived in the Algarve for more than two years (but ideally longer); 2) to consider Portugal as their only current place of residence (thus avoiding seasonal or «peripatetic» [O'Reilly 2000] migrants). For the analysis of the interview data, (see section 5 below), we draw on data from in-depth interviews with seven NE adults and six EE adults. These interviews were conducted in English (NEs) or in Portuguese (EEs).

4. Migrant profiles: Socio-demographics and language(s)

Our survey results pointed to similarities and differences between the two groups. Although the eastern European group has a slightly younger average age, (60 per cent of respondents were between 30-49) it is not the case that all northern Europeans living in the Algarve are retirees (55 per cent of respondents were between 50-69 and just over 20 per cent were between 30-49), although this is often presented as being the case in public (and indeed academic) discourse. We found that there are individuals who are working as well as «not currently working» in both groups. However, there are more northern Europeans who are «self-employed» or running their own business (either in the Algarve or elsewhere in the world, around 25 per cent of our respondents), whilst eastern Europeans tend to be «employed» by others (only 16 per cent declared to be self-employed, increasingly, in fact, by northern Europeans). On the other hand, «not currently working» is more likely to mean unsought unemployment for eastern Europeans, whilst for many northern Europeans it is a lifestyle choice, enabled by having sufficient personal funds. The survey points to both groups being relatively well-educated, with almost 40 per cent of eastern Europeans and 60 per cent of northern Europeans having had some kind of further or higher education.

The migrant profiles that emerged showed that respondents from both groups have been living in the Algarve on average for over ten years, indicating relatively stable communities. In both groups, individuals overwhelmingly reported that they intend to stay in the Algarve for the foreseeable future and that they feel «at home» there.

The migrant population in the Algarve is extremely diverse and their language practices in their daily lives are not easily described. The following example illustrates the case in point: a Moldovan immigrant in the Algarve may speak several languages, for example with his or her family (Moldovan), friends (Russian), church-based social networks (Ukrainian) and co-workers (Moldovan, Russian, Portuguese and English) (see Table 5).

Table 5. Languages spoken by respondents (percentages)

	PT	EN	UKR	RU	RO/MO	FR	ES	DE
EE n=112	95.5	42.0	34.8	61.6	53.6	11.6	15.2	8.9
NE n=86	62.8	97.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	51.2	16.3	32.6

PT (Portuguese); EN (English); UKR (Ukrainian); RU (Russian); RO (Romanian); MO (Moldavian); FR (French); ES (Spanish); DE (German)
 Source: Ribeiro (2015: 241).

The local environment of these migrants is abundantly multilingual, even though Portuguese, and of course, in the highly touristic parts of the Algarve, English, take the centre space. However, there are few displays of formal, literate aspects of their multilingualism, that is, few public language displays in Romanian or Ukrainian, in contrast with overabundance of English advertisements, bill boards, etc. According to Blommaert (2010: 9) «such public displays can index the size and the degree of solidification of particular immigrant communities» but in the Algarve they also index the political economy of (the English) language (see section on Linguistic Landscapes below).

By contrast, the northern Europeans can be divided into two main groups: native English speakers and other native-language speakers (*e.g.* Germans, Dutch and Swedish). The native English-speakers engage predominantly in a monolingual practice and other nationals use both their native language and English to engage in their post-migration life. They do not seem to value learning the local language and their daily life does not seem to require being proficient in Portuguese, as we will see below.

5. Speaking (or not) Portuguese

Our overall research aim was to explore the language practices of both groups. Our findings show that regarding language practices, there are clear differences between the two groups. For EEs, it is extremely important, in terms of successful outcomes, to master the Portuguese language. In our survey, over seventy per cent of EEs assessed their knowledge of the Portuguese language as ranging from «good» to «fluent». Overall, these migrants are much more aware of the benefits of being multilingual, both in terms of economic capital (job opportunities and the likelihood of getting a «better» job as one's command of Portuguese and also other languages, particularly English, increases) and also in terms of social capital by enlarging one's social network and being «accepted» in local society. Many of the EEs were already multilingual when they arrived in Portugal, and although they found it initially a challenge to learn a completely new language – Portuguese -, they mostly took it in their stride and learned very quickly:

I'd been in Germany and they said to me to come here the Algarve is nice lots of sunshine [...] and in the first week I didn't like it at all and it was really complicated because I speak English I speak German I speak French and so it was all new to me, in two weeks I started to watch films in the evening the thing is they speak English but it was translated into Portuguese [subtitles], in two months I practically spoke it but without an accent or anything (Cosmin, Romanian, self-employed)

I was working in a hotel and I needed to speak and I can't speak English so I needed to understand what the person was telling me and so it's like swimming you leave someone right in the middle of the sea and she has to start swimming [...] and it was like that with a lot of mistakes of course but I wasn't scared of contacting and making mistakes [...] first time I made errors third time errors fourth time possibly it was better, do you understand, it's like that, I never took lessons (Yulia, Ukrainian, self-employed)

EEs use various individual strategies to learn the language as fast as possible, such as reading newspapers and magazines in Portuguese, or watching movies in English with Portuguese subtitles, as Cosmin did (see extract above) and do not shy away from making mistakes, as Yulia points out (above). These are recurrent repertoires from migrants whose initial motivation to learn the language was, of course, finding and keeping a job. On the other hand, for NEs, there is very little attempt to learn

Portuguese (over sixty per cent of NEs admitted to a very limited knowledge of Portuguese); nor does the ability to speak and understand Portuguese figure as an important prerequisite to a successful migration outcome. When asked, less than forty per cent of our sample stated that it is «very important» to learn Portuguese and fourteen per cent said that it is «not at all important». Many people (particularly the British) talked about how they had attempted to learn when they first arrived, but soon gave up, either because it was «too difficult» or because they found they could easily «get by» without it. A common NE repertoire is the frustration in trying to learn such a «difficult» language only to find that «all the Portuguese speak English», thus thwarting any attempts to practice (see also Figure 2). One participant even claimed that the Portuguese simply «don't want to help»:

I feel as though I should learn the language and I have tried but I have to say it's very hard [...] I find them [the Portuguese] a little bit harsh - I think they're still getting used to the English coming over here, [...] um when I say hostility it's a lack of wanting to help. It's you're English and you don't speak our language and therefore I can't be bothered (Gillian, British, self-employed)

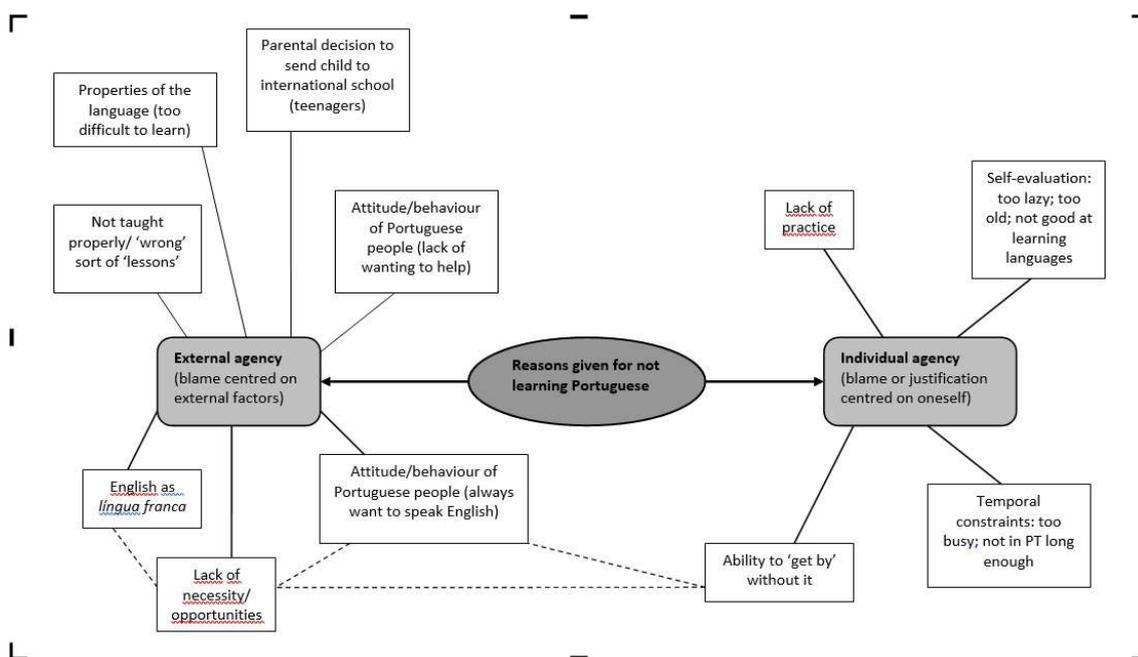
In most cases, however, not speaking Portuguese seems to be an active lifestyle choice – based on the privilege afforded by the practice of speaking English and the powerful symbolic status attributed to the English language and its «native» speakers in the Algarve region. In most cases, the NEs who settle in the region build social networks with others who are «similar» in terms of sociolinguistic proximity and thus build their social capital by enacting bonding strategies amongst themselves – the «expats» (Casado-Díaz 2009; Casado-Díaz *et al.* 2014). The majority of NEs living along the coastal belt of the Algarve seem happy to live a kind of self-secluded existence, socialising amongst themselves and often organising structured social networks such as the «associations» that Elke mentions (below) in order to develop mutual cultural interests, perform charitable works, or attend recreational classes (*e.g.* art, cookery, yoga):

There are lots of cultural associations, all founded by expats, where most people belong to as members. These associations are also open to Portuguese people but unfortunately practically none is joining – here at the Algarve retired people interact mostly in between themselves, have relatively little contact with Portuguese (Elke, German, retired)

Those who work either take jobs in the tourism sector, where English is the lingua franca, or set up businesses aimed at other lifestyle migrants – everything from bars and restaurants to real estate and property management agencies, from health centres to beauty salons and indeed just about any service imaginable can be found catering to English-speaking clients in the Algarve these days. In short, achieving a command of the Portuguese language is not generally a requirement for successful outcomes among these migrants from the north of Europe.

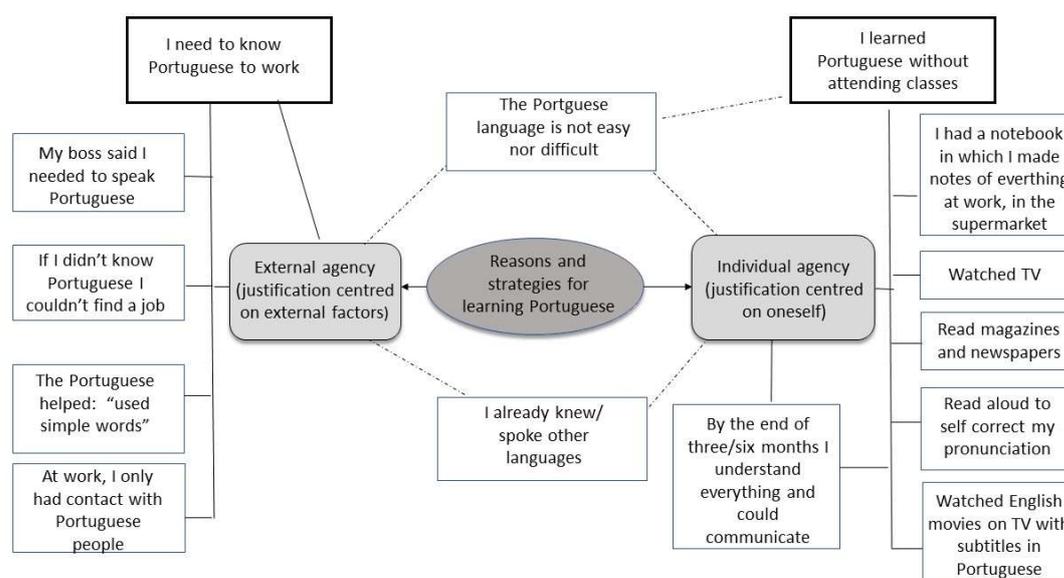
Figures 2 and 3 map out the various reasons (and strategies) our participants stated during the interviews for learning – or not – Portuguese. Whereas the English-speaking community presents various instances of external agency at play, the eastern Europeans list a series of individual strategies they engaged in to learn the language as fast as possible. Additionally, there is a noticeable distinction in terms of the language properties: for the northern Europeans it is «too difficult», for the eastern Europeans «the language is not easy nor difficult».

Figure 2. Reasons for not learning Portuguese – English speaking interviewees



Source: Torkington (2011: 185).

Figure 3. Reasons and strategies for learning Portuguese – eastern European interviewees



Source: Interviews.

6. Exploring the Linguistic Landscape

The transformations of the Algarve region due to tourism-related mobilities (including flows of tourists and also of migrants) have impacted on its semiotic landscape. English is seemingly everywhere, whilst the languages of the eastern European migrant communities are almost entirely absent. An exploration of the texts that appear in the semiotic landscape can be viewed as nexus points for various circulating discursive practices. Such practices are spatially and temporally embedded in a dialectical relationship with the politics of place and contribute to the inclusion/exclusion not only of different languages but ultimately, perhaps, of socio-linguistic groups.

As an example, we can cite the case of Vilamoura – one of the major tourist resorts in the Algarve and also one of the forerunners in the «residential tourism» stakes. Since the vast majority of signage in this town is in English, it is clear that the place is actively being constructed through discursive landscaping as a space where English-speaking tourists and migrants (*i.e.* Northern Europeans) are not only welcomed but also legitimized as «belonging» in the place. This then forges a privileged place-identity for these social in-groups and reinforces an acceptance of the type of social practices associated with them – both leisure and entertainment-based activities and the practices associated with settling in the area such as the purchase of real estate (see Torkington 2012; 2014 for more on this).

On the other hand, despite the significant presence of stable communities of eastern Europeans in the region, there is a noticeable absence of their languages in the

landscape. Whilst it may be expected that «official» signs will not use this language, and nor will signage that is explicitly directed at tourists, it is surprising that there has not been a «bottom-up» filtering through of this language into the landscape (Torkington 2014). This may well have something to do with the general willingness of these migrants to integrate into the local community, not only by achieving a good command of Portuguese (and, usually, English) but also through strong place attachments which generate a feeling of «being at home». Interestingly, the reasons given for settling in the area are often very similar to those of the northern Europeans – *i.e.* a perceived better quality of life and lifestyle affordances (Torkington & Ribeiro 2017).

In other words, the exclusion of the «community» language(s) of these groups of migrants does not in fact seem to contribute to their social exclusion in any immediately obvious way, although the noticeable absence of eastern European languages from the landscape does give a clear message about the relative status of these languages and, by extension, their speakers, not only in the local geo-semiotics but in terms of their social positioning.

It could therefore be argued that whilst tourists and lifestyle migrants from northern European origins are given a front-of-stage position in the semiotic landscape, the back-stage position of other migrant groups, who tend to work in construction and low-skilled service industry jobs, is reinforced by a lack of presence in the same landscape. This seems, moreover, to reflect the socio-economic structure of the region, which continues to be first and foremost a tourist destination. As the language of tourism, English is, by extension, the language of economic and symbolic power in the Algarve.

7. Conclusions

This paper's overall objective was to describe a research design based on different methods in order to foreground the multilayer phenomenon of language practices in the Algarve, given the multinational context, of which the local Algarvians are, in many instances, unaware.

A mixed-method approach is considered to be an epistemological claim concerning what more can be known about a phenomenon when the findings from data generated by two or more methods are brought together. One important conclusion for the knowledge claims on our findings is that mixing methods is not a way of validating

findings *per se* but implies an awareness of the multiplex, contingent nature of the social world, which we hope to have highlighted.

In the Algarvian public sphere, eastern Europeans' multilingualism is not politically, socially or economically valued in the Algarve. Northern Europeans, on the other hand, and in general, position themselves mostly or solely as English speakers. Subsequently, this group can be considered to act as an «elite», for, as elsewhere in the world, they discursively position themselves (and are also positioned by the local community) as privileged, regardless of wealth and power (cf. Thurlow & Jaworski 2010).

With this study, however, we also aimed to explore the issue at the micro-level. Our findings do in fact show that there is a marked difference in language practices between NEs and EEs living in the region, which relates to both economic and social capital and to how different languages have different degrees of prestige in the global arena and are symbolic of hierarchies of power that different nation-states hold. This social capital presents itself in distinct ways for EEs and NEs. For EEs, learning Portuguese is essential for making one's way in Portugal and working amongst Portuguese, therefore to build on (bridging) social capital. On the other hand, for NEs, the fact that English is so widely used and accepted makes it unnecessary to learn the local language, even after living in the Algarve for many years. However, this lack of local language knowledge doesn't seem to impinge in any way upon the way they positively evaluate their move.

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