

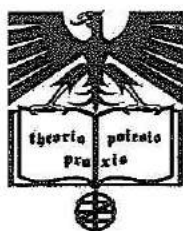
# O Poder e a Persistência dos Estereótipos

# The Power and Persistence of Stereotyping

Sob a coordenação de/Edited

by

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# A NEW STEREOTYPE IN THE MAKING: "IMIGRANTES DE LESTE" IN THE PRESS

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## I Introduction

Stereotypes proved to be a very convenient way to pigeonhole and make comprehensible social attitudes, behaviour and values. They are developed, maintained and reinforced in the course of social constructive practice. Sometimes taken and presented as plain truths, stereotypes are creative. They encode political and economic considerations of powerful social groups and institutions. Mass media adopt these attitudes and reproduce them in their discourse, using available techniques to stress certain features. As a result, the audience is presented with an opinion which is not always easily verified and often carefully veiled, so that it can be accepted by the audience as their own.

This paper aims to compare the way the stereotype of "imigrantes do Leste" is being constructed in the Portuguese press to serve as the group representation by the press of the Russian-speaking community. The textual analysis of the data follows the framework and the ideas of M. A. K. Halliday (1978), R. Hodge (1990), N. Fairclough (1992, 1995), R. Fowler (1999) and M. Talbot (1999). It focuses on such linguistic mechanisms as word choice, modality and transitivity to show how they reflect power relationships between the "participants" of newspaper texts and how writers may influence their readers' opinions. The paper points out the cultural elements used for the construction of the stereotype in the press and underlines the role of linguistic features in the process of stereotyping, critically viewing the relationships between language, society and ideology.

## II The data, objectives and methodology of the paper

The analysis of representation of Eastern European immigrants in the Portuguese press is based on texts from *Público* and *Expresso*. All the newspaper data were collected in March 2003, the period of a heated discussion around the new immigration law, and in June-July 2003, when it was published. The choice of the newspapers is dictated by the decision to compare the vision of the phenomenon by *Público* as the more left-oriented newspaper, to that of *Expresso*

that claims to address a general public. It should be noted, though, that, in comparison with *Público*, *Expresso* proved to have published considerably fewer articles about the immigrants.

The immigrant press is presented in the data by four Russian language newspapers: *Slovo*, *Nasha Gazeta*, *Immigrant* and *Maiak Portugalii*, observed in their evolution from the moment of their appearance in August 2001 to September 2003. Sample newspaper texts were taken for the analysis: "I Can't Live without Art" (*Maiak Portugalii*, 22 Aug. 2003) and "Os Homens que Apareceram do Leste", "Eles Estiveram Aqui" (*Público*, 28 Mar. 2003). All the texts can be consulted in the Appendix. The English translation is my own.

The objectives of the analysis are the following:

- to point out the sources for the construction of a collective image of Eastern European immigrants in the Portuguese press;
- to reveal the linguistic mechanisms used in the texts selected from the Portuguese Press;
- to outline the resistance strategies undertaken in the newspapers of the immigrant community.

The analytic framework for textual analysis combines the systemic functional approach (Halliday, 1978) with some of the elements of a critical language awareness programme in EFL (Wallace, 1992), as well as those of critical analysis of media discourse (Fowler, 1999; Reah, 1998). According to Halliday, the social system (or culture) is seen as a construction of meanings—as a semiotic system, hence a social context is "a temporary construct or instantiation of meanings from the social system" (Halliday, 1978, p.189). The functions of language utilize the following components of social context to determine which register is used:

<i>Component of social context</i>	<i>Functional-semantic component through which typically realized</i>
1 field (social process: the activity referred to and/or ongoing at the time of discourse)	experiential (language as reflection)
2 tenor (social relationship between participants)	interpersonal (language as action)
3 mode (symbolic code, the medium)	textual (language as texture)

Figure 1 (After Halliday, 1978, p.189 and Fowler, 1999, pp.35-36)

This, more general, framework can be specified to bring to light linguistic mechanisms for reproducing and shaping cultural attitudes in the mass media, once the distinctive properties of media interaction are understood (Fairclough, 1995). The interaction in the mass media in general, and in the press in particular, is one-sided, as there is no immediate response from the audience. So

the reader has to be constructed through a set of assumptions about shared knowledge, beliefs and cultural values. A sense of group solidarity is created, which does not always represent the facts. The newspaper writer has to negotiate the register and simulate the interaction by changing his/her own subject position in accordance with the chosen subject position for the reader. Moreover, the writer has to voice the institutional statements and the words of the characters of the story. Consequently, any newspaper text will have a "population" of real and imaginary characters into which the reader is drawn (Talbot, 1992, p. 174) with corresponding prior texts (Fairclough, 1995, p. 14). An actual reader, when reading the text, will have to agree or disagree with the subject positions (and the corresponding views) reserved for him/her by the writer. Any text, consequently, will present the reader with an opinion embedded in the set of choices made by the newspaper writer at the following levels:

- visual (graphological) level
- lexical level
- structural and grammatical (syntactic) level

The impact at the visual level is made up of the graphic format of the page, the style and size of print, the composition and deployment of photographs, drawings, cartoons, tables, maps and captions. For example, when looking at the newspaper headline "Os homens que apareceram do Leste", readers' attention will be undoubtedly focused on the word "Leste" [East], since its font is 6 times larger than that of any other word of the headline. This fact may be interpreted as an indication of the attempt to generalise rather than personalise the account.

The writer's position, along with that of the constructed reader, affect the choice of linguistic means at the two following levels. In Halliday's linguistic theory, the choice at the lexical level determines the ideational structure of the text that reflects underlying stereotypes. Thus, in the same headline, the chosen label "os homens" [men] seems to further assert generalization. Later, the participants of the text are to be engaged in some kind of relationship, so the choice will concern:

- assigning either active or passive roles to the participants by placing them into agent vs. affected participant positions (transitivity)
- expressing the perceived desirability, likelihood, certainty or truth of the reported event/action (modality).

For instance, the use of the verb "apareceram" [appeared] rather than "vieram" [came] in the headline robs "the men" of an active position. By placing consistently one group of participants in the subject and the other – in the object positions, the writer of the text will encode the asymmetrical power relations present in the society (Fowler, 1999, p.95). The analysis of the modality of the text also helps to disclose the writer's position (usually originated by the

institutional and dominant in the society) towards the phenomenon or event. The modality can be expressed by modal verbs as well as adverbs (*certainly, doubtfully, probably, etc.*) and adjectives (*unlikely, fortunate, etc.*). The absence of modal markers may signify the perceived certainty and truth of the statement.

Furthermore, the participant representations are to be organised into a coherent text by employing different cohesive devices. At this stage, the author will use various strategies in order to:

- foreground information (e.g. by placing it at the beginning or end of the clause/paragraph);
- background information (e.g. by excluding it from the text; by building the text on a certain assumption; by nominalising verbs).

In this analytic framework, the text is seen as one of the sets of options. These sets of options sometimes form systematic patterns and tendencies, providing the key to stereotyping and defining the ideological stand of the newspaper. On the whole, the obtained texts will “constitute versions of reality in ways which depend on the social positions and interests and objectives of those who produce them” (Fairclough, 1995); they will present the reader with a “solution” to the power conflict within the society. Common features of texts connected by the phenomenon or event they describe (i.e. intertextuality (Fairclough, 1995)) allow journalists to base critical analysis on just a few texts.

The main linguistic options at the different levels of representation are set out in the following table that attempts to summarize the features analysed by R.Fowler (1999), C. Wallace (1992) and D. Reah (1998).

<b>Visual (graphological) level</b>		Graphic format of the page Style and size of print Composition and deployment of illustrations and captions
<b>Lexical level</b>	Word choice (ideational elements)	<b>Naming strategies:</b> colloquial, serious, explicitly/implicitly derogatory <b>Connotations:</b> neutral, emotionally loaded <b>Deixis:</b> Personal pronouns: exclusive, inclusive Time: adverbs and tense Place: adverbs and the demonstratives <b>Semantic field:</b> specific, generally used
<b>Syntactic level (structural and grammatical)</b>	Interpersonal elements	<b>Modality:</b> truth, obligation, permission, desirability and likelihood (verbs, adverbs and adjectives) <b>Transitivity:</b> participants (agent/ affected participant) predicate circumstance
	Textual elements	<b>Theme:</b> fronting <b>Transformation:</b> nominalization, passivization <b>Cohesive relations</b>

Figure 2. Levels of choices in press representation (Fowler, 1999; Wallace, 1992 and Reah, 1998).

### III Eastern European immigrants in the Press.

#### III.1 Need for the new stereotype

Being “versions of reality”, media texts are sensitive to changes within a society, even more so when the “social cultural fabric is undergoing fundamental transformation” (Dunkerley et al., 2001: 136). Thus, in spite of the collapse of the USSR and the Warsaw Bloc, Eastern Europeans in Portugal had been still called “soviéticos” [Soviets] well until the end of the 1990s. It may have been due to the fact that there were too few people from the East of Europe actually living in the country to affect in some way the sense of social identity of the Portuguese. The situation had changed considerably with the steady influx of Eastern European immigrants from the 2000s onwards: a new Portuguese social identity had to include the element of contact with the newcomers, had to be re-defined in terms of their relation to this group of migrants. Moreover, the need emerged to take legislation measures to regulate their entrance and stay in Portugal. These factors led to the new coinage “imigrantes do Leste” [immigrants from the East], which, on the one hand, reflected the concern about the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union to the East of Europe, and, on the other hand, distinguished this group from the other main immigrant groups (from Brazil and Africa). Thereafter the work on the construction of the new stereotype was under way.

#### III.2 Sources of the construction of the new stereotype

Observations on the representation of Eastern European immigrants in the Portuguese mass-media from 2000 to the present date allow us to outline the following four sources:

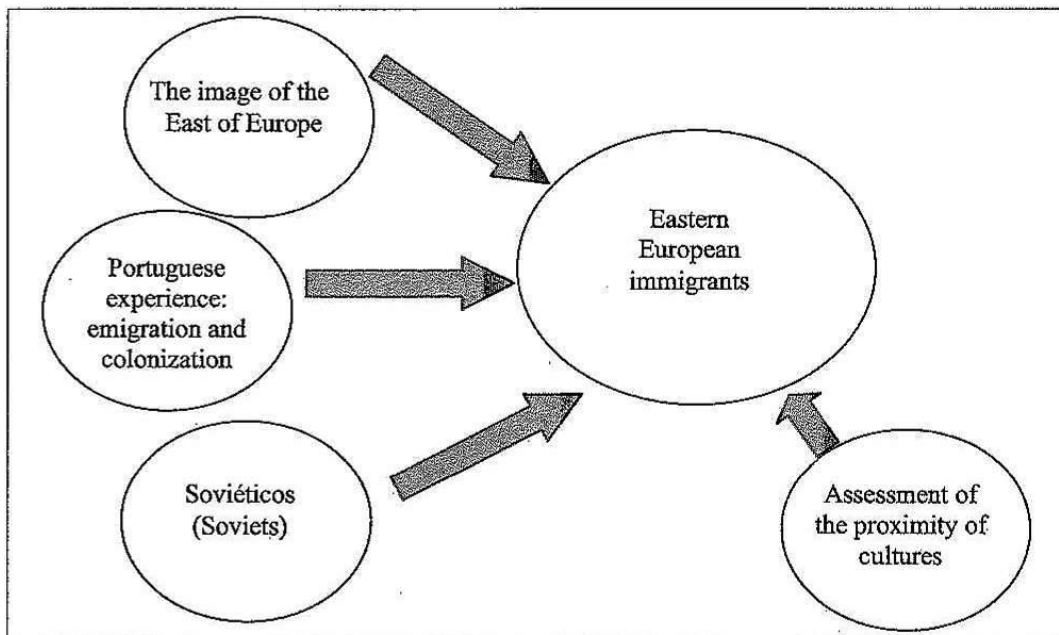


Figure 3. Sources of the construction of the new stereotype in the Portuguese press

Each of the indicated sources will be commented upon and specified with examples in the following sections of the paper.

### *III.2.1 The image of the East of Europe*

Facing the inadequacy of the stereotypes linked with the Soviet bloc, the Portuguese press had to construct a new kind of generalization for the East of Europe. It started by regularly replacing reports from individual countries with general conclusions about this part of Europe, which came to be systematically associated with certain socioeconomic phenomena. Simultaneously, its potential effect on the economic and social life of Portugal was being worked out. On the one hand, it was presented as a potential market for Portuguese goods and services:

- (1) *Portugal lança companhia turística no Leste europeu* (*Público*, 17 Jun 2003)
- (2) *"Saber Amar" desperta a interesse do Leste* (*Público*, 28 Mar 2003)

On the other hand, it was linked to violence and crime:

- (3) *Consumo de heroína no Leste europeu supera média europeia* (*Público*, 26 Jun 2003)
- (4) *Portugal é um país de destino para pessoas traficadas de países da Europa de Leste* (*Público*, 13 Jun 2003)

The East of Europe was presented as posing a threat to national employment:

- (5) *Emprego em alto risco: Força de trabalho nacional pouco qualificada e mais cara* (*Expresso*, 21 Jun 2003) and considered a burden on the taxpayers' money:
- (6) *Processos de máfias do Leste arrasam contas dos tribunais* (*Público*, 25 Mar 2003)

In November 2002, ACIME (the state institution for the study of immigration and ethnic minorities) sponsored an opinion poll carried out by the Universidade Católica. Its objective was to study the attitudes of Portuguese people towards immigrants. The poll results clearly show that the Portuguese have taken on board the media associations linked with Eastern European immigrants. According to the poll, 73.4 per cent of the Portuguese respondents expressed their fear of losing job to the higher qualified immigrants from the East. On the whole, this group of immigrants is associated by the Portuguese with "mob, prostitution, violence and conflicts in general" (*Expresso*, 14 Jun 2003). These attitudes and associations are similarly reflected in the analysed newspaper texts. Moreover, newspaper writers help to consolidate them, applying different strategies, which range from mere repetition to manipulation with such linguistic mechanisms as vocabulary choice, foregrounding, modality and transitivity. In the next section, I will provide an illustration from the

Portuguese newspaper data for each of the sources for the newly constructed stereotype.

### III.3 *The sources: linguistic consolidation*

#### III.3.1 *East of Europe*

Although “Os homens que apareceram do Leste” (*Público*, 28 Mar 2003) was intended to review a film that documented the life of five Eastern European immigrants in Portugal, the author, Ricardo Dias Felner, goes beyond the review to discuss the social phenomenon of “immigration from the East”, along with its representation in the Portuguese media. Thus, apart from the words dictated by the genre (“*cena*”, “*ganha protagonismo*”, “*carácteres principais*”, “*mensagem*”), the author includes the vocabulary of legal discourse (“*legalização*”, “*exploração laboral*”, “*angariação de mão-de-obra ilegal*”). Dias Felner not only chooses to foreground the words describing violence by placing them at the end of clauses (“*Iuri...com a cara cheia de sangue, depois de ter sido espancado*”), but also asserts their relevance by using the modality marker of certainty (“*A violência estava.. sempre presente*”). In this way, the association of “the men from the East” with violence is reinforced.

#### III.3.2 *Portuguese experience of emigration and colonization*

According to the cited poll, 74.7 per cent of the Portuguese have at least one relative who emigrated. Between 1960 and 1973, more than a million and a half of Portuguese left the country to work abroad (Barreto, 2002, p.7). So, naturally, evoking the emotional experience of emigration and colonization provides journalists with an excellent opportunity to bring the phenomenon of immigration closer to their audience. First of all, the authors have recourse to recognizable words and word combinations. In the textual data, it is reflected in the use of emotionally loaded vocabulary: “*labuta*” [toil] to describe hard work, “*calvário*” and “*escravatura*” to imply the oppression. Life is equalled with “*existência*”, job and lodgings are “*precarious*”. The word “*saudade*” is bound to win an emotional response from any Portuguese reader. Secondly, the elements of deixis (*O espaço tem aquela desarrumação das residências temporárias*) imply shared knowledge so as to create a sense of solidarity between the author and the reader.

#### III.3.3 *Soviéticos*

Rather than discarding the old stereotype of “*Soviéticos*”, newspaper authors recycled many of their presumed features such as heavy drinking, a consumerist drive and emotional reserve. In fact, the authors claim no difference between Soviet and ex-Soviet interlocutors: .. *desabafos – sentimentos improváveis entre conversadores soviéticos (ou ex-soviéticos, não importa)*. Supposedly shared



assumptions are presented as unquestionable truth, with the modality markers of certainty: “o apelo consumista, *cliché que define os eslavos pós-soviéticos*”.

### III.3.4 Proximity of cultures

Brought into close contact with Eastern Europeans, the Portuguese have to examine the differences in customs, religion and social behaviour. According to the poll results, “cultural and social values, religious traditions, children rearing and sexual behaviour” of people from Eastern Europe are perceived to be quite similar to Portuguese, though not as close as those of Brazilians (*Expresso*, 14 Jun 2003). For example, in one of the newspaper articles, an old Portuguese woman who witnessed an orthodox religious service is reported to have fled the church, because she found the happening “very strange” (*Público*, 26 Jun 2003). On the whole, the newspaper writers choose to build their texts around the difference of cultures, creating a dichotomy between “us” and “them”, where “us” means the Portuguese readers (often along with the author) and “them” implies Eastern European immigrants. The dichotomy can be seen to run as deep as clause structure. The following table illustrates this point.

Linguistic choices	we=Portuguese	they =Eastern European immigrants
Naming strategies	Full names ( <i>José Filipe Costa</i> ) Occupation ( <i>realizador, operador de câmara</i> )	First names ( <i>Edik</i> ) or no names Relationship ( <i>primo, marido</i> ) Generic ( <i>homens, pessoas</i> )
Transitivity	1. Agents of Actions 2. Active Participants in Events 3. Actors in Verbal processes 4. Sensers in Mental processes	1. Affected Participants 2. Participants in States, Events 3. Actors in Verbal processes 4. Sensers in Mental processes

Figure 4. Dichotomy in the Portuguese data

The authors chose differing naming strategies for the participants so as to move away from the people to the context, to give more weight to the Portuguese and, at the same time, to emphasise the isolation of the immigrant community from the outer world.

The category of transitivity helps reveal the way the author allocates unequally power between the participants. Adapting the systemic functional approach applied in English language media studies (N.Fairclough, 1995, p.110) to study the use of transitivity in Portuguese newspaper texts, several conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) Whenever the participants are involved in an Action (SVO structure), the immigrants are consistently placed in the Object position, affected by the Portuguese Agents: *Queríamos **filmar um homem que imigra***.. The immigrants may even be affected by inanimate nouns (*filme, garagem*), as in: *O **filme agarra** estas **personagens***..

- 2) In Events (intransitive, SV structure) the Portuguese are presented as Active participants more often than the immigrants: *Fazíamos de escudo...*
- 3) The immigrants are placed in Verbal and Mental processes (related to acts of talking and feeling) much more often than the Portuguese: *Ele próprio sofre...*

On the whole, the immigrants are opposed to the Portuguese participants in such a way that they have no say in what is happening to them, their presence does not affect anyone or anything. This is how the authors see the asymmetry of power in Portuguese society: the future of immigrants is not in their own hands but is decided by someone else.

#### ***III.4 The immigrants in the Portuguese data: overall picture***

Now that each of the sources that help to construct the stereotype of Eastern European immigrants in the Portuguese texts has been considered, the features of the stereotype can be listed as follows:

- Passivity
- Powerlessness before the Portuguese and the Mafia
- Temporariness
- Emotional reserve and cultural distance

Portuguese newspaper writers choose to emphasise or simply announce these qualities (sometimes to question their relevance) in the texts thus helping to reinforce the stereotype. But what is being excluded, omitted from the texts? Even though giving a rather detailed description of Eastern European immigrants' plight, the authors offer neither explanations nor solutions. Moreover, they often employ strong combinations of several linguistic mechanisms (nominalisation, deixis, modality, word choice) to lead the reader away from seeking these things:

*Basta aquela clausura constante na garagem, basta um diálogo fortuito sobre a discriminação nas filas do supermercado, basta o desabafo de Edik dizendo "que irá sempre sentir-se estrangeiro" ou o seu olhar esmagado pelos medonhos blocos habitacionais de Mem Martins, para percebermos que a apregoada solidariedade lusa para com os imigrantes de Leste é, na melhor das hipóteses, mal entendida.*

#### ***III.5 Resistance to the constructed stereotype***

Since the Portuguese political scene is not homogeneous, its changes and movements are bound to be echoed in the Press. Immigration policy has been highly debated in Portuguese political circles, hence the changing nature of

discursive practices around it. Liberal newspapers and those of the government opposition can be observed to challenge some of the assumptions about Eastern European immigration.

However, the emerging press of Eastern European immigrant communities also plays its part in the process of stereotype construction. Driven by the desire to create a social identity for the community, supported by immigrant associations, it has become increasingly active. Apart from informing immigrants about the news from their native countries, it gives them moral support and legal advice. On the other hand, it interacts with the discursive practices of the Portuguese press, challenging each source of the stereotype construction:

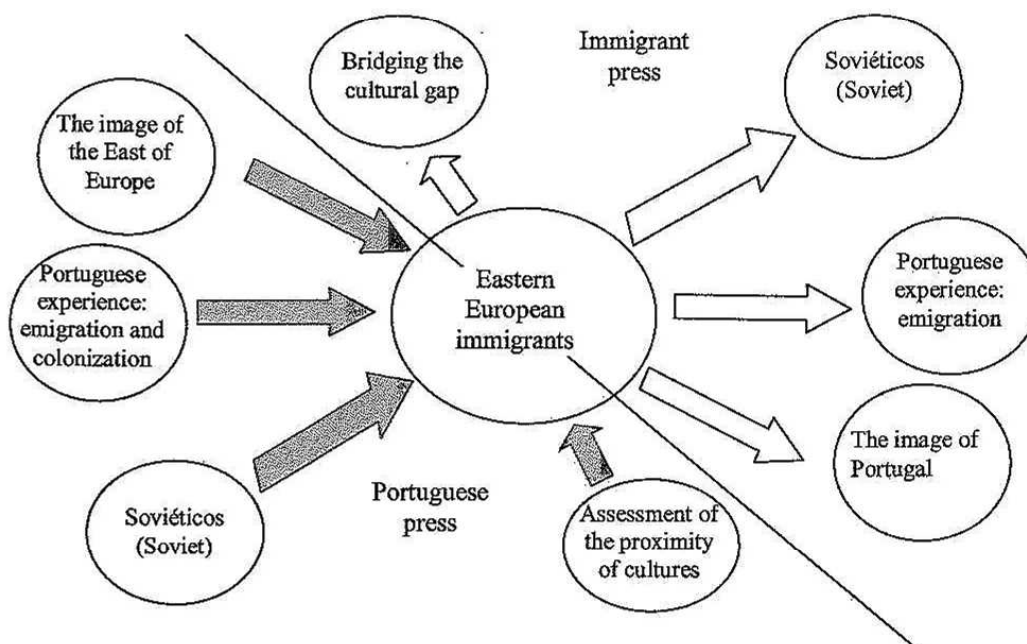


Figure 5. Immigrant vs. Portuguese Press

Thus, when in the Portuguese media the East of Europe is associated with crime and violence, immigrant newspapers open a new regular column *Portugal: criminal chronicle* (*Slovo, Immigrant, Nasha Gazeta*). The immigrant press compares the Portuguese experience of migration with that of Eastern European immigrants in Portugal to conclude that, though similar in some ways (*Like at home- Maiak Portugalii, 22 Aug 2003*, an item on the agencies trafficking Portuguese to the Great Britain, Ireland and Germany and the plight of the emigrants), they also differ (*We complain considerably more rarely-* op.cit.). [Note the implied division into “we” and “they”]. The immigrant press also challenges the “heavy drinking” cliché of the old stereotype by offering an alternative image of an Eastern European teetotaler: *Someone longs to have a drink, someone longs to play cards, but I get hold of my paints at any free minute* (*Maiak Portugalii, 22 Aug 2003*). To facilitate social integration of Eastern European immigrants

into Portuguese society, the press of the immigrant community informs its readers about the culture and language of the host country, encourages personal involvement in Portuguese social life by depicting creative and socially active immigrants.

However, the asymmetry of power in the relations between the Portuguese and immigrants finds its way into immigrant newspaper texts, which becomes especially remarkable when the two groups are brought in contact. Moreover, the modality markers indicate that a more active immigrant is seen by both groups as something hypothetical:

[Portuguese about immigrants]: *They **could** form their own clubs of some kind, where they **would be able** to express themselves;* [an immigrant about other immigrants]: *I **wish** that all immigrants **would** find their calling* (*Maiak Portugali*, 22 Aug 2003).

#### **IV Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to adapt the systemic functional framework (Halliday, 1978) which was applied to media studies (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Reah, 1998 and Fowler, 1999) to produce a textual analysis of the representation of Eastern European immigrants in both the Portuguese and immigrant press. Seen as part of the stereotyping process, press representation is shown to draw on four main sources (i.e. the image of the East of Europe, Soviet, assessment of the proximity of cultures and the Portuguese experience of migration/colonization). Whereas Portuguese newspaper writers try to consolidate these components linguistically, journalists of the Russian language immigrant press try to contest their adequacy. This paper has striven to illustrate this point by studying the authors' linguistic choices at the lexical and structural level.

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### ***Newspapers***

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