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**Language strategies of Russian immigrants in Portugal**

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Master in International Studies

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# RESUMO

A migração russa para Portugal intensificou-se em 2022 devido ao início da guerra em grande escala na Ucrânia. A mudança para Portugal exigiu que os imigrantes se adaptassem ao novo país, incluindo na aprendizagem de uma nova língua. Ao mesmo tempo, apesar de existirem estudos sobre práticas linguísticas de imigrantes de Leste Europeu da migração anterior, as práticas linguísticas desses imigrantes russos, que se mudaram para Portugal num curto espaço de tempo, continuam por explorar.

O objetivo da minha investigação é delinear as estratégias e práticas linguísticas do novo fluxo de imigrantes russos em Portugal. Optei por uma investigação qualitativa e realizei oito entrevistas semiestruturadas com imigrantes russos em Lisboa. O estudo identificou o papel de diferentes línguas (russo, inglês e português) em diferentes escalas na vida dos imigrantes russos em Portugal. Também caracterizou os principais fatores que influenciam as atitudes dos imigrantes russos em relação à aprendizagem e ao uso do português. Esses fatores são as ideologias linguísticas existentes e as perceções dos imigrantes sobre o capital social das diferentes línguas. As implicações teóricas e práticas deste estudo pretendem contribuir para a melhoria dos programas de aprendizagem da língua portuguesa em Portugal e para a adaptação dos imigrantes russófonos.

**Palavras-chave**: imigração russa, estratégias linguísticas, integração, ideologias linguísticas.

# ABSTRACT

Russian migration to Portugal intensified in 2022 due to the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine. The move to Portugal required immigrants to adapt to their new country, including learning the European Portuguese language. At the same time, despite the existence of research on the previous waves of Eastern European migration, the language practices of Russian immigrants who had to move to Portugal within a short period of time, remain unexplored.

The aim of my research is to delineate the language strategies and practices of the new wave of Russian immigrants in Portugal. I opted for a qualitative approach and conducted eight semi-structured interviews with Russian immigrants in Lisbon. The study has identified the role of different languages (Russian, English and Portuguese) on different scales in the lives of Russian immigrants in Portugal. It has also found the main factors affecting the Russian immigrants' attitudes towards learning and using Portuguese. These factors are existing language ideologies and the immigrants' perceptions of the social capital of different languages. The theoretical and practical implications of this study could contribute to the improvement of language and adaptation programs for Russian-speaking and other immigrants arriving in similar conditions.

**Keywords:** Russian immigration, language strategies, integration, language ideologies.

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# 1. Introduction

A new wave of Russian emigration that began after the start of a full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022 was unprecedented in Russian and Soviet history since the 1917 revolution and the subsequent civil war (Jerstad et al., 2024). For many Russians, Portugal became their destination country, leading to a significant increase in the number of Russian immigrants in Portugal. Due to the recent nature and intensity of events, there is still little research on this new wave of Russian immigrants, even though there is some research on the previous wave of migration from post-Soviet states after the USSR dissolution.

The new wave of Russian immigration to Portugal differs in terms of push and pull factors and the political and social context. In a short period of time, a significant number of Russians faced the need to adapt to a new country, while many of them did not have the resources to prepare for emigration. Since language is an important factor in adaptation and integration for immigrants (e. g. Ager & Strang, 2008), OECD, 2023), I consider it relevant to examine the attitude of Russian immigrants towards the Portuguese language and to study their language learning strategies in general. Despite the existence of studies devoted to the previous waves of Russian immigration to Portugal (de Almeida & Vaz Serra, 2011; Solovova, 2014, 2019; Bulakh, 2023, 2024), new research appears to be relevant. The issue of immigrants learning Portuguese is important for the European Union in general (Council of the European Union, 2004; European Commission, 2020) and for the Portuguese state (Presidência do Conselho de Ministros; Educação; Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social, 2020).

The aim of my research is to identify the language strategies of the new wave Russian migrants in Portugal, namely, to analyze which languages they use in which contexts and to understand their attitudes towards the Portuguese language. Analyzing linguistic strategies, I focus mostly on language practices and choices. Therefore, by language strategies, I mean the ways in which people build interactions with others in various social contexts using their language repertoire, guided by their goals and objectives.

Accordingly, my research question is formulated as follows:

RQ: Which language strategies dominate among Russian immigrants in Portugal?

I identify the following sub-questions:

- What roles do different languages (Russian, English, Portuguese, others if applicable) play in the lives of Russian immigrants in Portugal?

- What are the Russian immigrants' prospects for learning and using Portuguese?

- What factors influence their dynamics in learning and using Portuguese, or their refusal to learn or use it?

To achieve the goal of my research, I use Norton's theory of investment as a key concept (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton 2013; Darvin & Norton, 2015). According to Norton's theory, investment in language is determined by three main factors: people's identity, social capital (which can be acquired through language), and ideology (power relations that control the opportunity to speak). I also use the biographical approach to analyze linguistic repertoires as proposed by Busch (Busch, 2012). This approach allows me to consider immigrants' lived experiences through life, positioning their linguistic practices in a diachronic perspective. Both concepts were developed and tested for the study of immigrants, which is of great value to my research.

For my investigation, I opted for qualitative research and conducted a series of interviews with Russian immigrants of the new wave (after February 2022) living in Lisbon. Only adults participated in the studies, and the sample was limited to residents of the Lisbon region. Data collection was conducted in person (one-on-one interviews) in Russian.

The theoretical contribution of my research is that it explores the investment model in the current Portuguese context and thus adds to a scientific discussion on the language strategies of immigrants in Portuguese-based contexts in particular and in Europe in general. As a new type of migration from Russia, i.e. of highly qualified professionals who work in international companies as they seek safety and freedom in Europe, there are lessons to be learned about their motivations expressed in language attitudes and ideologies. The practical significance of my research lies in the fact that its results can be considered (with certain limitations) while developing strategies for teaching Portuguese to immigrants, both at the level of public policy and at the level of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This research also reaffirms the importance of the learner's agency in creating their linguistic identities and shaping their trajectories.

My thesis consists of an introduction, a theoretical framework (in which the aforementioned investment theory and biographical approach are discussed), the research context (in which I characterize the new wave of Russian immigration to Portugal), research methodology and approaches to data analysis, research results, and a conclusion.

# 2. Theoretical Framework

## 2.1. Model of Investment

In order to understand the role of Portuguese language in the lives of Russian citizens who have immigrated to Portugal, and to examine their strategies of learning and using European Portuguese, we need a comprehensive theoretical model. Such a model should take into consideration a whole range of language learning strategies, non-formal, informal and formal ones, as well as immigrants' sociolinguistic profiles. This model should also be applicable to the global mobility context.

Such a model seems to have been created by Bonny Norton. In her seminal paper (Norton Peirce, 1995) she introduced a concept of investment, which aims to overcome limitations of previous approaches to language acquisition, namely the ideas of motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985), affective filter (Krashen, 1981, 1982) and social and psychological distance (Schumann, 1976, 1986). The following paragraph provides a brief overview of these theories of second language acquisition (SLA), followed by a discussion of Norton's critique.

## 2.2. Second language acquisition theories of the 1970s and 1980s: motivation, affective filter and social distance

The studies of the role of motivation in SLA were conducted by Robert C. Gardner and Wallace E. Lambert (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985). Gardner (1985) defined motivation as a "combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (Gardner, 1985: 10). Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified two types of motivation: instrumental one (which corresponds to more utilitarian purposes) and integrative one (which reflects the desire to know better the other language's community and eventually to become a part of it). The affective filter hypothesis in SLA was proposed by Stephen D. Krashen (Krashen, 1981, 1982). According to Krashen (1982), there are three major groups of affective factors which influence SLA: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Therefore, a lack of motivation, poor self-confidence and high level of anxiety may significantly deteriorate a learner's results in SLA (Krashen, 1982). The notion of social and psychological distance is a part of the acculturation model of SLA, developed by Schumann (1986). According to this model, SLA is one aspect of acculturation, and if the

social distance between the learner's group and the recipient group is significant, and if acculturation does not take place, SLA will be less successful (Schumann, 1976, 1986).

## 2.3. Development of the investment theory

According to Norton (1995), the ideas of motivation, affective filter and social distance were based on the idea that learners have static, immutable, ahistorical and coherent identities, where motivation is their personal characteristic (so we could define some learners as motivated and others as non-motivated) and exists independently of social relations. Instead, Norton considered identity as controversial and fluid, and learners' attitudes as dependent on power relations[1] (Norton Peirce, 1995; Hajar & Karakus, 2024). Norton's theory of investment is based on her vision of identity and Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital. Departing from the poststructuralist concept of subjectivity (Weedon, 1987), Norton defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2013: 4). In line with poststructuralist theories, Norton sees identity as neither coherent nor stable but rather changing and contradictory, 'a site of struggle'. She claims that distinctions between social and individual are artificial, therefore arguing that motivation is socially constructed (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013).

The other basis for Norton's analysis is Bourdieu's concepts of capital and power (Bourdieu, 1986, 1987, 1991). Bourdieu claims that capital is power, and understands capital not only as an economic one, but as a social (connections to network of power) and cultural (e. g. knowledge and education) one as well. The value of the different forms of capital is determined by ideologies and are in constant negotiation. When different forms of capital are recognized as legitimate, they gain symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, speakers operate in a language market; and in a particular language market, some ways of speaking are valued more highly than others. Accordingly, speakers' success depends on their ability to reproduce highly valued characteristics (such as accents, choice of vocabulary, modes of uses, etc., Bourdieu, 1991). Based on Bourdieu's notion of capital, Norton claims that language learners come to new social spaces with their previous capital, and that they seek not only to achieve a new one, but to use an old one as well. Just like identities, symbolic capital is fluid and dynamic, influenced by ideologies (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013).

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[1] Before Norton similar vision of identities was developed by Hall (1990), paving the way to the constructivist approach to identity.

As Norton (2013) claims, mobile populations invest into learning a new language as they seek to acquire symbolic resources that in exchange will increase the value of their social and cultural capital. The differences from previous visions of motivation consist in two main factors: first, learners have multiple and controversial identities (and therefore multiple, sometimes contradictory desires). These identities are shaped by power relations and are characterized by different social status; therefore, identity formation occurs in the context of inequality. Driven by their identities, people actively seek and invest in particular language skills.

Second, language acquisition conditions are influenced by relations of power. This explains that a learner may be motivated, but have little investment in language learning due to hostile environment, discrimination based on gender, race etc. (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013). Therefore, the investment theory overcomes the limitations of previous vision of SLA and includes it in a context of power relations, time perspective and learners' identities' complexity.

Norton's ideas have been applied in subsequent studies. McKay and Wong (1996) examined not only oral communication and the right to speak (that Norton had been focused on), but all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). They found that investment may depend on a specific skill, as learners may prioritize different abilities (McKay and Wong, 1996)[2]. Other works applied the investment model to different languages, learning contexts and motives for discrimination (e. g. Block, 2013; Nelson, 2008). As for the necessities of my research, Norton's theory provides me with useful tools to the analysis of Russian immigrants' linguistic strategies in Portugal. It meets all criteria formulated by me in the beginning of this chapter:

Norton decided to develop her model in collaboration with Ron Darvin and published a modified model of investment in 2015 (Darvin & Norton, 2015). In order to understand the context of creation of a new model, we should briefly examine changes in the sociological reflection on migration patterns in the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

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[2] The idea that learners can invest in different language varieties, different skills, or language registers was further developed by Blommaert (2010) in the context of language repertoires (see also Blommaert & Backus, 2011).

## 2.4. Changing understanding of migration: mobility turn and transnationalism

Talking about changes in the understanding of migration, we may focus on two theories that aimed to reshape existing static and sedentarist perspectives. First of them is the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006). Sheller & Urry (2006) criticize social science as being static and sedentarist arguing that existing theories see stability as norm and change as deviation (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Their mobilities paradigm consists not only in the acknowledgment of the importance and increase of mobility in the world nowadays but also aims "at going beyond the imagery of `terrains' as spatially fixed geographical containers for social processes, and calling into question scalar logics such as local/global as descriptors of regional extent" (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 209). Sheller & Urry (2006) interpret mobility not only as movement of people but as movement of images and ideas that significantly increased due to technological development; moreover, different mobilities should be examined not separately but "in their fluid interdependence" (ibidem: 212). Hannam, Sheller, & Urry (2006) discuss different forms of mobility – physical, informational, virtual and imaginative – and underline the influence of unequal power relations on mobility, therefore mobility is unevenly distributed (Hannam et al., 2006).

The second theory that influenced my understanding of migration is transnationalism that was introduced by Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc in 1994. It is defined as a "process by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994: 6). According to the authors, due to development of global capitalism, the processes of migration changed: nowadays migrants create social fields that cross state borders. Transnationalism explains free movement of people, ideas, capital and objects across the world, suggesting that migrants are able to live their lives in two or more nation-states (Basch et al., 1994).

The theory of transnationalism was later developed and summarized by Vertovec (2009). Vertovec (2009) noticed that before the 1990s the majority of researchers focused on immigrants' adaptation in a host country and not on their ties with their home country. But even if maintaining relations with the homeland is not something new by itself, there were some significant changes by the 1990s. Vertovec (2009) lists such phenomena: decrease of costs and increase of velocity of communication (e. g. cheap phone calls, internet connection, inexpensive flights), which entailed the deeper immersion in the home context and more intense political engagement; increase of globalization (cultural, economic, technological and political); multicultural and tolerance politics in Western countries that allowed to maintain

and demonstrate transnational ties more openly (Vertovec, 2009). After Vertovec's seminal book on the topic other scholars continued to develop different aspects of transnationalism. For example, Glick Schiller (2018) argued that transnationalism should be examined not only in terms of space but in temporal prospect as well

These ideas are consistent with those of Blommaert, who criticized the perception of people as "fixed" in space and time, and the perception of space itself as horizontal and stable, and time as chronological. As an alternative to the existing sociolinguistics of distribution (based on the aforementioned perception of space and time), Blommaert proposed sociolinguistics of mobility, which focuses on language-in-motion and is based on the interaction of various spatiotemporal frames or scales (Blommaert, 2010). According to Blommaert, space is perceived as vertical (stratified): any horizontal space (e.g., a city) is filled with orders of indexicality: "indexical distinctions [...] project minute linguistic differences onto stratified patterns of social, cultural, and political value-attribution" (Blommaert, 2010: 5).

The mobilities paradigm and the theory of transnationalism and sociolinguistics of mobility allow me to understand the features of life of Russian immigrants in Portugal, especially their positioning in different communities around the world and therefore their attitude toward various languages including Portuguese. As Blommaert (2010) argues, people's linguistic repertoires in the present-day context are unpredictable; accordingly, the fact that Russians have immigrated to Portugal does not mean that Portuguese should become their dominant language. Besides, these theories align with Norton's reflection on a new model of investment that is presented below.

## 2.5. Subsequent development of the model of investment

Norton's model of investment was revisited in 2015 in a paper she coauthored with Darvin (Darvin and Norton, 2015). The authors explained the necessity to reexamine their approach by social and political changes in the end of 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. Among other phenomena, the authors mention changing of migration patterns, increase of global mobility and inadequacy of the previous conceptualization of migration as a one-way movement. Furthermore, they emphasize the development of new technologies that changed working conditions and social connections, so people could belong to different communities in offline and online spaces, which makes relations of power and capital exchange more complex.

Bonny Norton and Ron Darvin decided to add a third component (ideology) to the model of investment, arguing that in the current context it is essential to examine the influence of power relations more closely "to go beyond the microstructures of power in specific communicative events and to investigate the systemic patterns of control that communicative events are indexical of" (Darvin and Norton, 2015: 42).



Fig. 1. Darvin and Norton's model of investment (Source: Darvin and Norton, 2015)

Darvin and Norton (2015) understand ideology as systemic patterns of control and a normative set of ideas. The authors claim that ideology (systemic patterns of control) influences communicative practices and therefore creates modes of inclusion and exclusion (Darvin and Norton, 2015). As identities, ideologies are shaped by power relations and therefore are not fixed and permanent – they are complex, layered and may be contradictory.

According to this model, learners evaluate possible benefits of learning a target language variety based on their identities and symbolic capital that they already possess. Ideology influences the learners' position (advantaged or disadvantaged) based on their prescribed identities[3]. The interactions between ideology and capital create systemic patterns of control and assess which kinds of social and cultural capital are more prestigious, and which ones do not have a good exchange rate on the symbolic language market. The learner's positioning, perceived benefits and systemic patterns of control shape learners' investment in the target language learning: "learners invest in particular practices not only because they desire specific material or symbolic benefits, but also because they recognize that the capital they possess can serve as affordances to their learning" (Darvin and Norton, 2015: 46). That explains one more

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[3] In this context, it is worth mentioning the triad of legitimacy, belonging, and capital used in New Speakers' Studies (O'Rourke & Pujolar, 2019). Among other things, the authors argue that the legitimation of speakers depends on language ideologies, which are largely based on language sciences (e.g., the ideal of the "native speaker"). This is also relevant in the Portuguese context, as official discourse is native-centric (Keating, Solovova & Barradas, 2014).

time the complexity of language learning practices and underlines the one-dimensional and limited character of the notion of motivation.

The authors continued to explore their ideas in more recent works (Darvin, 2020; Darvin & Norton, 2023). The paper of 2023 is of particular interest for my research because it summarizes the whole development of the investment model since 1995. The authors warn against the reduction of investment to "cost-benefit assessment" and "gain profit" view and underline that investment is intrinsically tied to identity: "Learners are complex beings shaped by dispositions and desires, performing diverse selves and identities, while negotiating differences and inequalities" (Darvin & Norton, 2023: 37).

This deep and complex view of a learner's person corresponds to another approach that is of a significant importance to my research – that is Brigitta Busch's biographical approach to languages. While Bonny Norton focuses more on power relations and inequality, Brigitta Busch investigates personal and emotional trajectories of people in multilingual contexts. I consider these two approaches complementary and of a great importance to my research, due to the fact that the discussion of language choices and language investment of Russian immigrants cannot be separated from their life experiences.

## 2.6. Biographical approach: Brigitta Busch's view on lived experiences of language

While Bonny Norton starts her reflection on immigrants' language attitudes from revision of motivation as a concept, Brigitta Busch (2012) asserts the necessity of the revision of the linguistic repertoire theory. This theory was introduced by John Gumperz and initially referred to all communicative resources of a particular community, linguistic and social ones (Gumperz, 1964; Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). Busch focuses on the situation of dislocation, when a person moves from one sociocultural space to another and underlines that the experience of dislocation is associated with the need to transform one's linguistic repertoire, and that this process may be traumatic or at least problematic not only in case of a forced displacement, but in every case of migration (Busch, 2012). Busch argues that globalization causes the need to revisit the idea of repertoire. Moreover, she claims that Gumperz's concept was based on observation of linguistic interaction and suggests including into analysis linguistic ideologies that shape the person herself and her experiences (Busch, 2012).

Busch (2012) suggests that to fully understand a dislocation from a known social and linguistic context to an unknown one, we should combine three different approaches: a phenomenological one (that deals with subjective experiences), a poststructuralist one (that

regards a construction of a speaking subject shaped by linguistic ideologies and discourses about language) and an interactional one (that analyses how people interact by means of language). Following Busch's reflection and taking into account the usage of Norton's model of investment, in my research, I will try to combine these three approaches.

Similarly to Norton, Busch (2012) examines language ideologies and claims that power relationships affect people and, most importantly, people subordinate themselves voluntarily and without noticing such influence (Busch, 2012)[4]. These ideologies shaped by power relations and inequality, in turn, shape our attitude towards different languages (defining such things as language prestige or respect), excluding some people or position them as non-legitimate speakers because of their origin and/or their way of speaking (Busch, 2012).

The other aspect of linguistic repertoire's formation that Busch examines is a lived experience of language (Spracherleben), underlining the importance of biography and various experiences through life. She claims that linguistic repertoire is a bodily phenomenon, a part of a body memory and an emotionally charged experience. A feeling of shame is particularly important: it is based on the change of perspective from an internal point of view to an external one, or, in other words, from a living body to an object body (Busch, 2012). The emotional dimension is meaningful because language learning is not a pure cognitive process, but is bound to emotional and, therefore, bodily experience: "particular languages or ways of speaking can have such strong emotional or linguistic-ideological connotations that they are unavailable or only partly available at particular moments." (Busch, 2012, p. 17).

Busch's position on the feeling of shame is in my opinion consistent with the concept of the "right to speak" used by Norton, which was developed by Gayatri Spivak (Spivak, 1988). While Norton focuses on power relations that shape possibilities of communication, Busch examines the emotional dimension of the same phenomenon. Combining these two approaches allows me to study Russian immigrants' linguistic strategies taking into account their identities and social capital (in synchronic and diachronic perspectives) and analyzing how ideologies and previous experiences shape their language investment and, therefore, their attitude towards Portuguese language.

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[4] This reflection builds on the ideas of symbolic violence as formulated by Bourdieu (1986) and Fairclough (1989).

## 2.7. Conclusion

For the purposes of our research, I opted for the Darvin and Norton's investment model and Busch's biographical approach to language learning and usage. Therefore in my study I focus on Russian immigrants' identities (taking into account multiple character and fluidity of such identities), their social capital (the one they already possess and the one they want to acquire), and language ideologies that shape the usage of Portuguese and other languages in Portugal. Analyzing all these factors, I try to understand features of Russian immigrants' investment in learning and using Portuguese in a broader context of their lived experiences in Portugal.

# 3. Research Context

In this chapter, I aim to outline the main migration patterns of Russian immigration to Portugal, especially the characteristics of the new wave of emigration from Russia after February 2022. I outline the place of migrants from Russia in the overall picture of migration in Portugal, as well as their methods of relocation, types of visas and residence permits. Finally, I describe the requirements imposed on migrants by the Portuguese state and the resources provided by the state for learning the Portuguese language.

## 3.1. Dynamics of immigration in Portugal

Portugal is a popular country of immigration. The number of immigrants has been steadily increasing in the last years. According to the World Bank data, net migration in Portugal reached its maximum in 2019-2022 (World Bank, 2024).

Table 1. Evolution of foreign residents in Portugal (Source: AIMA, 2024)

| Year | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Foreign resident population | 480 300 | 590 348 | 662 095 | 698 887 | 781 915 | 1 044 606 |

According to the Agência para a Integração, Migrações e Asilo (AIMA)'s interim report of 2025 (Direção de Planeamento, Estudos e Estatística, 2025), on the 31st of December 2024 there were 1.546.521 foreigners in Portugal. As AIMA acknowledges, this number may be higher by 50,000 due to the unfinished processes for transitional regime asylum seekers (Direção de Planeamento, Estudos e Estatística, 2025). It should be noted that, given the speed with which AIMA processes residence permit applications and the number of unresolved court cases, these figures are preliminary and may not reflect the current immigration rates.

In 2023, the immigrant population in Portugal was predominantly composed of people from Brazil (35.3 percent), followed by Angola (5.3 percent), Cape Verde (4.7 percent), the United Kingdom (4.5 percent), and India (4.2 percent) (AIMA, 2024). According to PORDATA, the rate of population growth due to migration in Portugal in 2024 (by 1.3 percent compared to the previous year) placed Portugal in the second place in the European Union (where Malta occupies the first place, PORDATA, 2025). It is important to note that this number refers to an increase in the proportion, not the share of the total population, and reflects

both regularization and renovation of residence permits, as well as the influx of migrants. As we can see, migration processes in Portugal are characterized by intensity, and given the number of immigrants, migration is an important social phenomenon.

## 3.2. Regulation of immigration in Portugal: legal basis, types of visas and residence permits

The issues of immigration to Portugal are currently regulated by Law No. 23/2007 of July 4 – Legal framework for the entry, stay, exit, and removal of foreigners from national territory (Assembleia da República, 2007). According to the current legislation, there are different types of visas that Russian immigrants can apply for:

- Subordinated Work Visa (D1);

- Entrepreneur and Independent Work Visa (D2);

- Highly Qualified Workers Visa (D3);

- Study Visa (Higher Education) (D4);

- Family Reunification Visa (D6)

- Passive Income or Retirement Visa (D7)

- Digital Nomad Visa (D8)

The last type of visa (*Visto de residência para o exercício de atividade profissional prestada de forma remota para fora do território nacional*[5], the so-called Digital Nomad Visa) was introduced by the Law No. 18/2022 (Assembleia da República, 2022), being created for remote workers and self-employed professionals with the source of income from outside of Portugal.

As for existing types of residence permits, there are permits for:

- professional activity: subordinate employment (*atividade profissional subordinada*, art. 88), self-employment (*atividade profissional independente*, art. 89), and research activity and highly qualified activity, like teaching at the university (*atividade de investigação ou altamente qualificada*, art. 90);

- study and non-paid internship (*estudo, estágio profissional não remunerado ou voluntariado*): higher education (*ensino superior*, art. 91), secondary education (*ensino secundário*, art, 92), non-paid internship (*estágio não remunerado*, art. 93), volunteers (voluntariado, art. 94);

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[5] Residence visa for the exercise of professional activities performed remotely outside the national territory (translated by the author).

- family reunion (*reagrupamento familiar*, art. 98);
- victims of human trafficking (*vítimas de tráfico de pessoas*, art. 109).

The residence permit for investment activity (*Autorização de Residência para Actividade de Investimento* - ARI, so-called Golden Visa, that is formally an incorrect term) was introduced in Portugal in 2012 (Assembleia da República, 2012) and allowed foreigners to obtain a residence permit in exchange of investments, such as buying a private property for a rate superior to 500,000 euro (art. 90-A). In 2023 the program *Mais Habitação* suspended issuing of ARI for investment in real estate, but these residence permits can be renewed (Assembleia da República, 2023).

It should be highlighted that in February 2022 Portugal's SEF stopped issuing ARI for Russian citizens (Oliveira, 2022). According to the official statistics, by February 2022 Russians had obtained 431 residence permits for ARI (SEF, 2022c). Meanwhile, formally Russians were not excluded from the ARI program (no alteration of the Law No. 23/2007 was made), therefore in later years some of previously suspended processes were reopened without wide public coverage (Jensen, 2024).

One of the features of the Portuguese immigration legislation was a regime of "expression of interest" ("*manifestação de interesse*"). This regime was introduced in Portugal by Law No. 59/2017 of July 31, 2017 (that amended the Law No. 23/2007), and allowed to foreigners who had legally entered Portugal to make a request for a residence permit (in case they had entered with a tourist visa and subsequently decided to stay in the country and found a job or started a business activity, contributing to the Social Security (*Segurança Social*) (Assembleia da República, 2017). On the 3rd of June, 2024 the regime of "*manifestação de interesse*" was ended by Law No. 37-A/2024 of June 3, 2024 (Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 2024).

We can conclude that Portugal offers Russian immigrants a wide range of opportunities for relocation, including the possibility of moving under the digital nomad program, as well as opportunities (albeit limited) to legalize their status in Portugal without applying for a national entry visa. However, it should be noted that significant delays in issuing visas and residence permits, as well as the recently reduced opportunities for legalization in Portugal – due to the cancellation of expressions of interest – may affect further immigration of Russians to Portugal.

## 3.3. Russian immigration to Portugal

During the 20-21 centuries Russians experienced different waves of emigration. The first one was in 1917-1922, during the October Revolution and the Civil War; the second one – during

and immediately after the WWII (including the migration of ethnic Germans); the third one – in the 1970s and 1980s, that consisted mostly in the migration of political dissidents and ethnic Jews. The fourth wave took place during the *Perestroika* in late 1980s, and the fifth wave started in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Bulakh, 2023).

After the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 there has been a new wave of emigration, triggered by the outbreak of hostilities in February 2022 and the announcement of partial mobilization in September 2022. According to Jerstad et al. (2024), this last wave of emigration has been the largest since 1917, and the number of emigrants is estimated to be between 500 thousand and 1 million people[6] (Jerstad et al., 2024). Accordingly to these authors, this last wave of emigration is characterized by:

- politics as a push-factor (previous emigration in the 2000s and 2010s was driven mostly by economic reasons);
- the emigrants are of the average age around 32-33 years, and have higher levels of income and education than the average Russian residents;
- they come from bigger cities and have more liberal political views;
- many of the emigrants had traveled before and have a confident knowledge of foreign languages they can rely on.

The most popular recipient countries of this last wave of emigration have been Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia, Serbia and Turkey (due to the visa-free entry, geographic proximity, cultural and economic ties with Russia). As for the European Union (EU), it is the most common destination of Russian emigrants after the former Soviet Union countries. Jerstad et al. (2024) note that the most popular ways of immigration to the EU are academic migration, digital nomad visas, humanitarian visas and political asylum (Jerstad et al., 2024).

Portugal is one of the recipient EU countries for Russians. According to the official statistics, the number of Russians significantly increased in 2022 and especially in 2023 (see table below).

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[6] In the context of Russia's total population of 143.5 million, this number may seem rather small, but considering the intensity and time frame of the outflow, these figures appear to be significant. Furthermore, the exact number of people who left Russia after February 2022 cannot be accurately estimated due to it being an ongoing process.

Table 2. Russian citizens with residence in Portugal in 2014-2023 (Sources: AIMA, 2024; SEF, 2023; SEF, 2022b; SEF, 2021; SEF, 2020; SEF, 2019; SEF, 2018; SEF, 2017; SEF, 2016; SEF, 2015).

|  | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 4.408 | 4.263 | 4.283 | 4.264 | 4.365 | 4.885 | 5.103 | 5.156 | 6.075 | 10.901 |
| Men | 1.596 | 1.517 | 1.494 | 1.490 | 1.526 | 1.768 | 1.851 | 1.951 | 2.498 | 4.950 |
| Women | 2.812 | 2.746 | 2.789 | 2.774 | 2.839 | 3.117 | 3.252 | 3.205 | 3.577 | 5.951 |

It is important to mention that these statistics do not include Russians who had received Portuguese citizenship in the meantime, since the previous waves of immigration. Neither it includes Russian immigrants who had not received a Portuguese residence permit or had not applied for it (living with residence permits issued by other EU countries). Due to the delays of bureaucratic processes the actual number may be different.

As we can see, migrants from Russia do not constitute a significant percentage of total immigrants in Portugal (according to official statistics for 2023, about 1 percent — see the tables above). However, the number of migrants from Russia has grown sizably since the start of the full-scale war in 2022: compared to 2022, the number of residence permits issued to Russians in 2023 increased by 79.44 percent, even though the residence permit data may not reflect the actual number of Russians who immigrated to Portugal.

The new wave of Russian emigration has a number of characteristics which, along with its mass nature, distinguish it from previous waves of migration both to Portugal and to other countries. These characteristics are war as a push factor, the predominance of political motives for emigration over economic ones, and the intensity of emigration.

## 3.4. Linguistic integration of immigrants in Portugal

As other EU countries, Portugal offers language courses aimed to facilitate adaptation of immigrants in the country and contribute to their integration in Portuguese society. The first language education program ("*Portugal Acolhe*") was launched in 2001. In 2008 the government started a program "*Português para Todos (PPT)*", later revised in 2020 and now exists as "*Português Língua de Acolhimento (PLA)*" (Oliveira, 2023). Along with in-person courses, immigrants can use an online platform ("*Plataforma de Português Online*"), that has been operating since 2016 (Oliveira, 2023).

PLA includes language courses of four levels – A1 and A2 (elementary user), B1 and B2 (independent user), according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2020). According to data, presented by Oliveira (2023), in 2022 the number of PLA courses participants reached 31 373 (in 2021 there were 14 651 participants, so the number had doubled), but only 59,3 % of them obtained a certificate – that means successfully completed the course (in 2021 76 % received a certificate). Even if the number of participants was steadily increasing in recent years, in 2022 only 4 % of immigrants took part in PLA courses (Oliveira, 2023)[7].

One of the important features of Portuguese language learning programs for immigrants consists in their volunteer character – immigrants and refugees are not obliged to enroll in courses and/or complete the training (Oliveira, 2023). The proof of language acquisition is only required when applying for the permanent residence permit or nationality – the applicants should provide an A2 level certificate (Oliveira, 2023). Thus, the Portuguese state recognizes the importance of the Portuguese language in the adaptation of immigrants and provides immigrants with opportunities to learn the language, such as free language courses within the PLA.

Considering language integration of Russian immigrants, we should take into account the level of English proficiency of the population of the recipient country (since English is the most common foreign language among the Russian immigrants)[8]. According to the English Proficiency Index, Portugal is characterized by a considerable level of proficiency in English: Portugal is on the 6th place in the world, after the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden and Croatia (Education First, 2024). In the *Capital City Scores* Lisbon takes the 5th place after Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Vienna and Helsinki (Education First, 2024). If, on the one hand, the high English proficiency may facilitate initial contacts and communication for recent immigrants; on the other hand, it may hinder their acquisition of Portuguese and therefore their language integration, because knowledge of Portuguese is not necessary for everyday communication.

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[7] Analyzing participation of immigrants in PLA courses we should take into account that a big part of immigrants in Portugal come from Portuguese-speaking countries, so many of them do not need to attend these courses. As of 2022, 30,7 % of immigrant residents in Portugal came from Brazil, 4,7 % – from Cabo Verde, 4,1 % – from Angola, 3 % – from Guinea Bissau (Oliveira, 2023).

[8] According to a 2019 survey, 63 percent of Russians speak English to some extent, with only 5 percent reporting fluency. Other foreign languages are significantly less common than English (Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), 2019).

## 3.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that contemporary Portuguese society is characterized by intense immigration processes, and migrants make up a significant part of the country's population (AIMA, 2024). The new and most recent wave of Russian immigration to the country, triggered by the start of a large-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, differs significantly from previous migration waves, both in terms of scale and push factors (Jerstad et al., 2024). My study will attempt to contribute to the reflection on the characteristics of the new Russian migration specifically to Portugal and to the understanding of the language strategies of these immigrants in Portugal, as far as the knowledge of the host country's language is considered indispensable to integration (Council of the European Union, 2004).

# 4. Research methodology and approaches to the data analysis

## 4.1. Choice of research methodology

To analyze the language strategies used by Russian-speaking migrants in Portugal, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews. I chose qualitative research because it helps answer the questions "how" and "why" and allows for a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience and context (Cleland, 2017). Choosing a semi-structured interview allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis while gathering a wide range of information as the participants were not limited to the list of questions and could add information they considered relevant.

## 4.2. Context and Participants

The study was conducted in Lisbon in June-August 2025 among adult Russian immigrants who had moved there after February 2022. Participants were selected via purposive and snowball sampling, among the people that I had personally met. Knowing and being able to relate to their lived experiences allowed me to choose participants with various migration pathways, including highly qualified workers, digital nomads, university students and their family members. My selection was based on the following criteria:

- Departure from Russia and relocation to Portugal after February 2022 (thus, only representatives of the latest wave of emigration caused by the full-scale war in Ukraine were selected);

- Age: only adults (over 18 years of age) participated in the study;

- Experience of living in Portugal for at least one year[9];

- No citizenship other than Russian (as holders of other citizenships may have different experiences in obtaining visas, residence permits, and circumstances of emigration);

- Residence in the Greater Lisbon Area (due to limited resources, it had been decided not to involve Russian immigrants living in other regions of Portugal).

A total of eight participants were selected. The selection process also took into account an equal representation of men and women, as well as representation of immigrants with different types of residence (work, study, digital nomadism, family reunification).

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[9] According to the UN's and the EU's official terminology, an immigrant is a person who establishes their residence in a country of destination for a period of 12 months or longer (United Nations, 1998; European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2007).

## 4.3. Process of data collection

All interviews were conducted in person (one-on-one) in Lisbon, in Russian (with participants having the option to freely switch into English or Portuguese). Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes, and all interviews were audio recorded. I had known all participants personally before interviewing them. The interviews were conducted in coffee shops and parks where the noise level was comfortable for conversation and audio recording. The participants were able to choose the location for the interview according to their preferences. Before each interview, I informed all participants about the purpose of my study. All interviews were fully transcribed by me in Russian; all quotes from interviews are given in this paper in English in my translation.

The study was conducted by me in accordance with the Code of Ethical Conduct in Research ISCTE-IUL. The participants' personal data was processed in accordance with the GDPR, i.e. the access to source files was restricted to the author of the study; storage is carried out in a secure environment and will be deleted upon completion of the study. I assessed the risks to participants as low, and all topics that could lead to political persecution of participants were excluded from the study. All interview participants had been informed about the aims and purpose of the study and were assured of their anonymity, which was achieved by replacing all proper names, organization names, and other information that could identify the study participants when transcribing the interviews. Participants signed an informed consent form (in Russian). Saturation was achieved in the sixth interview, and the seventh and eighth interviews confirmed the completeness of the information.

The main topics of the interviews were the participants' history of immigration to Portugal, their linguistic background prior to moving, and the use of languages in various contexts in their lives in Portugal. Special attention was paid to the participants' practices of learning and using the Portuguese language. The interview guide is provided in Appendix.

## 4.4. Process of data analyzing

Specialized software for qualitative data analysis, MAXQDA, was used to process the interviews. Data analysis involves the use of thematic coding, which allows for the identification of key themes and patterns in respondents' responses. A hierarchical coding system was used. The codes were grouped into five categories: migration trajectory, use of

languages (by language), use of languages (by domain), investment in Portuguese language and community membership.

## 4.5. Researcher's ethics and responsibility

My motivation in the choice of research topic was partly influenced by the fact that I share the same lived experience as the participants of my study. Being a Russian immigrant in Portugal, I left Russia in 2022 in the similar circumstances and therefore I have an insider perspective on the phenomena under study. On one hand, such an insider position facilitated my research, because I am informed about all life circumstances of Russian immigrants, from problems in getting a visa to doubts on the possibility of building a future in Portugal. As far as a shared language (Russian), shared experiences allowed me to get access to some very personal information, enabling me to build rapport with the study participants. On the other hand, this insider perspective created some challenges in the data interpretation, as far as my personal experience and my attitudes towards different languages could shape my analysis. The other difficulty consisted in the fact that being a professional who works with Portuguese language, I have a certain set of values, which I tried not to impose on the participants of my study. Therefore, I did my research taking into account my personal stance and lived experience, trying to give to my participants as much voice as I could.

# 5. Language strategies of Russian immigrants in Portugal: research results

In this chapter, I will analyze the results of a study based on the eight collected interviews. All participants in the study are between 30 and 38 years old and hold a university degree. They have no citizenship other than Russian, having moved to Portugal after February 2022 to live in the Greater Lisbon Area. Data on the participants is presented in the following table (in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, their professions are not disclosed or discussed further).

Table 2. Overview of Interview Participants

| Code of participant | Gender | Age | Migration pathway |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | F | 30 | Family reunion |
| P2 | M | 32 | Highly qualified worker |
| P3 | F | 35 | Family reunion |
| P4 | M | 38 | Highly qualified worker, then self-employed worker |
| P5 | F | 33 | Digital nomad (self-employed worker) |
| P6 | M | 35 | MA student |
| P7 | F | 32 | Family reunion |
| P8 | M | 34 | Highly qualified worker |

This chapter is divided into several sections according to the theme of the study: migration trajectory, use of different languages during their stay in Portugal, Russian immigrants' investment in Portuguese language, patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

## 5.1. Migration trajectory: choosing Portugal

An examination of the migration trajectory of Russian migrants in Portugal will help me understand their personal trajectories, the reasons why the study participants chose Portugal as their destination, and their previous migration experiences. These factors are expected to largely determine their attitude towards different languages, including their investment in learning Portuguese.

First of all, even though almost all participants had not lived in another country prior to 2022 (except for one person who had studied for an MA in the United Kingdom), all of them

had had an extensive travel experience. After the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022, the participants began planning their departure from Russia, considering available options.

The interviewees who moved to Portugal as highly qualified workers (P2, P4, P8) reported that they had chosen Portugal as a destination country largely because it was their only or first confirmed job offer in Europe:

> *I received a job offer from here. [...] It was part of the old company. It has offices in almost every country in the world, in 95% of countries. We always had a mobility program, and I moved because of it* (P8, M, 34 years old).

> [...] *my husband had an interview in Cyprus, and there were some other options. We also considered Baku (Azerbaijan), but in the end, the only viable option was Portugal. We didn't really consider other countries seriously, neither European nor non-European* (P7, F, 32 years old).

The interviewees who had moved to Portugal as a digital nomad (P5) and an MA program student (P6) reported a similar thing – their choice had been based on the fact that Portugal was the most suitable alternative, as not all European countries had relocation programs for nomads, nor did all of them accept Russian students:

> *I moved because the war had started — everyone knows that. I realized that I didn't want to stay in Russia anymore. I had spent about six months preparing for the move, looking for a country to go to. I had a chart where I compared the options. [...] In the end, the only option left was Portugal, because Spain didn't have a 'nomad visa' at that point* (P5, F, 33 years old).

Based on the data, I can conclude that the study participants chose Portugal because it was relatively easy for the Russians to access compared to other European countries. Often, participants had no other alternatives for relocation, or these alternatives were less attractive to them, since they were countries of the former Soviet Union (USSR). In many countries of the former USSR, Russians who left the country for political reasons are at risk of being extradited to Russia if criminal proceedings were to be initiated against them. This is particularly true for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Pikulicka-Wilczewska, 2024). Therefore, despite the popularity of the Russian language in many former Soviet countries (which facilitates their adaptation) and the possibility of visa-free entry, many Russians do not consider these countries as their final destination for relocation. Thus, we see that the choice of Portugal as a country of relocation was not entirely arbitrary and, to a large extent, may have been made on a "residual basis".

To further substantiate this conclusion, we can analyze answers to the question about the participants' knowledge of Portugal prior to move. Some of the participants had never been to Portugal, while others (P5 and P6) had visited Portugal on short tourist trips; however, all participants noted that they had had little or no knowledge of the country before moving there:

*No, I didn't even know that country existed. I had never thought about it. For me, Europe ended in Spain* (P4, M, 38 years old).

*We had never been to Portugal before moving there, we knew nothing about the country, we had no acquaintances here, but we thought it was a good option, that there would be an office, and that the company would help with the paperwork for my husband* (P1, F, 30 years old).

*I first came to Portugal in 2014 for the Primavera Porto festival. [...] But back then, I didn't have a clear idea of what to expect. [...]. Overall, I knew nothing about Portugal* (P6, M, 35 years old).

Thus, we see that the main push factors for Portugal among the Russian immigrants I interviewed were the possibility of legalization and the possibility of obtaining visas and residence permits on the basis of a work contract or on the basis of income from other countries. It should be noted that from 2024 onwards, opportunities for Russian citizens to immigrate to Portugal have become more limited due to the abolition of the "expression of interest" (June 2024) and to the Portuguese government's general policy of tightening immigration controls.

## 5.2. Use of different languages in Portugal

In this section, I will analyze the role of different languages in the lived experience of Russian immigrants in Portugal, in accordance with the Busch's (2012) approach. For all participants in my study, Russian is their only native language, and everyone reported proficiency in English and Portuguese to varying degrees. Accordingly, I decided to divide this section into three parts and examine the use of Russian, English and Portuguese. I choose to proceed in that order based on the emergence of languages in the participants' lived experiences: for all of them Russian is a first language, English was introduced in a kindergarten or primary school, and Portuguese in adulthood, mostly after the relocation or some months before that.

It is important to note that although some participants had studied other languages at school or as adults (e. g. French and Italian), none of the study participants reported any significant use of other languages in their lives, either offline or online, in communication or in the media content consumption.

### 5.2.1. Use of Russian

All participants in the study noted that they use Russian when communicating with their spouses and families, so Russian is an important language for their informal interpersonal communication. A significant portion of their offline friends are other Russian-speaking immigrants, so they communicate in Russian.

*— Outside of work, what language do you use to communicate?*

*— About 50/50. With Russian-speaking friends, I speak Russian; with others (not necessarily Portuguese), I speak English. I don't have any close friends with whom I speak Portuguese* (P8, M, 34 years old)
*— What about friends?*
*— 90% are Russians* (P3, F, 35 years old)

*— Do you have any non-Russian-speaking friends?*
*— Probably not. I have colleagues, but we only interact with them at work* (P5, F, 33 years old).

For some participants, Russian is also their working language – often alongside English:

*Let's put it this way, officially we all speak English internally and write general announcements and give all-office presentations. But if we have internal phone calls and there are two or three Russians around you, of course you speak Russian. Or maybe there's a mini-chat on Telegram* (P4, M, 38 years old).

As for the media content consumption, Russian remains an important language for reading. Some participants read books (especially fiction) in Russian: the majority reads them online, but some people order books in Russian in European online bookstores. All participants consume news media content in Russian, mainly through Russian-language Telegram channels. This mainly concerns news from Russia and from Portugal. As for Portugal's news, generally Telegram channels write their posts based on the publications of major news agencies (*Diário de Notícias, Sic Notícias, Expresso*, etc.). At the same time, it is important to mention that the participants prefer to consume audiovisual content (TV series, films, TV programs etc.) in English (with or without English subtitles, and rarely with Russian subtitles).

As we can see, the Russian language plays a significant role in the lives of Russian immigrants in Portugal. First and foremost, it is the language of communication at home and among friends, and secondly, for some it is also the language of work. Russian is also an important language for obtaining news and information. Transnational ties allow participants to use their native language in various domains. At the same time, I cannot say that we see a communication bubble here, because people live in an international city well-positioned on a global scale (Lisbon), often work in international companies and visit places and events which host people with different linguistic backgrounds. Due to the diversity of social environment, the Russians remains an important language for immigrants, but almost never the only language of communication.

### 5.2.2. Use of English

All participants of my study have got a high level of English proficiency: most of them had had an experience of working or studying in English (all but P7), and all participants reported their ability to communicate in English and consume English-language content without a

significant difficulty. Due to the attested high level of English proficiency in Portugal, these Russian immigrants can use English in many areas of their lives in the country/city. As I mentioned in the section 3.4, Portugal is characterized by a very high proficiency in English, taking the 6th place in the world (Education First, 2024). According to the national statistics, in 2022 the proportion of the Portuguese population between 18 to 69 years old who knew a language other than their mother tongue was 67.5%, with English being the most widely spoken foreign language (64.2%) (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2023).

For most participants, English is primarily the language of communication at work. Even if their employer were based in Portugal, in all the cases analyzed, the team was international, so English becomes the transnational language of work and communication:

> *There are Russians, there are Portuguese, it's an international team, people from different parts of Europe. We mainly communicate in English, sometimes even with Russian speakers, when we need to discuss something quickly, when it's not a long conversation, we can also discuss something in English* (P1, F, 30 years old)

Secondly, English turns out to be an important language for media consumption. All participants reported that they consume the vast majority of video content (films and TV series) in English. When it comes to text content and searching for information on the Internet, the situation varies depending on personal preferences, but in one way or another, English plays a major role in the consumption of all types of information:

> *All [content consumption] happens in English, Tik Tok and YouTube, if I need to watch something for work, it's always in English. And films are always in English too, with English subtitles. I mainly consume information in English* (P1, F, 30 years old)

Thirdly, English is the language of informal interpersonal communication with all non-Russian-speaking acquaintances in Portugal:

> *— Do you have any Portuguese-speaking friends or acquaintances?*
> *— Yes. We mainly communicate in English* (P8, M, 34 years old).
> *Most of my acquaintances are from the cultural sphere, either through my previous work or through various events. Even if they are Portuguese, we discuss topics that are difficult for me to talk about in Portuguese. For example, I am not yet able to discuss serious topics about art in Portuguese* (P3, F, 35 years old).
>
> *I actually speak English with Portuguese people too, because my husband doesn't speak Portuguese and doesn't understand it very well yet, so even when we meet a Portuguese couple* [their friends]*, we speak English* (P7, F, 32 years old).

As we can see from the above quotes, the use of English in informal communication is dictated by either the perceived lack of knowledge of Portuguese, especially when the topic is considered complex or too significant to allow misunderstanding, or by the communication situation where English is the only common language for everyone.

Similarly to workplace communication, most of the hobbies enjoyed by participants in Lisbon involve interacting with people from different countries, which often requires the use of English:

> *I go to dance classes in Saldanha... It's quite rare that the teacher doesn't know English and doesn't translate. Often, when they see that, for example, half the people speak English, the whole class is conducted in English* (P1, F, 30 years old)

With regard to bureaucratic, medical and other types of institutional domains, all participants reported that they tended to use English to solve complex tasks that go beyond a simple interaction, such as greetings and expressions of gratitude. These language choices are dictated by their subjective perceptions of the complexity and/or importance of the topic of conversation:

> *For me, medicine is too serious a subject to leave anything misunderstood. I usually ask right away, 'Do you speak English?' and choose those [medical professionals] who indicate this in their profile. Sometimes they offer to speak Portuguese, but I refuse* (P3, F, 35 years old)

When it comes to everyday communication, English language is used to clarify information, while some basic interactions can be carried out (or initiated) in Portuguese:

> *When I arrive, I speak Portuguese right away. I say 'Olá' when they bring the menu, and I say 'obrigada.' [...] But whenever I want to clarify something, I switch to English* (P1, F, 30 years old)

Thus, we see that English language plays a significant role in the lives of Russian immigrants in Portugal in several domains. In workplaces, it may be the primary or the only language of communication; in institutional and healthcare domains, English becomes the main language of communication due to the perceived complexity of the issues under discussion, as well as due to the significant psychological and financial outcomes of a potential misunderstanding or a diagnosis. In everyday communication, English is used to clarify and discuss issues that are difficult for participants to deal with (e. g. to explain their preferences in a bakery, and ask not just for a bread, but for a sliced one, or to ask questions about ingredients etc.). At the same time, the complexity of communication requiring a switch to English varies depending on the study participant: some are more confident in their Portuguese than others. Finally, in informal interpersonal communication, English is also a useful language, particularly in international groups of friends and when attending cultural and leisure events. In sum, English language seems to permeate most of the communication domains for the most recent Russian arrivals with their general environment. In this sense, their language strategies are not far from another group of immigrants - lifestyle migrants from European and English-speaking countries.

Unlike Russian language, which is mostly used for communicating with family and friends (and sometimes at work), English is used across all areas of life and is often the main language for dealing with everyday and bureaucratic issues. As for the ratio of Portuguese and English in the daily lives of Russian immigrants in Portugal, we will discuss this in the next section.

### 5.2.3. Use of Portuguese

As I mentioned in the previous section, both English and Portuguese are used in everyday communication, but the use of Portuguese language is often limited. All participants use Portuguese to communicate in everyday situations, especially in recurring contexts that involve a formulaic use of language and do not require lengthy interaction nor clarification of details:

> *I already understand what people are saying in Portuguese when it comes to simple messages. For example, when I buy food and pay for it, it's literally just a few phrases. I would ask whether they have something, would say that I'll pay by card, and ask if I need a bag or not. I say all of these in Portuguese* (P1, F, 30 years old).

As illustrated by the excerpt above, in the participants' language ideologies certain domains (such as governmental offices and medical services) require the use of English. In some other domains, especially in everyday communication and hobbies/leisure, the participants allow themselves to speak Portuguese. They recur to translanguaging[10] in those occasions where their own control of Portuguese or their interlocutor's English competences alone are not sufficient for an effective interaction:

> *Sometimes funny situations arise: I would start a sentence in Portuguese but then realize that I don't know the words I need, so I would switch to English* (P3, F, 35 years old).

> *My coach is Brazilian. He doesn't speak English very well, and I don't speak Portuguese very well — we complement each other. It's a mixture of a Brazilian Portuguese and English. Sometimes he forgets a word, I forget a word, and we switch languages — if we remember the word in another language* (P5, F, 33 years old).

Such willingness to use translanguaging, associated with attempts to speak Portuguese, appears to suggest that the participants do not share any purist language ideologies that oppose language mixing. It seems to be the case of English and European Portuguese, and the participants' attitude towards the Brazilian Portuguese still needs to be examined separately (see the next section). One of the possible explanations may be the fact that all participants are used to interacting with people from different countries and cultures on a daily basis after their

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[10] By translanguaging I mean "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy et al., 2015).

immigration to Portugal. This may influence their language ideologies towards more openness and acceptance of diversity.

Outside the everyday life and formulaic use of language, Portuguese is used by the study participants to a limited extent. In institutional contexts, Portuguese language is used in a very limited way, i.e. mainly when there is no alternative, when government officials do not speak English. The same applies to medical services: interaction may happen in Portuguese when the interlocutor does not speak English (usually with administrative staff, but never in the doctor's office). Informal interpersonal communication in Portuguese-only is not widespread. Consumption of media content in Portuguese is also low: the participants did not report any viewing visual content on a regular basis, and no reading. In most cases, the participants' contact with any media content in Portuguese is limited to subscribing to individual accounts on social networks. It can be either educational content, entertainment, or personal exchanges. As an exception, I should mention the case of participant P6, who subscribed to the electronic version of one of the Portuguese-language newspapers.

This section provides only a brief overview of the use of Portuguese. In the following sections, I will examine the issues of learning and using Portuguese in more detail, namely the characteristics of Russian migrants' investment in Portugal and the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that determine the use of the Portuguese language.

## 5.3. Investment into learning/using Portuguese language

Before discussing the characteristics of the Russian immigrants' investment in Portuguese language, I will briefly describe the methods that the participants in my study used to learn Portuguese before and after the relocation.

The participants' experiences with learning Portuguese vary considerably: some of them studied Portuguese in language courses while still in Russia, after their processes of applying for national visas had already begun (P3, P7); others studied or are studying the language as part of formal education in Portugal (P2, P5, P6, P7, P8), while still others had never studied Portuguese in a classroom setting (P1, P4). However, all participants in the study share the experience of informal Portuguese language learning. Everyone noted that their knowledge of Portuguese comes from various sources, such as Portuguese-speaking acquaintances, service workers, family members, teachers, educational accounts on social media, and language learning apps.

As for language learning materials, there is a big disproportion between available materials for learning European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese on the Internet in terms of language learning applications, YouTube lessons, etc. In the beginning, many of the participants tried to use Duolingo app, which offers Brazilian Portuguese materials, in the beginning (namely P1, P3, P4, P5, P8). Often Duolingo experience would have been their first contact with Portuguese, but virtually all participants made comments about the limited applicability of this application to real life communication contexts. The other application that some participants used, was Practice Portuguese[11], which offers European Portuguese. The users of this app (P3, P4) noted the high quality of the materials. However, all participants admitted that they rarely used these applications (Duolingo, Practice Portuguese), and that their overall experience with language learning apps was not particularly fruitful or engaging. This may be caused by the fact that such applications cannot give an opportunity to speak and express people's own thoughts and therefore are quite distant from communication in real life. Moreover, unlike individual or group lessons, these applications lack interaction between people and do not create a supportive environment for learning.

Regarding the choice between the European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese (and the very idea of having to choose one variety of Portuguese), the participants did not comment on their preferences. However, it is noticeable from their learning strategies that they prefer European Portuguese. Except for Duolingo, no other Brazilian Portuguese materials, courses or lessons have been mentioned. As for the formal learning of Portuguese, all classes attended by the participants were in European Portuguese; the same applies for textbooks and YouTube videos. I suggest that such a tendency to avoid Brazilian Portuguese materials is not a coincidence considering the ratio between the available learning materials for Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese. This may be partially explained by the current requirements for Portuguese citizenship: A2 level proved by Centro de Avaliação de Português Língua Estrangeira (CAPLE) exams or a certificate of the same or superior level from a certified language school, where both options involve studying European Portuguese. In my opinion, this may be also attributed to the influence of language ideologies operating in Portugal, where Brazilian Portuguese is subject to discrimination in various domains (e. g. Carone et al., 2025).

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[11] https://www.practiceportuguese.com/ This is a website created for learning European Portuguese, subject to payment of a monthly subscription fee.

In the next section, I will analyze the attitude of our study participants towards the Portuguese language using the investment model (presented in Chapter 1 of this thesis). Accordingly, I have decided to divide this section into three parts: the first part will focus on identity, the second on social and cultural capital, and the third one - on ideology and patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

### 5.3.1. Identity

When explaining their reasons for learning and speaking Portuguese, the participants gave a number of arguments that reflect their linguistic identity. As we see before, identity is "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2013: 4).

First, the participants perceive themselves as people who respect the country that has accepted them and the people who live there:

> *It's part of respecting the place and the people who have welcomed us so warmly* (P8, M, 34 years old);

> *Just make a little effort to understand the locals a little bit. It seems normal to me. I think I would move to any country and learn the local language because I live there. So, the first thing is respect* (P5, F, 33 years old).

As part of constructing their linguistic identity, some participants in the study cited an example of an identity that is alien to them — a stereotypical wealthy migrant who makes no effort to adapt to the realities of their new country and believes that everyone else should adapt to them:

> *I imagine myself in the Portuguese people's shoes. And I would be upset if the people [who live here] didn't learn the language. When people come here, they pay taxes and think that everyone owes them something for it. That attitude really infuriates me. I really hate that. Like, we came here, we pay taxes, we're the bosses. We do what we want, behave how we want, and so on. I can't stand it* (P6, M, 35 years old).

> *I don't want to be the kind of person who comes here and continues to work in Russian jobs or in America, Britain, and so on. And lives here simply because it's easier to get documents here, or because the climate is good here. Somehow, that doesn't suit me, because I want to be part of the country, part of the city where I live.* (P1, F, 30 years old)

Many participants wanted to dissociate themselves from language strategies adopted by other immigrants who would not adapt linguistically to their new homes, making a choice to communicate only in English or Russian independently of the languages of the new countries. Such linguistic ideologies were not apparently uncommon among the Russian community. None of the participants consider these strategies acceptable to themselves, even if in practice

they did choose to communicate in English in many situational contexts. Participants in my study emphasize the importance of connecting with their new place of residence (that they may term as assimilation):

> This is my personal opinion: when you migrate, you should assimilate. That pretty much sums it up. Yes, I would like to assimilate. I want to understand the city, the signs and the spontaneous conversations on the streets (P4, M, 38 years old).

One participant in the study emphasized her role as a language broker in the family: despite the stress of having to use a largely unfamiliar language in a new communicative environment, she had to overcome her discomfort and resolve issues in Portuguese because she was the only one in the family capable of doing so. The term language broker, coined by L. Tse (McQuillan & Tse, 1995), initially referred to children of immigrants who translated and interpreted for their parents, but this term may be applied to adults like spouses, friends, hired assistants as well. This participant (P7) became a language broker for her husband, so her experiences with Portuguese are shaped by this role. Despite negative emotions, she had to assume this role guided by her identity as a family communicator:

> My husband doesn't understand very well, especially on the phone, and he can't say much in Portuguese. If the courier doesn't speak English, which happens very often, [...] Whenever I dial, I take a deep breath, because something is about to happen... [...] In general, it's even more difficult, but because it's inevitable for me, if I don't do it, no one else will, so I have to put up with it, there's nothing I can do about it (P7, F, 32 years old).

Thus, we see that investment into Portuguese is determined by the identity and language attitudes of the study participants — despite the lack of an immediate need to learn Portuguese language, they are learning it or plan to learn it in the near future. It is important for them to be people who respect their host country and have a connection with it, rather than isolating themselves from their host country in an immigrant bubble. Such a connection is understood not only in economical terns (like paying taxes, renting an apartment etc.), but rather as an understanding of the Portuguese culture and taking part in Portuguese society life.

## 5.3.2. Social and Cultural Capital

When discussing social and cultural capital, we can analyze participants' views on the potential benefits of learning and using the Portuguese language. One of the most frequently mentioned benefits of learning Portuguese is the prospect of obtaining the Portuguese citizenship. However, those who referred it, in one way or another stated that the Portuguese passport was not their main motivation for learning the language, nor was it a determining factor in their choice of a country to live in. Taking into consideration the current political

situation, a European citizenship is of considerable value for many Russians, because it protects them from restrictions on the issuance of visas and residence permits, and somehow guarantees their relatively safe future life in European Union. As for their plans after obtaining the Portuguese citizenship, the participants did not report any. This may be explained by their perception of future as completely unpredictable, considering the ongoing war, deterioration of relations between European countries and Russia, and the current political changes in Portugal (which is drifting towards anti-migration populist discourses). Thus, it is impossible to judge whether the study participants see their future in Portugal or whether they view it as a portal to a future relocation to yet another European country.

Nevertheless, despite the changing legislation and uncertainty about the future, citizenship remains a significant benefit:

> *Citizenship certainly has an impact — and a significant one, because it [learning Portuguese] is a requirement for the citizenship* (P5, F, 33 years old).

Another factor mentioned by the participants was the opportunity to feel more secure. Despite the ability to speak English or use Google Translate, being able to communicate in Portuguese is an important part of feeling comfortable and at ease in a new country. For Russian immigrants in Portugal, the ability to communicate in Portuguese is not so much a necessity as an additional degree of safety and freedom:

> *I think it's like being able to walk. I mean, you can still live when you can't walk, but it's harder than when you are able to walk. It's the same with language: if you understand what's going on around you and can explain to others what's happening to you, life is just easier. Safer, easier and more confident* (P5, F, 33 years old).

Another motive mentioned by some participants in the study was the opportunity to participate more fully in the lives of future children (if they were to have any):

> *I understand that the child will grow up in this environment and I don't want to be one of those crazy parents from Brighton Beach who speak Russian their whole lives, don't integrate at all, and so on…* (P1, F, 30 years old).

Thus, we can see that by speaking Portuguese the participants in the study wanted to achieve several goals. First, they hope to gain the ability to effectively defend their interests in various domains, including complex everyday communication tasks, bureaucratic matters and medical issues if necessary. Moreover, in the longer term, they want to be able to acquire the Portuguese citizenship and build a more sustainable future for their future children by participating in their school and social life, building relationships with administrators and the school community.

However, alongside the potential benefits of learning Portuguese, there are also considerations that, to a certain extent, diminish the value of Portuguese language skills in the

eyes of the participants. First and foremost, the participants noted that there had no actual need to use Portuguese language in their everyday lives. Given the limited resources and stress caused by their relocation and adaptation to a new country, some participants did not consider learning Portuguese to be a high priority:

> *I don't really get where to use it. Because English is everywhere, and I don't feel any resistance from people when I speak to them in English, but just something simple in Portuguese. It's as if my brain doesn't understand: if we live in such conditions, where we already have a new job and a new profession, why should we complicate our lives even more?* (P1, F, 30 years old).

Here we can see a sort of contradiction: despite the desire to speak Portuguese and the acknowledgment of its benefits, the participant expresses her doubts about the investment outcome in Portuguese. I will address this matter in the concluding remarks (see below). Moreover, achieving goals such as fluency in Portuguese or the ability to work in this language requires a higher level of effort and time. A situation in which learning a basic Portuguese is not necessary for everyday life, but learning an advanced level of skills in Portuguese seems too difficult a task, can create a feeling of frustration leading to a potential disinvestment in language learning:

> *English is enough, [and learning Portuguese] seems like it will complicate things for now. It will be easier later. Now I need to learn a new language. I'll have to pay money, to study. I need to invest in this. And then I think I'll be speaking English again, right? Because to reach a level where I can speak with the Portuguese people at work, it seems like it would take a long time to learn, right? When will it pay off?* (P1, F, 30 years old).

When discussing the prospects for using Portuguese in the workplace, it should be noted that not all participants consider this to be relevant. Working in the Information Technology (IT) sector in international companies, most workplace communication is conducted in English due to the specific nature of the job and the international composition of the workforce. Even outside of IT, one participant in the study remarked that the language proficiency was not sufficient for employment in certain jobs, as personal connections were much more important:

> *I don't see the point in improving my language skills to the required level to work in a museum: apart from the language, there are other barriers — they only hire their own people. It makes more sense to spend resources on projects (even if they are in English) and 'produce' something — language is not key here* (P3, F, 35 years old).

Opinions were divided on the issue of cultural capital: one of participants cited access to the Portuguese literature and cinema as a significant motive for investing in Portuguese, while others noted the limited availability of Portuguese-language content (especially in European Portuguese).

> *You're more likely to watch a series in English because there is a million of them, and I've already watched all the more or less well-known series in Portuguese. I tried to find some films, but they don't have subtitles, and watching without subtitles is very painful* (P7, F, 32 years old).

The lack of cultural appeal of the Portuguese language (some of the participants did not mention access to Portuguese culture as a significant factor at all) correlates with an extremely limited knowledge about Portugal prior to the relocation (see above). When discussing other languages, one of the participants noted the appeal of French, while two others expressed a desire to learn Italian in the future. In all these cases, people appeared to be guided by cultural or aesthetic motives[12]:

> I didn't fall in love with Portuguese. I was recently in France, heard French spoken again, and even wrote to my friend: "I want to learn French again (P3, F, 35 years old).

Thus, we can conclude that the social and cultural capital which the access to the Portuguese language can provide is deemed insufficient for the study participants to make a significant investment, at least at this stage of their lives.

Some of the benefits of investing in Portuguese relate to a more distant future, such as obtaining a citizenship and raising children. At the same time, many barriers to the language learning deter them in the present, such as lack of necessity, unclear prospects for using Portuguese in a work context, etc. In order to fully analyze the characteristics of these Russian immigrants' investment in Portugal, we need to consider the third element of Bonny Norton's concept, namely an ideology.

### 5.3.3. Ideology: patterns of inclusion and exclusion

In this section, I will examine the participants' perceptions of the attitude of Portuguese people at large towards those immigrants who try to speak Portuguese in ordinary interactions. In this context, we are talking mainly about Portuguese-speaking retail workers, waitstaff, health workers and frontline public service staff, since the participants mainly use Portuguese in everyday communication and, less frequently, when seeking medical assistance and in the government agencies. I have not found any relevant differences between the linguistic ideologies of Portuguese speakers in the respective domains, so further analysis combines all these contexts of communication.

Overall, the participants state that the Portuguese people they encounter as they go about their lives, in the various services and institutions, largely accept their efforts on speaking the new language:

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[12] This is particularly interesting because we are talking about languages that belong to the same language group, have similar grammar and largely overlapping vocabulary. Thus, arguments such as the relative complexity of the language for Russian speakers do not apply in this context; we are talking only about cultural ties and preferences.

*I think that in 75% of cases, the reaction is rather neutral or positive* (P6, M, 35 years old).

Some participants in the study had reportedly met with criticism from the local residents regarding language issues, but this was very rare. They could only recall isolated incidents, mostly limited to nonverbal reactions. There were no reports of serious conflicts or refusals to communicate based on the fact that the participants did not speak Portuguese, or that their language skills were considered insufficient by their interlocutors:

> *I don't see any negativity. Sometimes they roll their eyes, but that's all* (P3, F, 35 years old).

> *I tried a couple of times to go to the hospital and speak Portuguese there, but the last time was quite painful. Because the woman who works there had said something to me, and I kind of understood, but I tried to repeat it, because the sequence of actions is very important there. When I asked her again, she said, 'Não falas português.' Of course, a situation like that doesn't motivate you to speak, because it's easier to say it in English, easier to put her in a position where she has to struggle with English than to be in a position where I don't understand* (P7, F, 32 years old).

This episode is of particular interest for different reasons. First, it refers to a healthcare domain which is seen by the participants as a domain where all misunderstanding should be avoided – and where they would consequently choose to switch to English. Here we can see that, with a certain degree of probability, these language ideologies are shared by healthcare workers as well: therefore, misunderstanding provoked a rather judgmental and rather aggressive reaction. Second, this episode sheds light on the role of English as a sort of equalizer in unequal relations between native and non-native Portuguese speakers (and native and non-native English speakers as well): in the participant's view, her use of English would empower her and would somehow reduce the evident inequality of the patient-nurse relationship.

Despite the almost non-existent negativity on the part of local residents, some participants in the study encountered another problem: even if they had started communicating in Portuguese and had not experienced any particular difficulties in expressing their thoughts and understanding, their Portuguese-speaking interlocutors would switch into English.

> *I had problems at first because I had wanted to continue speaking Portuguese, but they saw that I didn't speak well and switched to English* (P5, F, 33 years old).

Such a willingness to switch to English may be explained by language ideologies that prioritize efficiency and speed of communication. Some participants in the study are convinced that their interlocutors refused to speak to them in Portuguese because of the interlocutors' expectations based on appearance and associated stereotypes. Such a refusal to communicate can be perceived to be quite uncomfortable, as an act of exclusion:

> — *What do you attribute their refusal to speak to you in Portuguese to?*
> — *My appearance. They think I'm British. Because of my hair color, my looks. They make assumptions even before I speak.*
> — *How did you react to that?*

*— Outwardly calm, but inside... Of course, sometimes I think, 'Did I say something wrong?' And if I realize I said the right thing, it's upsetting. It's that immigrant feeling: it's as if I didn't belong here and perhaps never will — simply because of this* (P2, M, 32 years old)

Switching to English when attempting to communicate in Portuguese is a discouraging phenomenon that all interview participants encountered to some extent. One of the participants in the study reported her interlocutors' attempts to switch to French in a situation of faulty communication. Although this is a unique case, its very existence seems to confirm my hypothesis that the participants' interlocutors, when switching to English, may have been guided not by the actual interaction difficulties, but by the person's appearance or pronunciation traits:

*For some reason, people immediately assume I'm French. I don't know why. Maybe it's the sound of the letter R? It looks like this: we're just talking, they're giggling, they understand me and answer me, and I understand them and answer in Portuguese. But at the end they say to me... 'bonjour'. They say "bonjour" to me. Why 'bonjour'? Firstly, I don't really like the French — don't call me French. Secondly, I don't know what I've done wrong* (P5, F, 33 years old).

When discussing the reasons that motivate the Portuguese interlocutors to switch to English, the participants explained the actions of their interlocutors in different ways: wanting to show off their high level of English (P7), or to practice it (P2), to indicate their friendliness and openness (P2), to simplify communication for themselves and/or to accomplish the communicative task in the fastest way possible (P5, P7). So, as we can see, the participants have reported that many of their Portuguese interlocutors do not appear to be willing to invest into communication in Portuguese with immigrants.

At the same time, the interviewees dismissed reasons such as a desire to put migrants in their place (P2) or a desire to help (P5, P7):

*It's unlikely that they care about how I feel. It's just faster that way* (P5, F, 33 years old).

*It's as if they're trying to help, but honestly, I don't see how it helps if someone is already willing to speak Portuguese with you, and you have to struggle for five minutes. It is 100% counterproductive* (P7, F, 32 years old).

Trying to find a reason for this behavior, the participants conclude that it may be due to the large number of immigrants in Portugal (especially in the Lisbon area) and to the habit of local residents to regularly communicate in English and consume English-language films and TV series. This distinguishes Portugal from Russia and other European countries, such as Spain, Germany or Italy. In Russia, for example, dubbing foreign films is a common practice, whereas subtitling is limited to a few non-commercial movie theaters. Thus, most Russians are used to navigating a monolingual space, both in terms of communication and video content consumption.

Despite the marked tendency of locals to switch to English when communication becomes difficult (and even when there are no difficulties), the study participants believe that Portuguese people expect immigrants to learn Portuguese and judge them on that basis:

> *I think so, although it's a paradox: the language seems to be important, but at the same time, they often don't let you speak it — they immediately switch to English. Nevertheless, there is a feeling that they are judging you* (P2, M, 32 years old).

Based on the data presented, we can conclude that the existing language ideologies may contribute to the communicative exclusion of immigrants who attempt to speak Portuguese (at least in the Greater Lisbon).

## 5.4. Concluding remarks

In this section, I will review the main research findings obtained. One of the recurring motives amongst the interviewed participants is a motive of safety. After the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, life in Russia has become associated with various risks. First, people who oppose or criticize the war are prosecuted and are threatened by imprisonment. Second, the conscription that started in September 2022 has not been officially ended, so staying in Russia can potentially entail risks of being sent to the combat zone (this is particularly relevant for males between 18 and 50 years old). Therefore, political persecutions, disagreement with the state actions and the impending threat of conscription motivated the people to leave Russia and find a safer place to live. Safety was one of the most significant drivers of emigration and reasons to choose Portugal: perceived as a democratic country that respects human rights, Portugal offers such safety to the Russian immigrants in this study.

As for Portuguese language, despite the fact that the Russian immigrants are able to live in Portugal without actually speaking the European Portuguese (and some of them do live like that), it is perceived as a language of empowerment. By learning and speaking Portuguese, the Russian immigrants seek to achieve some degree of stability in their new country, to be able to defend their interests, and the interests of their families if needed (and that resonates with the motives of safety described above). This line of reasoning also incorporates the immigrants' considerations regarding Portuguese citizenship: since this citizenship guarantees a higher level of safety, Portuguese language in this context is one of the key tools to obtain it. Another motive, consistent with the safety, is a motive of freedom. As safety, freedom was one of the factors for migrating: in Portugal, the Russian immigrants have a freedom of speech, as well as a relative freedom of movement inside the EU (even if such a freedom may be temporarily limited by the time-taking AIMA processes). Moreover, certain degrees of freedom may be

achieved in Portugal through language, such as finding new social circles and gaining access to the country's cultural life.

At the same time, the investment in Portuguese is hindered by several factors. First, it is a psychological overload caused by having to move and adapt to a new place. Prior to their move, many Russian immigrants had not had the sufficient temporal and financial resources for planning their relocation, and many of the study participants had never been to Portugal before moving here. Thus, investment in Portuguese language is conditioned by certain limitations caused by the time and energy constraints. Although financial matters do not seem to be of significant importance – as the participants did not mention either actual financial constraints or expectation of financial profit from Portuguese, the immigrants often conceptualize investing in Portugal and in learning European Portuguese in economic terms, such as "pay", "pay off", "spend resources" etc. The participants wonder if the "exchange rate" between their efforts and future benefits is profitable for them. Their basic communicative needs of the moment can often be met by using English language, and some more complex needs require a high level of proficiency in Portuguese (such as discussing medical issues in detail or establishing close friendships). Thus, acquiring the basic Portuguese language competencies calls for an investment but does not seem to provide significant new benefits. And the participants' rather low expectations regarding the perceived benefits of learning Portuguese may explain the apparent paradox: the participants express their desire to learn and speak Portuguese, and at the same time it is not one of their priorities.

This seeming discrepancy may be interpreted in the light of Blommaert' concept of spatiotemporal frames (scales) (Blommaert, 2010). On the transnational scale, English is a leading language for Russian immigrants, as far as it provides them with access to new job opportunities and social connections across the globe. At the same time, Portuguese language may be an important language on the transnational scale, especially for Russians who aim to work or interact in other ways with people from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). On the national scale in Portugal, the leading role is played by the European Portuguese, because it gives access to new social networks and to the new state citizenship. Moreover, Portuguese is a language of school education, therefore it is vital for immigrants who have children or will have them in the future. On the local scale (at work, at home, among friends) the Russian immigrants use mostly Russian and English, and, to a certain extent, Portuguese. Accordingly, Russian immigrants with different linguistic repertoire operate in different spaces. Those who speak only Russian are limited to the immigrant bubble in offline (and online) communication. Those who speak Russian and English may interact with various

communities, including Portuguese people, since many of them speak English. Those who speak Russian, English and Portuguese can operate in virtually all contexts and have access to a wider range of opportunities. It should be noted that this picture is dynamic: roles of languages on different scales are constantly changing and renegotiating throughout the Russian immigrants' life in Portugal.

Coming back to the investment in Portuguese language, I should say that the lack of expected returns is not apparently the only hindering factor. Language ideologies operating in Portuguese society may also contribute negatively. First, the participants' interlocutors (native Portuguese speakers) often prioritize the efficiency of quick communication over providing the newcomers with a possibility to express themselves in Portuguese. Due to the overall high level of English proficiency in Portugal, switching to English is a much more likely scenario than continuing the conversation in Portuguese in case of any difficulties and, moreover, in case of their anticipation. The latter statement relates to the reported language judgment on the expected language competences based on the immigrant's physical appearance. The study participants provided several examples of such a phenomenon (namely the cases of P2 and P5), and in these examples we can see that people's bodies play a significant role in communication.

Discussing these linguistic ideologies allows us to move on to consider the issues of proper time and space for language learning. At least in the early stages of learning a new language, immigrants need a safe space to practice and enough time to formulate their thoughts and understand their conversation partner. Due to the unequal power relations, such space and time can only be provided by native speakers or advanced users. In the context of the present-day Lisbon, such opportunities appear to be rather rare. However, in order to fully address this issue, research on immigrants from other countries is needed.

Returning to the factors that contribute to the language investment, we should discuss the immigrants' perception of their own identities. In part, the identity of a "good immigrant" is constructed on the basis of opposition, namely the popular stereotype of immigrants who do not want to adapt to their host country. Reflecting on such stereotypes, the study participants used images such as "rich white people" and immigrants living in Brighton Beach, USA. As for the latter, we are talking about one of New York's neighborhoods, a popular destination for immigrants from the USSR, historically known for its widespread yet close-knit Russian-speaking cultural community enjoying a certain isolation from the English-speaking world. Rejecting this model of adaptation on a number of ethical grounds, such as the question of respect, the study participants appear to construct an image of an immigrant who adapts to new realities and integrates into the host country. However, their understanding of integration is

subjective and varies depending on the participant: for some, integration means being able to understand those around them, while for others it means getting an education and having strong friendship ties. At the same time, all the participants' ideas about integration are in one way or another revolved around the Portuguese language (e. g. considerations of P1 and P4 in the sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.1. respectively).

Thus, we see that applying the investment model to the analysis of the language strategies of Russian immigrants in Portugal allowed us to look at the problem from different angles and identify the main obstacles in immigrants' path to learning Portuguese, and, accordingly, to their adaptation in Portugal.

# 6. Conclusion

In this study, I have focused on the language strategies and practices of Russian immigrants in Portugal. In order to analyze these strategies, I used several theoretical tools. First, Norton's concept of investment, which allowed me to study factors that influence immigrants' investment in Portuguese language, namely their identities, social capital that they possess and that they aspire to have, and language ideologies shaped by power relations (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton 2013; Darvin & Norton, 2015). Second, Busch's concept of the lived experience of language, which underlines the importance of biography and various experiences through life and acknowledge the bodily dimension of linguistic repertoire (Busch, 2012). Third, the concept of transnationalism that explains how immigrants build social relations linking together different societies across the borders (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994). And finally, the Blommaert's sociolinguistics of mobility, which focuses on language-in-motion and is based on the interaction of various spatiotemporal frames (scales), perceiving space as stratified and filled with orders of indexicality (Blommaert, 2010). I found these theoretical tools to be valuable for the analysis of current immigrants' language practices.

As concerns research methodology, I chose qualitative research, which is consistent with the research objectives and the chosen theoretical framework. For the purpose of research, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews. Choosing a semi-structured interview allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis while gathering a wide range of information, because respondents were not limited to the list of questions and could add information that they considered relevant.

The study's main research question is formulated as follows: "Which language strategies dominate among Russian immigrants in Portugal?" It has three sub-questions, which I will address consecutively.

The first sub-question is "What roles do different languages (Russian, English, Portuguese, others if applicable) play in the lives of Russian immigrants in Portugal?" Russian is an important language on the local scale (at work, at home, among friends). It is the language of communication at home, in some cases the language of work, and is widely used for informal interpersonal communication. Russian also plays a significant role in obtaining news and information.

English is a leading language on transnational scale, as far as it provides the participants with access to new job opportunities and social connections across the globe. At the same time, it is a significant language on the local scale. English is used in all areas of life and is often the

main language for dealing with everyday and institutional issues, it is often used to clarify and discuss issues that are difficult for immigrants to deal with. In workplaces, it may be the primary or the only language of communication. Moreover, the Russian immigrants use English in informal interpersonal communication, particularly in international groups of friends and when attending cultural and leisure events.

Portuguese language plays the leading role on the national scale, because it offers access to new social networks and is essential for a future life in Portugal, being a requirement for setting up a permanent residence and/or citizenship (and, in case of immigrants with children, being a language of school education and socialization). On the local scale it is of somewhat limited use, especially outside the everyday life sphere. Outside of the formulaic use, Portuguese language is employed mainly when there is no alternative (e. g. when government officials do not speak English). Informal interpersonal communication in Portuguese-only is not widespread. Consumption of media content in Portuguese is also low.

The second sub-question is "What are the Russian immigrants' prospects for learning and using Portuguese?" Since the Russian immigrants were motivated to move to Portugal in pursuit of safety and freedom, these motives influenced their attitude towards the Portuguese language. Portuguese is seen as a language of empowerment that can provide immigrants with a stability in a new country. Furthermore, a certain level of Portuguese is a requirement for citizenship, and a European passport is associated with further safety and freedom. Moreover, language can give access to better understanding of Portuguese society and culture, which is consistent with the identity of a "good immigrant", who adapts to new realities and integrates into the host country (and such views are shared by many Russian immigrants). At the same time, we see that these considerations often do not guarantee a significant investment in Portuguese. Partially this can be explained by the fact that some of the benefits of investing in Portuguese relate to a more distant future, such as obtaining a citizenship and raising children. On the other hand, some Russian immigrants may pay more attention to the development of their English skills, as far as English is a leading language on the global scale. However, there are other factors that influence the investment in Portuguese, and they will be addressed in the next paragraph.

The third sub-question is "What factors influence their dynamics in learning and using Portuguese, or their refusal to learn or use it?"

One of the factors here is the fact that English is widely spoken in Portugal. The immigrants' basic communicative needs of the moment can often be met by using English language, and some more complex needs require a high level of proficiency in Portuguese,

such as discussing medical issues in detail or establishing close friendships. Thus, acquiring the basic Portuguese language competencies calls for an investment but does not seem to provide significant new benefits. Considering the psychological overload due to emigration and the limitations caused by the time and energy constraints, some Russian immigrants opt not to invest in Portuguese at the current stage of their lives.

Another important factor consists in language ideologies operating in Portuguese society. Driven by different motivations (such as linguistic accommodation, prioritizing the efficiency in communication, language profiling or immigrants' appearance), native Portuguese speakers tend to switch to English (or French), in case of any difficulties occur and, moreover, in case of their anticipation. Therefore, the newcomers have limited possibilities to use their Portuguese, especially if they have only basic competences. Ultimately, this may influence negatively the immigrants' investment in Portuguese.

The third factor is the perception of the social and cultural capital of the Portuguese language. The interviewed Russian immigrants do not see the European Portuguese as a source of new economic opportunities. Furthermore, their interest in the Portuguese culture is not sufficient to justify some kind of considerable investment in the language learning. The latter can be explained by the low popularity of Portuguese culture in Russia and in the post-Soviet context, especially when compared to the French, Italian, or American cultures. Due to the influence of these factors, in most cases investment in Portuguese is rather limited.

To sum it up, I am going to return to the main research question: "Which language strategies dominate among Russian immigrants in Portugal?" Based on the data I have, I can conclude that the main language strategy of Russian immigrants is to learn Portuguese at a basic level, sufficient for simple interactions in everyday communication, and eventually, for obtaining the Portuguese citizenship. At the same time, English plays the role of a language that allows the Russian immigrants to engage in more complex communication (e. g. when discussing medical issues, bureaucratic issues, as well as in informal communication situations). If the current trends were to continue in the future (and if my conclusions are confirmed by the eventual research on other immigrant communities), there is a possibility that Russian immigrants will stop investing into learning Portuguese altogether after reaching a basic level. And this in turn may hinder their integration in Portuguese society and may lead to the creation of an English-speaking communication bubble amongst those immigrants.

My research is aimed to contribute to understanding of Russian immigrants 'language strategies in Portugal. First, the current wave of Russian immigration to Portugal is

unprecedented, and the newcomers 'linguistic practices have not yet been studied. Second, Portugal is a popular country of immigration, therefore Portuguese society faces the need to accept large numbers of people with different cultural, social and linguistic background. In my research I made an attempt to analyze the most important factors that influence the immigrants ' attitudes towards Portuguese language. From a practical point of view, my conclusions can be used (considering their limited nature) in the creation of initiatives to teach Portuguese to immigrants, as well as initiatives promoting adaptation and integration. For example, in planning language materials or courses based on the immigrants' needs, taking into account their real contexts of communication in Portugal, or in organizing programs of adaptation and integration based not only on language learning, but on building social connections with local people.

As for further research on the language strategies of Russian-speaking immigrants, studies comparing different regions in Portugal as well as comparing different waves of Russian immigration could adjust my conclusions and form a more nuanced picture of the current linguistic dynamics among Russian-speaking immigrants in Portugal. The other line of research may consist in studying immigrants from other countries, in order to compare linguistic practices of different immigrant communities in Portugal. Taking into account popularity of English in Portugal, this study may be especially relevant for native English speakers. Moreover, it will be interesting to see the development of immigrants' linguistic strategies over time (what is going to change after five years of residence in Portugal or after receiving Portuguese citizenship). Comparative and diachronic studies can deepen our understanding of immigrants' language strategies and can contribute to the creation of a suitable environment for learning and integration.

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# Appendix

**Interview guide:**

1. General Information:

1.1. How long have you been living in Portugal?

1.2. How did you end up in Portugal?

2. Language background (before moving to Portugal):

2.1. Which languages do you speak?

2.2. Did you learn any Portuguese before moving?

3. Language usage and linguistic adaptation in Portugal:

3.1. Which languages do you use (speak/write/listen to/read) now on daily basis? With whom, in what context?

3.2. Do you feel at ease when communicating in which languages?

3.3. What about difficulties? Have you had any difficulties in your day-to-day communication (when going about your legal situation and in other contexts)?

3.4. What languages do you use in your daily life now?

- What languages do you use to communicate with family and relatives?

- How important it is for you that Russian is spoken in your family here in Portugal?

- What languages do you use in a workplace context?

- What languages do you use with friends?

- Do you have Portuguese-speaking friends? If so, how do you communicate?

- In which languages do you read and write, daily, at workplace and in social media? In which languages do you watch TV and media content?

- Do you feel there is a Russian-speaking community in Portugal? How do you know about it?

4. Portuguese language – learning:

4.1. Are you studying Portuguese now? If so, how? What motivates you?

4.2. Have you encountered any difficulties in learning Portuguese? Give an example

4.3. Some people think that one can live in Portugal perfectly well without speaking Portuguese. Do you agree? Could you justify in more detail (referring to different dimensions of an individuals' life, like family, education, work, access to services, etc…)

4.4. Do you enjoy learning and speaking Portuguese?