

The Dialect of Alghero: continuity and change

Maria-Pilar Perea

1. Introduction

A variety of political and economic factors led to the presence of Catalan in the city of Alghero (Sardinia) from the fourteenth century onwards.¹ As a result of the relationship between language and power, Catalan was the language of the people and government until the seventeenth century, although in the sixteenth century the city had received new settlers (Ligurians, Provençals, Sardinians, Sicilians, and Neapolitans) as a result of plague (Caria 1990: 35). Later, Spanish and Italian immigrants established themselves in the city, and Alguerès was left without any Catalan political support, although the dialect continued to be spoken. From the seventeenth century the relationship with Catalonia was interrupted. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that cultural contacts were established.

Two main factors explain the process of transition from the imported form of Catalan to the Alguerès dialect: 1) time, the cause of all linguistic changes and evolutions, and 2) space, determined not only by the migration of Catalan people, who spoke Catalan with a number of subdialects (people from Barcelona, Valencia, Tortosa, and Majorca; see Caria 1990: 34 and 2006: 41),³ but by Sardinian and Italian as well. Alguerès was formed by a hybridisation of the languages of the settlers and, as such, bears testimony to many Sardinian, Italian and Castilian influences.

In spite of its idiosyncratic and archaic character, Alguerès shares certain phonetic, morphological and lexical traits with other dialectal varieties of Catalan: for instance the retention of the labio-dental voiced phoneme, the absence of the first person singular ending of the present indicative, and terms such as *colgar-se* (S[tandard] Cat[alan] *anar al llit*), ‘to go to bed’, or *forqueta* (S. Cat. *forquilla*), ‘fork’, among many others, which are characteristic of this subdialect. The aim of this paper is to determine how far these features have been maintained in contemporary Alguerès, and whether the presence of Sardinian and of Italian languages is likely to contribute to its dedialectalisation, or even to its death, in the near future.

¹ The city became a Catalan colony under Peter IV of Aragon in 1354. For a historical overview, see Budruni (1989 and 1890), Leprêtre (1995), and Caria (1990, 1991 and 2006).

³ Together with Catalan and Valencian settlers, people from Aragon also came to Alghero (Manunta 1988: 23).

The basis for this analysis is a comparison of equivalent data compiled by two surveys separated by nearly 100 years. The first survey was carried out by Antoni M. Alcover, the founder of Catalan dialectology, in 1913. The second survey was conducted in 1997 by members of the University of Barcelona's Department of Catalan Philology as part of the general project 'Variation in language. Present-day Catalan'. The comparison that follows focuses on certain phonetic, morphological, and lexical aspects. The study considers the direction that the evolution of Alguerès has taken and discusses the question of the dialect's future and survival. First, we present the main sociolinguistic features.

2. A short sociolinguistic overview

According to the last census ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica) of 2005, the town of Alghero (including its outskirts and surrounding countryside) has about 39,372 inhabitants (Caria 2006: 64), 7,000 of whom speak Alguerès (that is to say, 17.8 % of the population). The city lies in the province of Sassari in north-western Sardinia. Its municipal area is contiguous to the Sardinian township of Sassari, Olmedo, Putifigari, and Villanova.

It is well known that a process of linguistic substitution of the dialect is underway due to the pressure of Italian, which is the official language and spoken by most of the population. However, Alguerès is also surrounded by other languages and dialects, such as the Sardinian Logudorese and Sassaresse, Corsican, and several Italo-Romance varieties. Typical characteristics of linguistic substitution are evident in the Alguerès speakers' attitude: a diglossic situation, lack of prestige, and no intergenerational transmission (Grossmann: 1983; Caria 2006: 58).

In spite of the regional law for the protection of Sardinian and Catalan languages (1997) and the existence of a national law for minority languages (1999), the Alguerès dialect has not found enough social support.⁴ At the universities of Cagliari and Sassari a chair of Catalan has been created, but its work does not have a major impact.

Linguistic policy initiatives such as the Palomba Project or the Catalan resource of Omnium Cultural, which promote the teaching of Catalan in

⁴ See Bosch (1999: 279-284), Caria (2006) and Argenter (2008) for information about the current legal situation in Alguerès.

primary and secondary school for students who wish to learn it are improving the negative situation a little.⁵

The survey *Enquesta d'usos lingüístics a l'Alguer* (Survey on language use in Alghero, EULA 2004) (gencat.net/presidencia/llengcat), which was commissioned by the Catalan Government (Generalitat de Catalunya), shows a clear reduction in the generational transmission of the dialect and the loss of social use. Bosch (2007: 42-47) provided four explanations for these processes: 1. demographic changes (Italian immigration and the use of Italian in mixed marriages); 2. the use of Italian as the language of education; 3. dissemination of standard Italian through the mass media; and 4. emigration of young Alguerès people for social and economic reasons. Argenter (2008: 212) studied the language shift in Alghero from the 1960s onwards and added two factors to the fourth explanation: 1. an increase in tourism and economic change in the economy, which have led to an alteration in traditional life; 2. a decrease in the density of traditional social networks.

The following figures concerning Alguerès are taken from EULA 2004:

	Alguerès	
Oral comprehension	90.1% (Sardinian oral comprehension: 69.7%.)	(however, 52.8% of young people aged 18 to 29 – people under 18 were not included in the survey – say that they do not understand oral Alguerès, in comparison to 30.2% of people older than 60).
Oral expression	61.3% (Sardinian oral expression: 33.9%)	
Written comprehension	46.6% (Sardinian written comprehension: 35.4%)	(however, 94.5% of young people of the ages 18 to 29 say they do not understand written Alguerès, as well as 77.4% of people older than 60).
Written expression	13.6% (Sardinian written expression: 15.4%)	
First language	22.4% [59.2% Italian]	(however, 4.7% of young people of the ages 18 to 29 say that Alguerès is their first language, as well as 43.2% of people older than 60).
Habitual language	13.9%	(however, 1.1% of young people of the ages 18 to 29 say that they habitually use Alguerès [98.9% use Italian], as well as 37.6% of people older than 60 [54.1% use Italian]).

⁵ See Lepêtre (1995), Blasco Ferrer (2002) and Scala (2003) about the teaching of Catalan in Alghero.

Caria (2006: 65) notes an impoverishment of colloquial Alguerès and of the lexis of traditional jobs in the past 25 years. There is a lack of lexicographic action to modernise the dialect with respect to new digital technologies or industrial products, such as domestic appliances, cars, motorcycles, television, mobile phones, computers, and so on.

Bosch (2007: 35) also referred to the Alguerès' linguistic current situation as an accelerated and gradual inner process of impoverishment, caused by the lexical and syntactic interference from the Sardinian and Italian languages—particularly Italian, which is the language of power and education. The result will be linguistic dissolution or hybridisation of the dialect. However, the consequences can be seen from another perspective: Chessa (2008) foresees the formation of a new dialect, according to Trudgill (2004).

In fact, the situation outlined at the beginning of the twenty-first century is not distant from what was described by Antoni M. Alcover in his philological survey, which was undertaken in three days¹⁶ in the city of Alghero¹⁷ in July of 1913. He wrote: ‘The impression that I have gained of the Alguerès dialect and the opinion of Alguerès people is extremely sad. I find the language too detached from other Catalan dialects, and Alguerès people are too in love with the Italian language, too cold for their own language. I am afraid that, apart from Palomba,¹⁸ very few people use it for more than speaking with their family and friends to conceal themselves from foreign people that they do not trust’¹⁹ (Alcover 1912-1913: 349).

In the next section, certain materials that were collected during Alcover's survey will be compared with more recent data to determine the possible evolution of some linguistic features.

¹⁶ The impact of the trip to this Sardinian city are reflected in the *Diary of the tour of 1913 to France and to other nations so that refers to the romance philology* ([‘Dietari de l'eixida d'enguany a França i altres nacions per lo que's refereix a la filologia romanista’], BDLC, VII, 1912-1913, 309-356).

¹⁷ Concerning Alghero, before the trip of 1913, Alcover had established previous contacts with Giovanni Palomba in 1906, because of the First International Congress of Catalan Language. Later, in 1909, Palomba came back to Barcelona in order to give some speeches about Alguerès history and literature.

¹⁸ Giovanni Palomba (Alghero, 1876 -1953) was a linguist and a teacher. In 1906 he and Antoni Ciuffo attended the First International Congress of Catalan Language on behalf of Alguerès people, and presented a paper about the grammar of modern Alguerès.

¹⁹ Original version: ‘De manera que l'impressió que m'ha feta l'alguerès i el sentir els algueresos, es estado de tristor. La llengua l'he trobada massa decantada, massa *distanciada* dels altres dialectes catalans; i els algueresos els he trobats massa enamorats de l'italià, massa freds per llur nadiu llenguatge. Me tem molt que, fora d'En Palomba, no siguen ben re-de-poquets que'l vulguen per qualque cosa més que per parlar en família i amb els amics per amagar-se dels forasters que no inspiren confiança’ (Alcover 1912-1913: 349).

3. The two comparison surveys

3.1 Alcover's survey (1913)

Antoni M. Alcover (Manacor 1862 - Palma 1932) is well known in Catalonia as the instigator of an important dictionary of the Catalan language, the *Diccionari Català-Valencià-Balear*, which was eventually finished in 1962 by his pupil Francesc de B. Moll (Ciutadella 1903 - Palma 1991). Besides his work as a lexicographer, Alcover was also interested in popular literature, philology, language, history, architecture, archaeology, and dialectology. Alcover was the first person to carry out dialectal fieldwork in Catalonia, and Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke saw him as the founder of Catalan dialectology.

From 1900 to 1928, Alcover collected dialectal information for his projects on philological excursions through the linguistically important localities in the Catalan-speaking territories from Perpignan (in France) to Elx (in Alicante), and from the Catalan area of Aragon to l'Alguer in Sardinia. On these travels, he compiled a linguistic corpus derived from questionnaires regarding phonetic, morphological, syntactic, lexical, folklore, and sociolinguistic aspects from the more than 300 localities that he visited. The data were used to complete the aforementioned dictionary, a study about Catalan conjugation, and also a grammar, which appears to have been lost.

In 1913, Alcover began his third and last journey through different countries of Europe in order to establish a closer relationship with Romance scholars from different Universities, which had started since his first journey in 1908.²⁰ He took advantage of this travel to visit Alghero, that time with about 15,000 inhabitants (Alcover 1912-1913: 348), and recorded there the complete conjugation of seventy verbs, and also phonetic and morphological data. The informants chosen were heterogeneous, but adults had to be illiterate. In general, children (from 9 to 14 years) were asked about the conjugation of verbs.

3.2. 'Variation in language' survey (1997)

In 1991, the Department of Catalan Philology of the University of Barcelona started to collect a set of linguistic corpora of contemporary Catalan: the University of Barcelona Corpus. The aim of the project is to gather representative data in order to contribute to the study of language variation

²⁰ During his life Alcover was in contact with recognised scholars of Romance languages and dialectologist, such as Jules Guilliéron, Jakob Jud, Carlo Salvioni, Louis Gauchat, Leo Spitzer and Max Leopold Wagner.

from geographical, social, and functional perspectives. The project is divided into a number of areas of study. The main objective of the dialectal area is to compile a representative corpus of the five main dialects of Catalan: Rossellonès, Central Catalan, North-western Catalan, Balearic, and Alguerès. The dialectal corpus²² (or COD) contains phonetic and morphologic data and a set of 10-minutes samples of speech collected through enquiries made in 106 county²³ capitals of the Catalan-speaking area. In 1997 Alghero was studied. The questionnaire had approximately 600 items. The first part focused on phonetics, and the rest dealt with morphophonological aspects of adjectives, articles, demonstratives, possessives, locatives, personal pronouns, pronominal clitics, and regular verbs. The informants, aged between 30 and 45 years, had all been born in the county's capital, were urban middle-class and also had a minimum level of formal education.

4. Comparative linguistic evidence of continuation and change

A study of Rossellonès,²⁴ another Catalan dialect in the process of extinction, showed a series of major changes in the grammatical aspects (mainly phonetics, morphology, and lexis) that characterise its present form (Perea 2007, 2009). As with Alguerès, the town in which this dialect is spoken is not located in a Catalan territory. Hence, the dominant language, which is French in this case, has had a strong influence. Similarly, Italian and Sardinian²⁵ are the languages that have had the most influence on Alguerès. They will cause its predictable future dedialectalisation, particularly Italian, whose stronger influx began in the eighteenth century (Armangué 1996: 51; Bosch 2002: 37). Besides, unlike the situation of Rossellonès, Alguerès has not yet lost its most characteristic phonetic and morphological traits (§ 4.1), but it is in a state of advanced disintegration (Crassi 1977). Certain morphological features can be explained by the Italian influence (§ 4.1.2.e, § 4.1.2.f, and § 4.1.2.g); other elements that had two solutions one hundred years ago have been reduced to the form used by the youngest people and show the typical phenomenon of linguistic change

²² See Alturo, Boix & Perea (2002) and Lloret & Perea (2002) for a general description of the corpus.

²³ A county is the administrative demarcation that has divided the Catalan-speaking area since 1931.

²⁴ *Rossellonès* is the traditional name given to the Catalan dialect spoken in North Catalonia, which includes the French counties of Rosselló, Conflent, Vallespir, Cerdanya, and Capcir.

²⁵ See Bosch (2002) for the historical presence of Sardinian words in Alguerès.

towards results that are more distant from Catalan, such as those shown by recent data (§ 4.2).

In Alguerès, the phonetics and morphology have been fairly stable with the passage of time. However, the syntax, vocabulary and prosodic features – especially accent and intonation – are the areas in which the incidence of Italian, and to a lesser extent Sardinian, has been most intense. All these aspects, together with the linguistic attitude of the speakers, apart from the few political actions in favour of the use of the dialect, will lead to its hybridisation and dedialectalisation in a few years.

In the next section, we describe certain constant phonetic and morphologic traits which show, to some extent, the stability of dialect in these areas. Secondly, we present the linguistic fields in which change is most evident.

4.1 Continuation

4.1.1 Phonetics

a) Unstressed [a] and [ə] are pronounced [a] – this feature is exclusive of Alguerès, as in other Catalan dialects these vowels are reduced to [ə] (Eastern Catalan and Standard) or to [e] (Western Catalan and Valencian): e.g. S. Cat. *par*[ə] ‘father’, Alg. *par*[a]; S. Cat. *cas*[ə] ‘house’, Alg. *cas*[a].

b) Unstressed [o] is always pronounced [u]: (Alg. *c*[u]rona ‘crown’; *f*[u]rmatg[a] ‘cheese’.

These traits have been founded without any changes in Alcover’s and COD’s data.

c) Rhotacism²⁷

c.1) Intervocalic *l* and *d* usually become *r* (S. Cat. *cata*[l]à ‘Catalan’: Alg. *cata*[r]à; S. Cat. *habita*[d]a ‘inhabited’, Alg. *habita*[r]a).

c.2) *r* usually becomes *l* (S. Cat. *sabate*[r]s ‘shoemaker’, Alg. *sabate*[l]s; S. Cat. *a*[r]c ‘arch’, Alg. *a*[l]c).

Alcover’s data	COD
S. Cat. <i>calent</i> ‘warm’, Alg. <i>ca</i> [r]ent	S. Cat. <i>calaix</i> ‘drawer’, Alg. <i>ca</i> [r]aix
S. Cat. <i>rodes</i> ‘wheels’, Alg. <i>ro</i> [r]as	S. Cat. <i>roda</i> ‘wheel’, Alg. <i>ro</i> [r]a
S. Cat. <i>jardí</i> ‘garden’, Alg. <i>ja</i> [l]dí	S. Cat. <i>porta</i> ‘door’, Alg. <i>po</i> [l]ta

²⁷ See Peana (1995) for a complete study of rhoticism in current colloquial Alguerès.

4.1.2 Morphology

The following features coincide in both corpora. Time has not caused any changes.

4.1.2.a) Due to its archaic situation, Alguerès has maintained the first person singular of the present indicative of verbs of the 1st conjugation with no ending, as in the dialect of the Balearic Islands:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>demano</i> 'I ask', Alg. <i>deman</i>	S. Cat. <i>canto</i> 'I sing', Alg. <i>cant</i>
S. Cat. <i>trobo</i> 'I find', Alg. <i>trop</i>	S. Cat. <i>explico</i> 'I explain', Alg. <i>explic</i>

4.1.2.b) Some verbs of the 1st conjugation change the morpheme of the first person singular of the present indicative for a velar suffix:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>envio</i> 'I send', Alg. <i>anvi</i> [k]	S. Cat. <i>canvio</i> 'I change', Alg. <i>canvi</i> [k]
S. Cat. <i>confio</i> 'I trust', Alg. <i>confi</i> [k]	

4.1.2.c) The first person singular of the present indicative of some verbs of the 1st conjugation adds a palatal suffix:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>bato</i> 'I beat', Alg. <i>triure</i> [tʃ]	S. Cat. <i>odio</i> 'I hate', Alg. <i>odie</i> [tʃ]
S. Cat. <i>llauro</i> 'I work', Alg. <i>llaure</i> [tʃ]	

This triple behaviour of verbs of the 1st conjugation (I) is exclusive of Alguerès, since this dialect presents a verbal class that is subdivided into three subclasses: IA (no ending), IB (with velar suffix), IC (with palatal suffix) (see Perea 2002).

4.1.2.d) The future of some verbs of the second conjugation has a form that includes -ga-:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>seré</i> 'I will be', Alg. <i>sigaré</i>	S. Cat. <i>diré</i> 'I will say', Alg. <i>digaré</i>
S. Cat. <i>tindré</i> 'I will have', Alg. <i>tangaré</i>	
S. Cat. <i>couré</i> 'I will cook', Alg. <i>cogaré</i>	

4.1.2.e) The conditional of all the conjugations ends in *-iva*:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>cantaria</i> 'I would sing', Alg. <i>cantariva</i>	S. Cat. <i>tindries</i> 'I would have', Alg. <i>tangarivas</i>
S. Cat. <i>seria</i> 'I would be', Alg. <i>sigariva</i>	S. Cat. <i>dormiria</i> 'I would sleep', Alg. <i>rumiriva</i>
S. Cat. <i>tindria</i> 'I would have', Alg. <i>tangariva</i>	

4.1.2.f) The past tense of verbs of the 2nd conjugation ends in *-eva*:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>perdia</i> 'I lost', Alg. <i>peldeva</i>	S. Cat. <i>perdia</i> 'I lost', Alg. <i>peldeva</i>
S. Cat. <i>entenia</i> 'I understood', Alg. <i>enteneva</i>	S. Cat. <i>bevia</i> 'I drank', Alg. <i>beieva</i>
S. Cat. <i>mereixia</i> 'I deserved', Alg. <i>mereixeva</i>	

4.1.2.g) The past tense of verbs of the 3rd conjugation ends in *-iva*:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>omplia</i> 'I filled', Alg. <i>ompriva</i>	S. Cat. <i>sortir</i> 'I left', Alg. <i>ixiva</i>
S. Cat. <i>obria</i> 'I opened', Alg. <i>obriva</i>	S. Cat. <i>servia</i> 'I served', Alg. <i>selviva</i>
S. Cat. <i>fugia</i> 'I escaped', Alg. <i>fugiva</i>	

4.1.2.h) The first person plural of verbs of the first conjugation ends in *-em*, analogously to the verbs of the second conjugation. However, the second person plural ends in *-au*, keeping (as in the Balearic dialect) the Latin ending *-atis*:

Alcover's data	COD
S. Cat. <i>nos. demanem</i> 'we ask', Alg. <i>nos. demanem</i>	S. Cat. <i>nos. cantem</i> 'we sing', Alg. <i>nos. cantem</i>
S. Cat. <i>vos. demaneu</i> 'you ask', Alg. <i>vos. demanau</i>	S. Cat. <i>vos. canteu</i> 'you sing', Alg. <i>vos. cantau</i>

4.2 Change

4.2.1 Depalatalisation

In his survey, Alcover detected a phonetic change that affects the pronunciation of the palatal word ending (followed by the plural morpheme), which the younger generations depalatalised. Older people's pronunciation coincided with Standard Catalan. In the COD data, all results show general depalatalisation in this context. This phenomenon can cause some homophonies: *fil* 'son' and *fil* 'thread'.

Alcover's data	COD
<i>cabe</i> [ʎ] 'hair' (old people) / <i>cabe</i> [l] (young people)	S. Cat. <i>pe</i> [ʎ] 'skin', Alg. <i>pe</i> [l]
<i>cava</i> [l] 'horse' (young people) / <i>cava</i> [ʎ] (old people)	S. Cat. <i>cava</i> [ʎ] 'skin', Alg. <i>cava</i> [l]

4.2.2 Vowel insertion

A characteristic trait of Alguerès is the insertion of an epenthetic vowel (*i* or *e*), as in Italian, at the end of words that finish with stop unvoiced consonants: *la ni*[t^ə] *del trenta-u* 'the night of the 31st'; *t'expli*[k¹] *lego* 'I'll explain later'; *fas meita*[t^ə] *de formatge* 'you make the half of cheese'.

4.2.3 Lexical variation

As Alguerès, like Rossellonès, constitutes a peripheral area of Catalan (see Bartoli 1925 and Recasens, 1990-1991), the vocabulary contains certain archaisms that are not of general use (*colgar-se* 'to go to bed' [S. Cat. *anar al llit*], *forqueta* 'fork' [S. Cat. *forquilla*], *morro* 'lips' [S. Cat. *llavi*], *calcigar* 'to tread' [S. Cat. *trepitjar*], *froment* 'wheat' [S. Cat. *blat*]). These words can be found in other Catalan dialects, but not in the Standard variety. Due to its geographic situation, Alguerès includes vocabulary that comes from Italy and Sardinia. Words such as *anca* 'leg', *murendu* 'donkey', *abre de poma* 'apple tree', *atunjo* 'autumn', *babai* 'uncle' or *frucar* 'to snow' are examples of the Sardinian influence. Nevertheless, due to the situation of the Sardinian minority language, there is hardly any exchange between these two linguistic varieties at the present time. In addition, Spanish domination from 1643 to 1764 lent a certain number of words, e. g. *duenyo* 'owner' (Span[ish] *dueño*), *assustar* 'to scare' (Span. *asustar*), *judia* 'bean' (Span. *judía*) or *adelfa* 'rosebay' (Span. *adelfa*). The pressure of Italian has been much stronger. Some dialectal descriptions (see Corbera 2000, Veny 1998) show that a large number of Italian words are used in Alguerès, which affect most semantic fields. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, Ciuffo

(1908: 75) gave a list of Italian words that had been introduced into the language and were used by uneducated people.

Corbera (2000: 229-236) used a vocabulary-based study to determine to what extent the Alguerès lexis has a Catalan origin. His analysis was twofold. First, he studied the etymological origin of the Alguerès words that he had compiled (2,238), which were distributed as follows: 1) 51.74% were Catalan; 2) 21.67% had Sardinian origins; 3) 16.80% had Italian origins; 4) 7.14% had Alguerès origins; 5) 1.51% were Spanish; 6) 1.34% had French origins; and 7) 0.40% were from unknown origins. The result of the addition of groups 1 and 4 was 58.8% of words of a Catalan nature. Next, he obtained other results applying the analysis only to words that are considered basic vocabulary (in this case, only 499). The new distribution is as follows: 77.93% were Catalan, 10.02% had Sardinian origins, 7.21% had Italian origins, 4.60% had Alguerès origins, and 0.2% had unknown origins. In this case, the result of the addition of groups 1 and 4 is 82.53% of words of a Catalan nature, which confirms the author's hypothesis.

In surveys undertaken in 1997, a significant number of Italian words were detected:²⁸

Alguerès	Italian	Standard Catalan
<i>farfal·la</i> [fal'fála] 'butterfly'	<i>farfalla</i>	<i>papallona</i>
<i>inditxe</i> 'forefinger'	<i>indice</i>	<i>índex</i>
<i>polpeta</i> [pul'péta] 'meat balls'	<i>popetta</i>	<i>mandonguilles</i>
<i>genitors</i> [genitóls] 'fathers'	<i>genitori</i>	<i>pares</i>
<i>risparmiar</i> 'to save'	<i>risparmiare</i>	<i>estalviar</i>

To achieve a quantitative linguistic analysis similar to that undertaken by Corbera, a fragment of spontaneous speech of an Alguerès informant²⁹ has been chosen and the resulting words have been indexed, quantified and analysed.

The interview lasted 9 minutes and 11 seconds and was composed of 1,362 words, 471 of which were different. The informant spoke Alguerès spontaneously on the subject of recipes.

The most frequent words were the following (the frequency of the appearance of the words in the text is indicated between parentheses):

²⁸ The dictionary of Sanna (1988) considers that there are fewer words from the Italian.

²⁹ Informant RIMA was born in Alghero in 1953 (her primary education took place there; all her family live and were born in Alghero).

<i>de</i> /d' (8) 'of'	(59)	preposition
<i>a</i> 'to'	(51)	preposition
<i>i</i> 'and'	(51)	conjunction
<i>sí</i> 'yes'	(41)	adverb
<i>és</i> 'he/it/she is'	(39)	verb
<i>la</i> 'the'	(38)	article feminine singular
<i>les</i> 'the'	(36)	article feminine plural
<i>que</i> 'what'	(24)	conjunction
<i>lego</i> (Spanish)	(24)	adverb
<i>perquè</i> 'because'	(21)	conjunction
<i>no</i> 'no'	(19)	adverb
<i>en</i> 'in'	(17)	preposition
<i>lo</i> / l' (9) 'the'	(16)	article masculine singular
<i>los</i> 'the'	(16)	article masculine plural
<i>per</i> 'for'	(15)	preposition
<i>se</i> / s' (1)	(15)	reflexive pronoun
<i>una</i> 'a'	(14)	indefinite feminine article
<i>io</i> 'I'	(13)	personal pronoun
<i>un</i> 'a'	(13)	indefinite masculine article
<i>assai</i> (Italian) 'fairly'	(11)	adverb
<i>hi</i>	(11)	locative unstressed pronoun
<i>va</i> 'he/she/it goes'	(10)	verb

As can be seen from the list, grammatical elements were more frequent than lexical ones.

Concerning lexical categories, we focus our attention on three elements: adjectives, nouns, and verbs. They will serve to offer a sample calculation of the frequency and linguistic distribution of words according to their origin: Catalan, Alguerès, Sardinian, and Italian.

4.2.3.1 Adjectives

Of the 44 adjectives that appeared in the text, 39 were Catalan (88%); 1 word was Alguerès (2%): *cariada* (Alg. 'kneaded the dough to make bread'); and 4 words were Italian (9%): *prompta* 'ready' (It. *pronta*), *meravillós* 'wonderful' (It. *meraviglioso*), *bravos* 'skilful' (It. *bravi*), *sodisfeta* 'satisfied' (It. *soddisfata*).

4.2.3.2 Nouns

Out of 134 nouns, 103 had a Catalan origin (75.5%); 14 were from Alghero (10.4%): *pavassinos* 'a sort of cake', *costeres* 'coast', *brinyols* 'pancakes', *copaça* 'a sort of food', *escorja* 'peel', *grames* 'grams', *jornada* 'day', *menuts* 'coins of little value', *pomata* 'tomato', *pregadoria* 'prayer', *recuita* 'cottage cheese', *súcura* 'sugar', *tabaques*, 'a sort of sweet'; 15 words

were Italian, and frequently adapted to Alguerès pronunciation (11.19%): *birra* ‘beer’ (It. *birra*), *comaracci* (unknown word; see, however, the Italian plural ending), *cundimenti* ‘condiments’ (It. *condimenti*), *empiegat* ‘employee’ (It. *impiegato*), *llibito* ‘yeast’ (It. *llevito*), *modo* ‘way’ (It. *modo*), *structo* ‘fat’ (It. *strutto*), *tranquil·lilat* pron. [trankwilitát] ‘quietness’ (It. *tranquilittà*), *comune* ‘township’ (It. *comune*), *campanya* ‘field’ (It. *campagna*), *campanyes* ‘fields’ (It. *campagne*), *campanyolos* ‘peasant’ (It. *campagnolo*), *condensa* ‘rennet’ (It. *condensa*), *galetines* ‘small biscuits’ (It. *galletina*), *estudents* ‘students’ (It. *studente*), *segreteria* ‘secretaryship’ (It. *segreteria*); and 1 word was Sardinian (0.7%): *casadines* ‘a sort of sweet’.³¹

4.2.3.3 Verbal forms

Out of the 124 verbal forms, 108 had a Catalan origin (87%); 2 were Alguerès (1.61%): *aquidra* ‘he/she/it calls’, *escorrida* ‘drained’; 14 were Italian, and frequently adapted to the Italian pronunciation (11.29%): *brujam* ‘we burn’ (It. *bruciamo*), *brujau* ‘you burn’ (It. *bruciai*), *condite* ‘flavoured’ (It. *condito*), *difendre* ‘defend’ (It. *difendere*), *dipenent* ‘depending’ (It. *dipendere*), *diventare* ‘to put’ (It. *diventare*), *equilibra* pron. [akwilibra] ‘he/she/it equilibrates’ (It. *equilibra*), *emparat* ‘learned’ (It. *imparato*), *empaste* ‘I mash’ (*impasto*), *gita* ‘he/she/it throws away’, *giten* ‘they throw away’, *gitaven* ‘they threw’ (present and past tense of It. *gettare*); *macinate* ‘milled’ (It. *macinato*), *resparmiar* ‘to save’ (It. *risparmiare*).

Concerning the value of the incidence of Italian vocabulary in Alguerès, its strength in lexical elements is significant (however, we must distinguish between patrimonial words, with more or less similar results in Catalan and Italian, due to their Latin origin, and learned Latin borrowings, giving identical results for the two languages). However, the pressure is even stronger when it affects grammatical elements, including conjunctions or adverbs, discourse markers and connectors: *assai* (adv.) ‘fairly’ (11), *allora* (adv.) ‘then’ (9), *ecco* (interj.) ‘here we are’ (6), *proprio* (adv.) ‘precisely’, *fra* (prep.) ‘between’ (1), *en vece de* (prep.) ‘instead’ (3) (It. *invece di*), *cosa* (conj.) (4) (*cosa te puc dire* ‘what I can tell you’, parallel structure to the Italian *cosa posso dire*), *sòlito* ‘usual’ (1) (It. *solito*), *ma* ‘but’ (2), which alternates with the more frequent Cat. form *però* (6). We can also find adapted Spanish words from the seventeenth century, such as: *lego* ‘after’ (Sp. *luego*) (22), *bono* ‘well’ (1) (Sp. *bueno*).

³¹ Sardinian influence can be found in some semantic fields, such as rural life or agriculture.

4.2.4 Linguistic intelligibility

Linguistic intelligibility is a trait of subjective nature that affects understanding among speakers of different dialects. Unlike other languages, except for some cases of particular lexis, speakers of the six main Catalan dialects (Eastern Catalan, Western Catalan, Valencian, Balearic, Rossellonès and Alguerès) can understand each other. The intelligibility is greater among the first three Catalan varieties, whereas Balearic, and particularly the Majorcan dialect, is more difficult for continental speakers to understand due to its frequent phonetic assimilations. In addition to its pronunciation, Rossellonès contains numerous French words. Alguerès has poor intelligibility, due to the action of several phonetic phenomena, such as rhotacisms, metathesis or assimilations, and the specificity of its lexis. Words such as *finsamenta* ‘until’ (S. Cat. *fins*), *calqui* ‘some’ (S. Cat. *algún*), *xapador* ‘peasant’ (S. Cat. *pagès*), *mensil* ‘monthly payment’ (S. Cat. *mesada*), with the rhotacisms (*fromígola* [pron. *frumígura*] ‘ant’ [S. Cat. *formiga*], *branc* ‘white’ [S. Cat. *blanc*], *pruja* ‘rain’ [S. Cat. *pluja*], *colda* ‘rope’ [S. Cat. *corda*]), with assimilations (*fadrí* pron. [fari] ‘unmarried’ [S. Cat. *Solter*], *vidre* pron. [vírra] ‘glass’), or with metathesis (*aquidra* ‘he calls’ [S. Cat. *crida*], *antrenda* ‘understand’ [S. Cat. *entendre*]) are, in principle, absolutely opaque to Continental or Balearic speakers. Intelligibility problems are two-way:³² from Alguerès to Catalan and from Catalan to Alguerès. In his travel book, Alcover explained: ‘He [referring to Venanzio Todesco, his host (Italian philologist; 1879-1962)] has asked me to speak in Catalan; I have spoken, but he immediately said that he noticed that listening to people from Alghero was not the same as listening to people from Catalonia: the pronunciation of Alguerès speakers is very Italian, and, for this reason they are easier to understand than people from Catalonia or from the Balearic Islands’ (Alcover 1912-1913: 343). Thus, as in Alcover’s time, the use of Italian language for mutual communication is not unusual: ‘Then I started to use Italian, and all the time we spoke in Italian’ (Alcover 1912-1913: 343).³³

³² Original version: ‘Ell m’ha dit que li parlàs català; jo ho he fet, pero ell aviat m’ha dit que comprenia que no era lo meteix sentir parlar algueresos que catalans: els algueresos han italianisada molt la pronuncia de llur català, i per això pe’ls italians son més bons d’entendre que no els catalans o balears (Alcover 1912-1913: 343).

³³ Original version: ‘A-les-hores he romput en italià, i en italià hem parlat sempre’ (Alcover 1912-1913: 343).

7. Conclusion: towards dedialectalisation

We have shown the significant presence of the Italian lexicon, which has a notable effect on conjunctions, adverbs, adjectives, nouns and verbs in particular. In addition, the pronunciation of Alguerès speakers is absolutely Italian. The dedialectalisation process develops inexorably and the old diglossia threatens language substitution, since it has moved from unidirectional bilingualism – traditional Alguerès speakers used the two languages: Alguerès and Italian – to Italian monolingualism (Caria 2006: 59).

Despite the protection offered by certain laws and the efforts to introduce Catalan into official education, neither the institutions nor the people who hold positions of public responsibility favour linguistic loyalty to Alguerès speakers.

In addition, dedialectalisation is generated not only by the presence of Italian, but, as in Rossellonès, by standard Catalan, which also causes the loss of specific features. Although this pressure is much more pronounced in Rossellonès, educated Alguerès speakers are proud to learn and use standard Catalan, because it brings them closer to continental speakers. However, the fact that the city is on an island prevents the action from being as intense as in Rossellonès. The schools in North Catalonia (the *bressoles*) teach only in Standard Catalan, and the mass media have started to have an influence.

Finally, the number of speakers who are committed to the use of Alguerès is very low, and generational transmission no longer takes place. In contrast to the speakers of Roussillon, who are pressured by French centralism (it is difficult to forget the well-known slogans: ‘soyez propres, parlez français’ [‘Be polite, speak in French’] or ‘il est interdit de cracher et de parler patois’ [‘Spitting and speaking *patois* is forbidden’]), Alguerès people do not show a clear rejection of their own identity. However, we can observe a disinterest in transmitting it, as it is considered that the language has no social value and does not help to get a job, for example. The perception of Alguerès speakers also leads to this conclusion: ‘Com així avui també, e:, si he ditⁱ que hi ha, e:, deu, quinze mil que parlen alguerès, però que, e:, s’enteressen efectivament a la llengua, o que saben escriví-lo, o escriure, e:, són veramentⁱ pocs’ (‘Today, if I say that ten thousand or fifteen thousand people speak Alguerès, there are very few that are really interested in their language or know how to write it’).

Hence, Alcover’s words of 1913 are valid today, in 2010: ‘What is the future of the Catalan of Alghero? The children of the children of current Alguerès people, do they love it more than their parents? We do not know.

Who knows what will happen with the passage of time? The future usually brings so many surprises! Let us be optimistic about the future fate of Catalan of Alghero' (BDLC, VII, 351).³⁴

Although we can be optimistic, all the indications suggest that the children of the children of current Alguerès speakers will no longer use their dialect, although some of them – but not many – may take a more or less active interest in and know standard Catalan.

³⁴ Original version: '¿Quina sort està reservada an el català de l'Alguer? Els fills dels fills dels algheresos d'ara l'estimaran més que no aquests? Es mal de dir això. ¿Qui sab lo que succeirà amb el temps? ¡Reserva ordinàriament tantes sorpreses el pervindre! Siguem optimistes sobre la futura sort del català de l'Alguer' (BDLC, VII, 351).

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