Jersey is the largest island within the British Protectorate of the Channel Islands and has long been a focus of socioeconomic emigration. The Madeiran Portuguese started to arrive in the 1960s, initially as seasonal agricultural workers but more recently to work in the service sectors with the advent of a sustained tourist industry, particularly in the capital city of St. Helier.

Earlier research highlighted the diverse nature of contexts of language use and ideologies of sociolinguistic empowerment in the workplace held by members of the Portuguese diaspora (***** 2013). The present paper now explores individual sociolinguistic experiences and ideologies by examining the relationship between heterogeneous identification practices and ideological positionings that underpin multilingual and multivocal discourse. A critical interactional sociolinguistic perspective is adopted through the use of a discrete set of personal narratives generated through semi-structured interviews that are based on discursive repertoires. Observational techniques of everyday interactions in the primary contexts of interest (trans-local workspaces and social spaces) confirm that linguistic skills acquire significant symbolic capital, even as a form of tacit knowledge. By problematising age as the key social variable, we consider whether younger respondents are better empowered to use such skills for access to prestige sociolinguistic, sociocultural and socioeconomic networks outside those experienced by their older compatriots. Thus, we find that their mutable positioning as social actors across the boundary between the receptor community and the Portuguese diaspora is starting to challenge ideologies regarding the relationship between the notion of homeland, migrant language and identity, and this now engenders tensions of uniformity and diversity between different age groups within the diaspora itself.


Keywords: ideology, multilingualism, identity.