ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS RELATED TO LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGES

A SURVEY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PORTUGAL (2008-2010)

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Attitudes and beliefs related to language and languages: a survey of university students in Portugal (2008-2010)

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INTRODUCTION

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ULICES¹

In today’s globalised world languages interact in ways that were not possible a century or even three decades ago. Within the last eight years the European Union has grown from 15 to 27 member countries, and this has added 12 working languages to it. Business has gone global with small companies now able to extend their reach beyond their national or traditional markets to new ones in any country on any continent. For such expansion communication is essential. In addition to these institutional and economic uses of languages, the Internet has made it possible for the private citizen from any part of the world to communicate face to face in real time with others as well as to post individual statements of positions about their life or beliefs via blogs, social networks etc. In such a changing world, language users are constantly adapting to and changing the way language and languages are used. In particular, young people today are at home with digital technology and use it creatively to interact with others. They are, in fact, the first generation to have grown up with it and have been called “digital natives”. It is therefore of interest to know what these young people think about language and the language(s) they are using. What beliefs and attitudes do they hold?

There are many stereotypes concerning language and languages. Many people think language is written language and therefore basically grammar, some do not know exactly what is included in a term like language, and many others do not distinguish between language and languages. Common stereotypes concerning languages include the view that some languages are more important than others, or some are easier to learn. With this project we wanted to ascertain the exact measure of such stereotypes, As linguists, we

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were also interested in whether knowledge of linguistics affects a person’s beliefs about language and languages. To investigate these issues, we set up a project which we called “Attitudes and beliefs towards language and languages”.

The first step was a survey of literature that could help us to identify what had been done in the field in recent years. The literature was discussed in the group and informed the kind of data we wished to collect. Having decided how to select the data, we chose to begin with a sample that, although not representative of the universe we wanted to examine, could be a first and important step towards that. We selected three universities in Portugal, one in the north, the University of Minho, one in the centre, the University of Lisbon, and one in the south, the University of the Algarve, and designed a questionnaire for the collection of data from the three universities. The questionnaire would be completed by 1st year students, with no background in Linguistics, and 3rd year students, who had already attended three or more course units of Linguistics. Our hypotheses were that: (1) there would be differences in the attitudes and beliefs of the students among the universities; and (2) students who had studied Linguistics would hold different attitudes and beliefs from those who had undertaken no formal study of Linguistics.

These hypotheses underpinned the questionnaire design. The questionnaire was made up of six parts, and all responses were anonymous. The first part aimed to characterise the respondent population. The respondents were asked to provide some biographical data and information about their attendance of linguistic subjects. They were also asked to auto-evaluate their competence in some European foreign languages, as well as about their use of foreign languages to communicate in Portugal.

The second part sought to determine what the students thought knowing a foreign language implied. The hypotheses proposed covered the importance attributed to systemic aspects such as knowledge of grammar, accuracy and fluency in writing, and good pronunciation, communicative aspects such as
being able to understand native speakers, as well as socio-cultural aspects such as knowledge of the foreign language culture. The questions used a Likert scale. In the wake of communicative language teaching methods, which have gained ground in Portugal, the relative importance attributed to communication as opposed to a more traditional formal accuracy-based knowledge was sought through three true/false statements.

The third part continued the focus on foreign languages. The respondents were asked to evaluate German, Spanish, French and English as the most widely spoken languages in Europe. Their evaluation concerned the degree of importance of these languages, the level of difficulty, their usefulness for international communication, and their sonority. This evaluation was achieved by ranking the languages.

In the fourth part, we were concerned with Portuguese and what the respondents thought knowing their own language meant. The features considered were parallel to those asked about knowing a foreign language in Part 2, that is, they covered attitudes towards systemic, communicative and socio-cultural knowledge. Once again a Likert scale was used. In addition, seven true/false statements aimed to explore the respondents’ attitudes towards varieties of Portuguese, in particular Brazilian and European Portuguese.

Part 5 focused on the minority languages spoken in Europe vis-à-vis the major languages. The respondents’ beliefs about aspects related to status, use, value, and the people of the minority languages were addressed. This was done by means of seven true/false statements.

Finally, in the sixth part, the questions concentrated on English. The respondents were asked about their attitudes towards English and using English, and its importance in professional development and education. Furthermore, three questions concerned how they viewed British and American English.
The first phase of questionnaire distribution took place in 2009. Colleagues in the three different universities were contacted so that the questionnaires could be distributed. This first phase targeted first year students, who supposedly had not yet attended any course units in Linguistics. The questionnaires were distributed and collected during the academic year of 2009-2010. An initial manual analysis by the group noted that, contrary to expectations, there were different situations with regard to the number of course units of Linguistics that these first year students had studied. Some had never studied Linguistics while some had already completed one course unit in Linguistics. Because this variable was essential for the study, it was deemed necessary to group the students by the number of course units of Linguistics they had studied and by university.

In 2010, the questionnaires were given to 3rd year students by the same colleagues at the three universities. When we received the completed questionnaires, we faced the same problem: the number of subjects in Linguistics that the students had studied differed quite a lot. As a result we manually reclassified what we had initially planned to be a binary variable – no Linguistics course units/some Linguistics course units – into three groups: students who had never studied Linguistics; those who had completed one or two course units; and those with three or more course units of Linguistics. This classification was not arbitrary. In fact, unlike the courses that have a strong component of Linguistics, many courses in the Humanities in these universities require the students to complete two semesters of Linguistics. Hence, this middle group can be considered to correspond to students whose full exposure to Linguistics would total two course units, regardless of whether they were continuing their studies in Linguistics in the following year or not. Of the 333 questionnaires received, 8 were excluded because it was not possible to ascertain the number of semesters of Linguistics that the respondent had studied. A further 7 questionnaires from the University of Lisbon were excluded because the respondents were not registered in the Faculty of Letters. As a result, 318 questionnaires - 202 from the University of Lisbon, 91 from the
University of Minho and 25 from the University of the Algarve - make up the sample. The questionnaires were then treated statistically using SPSS\(^2\), and a qualitative analysis was undertaken.

As previously stated, we had come from two hypotheses: (1) that to attend subjects in Linguistics would be relevant for the changing of stereotypes; and (2) that there would be differences across the three different universities. The first assumption was proved to be well founded. In fact, the more Linguistics subjects the students had undertaken, the more they were aware of what the attitudes and beliefs in relation to language and languages meant and the fewer stereotypes they maintained. As for the second assumption, we were faced with a problem: the number of questionnaires distributed in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon was much greater than in the other two universities, the University of Minho and the University of Algarve. Nevertheless, despite this difference, it was possible to draw some tentative conclusions concerning our second assumption although it must be borne in mind that many of the results did not attain statistical significance.

Initially we had planned this to be the first phase of a study that we would continue by broadening the sample in order to actually ensure a representative study of the attitudes and beliefs of Portuguese students in relation to language and languages. But after having finished this survey, we do not believe we would reach different results or arrive at different conclusions. So, we have decided to publish this and consider the study concluded.

The organization of the book follows the six parts of the questionnaire, moving from the characterization of the respondents to the attitudes towards and beliefs about foreign languages, Portuguese, minority languages, and English. A brief conclusion is given at the end.

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\(^2\) We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Susana Clemente for the statistical treatment of the data.
Finally, we would like to thank the colleagues in the three universities who were kind enough to respond to our request and who undertook the work of receiving, distributing, collecting, and sending us the questionnaires.
CHAPTER 1
Characterisation of the sample

Maria Goreti Monteiro (ULICES³/ESTG, IPL⁴)

The objective of this study is to ascertain the feelings of Portuguese students towards the importance of languages and language learning. To do this, surveys were sent to three Portuguese universities: one in the North of Portugal, the University of Minho, one in the centre, the University of Lisbon, and one in the South of Portugal, the University of Algarve. The survey is organised in six sections, beginning with Part 1, where the participants characterise themselves, by providing answers to eight questions.

Students from the Humanities departments of the three universities answered a total of 318 questionnaires and, of those, 317 indicated their age, which ranges from seventeen to sixty-two years. Although most of the students are aged 20, the median age is 21, as can be seen below in Table 1.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>23.27</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: Average age of participants.

This result has very slight differences when analysing each university, due to the maximum age of the participants. For example, at the University of Minho, even though the age varies from 18 to 47, the median shows that 50% of the students are at least 22 years of age, i.e., a year older. Students traditionally enter the University the year after finishing secondary school, i.e. at the age of 18 or 19. The reason for this difference may be due to the year of the attendance of the participants in the study.

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The students’ gender is also registered and the data show that almost three quarters of the participants, 73.6%, are female. This result is not surprising since, in Portugal, the humanities courses traditionally have more female than male students. When analysing the results from each university, the number is similar in the Algarve, 72%, but higher in Lisbon, 76.6%, and almost ten points lower in Minho, 67.4%.

The participants’ country of origin was also asked as it may influence the results concerning the number and variety of language competence. As expected, the majority of the people involved are Portuguese, 309 individuals or 83.3%. The remainder come from Africa and Western Europe in first and second place, respectively, followed by Eastern Europe and South America, distributed as observed in the following chart.

![Figure 1.1: Place of origin.](image)

When examining this variable by country, students from 21 countries other than Portugal answered the questionnaire. The two foreign European countries with a higher number of participants are France and Moldavia, the first with five and the second with four students. The African students come from African Portuguese speaking countries, with four Angolan and four Cape Verdean leading the list, and the Portuguese speaking country of South America, Brazil, is also represented with four students.
Due to the fact that most foreign students are attending the university in Lisbon, the diversity is also wider in this institution. The University of Algarve, for example, has no respondents from Asia and the Minho has none from Asia or from Africa.

The courses these students are attending are varied: they range from Translation to Communication Sciences, but over one quarter of the respondents are aiming for a degree in Languages, Literatures and Cultures and more than 20% in European Languages and Literatures. The diversity of the courses is clear in Figure 1.2, below, where the courses are shown in order of frequency for the entirety of the three universities. However, the figures change when analysing the data from each institution, since the same courses are not offered everywhere. For example, Translation is only available at the University of Lisbon, which means that the information regarding this course pertains to this university alone.

![Course Distribution Graph](image)

**Figure 1.2: Courses.**

Our hypothesis is that students become more aware of the value of learning languages after studying linguistics. Thus, for this study, it was important to establish the connection between the participants’ opinions and their contact with this field of knowledge. The combined results of the three
universities revealed that, at the time of the enquiry, 31.4% of the participants had studied no course unit that could be linked to linguistics. Of the remaining students, more than one third, 38.7%, had completed one or two linguistics subjects and nearly thirty per cent, 29.9%, had completed three or more. The distribution within each university, however, is very dissimilar, as represented below, in Figure 1.3:

![Figure 1.3: Linguistics related subjects – percentage of attendance](image)

While most students had attended some linguistics subjects in Lisbon as well as in the Algarve, the opposite is true in Minho, for more than half of the students. This fact can be associated with the outline of the courses, which may place linguistics subjects during the second year in some universities while, in other courses and universities, these can be attended during the first semester of the first year.

These results are also linked to the year of enrolment in each university. At the University of Minho, for instance, more than half, i.e., 52.2% of all participants are first year students who may not have had the time to finish any of the referred subjects, as opposed to 30.4% of the second, third and fourth year students who probably have. On the other hand, in Lisbon, only 15.4% of
the participants have only one enrolment, whereas 74.1% have already been at the university for two, three or four years.

Given that one of the purposes of the questionnaire is to analyse the attitudes towards and beliefs about languages, the students were asked to evaluate their competence as language users in oral and written comprehension, and oral and written production. They had to rank themselves as basic, independent or proficient users of German, Spanish, French, Italian, English and any other language.

The categories used in this document follow those developed in the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Learning, Teaching, and Assessment of European languages, which divides the initial six levels into three broad levels: Basic User: A1 and A2; Independent User: B1 and B2; Proficient User: C1 and C2. The main purpose of the CEFR is to provide a common basis for language learning and teaching in Europe, both for students, by facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications, thus, aiding European mobility, as well as for professionals in the field of language education, by providing a common basis for the elaboration of language teaching material across Europe.

The major categories of language use at each of the six levels are globally described below, but each skill is explained in detail in the complete text of the Framework document, on http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/Portfolio/documents/Framework_EN.pdf.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Certificate</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes &amp; ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: CEFR Global Scale - Self-Assessment Grid.
Although there is a slight deviation with one or two variables in the answers from each of the Universities, Table 1.3\(^5\) shows where the highest percentage of students commonly feel they belong concerning the knowledge of the five languages typically studied in Portuguese schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Total % answers</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Speaking (percentage)</th>
<th>Reading (percentage)</th>
<th>Speaking (percentage)</th>
<th>Writing (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td>(34.9%)</td>
<td>(34.6%)</td>
<td>(34%)</td>
<td>(32.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent user</td>
<td>(35.5%)</td>
<td>(34.6%)</td>
<td>(34.3%)</td>
<td>(37.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td>(37.7%)</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
<td>(41.5%)</td>
<td>(42.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proficient user</td>
<td>(44%)</td>
<td>(44.3%)</td>
<td>Independent user</td>
<td>(44.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent user</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td>(27.4%)</td>
<td>(28%)</td>
<td>(28.9%)</td>
<td>(27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic user</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.3: Language self assessment.

When analysing the answers, it is surprising to find the participants’ assessment of Italian at par with French, due to the fact that Italian is not typically offered in secondary schools in Portugal, but French is, and many students have learned this language, even if only for three years. The difference is only reflected in the number of students who have given information about the two languages: while more than three quarters state that they have some knowledge of French, less than half have some familiarity with Italian.

\(^5\) The column “total % of answers” indicates the percentage of students who have given their assessment for each of the languages. Of those, we indicate the level of skill where the majority of students state they are positioned.
The German language has always been offered in the Portuguese school system, but it is not a popular choice, partly because of its reputation for being a “difficult language”. This may be the reason for the reduced number – less than half – of students who have studied it and perhaps for the results which indicate that the very few who did study it, do not generally deviate from the Basic level.

Even though over three quarters of the students say they know Spanish, the learning of this language in Portuguese schools began very recently and only in a very few schools. This discrepancy can be explained by the perception that Portuguese people traditionally have that they can understand a great deal of what they hear and what they read, due to the fact that they consider Spanish to be very close to Portuguese. In speaking and writing, however, they indicate a higher level of difficulty, reflected in their assessment of those competences, where most go down from an independent to a basic user.

For the last thirty years, the national school system has established the teaching of an average of five to seven years of English, which should provide Portuguese students with a very good knowledge of the language. This is one of the reasons nearly all the students have some knowledge of the language and their self-assessed level is so high when compared to all the others. Of the 318 students that answered this question, 140 say their oral comprehension is at a proficient level, while 128 say it is at an independent level. Their written comprehension has very similar results, where 141 are proficient users and 125 are independent. The two production skills, speaking and writing, yield slightly lower results, with the 132 independent and 116 proficient users of the former and 142 independent and, again, 116 independent of the latter.

The last question in Part 1 of the study refers to the actual use of a foreign language in Portugal, with the assumption that this use is outside a classroom setting. The percentage of the participants who have never spoken a foreign language is only 5.7, a figure which is hardly significant in the sum total, as is apparent in Figure 1.4.
This section of the study on attitudes towards language learning sought to describe the population who responded to the survey. From the results it is possible to derive a representation of the average participant. The end result depicts a 20 or 21 year old female Portuguese student who is taking a degree in Languages, Literatures and Cultures, still in her first year of studies, but who has already attended one or two linguistics subjects. This student has used a foreign language in Portugal - English more often than not - and has done so quite skilfully.
In today’s world, which has increasingly become a "global village", knowledge of languages has acquired a crucial role for the full integration and interaction of individuals in society. We emphasise integration and interaction, in order to point out that communication, hence language "in its larger construct" is, in our view, the only way that we can truly know, understand and interpret the other. However, students from different levels of secondary education in Portugal seem to have a perspective on languages that differs, as evidenced by the results presented in the Report of Examinations (2011) in German, Spanish, English and French in school years prior to entry into higher education. The report notes that although the items that showed the poorest results in the national examinations of French and English corresponded to passing grades – 50.3% and 50.2% (French), and 53.3%, 54.4 and 51.2%, (English) – they do not differ significantly from those of German and Spanish, 43.3% and 40.8%, respectively. Furthermore, these items are related to aspects of linguistic correction, involving vocabulary, spelling, morphology, and syntax. Although the Report of Examinations analyses students in secondary schools, these are the students who will be going to university. It is therefore of interest to explore how the understanding of what underpins foreign language knowledge develops as young people progress through their tertiary studies, in which they are exposed to linguistics.

In order to better understand these young peoples’ positions with regard to foreign language knowledge, Part 2 of the questionnaire focussed on their

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9 School of Economics and Management, Technical University of Lisbon.
beliefs about what knowledge of a foreign language entails. A set of six questions concerned the importance the respondents attribute to formal systemic features of language use: correct use of grammar rules (9a), good pronunciation (9d); communicative aspects: ability to write texts fluently and correctly (9c), ability to understand the foreign language speakers (9f); and cultural aspects: knowledge of the cultures and customs of the mother-tongue speakers of the language (9b), and having a wide vocabulary (9e). A further three questions sought to compare the importance of aspects of foreign language knowledge that are traditionally valued by grammar-translation teaching methodologies with aspects valued by early communicative language teaching methodologies. Question 10 addressed stereotypes related to writing and speaking (10a), fluency and pronunciation (10b) and knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. The first set of questions asked respondents to rate each characteristic as very important, important, not very important, or don’t know. The second set presented statements to be marked as true or false.

The following section will analyse the results, first globally, then taking into account the variables number of linguistics units studied and university. The section will finish with some final remarks on the results for the students’ beliefs about what is meant by knowledge of a foreign language.

The median values for the items in question 9 fall into two groups: correct and fluent writing and having good oral comprehension were rated as very important while all the other items were rated as important. Although this may suggest that the students privilege the communicative aspects of knowledge of a foreign language, a more detailed examination of the results suggests a more complex picture.
Figure 2.1 shows the importance attributed to aspects of foreign language knowledge. The most striking result is that the ability to understand the speakers of a foreign language is highly valued with 81.4% of the students classifying it as very important and a further 16.7% classifying it as important. Several factors may contribute to this result. The first is that exposure to foreign languages permeates the media in Portugal. With the exception of cartoons, neither films nor television programs are dubbed, and pop songs in foreign languages make up a large proportion of the songs played on the radio on many channels. The Internet provides another source; not only does it supplement or even supplant traditional media, but it offers exposure to foreign languages through posts on YouTube, blogs, podcasts, and so on. While much of the content is in English, it is not restricted to this language. A second factor stems from Portugal’s strong tourist industry. The annual influx of foreign language speakers means that it is common to hear foreign languages being spoken. The opportunities for listening to foreign languages clearly outstrip those for written production, which may account for the lower values attributed to writing fluent and correct texts. On this item 50.3% of the respondents considered it to be very important, 42.1% considered it important, and only 6.3% classed it as not very important. It is to be noted both these items, whose
median was deemed very important, reflect the communicative function of a foreign language. Within the second group, whose median value was \textit{important}, a subgroup comprises the correct use of grammar and having a wide vocabulary. The values for these two items approximate those for written production, albeit with an inversion in the values attributed to \textit{important} and \textit{very important}. Nonetheless, these features are highly valued, with only 4.7\% and 6.6\% rating them as \textit{not important}. The other subgroup, comprising knowledge of culture and having a good pronunciation, is clearly less valued. Although just over 50\% of the respondents considered these items to be \textit{important}, the values for \textit{not important} are higher than any other item: 30.2\% and 17.6\% respectively. Two points might be made about these results. While knowledge of the foreign language speakers’ customs and having a wide vocabulary reflect aspects of cultural knowledge of a language, the latter contributes more directly to language production. This communicative factor may account for the greater value attributed to a wide vocabulary range. The second point concerns the lower values attributed to having a good pronunciation. It is generally accepted that due to the complexity of the phonetics of European Portuguese, these speakers have little difficulty in learning to pronounce the phonetic systems of many other languages. Consequently, because the students do not perceive pronunciation to be a problem, they may not value it as very important.

It is to be stressed that the above analysis provides a global reading of the respondents’ beliefs of what knowledge of a foreign language entails. Other attitudes and beliefs may come to light with a more detailed analysis using the variables of this study. In particular, we were interested in whether the study of linguistics would affect their responses. The respondents to this questionnaire had no knowledge of linguistics, or had studied one or two units of it, or 3 or more. The distribution of the 318 respondents across the three groups is given in Figure 2.2.
When the variable *number of linguistics units studied* is taken into account, with the exception of having good pronunciation, the results did not attain statistical significance. Despite this, the study of linguistics did seem to have an impact on the respondents’ beliefs about foreign language knowledge. The results for each item will be presented separately.

**Figure 2.3: Importance attributed to correct grammar use of a foreign language by number of linguistics units studied.**

Question 9a concerned the value respondents placed on being able to use the grammar of the foreign language correctly (Figure 2.3). The results show that there is a minimal movement between the beliefs held by students with no knowledge of linguistics and those who have completed one or two units of linguistics; those considering correct grammar use not important
decline slightly from 6.1% to 4.1% and those considering it very important rise marginally from 44.9% to 47.2%. This suggests that students who have studied 1 or 2 units of linguistics regard grammar as slightly more important than those with no linguistic knowledge. However, the insignificant trend is clearly reversed for the students who have completed 3 or more linguistics units. Although the values remain constant for those who consider that correct grammar use is not important, there is a decrease of almost 10% in those who find it very important and a concomitant increase in those who find it important. These results do not show statistical significance\textsuperscript{10}, but they might suggest that the study of one or two linguistics units has little impact on the beliefs of students with regard to the importance of correct grammar use and it is only in the later years that the beliefs undergo greater change, and students accord less importance to correct grammar use in a foreign language.

A tentative explanation for these findings might lie in teaching methodologies that the students have been exposed to in earlier cycles of education. Although more recent foreign language communicative teaching methodologies clearly articulate the importance of grammatical knowledge for a communicative act, this perspective is not always brought out in the classroom. Often students in secondary school are immersed in learning contexts in which grammatical rules are decontextualized and the functional and socio-cultural aspects that constrain their use are ignored. In other words, the foreign language grammar is not taught as a functional aspect of the foreign language; rather it is set apart to be learned for its own sake. This view, which would regard grammar as important for its own sake, might carry over for the students in their initial years of study at university.

Because the complexity of written texts progresses over the course of studies, and students are evaluated primarily through writing, we were also interested in how they viewed the importance of the ability to write texts in a foreign language (Figure 2.4).

\textsuperscript{10} The Chi-Square tests are not valid because more than 20% (22.2%) of the expected counts are less 5.
The results for the importance attributed to correct and fluent writing in a foreign language (question 9c) show a similar trend to those for correct grammar use in so far as the relative share considering it very important declines from 52% to 45.7% and those considering it important rises from 39.8% to 48.9% as the respondents’ exposure to linguistics increases from 1 or 2 units to 3 or more. The importance attributed to correct and fluent writing also decreases from the respondents with no linguistic knowledge to those with 1 or 2 units. This is indicated in the declining trend for very important and the rising trend in not important. Thus, there appears to be an overall declining trend in the importance attributed to correct and fluent writing as the number of units of linguistics studied increases even though the results did not attain statistical significance\textsuperscript{11}.

The results for the importance of correct grammar use and correct and fluent writing warrant further reflection given that the latter implies the former. It is observed that respondents judge, overall, that writing is very important and that grammatical rules are important. How is it possible to write with correct grammar without knowing the standard of written discourse? Did the respondents answer randomly or do they consider that writing and grammar

\textsuperscript{11} The Chi-square tests are valid but the relation is not statistically significant. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.86.
are independent of each other? In other words, do they believe that it is possible to learn how to write without having a knowledge of grammatical rules such as syntax, spelling or even morphology? Moreover, it is disturbing to note that the results for not important hardly oscillate between students who have never studied linguistics (5.1%) and those with three or more linguistic units (5.4%), which suggests that for the latter students, the learning process over the course of their studies has been ineffectual. Indeed, an exploratory study carried out by Teixeira & Azevedo (2012) shows that students in their first year of the 1st cycle of higher studies, who have not yet completed any linguistic units, need support to fulfil the demands of the written tasks they are set: “...throughout the writing process, students must be clearly guided and supervised by teachers, in an early stage, in order to be able, further on, to overcome their difficulties and become autonomous and reflective in writing tasks (and others) that they carry out.” Such a claim indicates that the monitoring of the writing process by teachers should be a constant.

Question 9 (d) concerned the importance the respondents attribute to the importance of good pronunciation in a foreign language (Figure 2.5).

![Figure 2.5: Importance attributed to good pronunciation of a foreign language by number of linguistics units studied.](image)

Unlike the other items in question 9, the results for the importance of good pronunciation in a foreign language were found to be statistically
There is a clear declining trend for importance in the responses. While the number of responses for not important increases steadily from 9.2% to 26.9% over the course of study of linguistics, those for very important remain quite constant for the students who have completed 0 or 1 or 2 units of linguistics, 33.7% and 34.4% respectively, then drop by more than half to 16.1% for the students who have completed 3 or more linguistics units. This drop in the number of responses classed as very important is offset by a concomitant rise in the responses classed important, the values of which attain 47.5% and 57.0% for the students who have studied 1 or 2 linguistics units and those who have studied 3 or more respectively.

Taken overall, the results of these three items (9a – correct grammar use, 9c – correct and fluent writing and 9d – good pronunciation) indicate that the greater the number of linguistics units studied, the less the respondents value these aspects of foreign language knowledge as very important. While writing texts is a communicative act, writing texts fluently and correctly implies formal, systemic language knowledge. Hence, these results suggest that the study of linguistics contributes to relativizing the importance of such formal systemic features of a foreign language. In particular, a possible explanation for the declining importance attributed to pronunciation is that the study of linguistics contributes to the students understanding that while a standard pronunciation of a foreign language is considered correct, a standard is nonetheless arbitrary, and many other equally correct pronunciations exist. Greater linguistic knowledge therefore suggests greater awareness of and tolerance towards variety.

By contrast, there is little variation in the values for the importance of being able to understand the speakers of a foreign language as students increase their exposure to linguistics (Figure 2.6 below).

---

12 The Chi-square tests are valid and the relation is statistically significant. 0 cells (.0%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.64. Notation: \( X^2 (4) = 16.968, p = 0.002 \) (\( p < 0.05 \)). For this reason, there is a statistically significant relationship between the number of units and the importance attributed to pronunciation.
The percentage of respondents classifying oral comprehension as very important varies by less than 4%, those classifying it as important by less than 3% and those classifying it as not important by 2.2% among the three groups: no / 1 or 2 / 3 or more linguistic units. The high value placed on oral comprehension is reflected in the median, as previously discussed. It would seem that the importance of this communicative aspect of language knowledge is little affected by the study of linguistics although the results did not attain statistical significance\textsuperscript{13}.

Figure 2.7 shows the results for the importance attributed to lexical knowledge.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{13} The Chi-square tests are not valid because 3 cells (33.3\%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.89.
Overall, the values for the extreme positions – very important and not important – are higher for respondents with no linguistic knowledge than for those who have completed 3 or more units of linguistics. The increase in the number of respondents who consider it important to have a wide vocabulary in the foreign language suggests a trend towards a central position with regard to vocabulary. It is of note, however, that the major change takes place between the respondents with no linguistics knowledge and those who have completed 1 or two units. Although not statistically significant\textsuperscript{14}, these results may indicate that a little exposure to linguistics has an impact on students’ beliefs with regard to the importance they attribute to having a wide vocabulary in a foreign language.

In fact, an individual’s lexical knowledge results from a number of factors. In particular, social and economic factors, reading, including comprehension and interpretation of the text, and the individual’s level of writing skills and grammar all affect their lexicon. It is to be noted that the results for the items correct and fluent writing, correct grammar use and a wide vocabulary are similar, albeit not the same. In other words, the respondents believe these three skills are essential components in knowledge of a foreign language. Indeed, we cannot and nor should we separate lexical knowledge from writing or grammar insofar as spelling, semantics, diachrony, synchrony and the relations of meaning between words are concerned.

Because learning a language does not only involve knowledge of its structure, but also cultural knowledge, one question concerned knowledge of the customs and cultures of the native speakers of the foreign language. The results for this item are shown in Figure 2.8.

\textsuperscript{14} The Chi-square tests are valid but the relation is not statistically significant. 0 cells (.0\%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.22.
Figure 2.8: Importance attributed to knowledge of the customs and cultures of the native speakers of the foreign language by number of linguistics units studied.

The results show that as students’ knowledge of linguistics increases, the figures for those who consider such socio-cultural knowledge very important remain relatively constant while the figures for those who consider it important increase and those who consider it unimportant decrease. The fact that there is a steady declining trend in those who consider this item unimportant suggests that the study of linguistics does have an impact on students’ beliefs with regard to the importance of knowing about the customs and cultures of the peoples who speak the foreign language. The greater their knowledge of linguistics, the more they value such knowledge. Nonetheless, even after studying 3 or more linguistics units, more than a quarter of the respondents continued to regard knowledge of the customs and cultures of the native speakers of the foreign language as unimportant\textsuperscript{15}.

These results appear to be relevant especially if we consider that many college students with knowledge of linguistics seem to devalue such social and cultural aspects, which we believe to be intrinsically linked to and inseparable from language. In 1976 Dittmar already incorporates language in a social perspective:

\textsuperscript{15} The Chi-square tests are valid but the relation is not statistically significant. 0 cells (.0%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.35.
From an ecological viewpoint we view the language as an integral part of a larger Picture of the community and all of things the community does. (...) because every ‘someone’ is, or has been, a living, breathing, thinking, feeling member of community. In other words, every instance of language is or has been an integral working and feeding and making shelter and playing and fighting and laughing and crying and mating (p. 121).

We shall now turn to the results for the variable university. Analysis of the the respondents’ perceptions of the importance of aspects of knowledge that underpin foreign language knowledge using university as the independent variable showed similar trends across the thee regions, north, centre and south in the order of the ranking of items across the options of very important, important, not important, but there were variations in the values assigned to each category. A description of the results follows.

The results for question 9(a), which concerns the importance placed on correct grammar use, are shown in Figure 2.9.

![Figure 2.9: Importance attributed to correct grammar use in a foreign language by university.](image)

There is no significant difference among the values for each university; in each case the option important is the most frequent response. The largest difference between the values for important and very important – 14.8% - was found in the University of Minho while the University of Lisbon and the University of the Algarve registered 5.4% and 4% respectively. Also of note is the fact that the option not important was selected in all three universities. The
lowest values for this option were obtained in the University of Lisbon while the Universities of the Minho and the Algarve show similar, slightly higher values.  

Figure 2.10 shows the results for the importance the respondents attribute to knowing the customs and cultures of the native speakers of the language. Overall, the respondents consider such knowledge to be important. The highest values for *important* were obtained in the University of Lisbon (UL), followed by the University of the Minho (UM) and lastly the University of the Algarve (UALG). Interestingly, the second most frequent response was *not important*, with UALG and UM obtaining around 30% and 40% respectively. The least frequent response was *very important*, which we find somewhat unexpected. It is worth noting that the highest values for *very important* were found in UALG, where just under 30% of the respondents found such cultural knowledge very important.  

![Figure 2.10: Importance attributed to knowing the customs and cultures of the native speakers of the foreign language by university.](image)

The highest values for *very important*, which were obtained in the University of the Algarve, might be explained by the fact that the Algarve has perhaps the most developed tourist infrastructures of Portugal and foreign tourists, hence speakers of different languages and cultures, are an important source of economic revenue. Similarly, the lowest values for *not important*,

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16 The Chi-Square tests are invalid because more than 20% (22.2) of the expected counts are less than 5.
17 The Chi-square tests are valid but the relation between the two variables is not statistically significant.
which were found in Lisbon, may be due to its cultural and economic mix. Lisbon has a high level of entrepreneurial business activity. For example there are 32,644 firms operating in the automotive sector and 7,608 in the hotel industry.\textsuperscript{18}

Question 9 also addressed the importance the respondents attribute to fluent and correct writing. The results for this item are shown in Figure 2.11. Again the results were similar across the three universities, especially for the option \textit{very important}. Although the option \textit{important} was less frequently chosen than \textit{very important}, with the exception of the University of the Algarve, the difference in the values obtained in the Universities of Lisbon and the Minho is less than 10%. The option \textit{not important} was selected in all universities, but its value was significantly lower than the other options.

![Figure 2.11: Importance attributed to correct and fluent writing by university.](image)

Of note is that the responses are more evenly spread in the results for the University of the Algarve: 48%, 36% and 16% for \textit{very important}, \textit{important}, and \textit{not important} respectively. In the other two universities it is the difference between the values for \textit{very important} and \textit{not important} that stand out: 47.5% in the University of Lisbon and 41.5% in the University of the Minho.

\textsuperscript{18} Available at \url{http://www.ine.pt/prodserv/quadros/116/218/010/xls/00100000.xls-Microsoft}. Accessed: 01 October 2012.
By contrast, the values obtained for the option *not important* were higher for the importance attributed to correct pronunciation of a foreign language than for the importance of correct and fluent writing. This was the case both in aggregate terms (17.9%) and for each university (UL, 19.5%; UM, 15.9% and UALG, 12%), as shown in Figure 2.12.

![Figure 2.12: Importance attributed to correct pronunciation of a foreign language by university.](image)

While the University of Lisbon obtained the highest values of the three universities for the option *not important*, its values for *important* were the lowest – 51%. The highest percentage – 60% - was registered by the University of the Algarve, followed by the University of Minho, with 56.8%. The option *very important* made up a similar percentage in the three universities 19

Figure 2.13 shows the results for the question concerning the importance the respondents attribute to having a wide vocabulary in a foreign language.

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19 The Chi-square tests are valid but there is no statistically significant relation between the two variables. 1 cell (11.1%) has an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.47.
There was little variation across the universities with regard to the importance attributed to having a wide vocabulary. The option *very important* accounted for 46.5% (UL), 41.6% (UM) and 44% (UALG). The results for *important* show the highest values and are more homogeneous: 48.5% (UL), 48.3% (UM) and 48% (UALG). The option *not important* was least selected, with values ranging from 5% to 10.1%. These results did not attain statistical significance.  

The relations among words give rise to meaning-making, not just in a linguistic perspective, but also in interaction with ‘the other’. This is what makes a language a living and functioning organism. For this reason, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of understanding ‘the other’, in this case, speakers of the foreign language. These results are shown in Figure 2.14.

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20. 1 cell (11.1%) has an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.67. The chi-square tests are valid, but there is no statistically significant relation between the two variables.
What is most striking about these results are the very high values for the option *very important* in all three universities: 85.1% in UL, 75.3% in UM and 84% in UALG. Furthermore, the results for UL and UALG are similar. The values for *important* are much lower: 13.4% in UL, 24.7% in UM and 16% in UALG. Interestingly, not a single respondent from the universities of the Minho or the Algarve selected *not important*. In other words the result for these universities was zero, which indicates that these students consider oral comprehension of a foreign language to be undeniably important, an attitude that implies comprehension of and with the interlocutor. Only 1.5% of the respondents from the University of Lisbon selected *not important*.

While it is not possible to confirm the statistical significance of these results\(^{21}\), it would appear that the importance attributed to understanding speakers of the foreign language does not vary according to the region where the students are studying. This result might in part be attributed to the aims and homogeneity of education and the teaching methodologies if we consider that the role of the teacher goes beyond the regulatory statutes that guide the profession in order to reach out to each class. In doing so the teacher mediates and facilitates access to knowledge, opening new perspectives on the one hand, and helping to (re)co-construct on the other. If so, it would seem that teachers contribute positively with regard to this issue. A second factor could lie in the homogeneity of student life for these respondents. As previously mentioned, their use of foreign-language media is probably high, and this could contribute to their wishing to understand the spoken language directly, without the mediation of subtitles or a translator. The better their comprehension, the greater the range of materials and speakers they would have access to.

The second half of Part 2 of the questionnaire sought to explore stereotypical beliefs about foreign language knowledge that are associated with

\(^{21}\) The Chi-square tests are not valid because more than 20% (44%) of the expected counts are less than 5, and there are expected counts that are less than one (0.24).
traditional grammar-translation models of language teaching: that writing is more important than speaking; or with early communicative models of language teaching: that fluency is more important than pronunciation, and that having a wide vocabulary is more important than knowledge of grammar. These beliefs were addressed through statements that the respondents marked as true or false. The results for these items are given in Figure 2.8.

![Figure 2.8: Stereotypical beliefs about the relative importance of aspects of foreign language knowledge.](image)

The stereotype that it is more important to know how to write a foreign language than to know how to speak it reflects values associated with grammar-translation teaching methodologies. The respondents clearly reject such a stereotype; 89% of the respondents found the statement false. By contrast, more than three quarters of the respondents (78.9%) agree that fluency in a foreign language is more important than good pronunciation. As already noted earlier in Chapter 2, mainland Portuguese speakers tend to have little difficulty in learning the phonetic systems of many other languages. This may lead them devalue pronunciation in relation with other aspects of language knowledge. Notwithstanding this, the results for these two items suggest that
most students value the communicative function of a foreign language, and this may reflect the values of communicative language teaching methodologies. Yet, it does not mean that they disregard the importance of grammatical knowledge; 67.6% of the respondents found the third stereotype, that a wide vocabulary is more important than knowledge of grammar, to be false. This latter fact suggests that many students hold a more complex view of what is implied by foreign language knowledge and do not subscribe to stereotypical views. It is to be noted, nevertheless, that almost a third of the respondents do believe that a wide vocabulary is more important than grammatical knowledge.

The aim of this section was to explore how students in tertiary institutions in Portugal rate the importance of knowledge of a foreign language grammar, vocabulary and culture, as well as the importance of correct pronunciation and writing and oral comprehension skills, and to see whether there were differences in the beliefs based on the number of linguistics units they had completed or university affiliation, Lisbon, Minho and the Algarve. However, as noted in the description of the results, in general it was not possible to determine any statistical significance in the results. The only result that attained statistical significance was the importance of correct pronunciation, where it was found that the study of linguistics has an impact on the importance the respondents attribute to correct pronunciation: the greater the students’ knowledge of linguistics, the less they value correct pronunciation. Except for this aspect, the results show that neither the regional location of the university nor the number of linguistics units completed by the students impact on the way they perceive the importance of systemic and socio-cultural aspects of foreign language knowledge. Overall, the findings suggest that such aspects of foreign language knowledge are important.

Taken globally, it seems that the students tend to value the communicative function of a foreign language most. This is shown by the higher value they place on the aspects of foreign language knowledge that
more directly concern language production and reception, in particular oral communication.

When the number of linguistics units studied is taken into account, the results seem to indicate that the study of linguistics contributes to the students developing more nuanced views of what underpins foreign language knowledge. Over the course of study of linguistics, formal systemic aspects of foreign language knowledge tended to decline in importance while there was a growing awareness of the importance of socio-cultural aspects and there was little change in the value accorded to aural comprehension, which was systematically highly valued.

This study could provide a basis for further research. Because many of the Chi-square tests were valid (university vs. cultural knowledge; number of linguistics units vs. writing; university vs. having a wide vocabulary; number of linguistics units and university vs. correct pronunciation), both a wider and more balanced sample could be used. In addition, the attitudes and beliefs of the students brought to light by this section of the survey are the product of the values of the practices the students have been exposed to in the educational system and in their private lives. Hence, other independent variables such as the course study plan and its corresponding syllabus could shed further light on what the university students believe or hold as representations of the importance of features underpinning foreign language knowledge.
CHAPTER 3

Attitudes towards and beliefs about major European languages

Madalena Teixeira (ULICES\textsuperscript{22}/ ESE,IPS\textsuperscript{23})\textsuperscript{24}

In today’s social, cultural, political, and economic context, the ability to communicate in different languages not only makes it possible to share experiences with the other, but also contributes to an active integration in all spheres of life. Globalisation has brought about new challenges, conflicts, commitments, and partnerships, and language represents the means to learn about, understand and build ideas in a world of constant change.

Bearing in mind that Portugal participates in “a unique economic and political partnership” in the European Union,\textsuperscript{25} it is useful to understand how students perceive the most frequently spoken languages within the Union: German, Spanish, French, and English. As previously detailed, the respondents were university students in the first cycle of studies. Three groups were considered: students who had never studied linguistics, students who had studied one or two semesters of linguistics, and students who had studied three or more semesters of linguistics.

The objectives of this section of the survey were: i) to understand how important students considered each language; ii) to understand how difficult students considered each language; iii) to measure how useful students considered each language for international communication; and iv) to understand students’ attitudes towards the sonority of each language, i.e. which languages sounded better, and which sounded worse.

This section describes and discusses the results for this question of the survey. In question 11 the respondents were asked to rank the four languages – German, Spanish, French, and English – according to the following scales: 11a) 1 – most

\textsuperscript{22}University of Lisbon Center for English Studies.
\textsuperscript{23}Escola Superior de Educação, Instituto Politécnico de Santarém.
\textsuperscript{24}This chapter is dedicated to my father, who taught me the importance of learning my first foreign language.
\textsuperscript{25}Available at: \url{http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index_pt.htm} Accessed: 16 April 2012.
important to 4 – least important; 11b) 1 – most difficult to 4 – least difficult; 11c) 1 most useful to 4 – least useful; and 11d) 1 – most pleasant sounding to 4 – least pleasant sounding. The results are presented as averages, broken down by university and the number of linguistics units studied.

For citizens to participate actively in today’s society, knowledge of foreign languages is important. For this reason, a set of questions aimed to find students’ attitudes to the four most widely spoken languages in Europe. Table 3.1 presents the results for the respondents’ attitudes towards how important they consider the four main European languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.º Linguistics course units</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 University UL</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2 University UL</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more University UL</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Importance of major EU languages by number of linguistics units studied.

Overall, the results show that English is considered the most important language among the four, followed by Spanish, then French, and lastly German. The variable *number of linguistic units studied* showed no significant effect on the rankings. These results point towards an (almost) unquestioned leadership of English.
Such results are in line with findings published by the European Union\textsuperscript{26}. They also underscore recent government policies in language teaching, in which the Ministry of Education has recommended the teaching of English in the first cycle of basic education (K1-4), and has made it compulsory in the second cycle (K5-6). By contrast, there has been a decline in the demand for learning French in recent years, which may be explained by the focus on English as well as by the introduction of Spanish as a language option for students in the third cycle of basic education (K7-9). A second explanatory factor may derive from the fact that Portugal is a popular tourist destination, and English is one of the most frequently spoken languages by tourists; 2,270,900 British and U.S. tourists visited Portugal in 2007. In view of the importance of tourism to the Algarve, the uniformity in the attitudes of the students from the University of the Algarve comes as no surprise.

The results also suggest that Spanish is gaining in importance while there has been a decline in the importance of French. With the exception of students who had never studied linguistics in the University of the Algarve and the University of Lisbon, Spanish was ranked the second most important language of the four. The decline in importance attributed to French is reflected in the paucity of new French words and expressions entering the Portuguese language, as seen in recent dictionaries such as the Academy of Science’s \textit{Dictionary of Contemporary Portuguese} and Antônio Houaiss’ \textit{Dictionary of the Portuguese Language}. In the University of Minho the values attributed to the importance of French were similar for students who have not studied linguistics and those who have studied three or more semesters. In other words, those who have formally studied linguistics hold a similar view to those who have no formal knowledge.

The language that was considered least important was German, and this result is common both across the three universities and across the three groups, with the University of the Algarve consistently registering values above the average. The fact that German is consistently ranked least important warrants further reflection and is cause for concern on three accounts: i) political and economic, ii) social and iii) scientific. The first aspect relates to Germany’s strong position in the world of finance

in Europe. The headquarters of two major banks - *Deutsche Bundesbank* and the European Central Bank - lie in Frankfurt, and the impact of their decisions reaches beyond Europe to other continents. Second, the current economic context has implications for the social fabric of society. In particular, Germany has recently witnessed protests against the financial bailouts for Greece, Spain and Portugal. The third aspect is related to the other two. Germany invests heavily in scientific research, and is particularly productive in mechanical engineering. It should be noted that the automotive industry accounts for 15% of Portugal’s GDP and that sales of German brands have fallen the least in the recent crisis.

The second question of this section concerns the respondents’ attitudes towards how difficult each language is to learn. Overall, English and Spanish are considered the easiest languages to learn; these two languages obtained similar average values. The variable *number of linguistic units studied* had little effect on the results, as can be seen in Table 3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.º Linguistic course units</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 University UL</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>2.19</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2 University UL</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more University UL</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Difficulty of major EU languages by number of linguistics units studied.

In general, the universities of Lisbon and the Minho showed similar results with regard to English and Spanish. This result was consistent across the three groups,
students with no formal training in linguistics, those with one or two units and those with three or more. By contrast, students from the University of the Algarve registered values below the average for English, which suggests that these respondents perceive learning English as harder than the respondents from the University of Lisbon and the University of Minho. Similarly, students with no linguistic knowledge from the University of the Algarve perceive Spanish to be more difficult than their University of Lisbon and University of Minho counterparts.

This result for the Algarve warrants reflection. Is it merely subjective or could it be linked to teacher training? Given that English is a compulsory subject, as previously stated, it is tempting to agree with Ortiz (2007: 7) that “There is a shortage of everything in public schools. The scene is a travesty: a place where students don’t learn, teachers who don’t know the language teach, parents don’t care about their children’s education, and methods don’t work. In such schools the teaching of English is a kind of make-believe carried out by invisible teachers”. However, we do not consider teachers to be “invisible”. What might happen is that teachers sometimes neglect the teaching of two fundamental competences for any language: sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence. Another relevant aspect is the importance of the tourist industry in the Algarve. The many resort complexes offer an attractive alternative for the young and unskilled.27

French was considered the second most difficult language except by students with no formal training in linguistics in the University of the Algarve. The average values for this item were 2.16 for students with one or two units of linguistics and 2.24 for those with three or more. These students’ perception of French as the second most difficult language to learn may stem from the fact that they have a greater knowledge of the language and a greater awareness of what is required to develop the linguistic skills28 (Simões, 2006) that are needed to communicate effectively and appropriately in different contexts. It is important to note that the Relatório de Exames Nacional (National Exam Report, 2010) claims that some of these skills are also not being consolidated in the students’ native language.

27 Information provided by the Resident Manager of the Dom Pedro chain in the Algarve.
28 Cf. Communicative competence is understood in terms of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
German was considered to be the most difficult language. Lower than average values were found for the students with no knowledge of linguistics from the University of the Algarve (1.00), the students with one or two units of linguistics from the University of the Minho (1.00) and those with three or more from the University of Lisbon (1.14). A report on the results of national German exams in secondary schools finds that the items in which students exhibited the poorest performance are those that "demand a detailed comprehension of the text and of the function of connectors within the sentence, which is underpinned by discursive and grammatical competence." (Relatório de Exames Nacional, National Exam Report, 2010:13). The same report claims that results from national exams in Portuguese reveal that students experience greatest difficulty in tasks requiring metatextual and metalinguistic awareness (Relatório de Exames Nacional, National Exam Report, 2010), and this is reflected in a poor command of structure and cohesion. Bearing in mind that students face such difficulties in their native language at the end of their compulsory schooling, it is not so surprising that they should consider German the most difficult language. The fact that students from the three universities consider German the most difficult language may also lead them to downgrade its importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.º Linguistic course units</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>UL</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>UL</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>UL</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: International communication and major EU languages by number of linguistics units studied.
Table 3.3 shows the results for each language’s usefulness for international communication. With regard to the average values, English clearly stands out as the language that is considered most useful for international communication while German is considered the least useful. These results corroborate those of a study by the Council of Europe (2007)\textsuperscript{29}, which identifies English as an emerging lingua franca.

“English is spoken by an estimated 38% of EU citizens as their first foreign language, putting it well ahead of German and the others as the most widely used language of the European Union. About 14% of EU citizens have either French or German as their first foreign language. The arrival of 12 new member states since 2004 has confirmed the pre-eminence of English as the emerging lingua franca of the European Union.” (p.5)

These findings of the European study have no doubt contributed to the current educational policies, as previously mentioned.

French is considered to be the second most useful language for international communication with average values of 2.81 for students with no linguistic training, 2.92 for those with one or two linguistics units and 3.02 for those with three or more. Although Spanish shows similar values: 3.07, 2.53 and 2.55 for the three groups respectively, the two languages show opposite trends. While the perceived usefulness of French decreases with greater knowledge of linguistics, that of Spanish increases with greater knowledge of linguistics. These results, however, are not statistically significant.

When broken down by university, students of the Algarve and Minho with no linguistic training rank the usefulness of Spanish after French, the values of the former language reaching 3.20 and 3.00 for the respective universities, both of which are statistically significant. German is consistently ranked as the least useful language for international communication. In the University of the Algarve it attains an average of 4.00 among students who have studied three or more units of linguistics, above the group average of 3.40. The results for all universities for students who had studied one or two linguistics units and three or more units were found to be statistically significant. The low values attributed to German may in part be due to its low visibility

as a useful language for international communication. For example in the dissemination of research, the publishing industry, especially the Brazilian, translates German works into Portuguese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.º Linguistic course units</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>1 or 2</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UL</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UL</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 or 2</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UL</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>UALG</td>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Sonority of major EU languages by number of linguistics units studied.

Finally, but not least, we shall analyse the results obtained for the question concerning language sonority (Table 3.4). The results for the sonority of each language were quite homogeneous across the different groups of students. There was little deviation in the average value for each language; Spanish recorded a variation of 0.8, French, 0.14, and English and German 0.12. The latter two languages once again appear at the extremes; while German was considered the least pleasant sounding language, English was considered the most pleasant. French and Spanish were in between.

We believe the result for English and German is due to i) the school trajectory; and ii) “contact” with each language. As already referred, children learn English from primary school, and in 2012, English changed from being an option as first foreign
language to becoming the only foreign language taught in the 5th grade. Hence, in the schooling system students receive more exposure to English than any other foreign language. The same privilege is not accorded to French, Spanish or German. A second foreign language can only be taken up in the 7th grade. Outside school, there is greater contact with English than the other languages due to the role of the media, in particular that of television, in broadcasting English-medium programs. Few films and cartoons are shown in languages other than English, and when they are, they are often dubbed into Portuguese, unlike the English-medium programs. In addition, computer games and Playstation tend to use English; at best there may be a written and/or oral translation into Spanish.

With regard to Spanish and French, the results for usefulness for international communication (table 3.3) and those for how pleasant the languages sound are similar. When the results are broken down by university and number of linguistics units studied, the respondents from the University of the Algarve who have no training in linguistics present higher values than the respondents from other universities for German and Spanish: 4.00 and 3.00 respectively, which suggests stronger attitudes towards these languages. Yet the same group considers English and French to sound equally good, unlike the other universities, where respondents with no linguistics training ranked English before French. The students from the University of the Algarve who have studied three or more semesters of linguistics also present higher than average values for German and French – 3.63 and 3.00 respectively.

For the group of respondents who had studied one or two semesters of linguistics, German was considered the least pleasant sounding language, with the respondents from the University of the Algarve once again a showing higher value than the other universities. By contrast, the values given by the respondents with one or two semesters of linguistics from the University of the Minho for German and French were equal (3.50).

Recognition of sounds and the ability to reproduce them are important in the learning of any language. This competence also underpins the mother tongue since the
development of phonological awareness contributes to learning how to read and write successfully.\(^\text{30}\)

In the previous section, we presented the results on the basis of average values and simultaneously reflected on them. However, as it is our intention to extrapolate to the rest of the population, we carried out the simple parametric analysis of variance or T test (T test for extension of more than two groups). These tests aim to check three assumptions: independence, normality and homogeneity.

Independence is already a certainty, because a student at the University of Lisbon, for example, cannot belong to the University of Minho or the University of Algarve, or vice versa. Similarly, a student who has not studied any Linguistics units cannot join the group of students who have one or two Linguistics units, or three or more units of Linguistics, or vice versa.

As for the assumption of normality, the dependent variables do not have a normal distribution in each group - University of Lisbon, University of Minho and University of Algarve – from the independent variable. Therefore, it is not possible to carry out simple parametric analysis of variance. As a result a T test was carried out with the University of Lisbon and the University of Minho, but the University of Algarve was excluded. Because the former two samples are above fifty, it is claimed, therefore, the central limit theorem and normality was assumed.

Given the independence and normality, it is possible to check the assumption of homogeneity with the variable University(ies) and the various items making up question 11. Thus, we observe that, on average, in Figure 3.1 - Average Values for the importance of languages by university - individuals at the University of Lisbon (UL) attribute, sequentially, more importance to English, French and German than individuals from the University Minho (UM). The reverse situation occurs for Spanish, such that the individuals of the University of Lisbon attach less importance to Spanish than those from University of Minho.

The most significant difference occurs, however, in UM individuals, since on average they consider German less important \( T(211.827) = -2.22, p = 0.027 \) \((p <0.05)\) and Spanish more important than individuals from UL \( T(259) = 3.113, p = 0.002 \) \((p <0.05)\).

German and French are the most difficult languages for speakers of both universities. However, informants from the University of Lisbon consider French more difficult and German less difficult than speakers from the University of Minho, as shown in Figure 3.2 - *Average values for difficulty of languages by university*. Spanish is considered more difficult for the individuals from the University of Lisbon and English more difficult by the University of Minho.

On average, students from UL consider French \( t(256) = -2.435, p = 0.016 \) \((p <0.05)\).
<0.05)] more difficult and English easier than students from UM \[T (256) = 2.062, p = 0.040 (p <0.05)]

With regard to the language that is considered to be most useful for international communication use, the averages indicate that English is so considered in both universities. The second most useful language differs between the two universities; while the values presented by the University of Lisbon questionnaires point to Spanish, those of the University of Minho point to French (Figure 3.3).

German is used least in situations of international communication by individuals from both universities, and German is used less "by" UM than by the UL. However, in terms of averages, the results are not statistically significant.

![Figure 3.3: Average values for the usefulness of international languages by university.](image)

Both the students from UL and UM consider that English sounds the best and German sounds the worst, as can be seen in Figure 3.4.

![Figure 3.4: Average values for language sonority by university.](image)
Nonetheless, students from UL "hear" French as having a better sound in French and those from UM hear Spanish. Although these are average values, there are no statistical significant differences between students from UL and from UM.

Having made the Simple Parametric analysis of Variance, there were no statistically significant mean differences among the three groups for the variable number of linguistics courses.

We started this text with the notion of the importance of languages, bearing in mind the effects or causes that the political context may have in the articulation between them. Our aim is to learn the degree of importance the students from the Universities of Lisbon, Algarve and Minho attach to German, Spanish, French, and English, how difficult they find them; which it is more useful for the purpose of international communication, and which language sounds best and worst to them.

It was found that: i) students at the University of Minho and University of Lisbon consider English the most important and German the least important, ii) students from both universities classified German as the most difficult and English the least difficult; iii) students from both universities believe that English is the language that best serves their own purposes of international communication, unlike German; and iv) students from both universities believe English sounds best to them and German sounds the worst.

As a final remark, given the study’s focus on the importance and the use expressed by students of the four main European languages, we end this section with the words of Geraldí (1992: 84) "What must be made clear [...] is that the changes in ongoing scientific research do not correspond simply to a fashion, but to the desire to obscure issues of disclosure in the process of understanding the phenomenon we want to explain through science".
Attitudes towards and beliefs about the mother tongue

António Avelar (ULICES\textsuperscript{31}/FLUL\textsuperscript{32})

Flaviane Carvalho (ULICES\textsuperscript{33})

This section explores the students’ attitudes towards their mother tongue and varieties of Portuguese. The respondents were asked to rate items on a scale of 1 (very important), 2 (important), 3 (not important), or 4 (don’t know) for their importance as determinants of knowledge of their mother tongue. The following aspects were probed: lexis and grammar, knowledge of regional varieties in both the spoken and written modes, and socio-cultural awareness. The aim was to gain a global understanding of how the respondents consider their mother tongue.

An initial global analysis of the first aim finds that the results fall into two groups with regard to importance: the first comprising the three items that were considered of greater importance, and the second made up of the items that were considered of lesser importance. In descending order, the first three are command of writing, knowledge of grammatical structures and knowledge of lexis, although the values do not differ significantly (Figure 4.1).

![Figure 4.1: Aspects considered of greater importance for knowledge of mother tongue.](image)

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\textsuperscript{31} University of Lisbon Center for English Studies.

\textsuperscript{32} Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon.

\textsuperscript{33} University of Lisbon Center for English Studies.
Awareness of regional varieties, socio-cultural aspects and diction make up the second group. Summing the average values for the items in each group, a comparison of the two groups is given in Figure 4.2.

![Figure 4.2: Comparison of Group 1 (of greater importance) and Group 2 (of lesser importance) items.](image)

It should be noted that within the second group of items considered of lesser importance, only 38% of the sample believe knowledge of regional varieties to be very important. These results indicate that the respondents value knowledge of the systemic features of language and its written form rather than its socio-cultural aspects, regional and linguistic diversity. This suggests a formalist view of communication. We shall now turn to the results for the proposed determinants individually, taking into account the variable number of linguistics subjects studied.

With regard to the item written expression it was found that the greater the number of linguistic units studied, the less importance given to writing. Although the differences were not significant, it may be that the introductory units in linguistics are not sufficient to relativize the importance of writing.
By contrast, there was a slight decline in the importance attributed to knowledge of grammatical structure with more linguistics units studied. This relation, however, was not significant (Figure 4.4).

The opposite trend is found with regard to lexis; as the number of units of linguistics studied increases, the overall importance attributed to lexis also increases, albeit slightly. In fact, although the number of respondents who considered lexis very important remains relatively stable across the three groups, the number of respondents who considered this item of little
importance declines as the number of linguistic units studied increases. This result suggests that the importance attributed to lexis remains relatively stable during the course of the undergraduate degree.

![Figure 4.5: Importance of lexis by number of linguistics units studied.](image)

The students tend to increasingly regard diction as less important as their knowledge of linguistics increases. The results show that while the relative share of those who consider diction important remains fairly stable across the three groups, the relative share of those who consider it very important declines and the relative share of those who consider it unimportant rises as more linguistics units are studied.

![Figure 4.6: Importance of diction by number of linguistics units studied.](image)
Conversely, the importance attributed to regional customs increases as more linguistics units are studied. Although globally knowledge of regional customs ranked fourth, the results show a clear trend that the greater the knowledge of linguistics, the more regional customs are valued.

Figure 4.7: Importance of socio-cultural information by number of units of linguistics studied.

Lastly, with regard to awareness of dialects, the students tend to increasingly consider this of less importance as their knowledge of linguistics increases.

Figure 4.8: Importance of awareness of dialects by number of units of linguistics studied.
The second part of section 4 focused on students’ attitudes towards their mother tongue, European Portuguese, and other varieties of Portuguese. The respondents were asked to decide whether they considered seven statements about different varieties of Portuguese spoken outside Portugal and the importance of reinforcing the cultural presence of Portuguese to be true or false. The choice of true/false questions both stems from the nature of the information and contributes to the internal validity of the survey. In addition, the respondents were asked to pass judgement on the norms of European and Brazilian Portuguese. The questions covered oral and written forms, including the need for the spelling agreement recently accorded between Brazil and Portugal. The latter topic is covered in two statements (13e and 13g), whose phrasing is deliberately negative, thus adding to the survey’s internal validity. The aim was to determine whether the study of linguistics would affect the students’ attitudes towards their mother tongue.

The first two questions, which concerned the relation of Portuguese with other Portuguese-speaking communities and its place in Europe, tend to elicit consensual reactions; it is hard to argue for a reduction in cultural production or for the irrelevance of knowing about varieties of Portuguese spoken elsewhere, whether it be in the scientific community or the wider community, which includes the media. Although the results were not statistically significant, there is a steady trend for the respondents with greater knowledge of linguistics to value the importance of knowing other varieties of Portuguese more (Figure 4.9).

![Figure 4.9: Importance of knowing varieties of Portuguese spoken in other communities.](image)
There is no progressive trend with regard to the need to invest in the promotion of Portuguese culture. Although the difference in values is slight (1.3%), students who have studied linguistics for one or two semesters show lower values than students who have not studied any linguistics. Despite this variation, the respondents who have studied three or more semesters of linguistics are almost unanimous (97.9%) in believing that it is important to invest in the promotion of culture.

With regard to the comparison between the norms for European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese (see Figures 4.10 and 4.11), the variable number of linguistics units studied has a significant influence on the results. More than half the respondents who had not studied any linguistics believe that both the written and spoken norms of European Portuguese are more correct than the Brazilian, albeit with a slight difference of 3.2% for the written variety. It is also noteworthy that a significant proportion of students who have studied three or more linguistics units also hold the stereotypical view that written European Portuguese is more correct than Brazilian (31.5% for spoken Portuguese and 34.7% for written Portuguese).

As can be observed in Figures 4.10 and 4.11, the evolution in the attitudes towards the two varieties across the groups is gradual, but irregular. In fact, it would appear that many respondents modify the privileged view of European Portuguese as their studies of linguistics increase; the gap is much smaller among the respondents who have studied no or one or two semesters of linguistics than for those who have studied three or more. This suggests that the development of this aspect takes place late in the course cycle.
The results for the respondents’ beliefs concerning their understanding of written Brazilian norms show a similar trend. 10% of the respondents who have not studied linguistics claimed they could not read a text written in Brazilian Portuguese. The figure for respondents who have studied one or two units of linguistics declines slightly to 8.9% while that for respondents who have studied three or more units of linguistics drops significantly to 2.1%.

Questions 13f and 13g aim to probe the students’ views on the need for standardisation of the written European and Brazilian varieties of Portuguese, i.e. they refer explicitly to the spelling reforms that have recently been introduced. The two questions cover aspects of the same belief; one elicits agreement with need to standardise writing while the other characterises the new spelling reform as unnecessary. As already stated, the opposing polarity of
the statements reinforces the validity of the questionnaire. The results for these items are statistically significant\(^{34}\), however, caution is required in their interpretation. While 68% of the respondents who have never studied linguistics claim they agree with the need to standardise the written form of the different varieties of Portuguese, the figure drops by approximately 18% to 49.5% for the respondents who have studied three or more units of linguistics (Figures 4.12 and 4.13). Yet, when the issue explicitly is formulated as the need for the new spelling reform, the latter group appears not to have modified their views on the issue; rather, they show similar values to those who have never studied linguistics (72.7%).

![Figure 4.12: The need for standardisation among the different varieties of written Portuguese.](image)

![Figure 4.13: The need for the new spelling reform.](image)

\(^{34}\) The chi square tests are valid and the results are statistically significant.
The belief does not appear to stem from a developing knowledge of linguistics given that it is the students who have attended one or two units of linguistics that reveal the most negative attitude towards the need to standardise written varieties of Portuguese; 34.1% do not agree with such standardisation (13f), and 86.1% believe the new spelling reform to be unnecessary.

From the above analysis, some key findings emerge. First, the study of linguistics seems to have an impact on the development of beliefs about one’s mother tongue. Second, with some exceptions, there appears to be a systematic evolution in the respondents’ beliefs from the results of the students who have had no contact with linguistics to those of the students who have studied it for three or more semesters.

Despite the aforementioned evolution in beliefs, stereotypical views about the correctness of Portuguese and Brazilian spoken and written norms prevail. The young generation apparently retain the memory of outmoded ideas that are far from those privileged by discourse of the scientific community or the mass media. In view of the presence of a sizeable Brazilian community in Portugal and the vast array of Brazilian soap operas on television, it might have been expected that exposure to Brazilian norms would lead to beliefs different from those expressed in the study.

Finally, the results suggest that knowledge of linguistics has little impact on the respondents’ beliefs about the need to standardise written Portuguese. The topic is a subject of hot debate in Portuguese society, and only the students who had studied one or two units of linguistics did not hold such negative views as the other students, regardless of whether they had studied three or more semesters of linguistics or none.
CHAPTER 5

Linguistic diversity in the European Union

António Avelar (ULICES\textsuperscript{35}/FLUL\textsuperscript{36})

Flaviane Carvalho (ULICES\textsuperscript{37})

Part 5 of the survey sought to ascertain aspects of the students’ beliefs about linguistic diversity in the European Union (EU) and whether they see this diversity as a source of enrichment for the EU or an impediment to communication among the peoples. Questions were included on whether minority languages were effective vehicles of communication in science and technology, and for expressing cultural identity. In light of the conflicting discourses that abound in today’s society, such as the presence of languages in the EU that may be more used to expressing feelings, reasoning, doing business, or exercising power, it was felt that the beliefs of young Portuguese students would be of interest.

An overall analysis of the results shows that the students are essentially divided equally on almost every question of this section. One exception to the rule was 14a, which broached the topic of whether minority languages were able to express cultural identity; 83.4\% of the respondents believe that minority languages are fully able to express identity in the same way that languages such as German and French do. A second exception was the belief concerning equality of access to the services of European institutions for speakers of minority languages; 34.5\% are sceptical with regard to the efficacy of the European institutional norms for minority languages.

When the variable \textit{number of linguistics units studied} is taken into account, the results show that the amount of linguistics studied has little effect on the results. With the exception of question 14f, which focuses on the

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\textsuperscript{37} University of Lisbon Center for English Studies.
potential disadvantage that minority cultures have in asserting themselves before the central decision-making bodies of the EU, the difference between respondents who have not studied linguistics and those who have studied three or more semesters of linguistics is minor: 5.3% for 14a; 7.0% for 14b; 3.8% for 14c; 2.0% for 14d; 2.9% for 14e; and 6.6% for 14g. The fact that the variable 3 semesters or more of linguistics appears to have little impact is all the more noteworthy given that in other sections of the questionnaire the impact of the variable on the results is significant. It may be surprising that the study of linguistics does not bring about developments in the students’ thinking with regard to fallacious statements such as minority languages are limited in their ability to express ideas in the scientific and technological fields (14b); minority languages change more slowly than major ones (14c); and speakers of minority languages of the EU are more open to other cultures (14d). The students were split quite evenly down the middle in their opinions as to the veracity of these statements.

By contrast, as mentioned above, the study of linguistics did prove significant in the results for 14f; there was a difference of 14.1% between the respondents who had never studied linguistics and those who had taken 3 or more units. The question concerned matters of citizenship and equality in asserting one’s culture before decision-making bodies of the EU. The results show that the respondents hold a relatively positive view of the impartiality of European institutions and this view is strengthened with the study of more linguistics (Figure 5.1). The results are statistically significant and are in line with those of 14e, which focused not so much on culture but on the difficulty of accessing the benefits of EU institutions.
Figure 5.1: Minority languages are disadvantaged when it comes to asserting their culture before decision-making bodies of the European Union.

The last question of this section, 14g, broached the topic of learning a minority language. The results indicate that only 28.1% of the respondents showed any interest in learning one of the minority languages of the EU and that this interest declined as more linguistics was studied.

By way of a final comment, it should be noted that the beliefs of these young university students spring from representations and socio-historical constructions that are built up from their linguistic participation in the communities and contexts in which the speakers participate, be they written or oral, informal, family-based, reflexive, or academic. This being the case, the results obtained suggest that further study of these students’ beliefs is warranted. One way to probe deeper into these beliefs would be to take students’ written texts as a base and analyse the linguistic choices, meanings, range, and relevance of the attitudes in question.
At the beginning of the twenty-first century English has reached nearly every corner of the world. A language with such a unique position is referred to as ‘global’. As argued by Crystal (1997), “a language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country” (Crystal, 1997: 3). Indeed, nowadays, English as a global language belongs to every individual, nation and community; it is used practically everywhere and affects all domains of social life.

Although there are no real estimates for the number of English speakers worldwide, as the demand for English Language Teaching (ELT) is constantly increasing, it can be suggested that the number of those who speak English to a certain degree of competence has already reached two billion worldwide (Crystal, 2008). The approximate number of non-native English speakers may vary from 500 million to as high as one billion, as opposed to 320-380 million native English speakers and 300-500 million speakers of English as a second language (Crystal, 2003: 107).

Due to the growing international community of English users, not only has the language changed, but the discourse about it has shifted to capture the new reality of the language. In today’s globalised community, delineating and identifying speakers of English according to limited groups is an arduous task. Users of English are no longer confined to static groups; rather they are users in constant exchange amid different people and diverse situations.
Several models have been put forth by researchers to illustrate English language use in the world, of which Kachru’s framework (1985) is fundamental to comprehend the progress in the spread of English.

Kachru (1985) proposes a model which serves as a framework for observing the several roles English plays across the different nations around the world and in a variety of sociolinguistic situations. The model consists of three concentric circles (Figure 6.1): Inner, Outer and Expanding circle. Each circle symbolises the type of spread, patterns of acquisition and functional domains in which English is used in a range of nations and cultures.

The Inner circle is constituted by those who have English as a first language (L1 English speakers) and who also demonstrate a high proficiency level. These countries – United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – have English as their official language, in addition to it being most of the population’s mother tongue. Furthermore, in relation to
language learning, the standard varieties of these countries are likewise normally regarded as norm-providing for international English language teaching. Hence, according to Kachru’s model, the core of all English speakers is located within the Inner circle countries.

The Outer circle, on the other hand, refers to states where English has an official or important status together with other local languages, and the population is referred to as L2 English speakers. For that reason, the use of English is often circumscribed to areas such as the media, administration and education. These nation states were directly or indirectly colonized by other English speaking countries in the past; thus, the intertwining of English and local languages has brought about a process from which indigenous varieties of English with their own independent features have emerged (e.g. Indian English and Singaporean English). The variety of ‘Englishes’ spoken in these nations are still referred to as norm-developing varieties, as they are usually not yet recognized as standardized varieties to be taught.

Lastly, the Expanding circle refers to environments where English is essentially learned as a foreign language to function as a means of communication at an international level with native speakers of English. In these environments (e.g. in Brazil, China or Portugal), English is characterised by its highly restricted functions, limiting itself to the milieu of tourism, business or international relationships, for instance. As for the English language learners in these contexts, they have no variety of their own and are considered to be norm-dependent followers of standard British English (usually in the form of Received Pronunciation) or standard American English (in the form of General American English), in the great majority of the cases.

If we are to consider Braj Kachru’s Concentric Circle Model (1985), English in Portugal falls under the category of the Expanding Circle, hence joining the most numerous group of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) countries. However, it penetrates through several multicultural contexts predominantly through the domains of business, popular culture, media,
instruction, information technology and advertising. Therefore, even though English in Portugal is considered a foreign language and is generally employed as a means of international communication, rather than for intranational contact, this fact is slowly changing, not only in Portugal, but also in other countries deemed part of the Expanding circle. This situation has led to the need to reflect on Kachru’s neatly organized model, which no longer seems adequate to describe the global and constant shifting uses of English. For instance, some of the visible changes in English language use in Portugal may have to do with the growing immigrant communities and international students who may not know the Portuguese language when arriving in the country, the international and also national advertising campaigns targeted at a young crowd so as to appeal to their cosmopolitan and global consumer side, or the ever increasing use of social networks like Facebook both to (re)connect with friends as well as follow certain organisations, television shows, magazines, bands or festivals, for instance, in order to keep up to date with their most recent developments.

Given these particular examples, it is obvious that English’s greatest use is as a transnational contact language (Canagarajah, 2006), because many of those who start out thinking they are learning English as a foreign language end up using it as a lingua franca (ELF). The concept of ELF may be difficult to define; however, in this particular case we are referring to ‘an additionally acquired language system, which serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages’ (definition available on the VOICE corpus website). According to this interpretation, native English speakers are assumed to be using English as a lingua franca along with non-natives as well.

Bearing in mind the current role of English in Portugal, Part 6 of the questionnaire attempts to give insight into the attitudes towards the use and status of the English language (question 15), as well as to highlight the perceptions of the two main Standard English varieties – British English and American English (question 16). For the convenience of the analysis of this
survey, each question is first studied and interpreted separately, and afterwards the variable established at the beginning is taken into consideration.

As observed in Part 1 of the survey, when students were asked to assess their English proficiency, only a small number of respondents defined their skills as elementary (see Figure 6.2). The percentage of those who consider themselves independent or proficient English speakers is much higher, although the difference between both is not significant. It is worth noting though that students deem themselves as being more proficient in ‘passive’ skills (listening 44% and reading 44.3%) than in ‘active’ usage of the language (speaking 36.5% and writing 36.5%). The reason for such discrepancy may have to do with the fact that students are more exposed to English through television, films, music, books, and advertising, rather than taking a more active conduct, such as communicating orally with other people or in writing.

![Figure 6.2: Respondents’ proficiency in English.](chart.png)
In order to explore the attitudes of university students towards the English language and its status in the Portuguese society, in question 15 respondents had to choose from three options: ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘I do not know’ (see Table 6.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) English is the most important language in the world.</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Knowing English is crucial for professional development.</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) I would love to know how to speak English fluently.</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) English is a very easy language.</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Those who know how to speak English well are always better regarded.</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) I feel at ease when I speak in English.</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) English should be the only compulsory language at school.</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) I would always choose English at school, even if it were not compulsory.</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: University students’ attitudes towards English and its status in the Portuguese society.

Considering the role English plays in our global society, in question 15a 61.6% regard English as the most important language in the world compared with 29.2% who do not agree with the statement. When analysing this statement with the number of linguistic units completed, the study conducted is valid, however, there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Nonetheless, it can be verified that the fewer the number of classes finished, the more the respondents consider English the most important
language (0 linguistics units – 70.4%, 1 or 2 linguistics units – 66.1%, 3 or more linguistics units – 52.8%). In other words, when the due competence is obtained, students find it out very useful to speak other foreign languages besides only English and the importance of English is relativized.

In 15b, ‘Knowing English is crucial for professional development’, 93.1% of the student population answered ‘yes’ to this statement, compared to only 3.5% who answered ‘no’. Of those who said yes, the great majority of students are independent or proficient users of the language (over 85%), which may reflect the importance given to English knowledge in today’s workforce.

Regarding fluency in English, in 15c ‘I would love to know how to speak English fluently’ 90% of the respondents answered ‘yes’ compared to only almost 4% (3.8%) who answered ‘no’. Once again, in general, those who answered ‘yes’ are independent and proficient users of the language.

Contrary to the previous two statements where there is a clear trend in students’ opinions, in 15d ‘English is a very easy language’ opinions are more divided. Nearly 51% (50.9%) of the respondents’ answered ‘yes’, while 39.3% answered ‘no’. From those who answered ‘no’, approximately 20% are elementary users of English, and when regarding each of the four language skills, those who have especially more difficulties in oral communication are those who consider English the most difficult (26.9%).

Further findings show that the majority of students 67.3% believe that speaking English well enhances a person’s status – statement 15e ‘Those who know how to speak English well are always better regarded’. The advantages the English language can provide in terms of social status and career perspectives are primarily recognised by the group of students with 3 or more linguistics units – 76.1% compared with 69.7% of those who have 0 linguistics units and 64.5% with 1 or 2 linguistics units. These results, however, do not show a significant difference in the opinion of the student population in general.

When asked how they feel about speaking English in statement 15f, 63.5% of the respondents feel at ease when speaking the language. It is worth
noting that over 90% of the students who answered ‘yes’ consider themselves as being either independent or proficient users of the language.

The last two statements from question 15 are devised to elicit respondents’ attitudes towards English in the school curriculum. The students in the study had their first contact with a foreign language in grade 5 (K5) and with a second foreign language in grade 7 (K7), with English always as one of the compulsory foreign languages.

When regarding the place of the English language in the school curriculum in 15g, 86.2% are against English being the only obligatory foreign language at school. Giving their opinion to the statement ‘English should be the only compulsory language at school’, students with higher language proficiency give greater significance to linguistic diversity and the growing importance of other foreign languages.

Notwithstanding the fact that the overwhelming majority of respondents are against the dominance of English in the school curriculum, 66% of students would choose English even if it were not an obligatory foreign language at school – statement 15h. Taking into account the variable ‘number of linguistics units completed’, 78.6% of students with 0 linguistics units respond ‘yes’; the same answer is given by 68.6% with 1 or 2 linguistics units and 56.2% with more than 3 linguistics units. Following the results, a trend towards the recognition of the importance of other foreign languages is observed by students with 3 or more linguistics units.

As already referred, in contemporary research Portugal is most frequently referred to as part of the Expanding Circle. The type of English used in the Expanding Circle is defined as ‘norm-dependent’ - that is dependent on the models set by the speakers of the Inner Circle (e.g. UK, USA, Canada). In the case of Portugal, the model is traditionally British English, and less often American English.
In question 16, students were given several statements about their perceptions of different English varieties and they had to mark ‘true’ or ‘false’ for each sentence (see Figure 6.3).

(a) British English is more correct than American English.
(b) American English pronunciation is easier than British English pronunciation.
(c) There are other varieties, but they are less correct than the British and American varieties.

![Figure 6.3: Perceptions on English varieties.](image)

In terms of correctness, comparing British English and American English, 65.4% do not believe that British English is more correct than American English. However, 31.4% still find the British variety more acceptable. When taking into consideration the variable ‘number of Linguistics units completed’, the greater the number of linguistics units completed, the lower the percentage of students who regard British English as more correct than American English. For instance, 13.3% of those who have not yet completed any course in linguistics believe that British is more correct than American English, while only 6.5% of those with three or more semesters of linguistics share the same opinion.

Surprisingly enough, when assessing British English and American English pronunciation, 67.6% state American English as being easier to understand when compared to British English. This may have to do with the fact that Portuguese students are more exposed to American culture in general through television shows, cinema and music. When referring to the number of linguistics units, the percentages vary somewhat; the lowest percentage verified is by those who have successfully completed 3 or more units of linguistics, where only 8.7% deemed the statement false. A possible explanation for this may lie in the students’ wider knowledge of linguistics, in
phonetics for example, which fosters their awareness of the differences between varieties, so there is no preference over one or another regarding intelligibility.

When confronted with other varieties, 65.7% do not see them as less correct than British and American English, compared to 30.8% who do. Regardless of the number of linguistic units completed, the great majority do not consider other varieties less correct when compared to the two major Standard English varieties. These numbers may reflect the fact that the Portuguese have long been a people who have emigrated to other countries, namely English speaking countries in North America, Europe, Africa and Australia.

All in all, from the questions analysed in Chapter 6, we are able to conclude that the great majority of university students agree that English has an important role in Portuguese society, and in their personal and professional development. Nonetheless, the greater the number of linguistic units students have completed, the more they are ready to accept the significance of speaking other foreign languages besides English, and the more they distance themselves from the exonormative models imposed on them in formal education.

Although the predominance of English is not likely to decline in the foreseeable future, it is more likely to develop in a bilingual or multilingual environment where people will be speakers of several additional languages, one of them being English due to its global position.
The aim of this project was to ascertain what attitudes and beliefs young University students hold with regard to language and languages. A questionnaire was sent to three Portuguese universities – the University of Lisbon, the University of Minho and the University of the Algarve – and was answered by students in their first or third year of studies of a humanities course. The questionnaire covered aspects related to the respondent’s mother tongue and foreign languages, the latter focussing on major and minority languages in Europe. We started from two hypotheses: (1) that there may be differences in the attitudes and beliefs across the universities; and (2) that the study of linguistics could impact on the students’ beliefs and attitudes such that the students who had never studied linguistics would hold different beliefs and attitudes from those who had studied linguistics. Although any interpretation of the results is limited by the sample size and distribution of respondents among the three universities, it is nevertheless possible to identify some trends.

With regard to the first hypothesis, it was often not possible to run tests to determine the statistical significance of the results using university as an independent variable. When the tests were found to be valid, the relation between the independent variable, university, and the dependent variable, a belief about language, rarely attained statistical significance. In fact, overall, there was little variation between the universities; the trends in beliefs and attitudes tended to be common across the three universities. This indicates that in general the attitudes towards and beliefs about language and languages do not vary according to the geographical location of the university. There were a few exceptions to this finding with regard to the beliefs about foreign languages. The students of the University of Minho considered German to be...
less important and Spanish more important than did their counterparts in the University of Lisbon. On the other hand the students of the University of Lisbon found French more difficult than English than did the students of the University of Minho. By contrast, there was no difference in the findings between universities for how useful each language was for communication, or how well it sounds. Such beliefs about the importance or the difficulty of a language stem from a myriad of factors. Not only might they include the educational systems of the two universities, but also the society in which each university is embedded and the hopes and aspirations of the students themselves. Only further investigation could throw light on what it is that contributes to the significant difference between the two universities found in this study.

With regard to the independent variable number of linguistics units studied, it was found that the study of linguistics had an impact on the results in some areas, but not in all. Once again it was not always possible to run tests, and when they were valid, the results were rarely statistically significant. However, there is reason to believe that students with a greater knowledge of linguistics tend to relativize stereotypical beliefs about the importance of formalistic grammatical aspects of a language and its status in relation to other varieties or other languages although in some cases they continue to regard such formal aspects as more important than socio-cultural aspects, and regional and linguistic diversity.

For the mother tongue, this development is visible in the trend that students who have studied three or more course units of linguistics accord less importance to grammatical structure, writing and diction, and slightly more to lexis, socio-cultural knowledge and other varieties of Portuguese than students who have studied no linguistics. While these results reflect greater tolerance at, perhaps, a more theoretical level, it does seem to be confirmed when put into practice. There was a greater tendency for students with the greatest knowledge of linguistics to find both the need for standardisation of Brazilian and Portuguese written varieties and the spelling reform less necessary than
the students who had studied no linguistics. In fact, although almost three quarters of those who had studied no linguistics believed standardisation to be necessary, only about a quarter felt the spelling reform to be necessary. This paradox suggests that something else is being called into play. Clearly it is not the ability to understand written Brazilian Portuguese as less than 10% claimed that they were unable to read a text written in this variety, which in it itself is surprising. It would seem that for these students written European Portuguese is bound up with their identity. While conceding that there should be standardisation, these students appear unwilling to accept changes to the norms of their mother tongue. In other words, for them the standardisation should entail aligning Brazilian Portuguese to the European Portuguese norms rather than the other way round, for this same group also tends to believe that European Portuguese is more correct than Brazilian Portuguese. By contrast, far fewer students who had studied the most linguistics seem to privilege such norms of correctness and identity over communication in this way, which suggests that linguistics contributes to students holding a more complex, nuanced view of language.

This tendency is borne out in the students’ beliefs about what is entailed in foreign language knowledge. Similar to the results for the mother tongue, the study of linguistics appears to attenuate the importance attributed to knowledge of grammar and norms of correctness of pronunciation, and increase awareness of the value of socio-cultural knowledge, although the latter remains little valued in comparison with the other features. In the case of pronunciation of a foreign language, the findings were statistically significant. In other words, the study of linguistics does correspond to a change in the students’ beliefs about the importance of correct pronunciation: the greater their knowledge of linguistics, the less the students regard correct pronunciation as important. However, in general, unlike their beliefs about the mother tongue, the students tended to value highly knowledge aspects reflecting the communicative function of a foreign language, in particular oral language reception, rather than the language’s formalistic features. It would seem that although there is a common
trend towards recognition and tolerance of variety within a standard language as student knowledge of linguistics increases, the differences between beliefs about the mother tongue and foreign languages corroborate the conclusion that the functions of a language – to communicate, to express identity – are intricately tied up with the beliefs of what underpins language knowledge.

The trend for students with more linguistics knowledge to relativize the importance of a particular variety of their mother tongue compared to others extends to their beliefs about the relative importance of different major foreign languages. Notwithstanding this finding, English holds a privileged position. The importance attributed to English as the most important, useful, easiest and best sounding foreign language among the major European languages reflects its global dominance and a willingness to embrace it. This is substantiated by students’ willingness to choose to study it even if it were not compulsory. German, on the other hand, is clearly less valued while attitudes towards French and Spanish seem to be shifting. Spanish is perceived as easier and more important than French across all the students, but their ranking in terms of usefulness and sonority is not uniform across the universities or the 3 groups of linguistic knowledge. The findings suggest that as students progress through their studies, they find French relatively less useful for communication and Spanish more so. Overall these trends seem to reflect the self-assessed proficiency of the students in each language; the higher ranked languages – English and Spanish – are those in which the students claimed to be more proficient. Yet, despite the generalised importance accorded to English, fewer students with greater linguistic knowledge find it so than students with no linguistic knowledge, and the percentage of the former group of students who regard British and American English to be equally correct is similar to that of those who find Brazilian and European Portuguese to be equally correct. These findings, once again, suggest that the study of linguistics contributes to a more open, tolerant view of language and languages.
Although the students do not believe different languages to be equally important or useful, it is still surprising to find that despite the study of linguistics, many, in fact around half, of the students surveyed continue to hold stereotypical beliefs about the capacity of minority languages in the European Union to express ideas in scientific and technological fields or their capacity for change. The amount of linguistics that the students had studied had no effect on these beliefs and opinions were generally split down the middle. By contrast, the impact of linguistics on beliefs concerning the equality of status accorded to these minority languages by the European Union was significant, and these students felt that being a speaker of a minority language did not constitute a disadvantage for access to decision making in the European Union.

Taken overall, the findings of this study suggest that greater knowledge of linguistics contributes to the development of a more nuanced, complex view of language and languages and a reduction in stereotypical views of language concerning norms of correctness, use and complexity although some stereotypical views remain. The study suffers from some limitations. The main one is that number of responses received from the different universities varied, with the result that the independent variable university was dropped from the analysis in some cases. A second limitation is that only the study of linguistics was taken as a second independent variable. Over the course of their university studies, students are exposed to many different subjects, so while it is possible to argue that the study of linguistics contributes to changes in attitudes and beliefs, it is not possible to say whether it is the main contributor. Only further investigation could throw light on this matter.

From these findings other topics for research have emerged. In particular, the question of identity offers rich ground for further exploration, for the findings of this study suggest that while foreign languages are valued for their communicative functions, this is not necessarily the case for the mother tongue. The relations between identity and other beliefs about language – both the mother tongue and foreign languages – warrant deeper investigation.
The students from the humanities courses that were surveyed are exposed to a minimum of one or two semesters of linguistics in the course of their study. While it was found that one or two semesters can have an impact on their beliefs about language and languages, the impact tended to be greater for those who had completed three or more units of linguistics. These students will continue to modify their attitudes and beliefs when they leave university and are exposed to different practices that reflect other values. Their opportunities to interact with speakers of other varieties of Portuguese and foreign languages will depend on the demands of the professions and jobs they undertake and their own initiatives. In a globalised world where digital technology facilitates communication, it is reassuring that on completion of their studies, the students who have the greatest knowledge of linguistics seem to be carrying with them fewer stereotypical views of language and languages than they may have had when they entered their course.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1

1. Age: __________

2. Sex: □ Male □ Female

3. Nationality: __________

4. a) University: ______________ b) Course: ______________

5. What linguistic classes have you attended?
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

6. The year of the first enrolment: __________

7. Evaluate your competence according to the following criteria:
   A = Elementary User B = Independent User C = Proficient User

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
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<td>German</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Have you already used a foreign language in Portugal?
   □ Yes □ No

   If yes, which one or which ones?
   __________________________________________________________________

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PART 2

9. Rank each item in importance using the numbers 1 to 4.
1- very important  2- important  3- not important  4- do not know

Knowing a foreign language implies...

a) being able to use the grammar correctly. ___

b) knowing the customs and cultures of the native speakers of the foreign language. ___

c) being able to write fluently and correctly. ___

d) having good pronunciation. ___

e) having a wide vocabulary. ___

f) being able to understand its speakers. ___

10. Mark each statement True or False.

a) It is more important to know how to write than to know how to speak a foreign language. ___

b) In a foreign language being fluent is more important than having good pronunciation. ___

c) In a foreign language it is more important to have a wide vocabulary than to know the grammar rules. ___
PART 3

11. German, Spanish, French and English are the most widely spoken languages in the EU; rank these languages on the scale from 1 to 4, taking into account the following aspects:

a) the degree of importance:

1 - the most important
4 - the least important

☐ German
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ English

b) the level of difficulty:

1 - the most difficult
4 - the least difficult

☐ German
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ English

c) usefulness of language for international communication:

1 - the most efficient
4 - the least efficient

☐ German
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ English

d) language accents:

1 - the best-sounding
4 - the worst-sounding

☐ German
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ English
PART 4

12. Rank each statement (a - f) in importance using the numbers 1 to 4.

1 – very important  2 – important  3 – not important  4 – I don’t know

To know my mother tongue means...

a) to have an extensive vocabulary. __

b) to know its grammatical structures. __

c) to be able to understand speakers from different areas of the country. __

d) to be able to write adequate texts for different situations. __

e) to have a good pronunciation. __

f) to be familiar with local uses and customs. __

13. Decide whether the following statements are True (T) or False (F).

a) It’s important to know the linguistic varieties of the other countries / communities where Portuguese is spoken. __

b) It is necessary to invest in cultural production (literature, music, cinema, etc.) in Portuguese, to strengthen the Portuguese culture in the European Union. __

c) The Portuguese spoken in Portugal is more correct than that spoken in Brazil. __

d) The Portuguese written in Portugal is more correct than that written in Brazil. __

e) I can’t understand a text written in Brazilian Portuguese. __

f) I agree with the standardisation of the linguistic varieties in Portuguese speaking countries, so as to strengthen the Portuguese language in the world. __

g) The new orthographic agreement is unnecessary. __
PART 5

14. In relation to minority languages, mark each of the following statements as True or False.

a) Some minority languages do not truly reflect a cultural identity, in the same way that German or French do. ___

b) The minority languages of the European Union (EU) are limited in their ability to communicate effectively, particularly in the scientific or technological fields. ___

c) Minority languages have evolved more slowly than major languages. ___

d) Speakers of a minority language of the EU are in general more open to dialogue with other cultures. ___

e) Minority languages are disadvantaged when it comes to accessing the benefits of EU institutions. ___

f) Minority languages are disadvantaged when it comes to asserting their culture before decision-making bodies of the European Union. ___

g) I plan on learning a EU minority language. If True, state which. ___
15. Mark with an ‘X’ the options to the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) English is the most important language in the world.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Knowing English is crucial for professional development.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would love to know how to speak English fluently.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) English is a very easy language.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Those who know how to speak English well are always better regarded.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) I feel at ease when I speak English.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) English should be the only compulsory language at school.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) I would always choose English at school, even if it were not compulsory.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Considering different varieties of English, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

a) British English is more correct than American English. ___

b) American English pronunciation is easier than British English pronunciation. ___

c) There are other varieties, but they are less correct than the British and American varieties. ___