

‘HI, CARLINHOS, HOW ARE THE UNICORNS?’ FORMS OF ADDRESS AS STANCE-TAKING DEVICES IN THE HOUSING CRISIS DEBATE ON PORTUGUESE X/TWITTER

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Abstract

This study examines forms of address in European Portuguese (EP) as stance-taking devices, reinforced by impoliteness, in a corpus of 410 tweets posted in response to the Lisbon mayor’s measures and policies to combat the current housing crisis. The study hypothesises that the complex EP address system is used dynamically, with few discursive constraints emerging from settings and interlocutors, and that this dynamic usage is then employed to signal (mis)alignment with the mayor’s policies. By means of a qualitative annotation of the corpus and an examination of code relations (how, or if, the different codes, or annotation labels, intersect), the study concludes that EP forms of address are deployed to their full semantic range in the corpus, thus confirming the first hypothesis. The subsequent hypothesis, positing that forms of address are prominent stance-taking devices, is not fully supported. The main nexus between stance and address links the anti-policies stance to indirect address, surpassing expressed, direct forms such as pronouns or nominal forms. However, this and other preferences emerging from the analysis (namely, a leaning towards more generalised impoliteness devices instead of more confrontational ones) point to the importance of linguistic indirectness in EP, which can be culturally motivated. An important conclusion is that EP address comprises nuanced sociocultural factors that should be acknowledged especially in educational settings so as to facilitate the use and learning of these forms. Finally, by focusing on online address as part of the debate on the housing crisis, this study has uncovered significant anti-immigration discourses marking an oppositional, anti-policies stance warranting further investigation addressing the current climate of disruption and crisis.

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Key words: Forms of address; European Portuguese; Stance; Impoliteness; Twitter.

1 Introduction

The housing crisis in Portugal, driven by high demand and low supply, is particularly acute in the capital city, driving the Lisbon mayor, Carlos Moedas, to take to Twitter

(now X) recurrently to announce policies and legislation devised to combat the problem. These tweets prompt responses from Twitter/X users expressing their views of alignment or misalignment with the measures proposed and, in so doing, contributing to the debate on the housing and cost of living crises at large. The aim of this study is to examine these online interactions and the extent to which forms of address in European Portuguese (EP) directed at the mayor can be deployed as stance-taking devices to signal opposition or (less often) alignment.

From a grammatical and morphological perspective, address in European Portuguese is a tripartite system which includes pronouns, nominal and verbal forms deployed in subject and object positions. From a pragmatic and discursive viewpoint, address in EP seems equally complex, particularly the pronoun of address *você*. This is a notional second person (2P) with a third person (3P) verb agreement highlighting the difficulty in applying the traditional Brown and Gilman (1960) T/V distinction (informal and formal, respectively). In view of this pragmalinguistic complexity, this study hypothesises that:

(1) EP forms of address are used dynamically, contrary to a static selection of address confined to fixed interlocutor and contextual impositions, and

(2) this dynamic use of address forms in EP can serve several interactional goals, namely signalling stance, that is, there is a nexus between the forms participants use to address Carlos Moedas and the stances they express for or against the housing policies publicised on Twitter/X by the Lisbon mayor.

The following section discusses the relevant literature on address in EP, the dynamic *vs* static use of address forms and how these might indeed constitute devices for discursive alignment or misalignment, reinforced by (im)politeness features. Section 3 presents the methodology and the data, which is followed by the respective analysis in Section 4. The final section concludes the study by summarising the main findings, the response to the hypotheses and further avenues of research.

2 Literature Review. Forms of Address in European Portuguese; Stance and Impoliteness

The tripartite address system in EP is characterised by pronominal, verbal and nominal forms, illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1. Forms of address in EP

Forms:	Singular	Plural
Pronominal	<i>Tu</i> + 2P sing. <i>Você</i> + 3P sing.	<i>Vós</i> + 2P pl. <i>Vocês</i> + 3P pl.
Verbal (pro-drop)	Null subject + 2P. sing. Null subject + 3P. sing.	Null subject + 2P. sing. Null subject + 3P. pl.

the formality of nominal forms such as titles and honorifics. Cook (1997, 2013, 2019) describes this middle ground as a ‘neutral’ platform avoiding the option for more marked T or V forms and avers that *você* or the 3P *pro-drop* emerge as the most likely neutral forms. The EP address system would thus be more accurately rendered by a three-dimensional T – N[neutral] – V distinction. The advancement of *você* has, to some extent, been propelled by the retraction of the 2P plural pronoun *vós*, which has lost its polite V meaning (Cintra, 1972) and which use, although it survives in the language (Duarte & Marques, 2023b), has become increasingly confined and further compounds the intricacy of EP address.

A further difficulty is posited at the level of first-order evaluations of *você*, that is, at the level of the evaluations and conceptualisations coming from lay speakers themselves (Eelen, 2001, Watts, 2003). Whilst some speakers resort to the pronoun as a ‘default’ form akin to the N-dimension, others outright reject it due to the impoliteness values they see in it. These first-order polarised pragmatic assessments are mirrored in the efforts that the vast second-order, or theoretical, accounts of *você* develop so as to encapsulate its variegated pragmatic values (apart from the pivotal Cintra’s 1972 study, see, for example, Carreira, 2003; Duarte, 2011; Hummel, 2020; Lara & Guilherme, 2018; Lopes 2019; Lopes & Hummel, 2020; Lopes & Mota, 2019; Lopes et al., 2021; Oliveira, 1994, 2009, 2013). Whilst all these accounts acknowledge the potential impoliteness of *você*, some also highlight the several demographic strands that interfere with the evaluation of this pronoun, namely social class, geographical provenance and age. According to Gouveia (2008), there is thus no real consensus as to the contextual descriptions of the usages of *você*, as it increasingly depends on the communicative goals of specific participants in specific interactions. Oliveira’s approach (1994, 2009, 2013) is particularly useful in this respect, positing that interactants can depart from unmarked conventionalised norms to negotiated address signalling a change in the addresser/addressee relationship and therefore specific to the interactional needs and goals of participants.

The wide pragmatic range of forms of address in EP does seem to suggest an all-encompassing system where a dynamic use of forms runs parallel to normative conventional restraints demanding a fairly rigid match between form and context/interlocutor (what Ide [1989] defines as “discernment”). Fernández-Mallat (2020) explains how in Chilean Spanish selection of address is not always categorically deployed based on the constraints of particular interlocutors / particular contexts calling for specific forms, and how address forms are in fact dynamic, with strategic address shifts often deployed in the pursuit of localised interactional goals. In their studies across several European languages, Clyne et al. (2009) and Norrby and Wide (2015) had already shown how the interpersonal facet of address selection, used to “manage human relations” (Clyne et al., 2009, p. 154), is based not only on several contextual, cultural and sociopolitical factors, but also on identity. The choice of address can therefore be an ‘act of identity’, enacted with more or less constraints depending on the extent to which discursive practices themselves are constrained –

the tighter the contextual constraints on discourse, the more limited the address options will become (Férrandez-Mallat, 2020).

Discursive practices on Twitter/X, however, operate with a degree of freedom that fully resorts to the variegated linguistic resources and the multimodal affordances of the platform so as to fulfil a panoply of communicative goals, from impoliteness to humour to stance indeed (Burnette & Calude, 2022; Escandón, 2015; Martínez, 2023; Luzón, 2023; Purwitasari et al., 2023; Truan, 2022; Vásquez, 2021; Vladimirou & House, 2018). Twitter/X is a 'microblogging' platform defined for its brevity, limiting users' contributions to 140 characters and of "informal and spontaneous" communication (Sifianou, 2015, p. 26), thus offering spontaneous interactions based on lay people's understandings (Blitvich & Sifianou, 2019; Sifianou, 2015). Furthermore, in her study of antagonistic discourse on Twitter, Vásquez (2021) sees 2P pronouns as markers of "toxicity" (Vásquez, 2021, p. 42) when used as opening moves of a given interaction, an important observation insofar as it highlights the nexus between pronouns as forms of address and antagonistic stances. Truan (2022) sees tweets left on the German *Twittersphere* as metapragmatic comments enunciating stances on forms of address themselves, thus highlighting the affordances of the platform to allow for discursive moves of (mis)alignment and evaluation, in particular of address forms.

Turning to the notion of stance, the latter is "by no means a monolithic concept" (Englebretson 2007, p.1), but it can safely be said that it encapsulates the intersubjective, interpersonal attitudinal value of propositional content (Chor & Lam, 2023), in other words, the grammatical and lexical patterns that speakers resort to in discourse to reflect their subjective evaluations of people and things, and how they position themselves towards the target of that evaluation. Stance thus emphasises the functional, intersubjective nature of language based on real contexts of usage (Englebretson 2007). As such, stance-markers can be of the most variegated nature, as Simaki et al. (2020) well illustrate – they see stance as a primarily psychological/cognitive state conveying "the way speakers position themselves in relation to their own or other people's beliefs, opinions and statements about things or ideas in ongoing communicative interaction" (Simaki et al. 2020, p. 217). Stance can thus include expressions of modality, evidentiality, subjectivity and intersubjectivity conveyed in modal verbs, verb tenses, etc. – a list to which address forms should probably be added as 2P referential forms of a prominently intersubjective nature.

Du Bois's (2007) notion of stance triangle is useful to this research insofar as it summarises the components of stance: evaluation, positioning and alignment or, as Du Bois (2007, p. 163) puts it, "I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and thereby align with you". In the case of the data examined in this study, participants evaluate the measures and policies proposed by the Lisbon mayor on Twitter, position themselves for or against them and (mis)align themselves not only with the mayor, but also with other Twitter users, although our focus will be on tweets directed at the mayor. If a nexus is shown between the EP forms used to

address the mayor and the evaluations (and subsequent (mis)alignment) towards him and his policies, then forms of address emerge as significant stance-markers.

An important element of stance, and in particular of stance on Twitter, is how it can be reinforced by discursive impoliteness (Burnette & Calude, 2022; Truan, 2022; Vásquez, 2021), although the shapes that impoliteness take on social media are to be carefully considered – as Vásquez (2021, p. 41) states, “new pragmatic norms may be evolving on different social media platforms”, meaning that attention to the digital context where potentially (im)polite utterances are produced is crucial. Blitvich et al. (2013) and Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011) emphasise how the affordances of the online medium itself, promoting a deindividuated communicative environment where participants tend to project their identities primarily as members of larger social categories, can result in impoliteness strategies of disaffiliation, “othering” (Blitvich et al., 2013, p. 345) those who are perceived as the outer-group. This reinforces Culpeper’s view of impoliteness (2011, p. 23) as “a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts”. However, as Culpeper (2011) proceeds to explain, “[s]ituated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered ‘impolite’ – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be”. Ascertaining what the expectations are towards politeness and impoliteness in online contexts, however, is arguably more strenuous than in the offline world. Vladimirov and House (2018, p. 150), for example, introduce the notion of “ludic impoliteness” to refer to “collaborative playful targeting against a public figure observed in social media contexts”, something that is also expected to occur in the data for this study, but that would be less expected if it were to occur offline. Furthermore, ludic impoliteness is somewhat akin to “mock politeness”, a kind of “over-politeness” in contexts where it ‘cannot conceivably sincerely apply’ (Culpeper, 2011, p. 103). This is a feature seemingly more expected in online contexts, and more restricted to limited settings of familiarity in the offline world. Due to these communicative nuances, social meanings in the digital realm must be carefully considered.

However, and as Culpeper (2011) elucidates, impoliteness is best viewed as both a semantic and pragmatic phenomenon; in some contexts, the literal meaning of linguistic expressions will supersede contextual interpretations – after all, “it is difficult to see how communication could proceed without some shared conventions of meaning” (Culpeper, 2011, p. 123). This is not to say that impoliteness is inherent to linguistic expressions; “the most heinous crime” (Culpeper, 2015, p. 435) when assessing impoliteness is to assume that it is there simply because a strategy that may communicate impoliteness (such as insulting vocatives, for example) has been realised. A balance between semantics and pragmatics is always necessary in order to evaluate verbal behaviours and social meanings that may indeed communicate impoliteness.

This is as true in the offline world as it is in online contexts – the use of insults and slurs in digital contexts, for example, can of course configure solidarity banter or mock impoliteness (as opposed to genuine impoliteness – Culpeper, 2011), but lends more support to interpretations of genuine impoliteness (see Bączkowska,

2021 and 2022, for detailed examinations of impolite insults on Twitter, and Archer, 2015 for a focus on insults as distinct from slurs). As Culpeper (2015, p. 435) elucidates, “impoliteness strategies are not all equally sensitive to context”, with some impoliteness strategies being more context-insensitive and more “resistant” to divergent interpretations other than the one of impoliteness. In the case of Twitter, its informality and accessibility, allowing for quick, brief messages and equally brief, spontaneous replies, has become “a double-edged sword” due to how easily users can become “a target for insults” (McVittie et al., 2021, p. 25). In view of this backdrop, insulting forms of address, in the shape of insulting vocatives, for example, lend themselves more to interpretations of impoliteness than anything else, as it is difficult to envisage a context when offensive insults would be directed at strangers on the Internet for the sole purpose of banter (although this cannot be excluded). The pragmatic effect of online insults is not just impoliteness, but also a reinforcement of negative evaluations and misalignment with the target – hence the analytical effort made in this study to encompass both stance and impoliteness and their nexus to address.

I will now describe the methodological steps resorting to the three main research strands that this section has discussed and on which this study is based – forms of address, stance and impoliteness.

3 Research Methodology and Data

The data used for this study consisted of tweets sent in reply to Lisbon mayor Carlos Moedas’s own tweets announcing new measures to combat the housing crisis in the capital city. 410 responses were manually collected between March and June 2023, with each tweet annotated with the categories (or codes) stance, address and impoliteness, divided into sub-codes explained in the sections below.

The analysis was qualitative and hinged on a detailed annotation of each tweet on MaxQDA, which also yielded the matrix of code relations. Although the quantitative data presented is significant, it should be seen as a means to provide objective support to the qualitative analysis. Each code could be used to annotate the same tweet, meaning that any each tweet could be coded several times with different categories. The small scale of the corpus allowed for a close reading of the data, with the annotation stage being followed by an examination of code relations. Code relations are cases of overlaps of codes, or when different codes are used to label the same segment. An examination of code relations is thus a useful tool to pinpoint segments where address and stance co-occur, thus indicating a nexus between the categories.

3.1. Coding stance

The category of stance looked at intersubjective positionings with either the measures or the mayor himself as targets – as Formentelli (2013, p.185) explains,

positionality derives from Du Bois' stance triangle and "regulates both the connection established between an evaluating subject and a target object".

The category of stance included three sub-codes: pro-measures, used to label tweets in favour of the measures announced by the mayor, or aligning with the mayor himself; anti-measures, including tweets against the measures announced by the mayor, or misaligning with the latter, and hortative / neutral, to categorise cases where no particular stance is expressed, or tweets which provide advice to the mayor. Table 2 summarises coding for stance, with examples:

Table 2. Annotation categories for stance

STANCE		
Sub-code	Explanation	Example
Pro-measures	in favour of the measures announced by the mayor / mayor himself	<i>Um homem com visão. Não é esquerdista fútil.</i> 'A man with a vision. He's not a superficial leftie.'
Anti-measures	against the measures announced by the mayor/mayor himself	<i>Renda acessível em Entrecampos? Acredite em quem quiser. Aldrabão.</i> 'Affordable rent in Entrecampos? Believe it at your peril. Liar.'
Hortative/Neutral	Tweets which provide advice to the mayor.	<i>Porque não acabar simplesmente com o IMT?</i> 'Why not just end IMT [Municipal Property Transfer Tax]?'

3.2 Coding address

The category of address is core to this study and therefore the annotation was as detailed as possible.

The first important distinction to draw is between two modes, indirect address and direct address. Indirect address comprises cases where no specific form of address was used and addressivity is conveyed by means of technical affordances provided by the medium itself (Twitter/X), namely by simply replying to the original tweet posted by the mayor or by "explicitly tag the intended addressee by using the @-handle" (Burnette & Calude 2022, p. 15).

When replying to the original tweet, and in the absence of an expressed form of address, clause-type became an important sub-category, namely interrogatives, declaratives and exclamatives, often producing expressive speech acts of emotional misalignment. Interrogatives were differentiated according to enforcers, such as tags; interrogatives with no specific addressee are also relevant, in the sense that the implicit interlocutor is the Lisbon mayor, but the surface form is not marked for address and resorts to an indirect strategy.

Direct address comprised the cases where specific forms of address were used, that is, direct linguistic features signalling the addressee. Sub-codes were the following: nominal forms (including forms used for banter, or ludic impoliteness, as construed by Vladimirou and House (2018)'s categorisation explained above), the

expressed pronouns *tu* and *você*, 2P and 3P *pro-drop* forms, and vocatives. “De-individuated” address, following Burnette and Calude (2022) were also considered under direct address, that is, tweets that address “a collective group (such as a country, business or government body)”.

The codes used to categorise address are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Annotation categories for ADDRESS

Sub-Code	Example	
INDIRECT ADDRESS		
Tagging	using the @-handle	<i>quando o @Moedas usa o termo "acessível"...</i> 'When @Moedas uses the word "affordable"...'
Replying	Replying directly to the original tweet by the Lisbon mayor by using specific clause types.	<p>Declaratives: <i>Grandes actores. 48 anos ditadura e 49 disto.</i> 'Great actors. 48 years dictatorship, 49 years this'.</p> <p>Exclamatives: <i>MERDA de medida esta que DISCRIMINA a favor de quem parte mais bem posicionado!</i> 'What a SHITTY measure that DISCRIMINATES in favour of those who're better off!'</p> <p>Interrogatives with message enforcers (tag questions): <i>foi depois q o @Moedas acordou de um sonho de um paraíso terreno q foi para os Paços do concelho gravar este vídeo...ñ foi?</i> 'It was after @Moedas woke up from a dream of an earthly paradise that he went to the City Hall to record this video... wasn't it?'</p> <p>Interrogatives with no specific addressee: <i>Quantos jovens, com menos de 35 anos, conseguem comprar casa em Lx por menos de 250.000,00 euros?</i> 'How many young people under 35 can buy a house in Lisbon for less than 250,000 euros?'</p>
DIRECT ADDRESS		
Nominal forms	Banter	<i>O menino Carlos tem metido tanta água que ainda se afoga.</i> 'Master Carlos has let so much water in, he's going to drown.'
	First Name [FN]/ Surname	<i>Onde é que o Carlos [FN] está ^{3P sing.} com a cabeça? Seja ^{3P sing.} RESPONSÁVEL!</i> 'What are you [Carlos/FN] even thinking? Be RESPONSIBLE!'
	Sr+FN <i>O senhor</i>	<i>O Sr Moedas devia fazer algo sobre isso em vez de pensar em trotinetes!!!</i> 'Mr. Moedas should do something about that instead of thinking about scooters!!!' <i>O senhor continua ^{3P sing.} a pensar que os lisboetas são estúpidos!</i>

‘**You [o senhor]** still think the Lisbonites are stupid!’

Titles/Honorifics *só para lembrar V. Exa. que há milhares de casas de portuguesas no interior desocupadas*
 ‘just to remind **you [Your Excellency]** that there are thousands of empty houses in the country belonging to Portuguese people’

Expressed pronouns

Tu **Tu** calado eras ^{2P sing.} *um poeta.*
 If **you [tu]** were to shut up, **you’d** be a poet.

Você *O que **você** quer* ^{3P sing.} *é estimular a especulação imobiliária desde jovens. **Tenha*** ^{3P sing., Imperative} *juízo.*
 ‘What **you [você]** want is to promote real estate speculation from a young age. Have some sense.’

Pro-drop forms

2P *Deixa* ^{2P sing., Imperative} *de ser corno e vai trabalhar.*
 ‘Stop being a cuckold and just get to work’.

3P *não tem* ^{3P sing.} *vergonha de pôr isso na Internet?*
 ‘aren’t you embarrassed to post that on the Internet?’

Vocatives

Banter (ludic) *Boa **Noddy**, és* ^{2P sing.} *o maior!*
 ‘That’s great, **Noddy, you’re** the best!’
*Um faz obra o outro apresenta a mesma, **tu*** ^{2P sing}
*aqui és o apresentador **Carlinhos**.*
 ‘One does the work, the other presents the work, **you’re** the presenter here, **Carlinhos**^{diminutive}’

Titles/Honorifics *Tenha* ^{3P sing., Imperative} *vergonha sr. **presidente!***
 ‘Shame on you (Have some shame), **Mr. President!**’

Familiarisers (denoting a close relationship between the speakers participating in the exchange – Martínez 2023)
 Social titles (Senhor (Sr) + FN/Surname and others)
 FN/Surname

*Mano, **Pá**, Homem...*

Tenha ^{3P sing., Imperative} *bom senso, **homem**.*
 ‘Have some common sense, **man**’.

És ^{2P sing} *o nosso herói. Obrigado, **meu senhor!***
 ‘**You’re** our hero. Thank you, **sir!**
*sempre do lado errado **meu caro**...*
 ‘Always on the wrong side of things, **my dear/dear sir**’

*Desculpe **Carlos**, mas vc presica de uma boa dose de realidade pura*

'I'm sorry, **Carlos**, but you [*você*] need a reality check'.

ó Moedas, quantos jovens, fora da tua bolha, conheces ^{2P sing. tu} – with vocative marker *ó*

Moedas, how many young people outside your bubble do you know

Insult/Personalised Negative Vocative: *Então, **salafrário**, preocupa-te* ^{2P sing.} *em cobrar impostos devidos a esse negócio manhoso*
 'So, **scoundrel**, concern yourself with collecting due tax from that dodgy business'

De-individuated	<i>Vocês</i>	<i>na verdade vocês (políticos) é que vivem numa bolha</i> 'in reality you [vocês – you ^{2P PLURAL}] (politicians) are the ones who live in a bubble.'
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3.3 Coding impoliteness

As previously discussed, this study draws on Culpeper's view of impoliteness (2011) as a clash of expectations established in specific contexts – when expectations are defrauded (because certain linguistic expressions bear a stronger connection to context than others, for example), a negative attitude towards the behaviour defying the expectation ensues. Impoliteness annotation followed Culpeper's (2011) categories of impoliteness.

Conventionalised impoliteness formulae encapsulate the cases where impoliteness is reflected in linguistic features that lend themselves more to interpretations of impoliteness (almost, but never fully) independent of context. The most relevant ones when coding the data were pointed criticisms and complaints, challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions, and insults in the form of personalised negative assertions or personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target), as the assumption on Twitter/X, and other social media, is that the target will learn what was said about them at a later point in time, given the asynchronous nature of the medium. As for personalised negative vocatives, they are already displayed in Table 3.

Non-conventionalised, or implicational, impoliteness applies to cases where impoliteness is inferred or implied. Form-driven impoliteness is, as the name indicates, marked at the surface form, thus triggering an inference for impoliteness blocking all other possible interpretations. Such is the case of innuendos, for example. Convention-driven impoliteness is triggered by violations or defiance of convention – cases of sarcasm, for example, where content mismatches the context, pointing at surface to interpretations of politeness which are in fact impolite. Finally, context-driven impoliteness describes contexts in which the inference of impoliteness is fully context-dependent and creative, triggered by something novel, with no mismatch or form serving as guides to derive the correct inference from the surface form.

Annotation for impoliteness is exemplified in Table 4.

Table 4. Annotation categories for impoliteness

IMPOLITENESS	
Sub-codes	Examples
Conventionalised impoliteness	
Pointed criticisms and complaints	<i>Ainda não perceberam que o Moedas está numa cruzada em nome dos ricos proprietários e ricos inquilinos, que se está cagando para a classe média quanto mais a classe baixa.</i> ‘You haven’t yet realised that Moedas is on a crusade on behalf of the rich landlords and rich tenants, that he doesn't give a shit about the middle class let alone the lower class.’
Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	<i>Renda acessível para o seu ^{3P sing.} ordenado ou para o meu?</i> ‘Affordable rent for your salary or for mine?’
Insult/Personalised Negative Assertions	<i>Bela anta que saíste ^{2P sing.}</i> ‘What an idiot/tool you’ve turned out to be’
Insult/Personalised 3P negative reference	<i>Este sonso do Moedas é um oportunista.</i> ‘This dummy/silly Moedas is an opportunist.’
Implicational Impoliteness	
Form-driven	<i>nao sei porque, mas este gajo nao 'e de confiança.</i> ‘I don’t know why, but this guy doesn’t seem trustworthy’
Convention-driven	<i>Obrigado por me defender enquanto jovem e seu munícipe, que nem com um salário bem acima da média tenho capacidade para comprar um T2 sozinho. Obrigado do fundo do coração.</i> ‘Thank you for protecting me as a young man and your resident, I who can’t even buy a two-bedroom despite a salary well above average. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.’
Context-driven	<i>nice, habitações unicórnio</i> ‘nice, unicorn housing’

It is noteworthy that the demonstrative pronoun in EP (*este* – ‘this’ as in *este gajo* ‘this guy’) is the form triggering the impoliteness inference and therefore what Hirata (2023) designates as an “absolute conventional implicature inducer”.

4 Results and Interpretation

The corpus comprised 1214 coded segments in total. This section will focus on each annotation category separately, in an effort to understand their interaction with address selection. In each section, after analysing the distribution of each category (stance, address impoliteness) in the corpus, the attention will be directed at how

codes interact and connect, that is, the code relations of the corpus or how different codes attach simultaneously to the same segment.

4.1 Analysing stance

Not surprisingly, the distribution of the stance sub-codes was as follows (Figure 1 and Table 5):

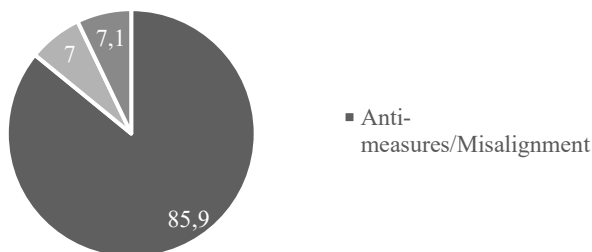


Figure 1. Stance codes distribution (percentage)

Table 5. Number of stance coded segments

Total segments coded for stance –	391
No. of Anti-measures coded segments –	336
No. of Pro-measures coded segments –	27
No. of Neutral/Hortative coded segments	28

The reason why it is not surprising that most stance-taking in the corpus was anti-measures and misaligned with the Lisbon mayor is because participants do not usually take to Twitter/X to express feelings of agreement; especially when the interaction is with a politician, or a public figure in general, social media is commonly used for disagreement and discord (McVittie et al., 2021; Saz-Rubio, 2023; Vásquez, 2021 – save the odd case of ‘homophily’ that Andersson 2021, accounts for).

The surprising element might reside in the codes that also attach to the segments coded for the anti-measure stance, summarised in Figure 2:

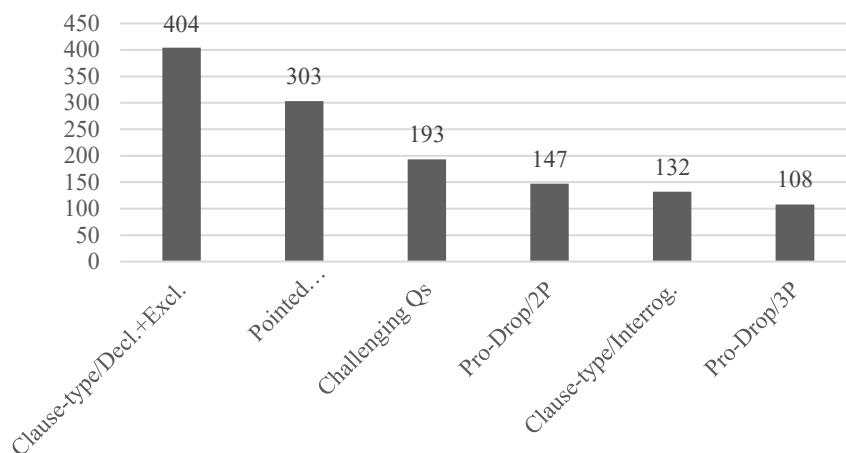


Figure 2. Intersections with anti-measure stance
(no. of times that codes attach to segments coded for the anti-measure stance)

Figure 2 displays the most relevant cases of code intersections with the anti-measure/misalignment stance. Although all other codes intersected with the category of stance, the values for hortative and pro-measure stances were too low to warrant an analysis given the constraints of time and space of this study.

The most significant mode of address intersecting relevantly with the misalignment stance is indirect address, or merely replying to the original tweet of the mayor by means of a declarative, exclamative or interrogative clause. It is relatively surprising that direct address does not figure amongst the most relevant codes intersecting with oppositional stance – firstly because as explained above, Twitter/X seems particularly inviting to direct, confrontational forms and secondly because an indirect address, precisely because it avoids direct confrontation, would seem less suitable to misalignment. This is, however, not the case, as indirect address, resorting to declaratives (example 1), or to interrogations (example 2), is a prominent stance-taking device of opposition in the corpus:

(1) *Risível que Moedas não concorde que uma estrutura de impostos deva obedecer a uma estratégia política que responda às necessidades reais e mais básicas da população no decorrer das suas vidas.*

‘It is laughable that Moedas doesn’t think that a tax structure should follow a political strategy addressing the real and most basic needs of the population in the course of their lives.’

(2) *Quantas casas de 250k não deixei eu de comprar porque tinha de pagar o IMT?*

‘How many 250k houses did I not buy because I had to pay IMT [Municipal Property Transfer Tax]?’

The nexus between interrogations and stance-taking is relevant as in fact questions can supersede their information-seeking objective and “reverse polarity” – they are

negative assertions “in disguise” conveying the stance of the questioner, as explained by Koshik (2005, p. 39), who adds: “the stance expressed is that of the corresponding negative statement; ‘when have I’ implies ‘never have I’, or ‘I never have’”. This is exactly the case witnessed in (2), which corresponding negative statement is ‘I have never bought a 250K house because of IMT’.

The nexus between stance and *pro-drop* address seems to confirm a preference for indirectness (in the sense that an explicit form of address, nominal or pronominal, is not expressed); however, it is important to note the nuanced preference for 2P *pro-drop*, to the detriment of 3P, in perhaps an effort to disambiguate the addressee (Example 3):

- (3) *Foste um erro de casting, acontece.*
'You were a casting mistake, it happens.'

The 3P *pro-drop* in example (3) could conceivably create a case of ambiguous reference by allowing, as potential referents, either the mayor or something or someone else – not so when 2P is used, as all the other meanings except the addressive meaning are blocked. In other words, the 2P is necessarily a form of address, whereas the 3P is often, but not always, addressive.

The interpersonal reinforcers of oppositional stance in terms of impoliteness were pointed criticisms and complaints and challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions; the latter relate to the preference for interrogations as a stance marker explained above, whereas pointed criticism and complaints were, in general, the preferred impoliteness devices of the whole corpus, as we shall see later.

4.2 Analysing address

The distribution of direct address and indirect address in the corpus is as follows (Figure 3).

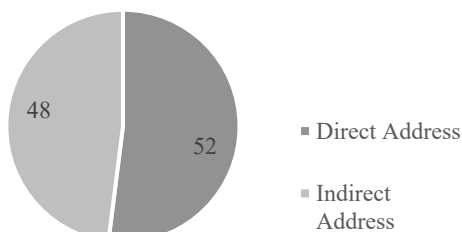


Figure 3. Direct address and indirect address distribution in the corpus (percentage)

Table 6. Number of direct vs indirect address distribution

Total segments coded for address –	482
No. of direct address coded segments –	250
No. of indirect address coded segments –	232

The preference for indirect and direct modes of address is practically split in the middle. This reinforces the significance of indirectness in the corpus, which our analysis of stance has already indicated.

The distribution of direct address in the corpus, the preferred mode of address, is as follows (Figure 4 and Table 6):

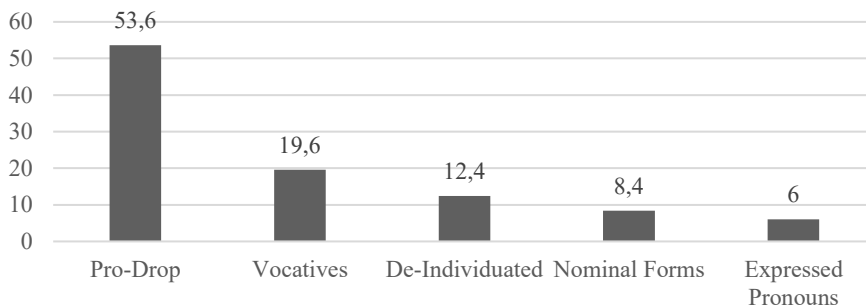


Figure 4. Direct address codes distribution (percentage)

Table 7. Number of address coded segments

Total segments coded for direct address –	250
No. of pro-drop coded segments –	134
No. of vocatives coded segments –	49
No. of de-individuated coded segments –	31
No. of nominal forms coded segments –	21
No. of expressed pronouns coded segments –	15

Figure 4 reveals that the most direct address option, vocatives, is not the preferred form. Although the full range of address options in EP are deployed (an interesting observation in itself) the significance of *pro-drop* forms shows, firstly, how conventionalised this option has become in EP as a form of address, especially when it comes to 3P forms – as Carreira (2003) would put it, the allocutive or addressive meaning of the verbal form seems to have superseded its delocutive meaning. In contexts of addressing others, the pragmatic meaning of *pro-drop* 3P verbs (that is, their use as a form of address) is likely to be automatically retrieved by speakers, cancelling the literal semantic meaning of the 3P (its referential meaning designating other objects or speakers apart from the interlocutors and the 1P). Secondly, the preference for *pro-drop* points to the fact that, in keeping with a leaning towards indirectness, speakers select the address options allowing for a certain effacement, as opposed to the more direct confrontation of vocatives. Even de-individuated address was more frequent than nominal and pronominal address.

The focus will now be on *pro-drop* forms and vocatives, the distribution of which is summarised in Figure 5 and 6:



Figure 5. Number of pro-drop coded segments, 2P and 3P

Table 8. Number of pro-drop coded segments	
Total no. of pro-drop coded segments –	134

2P pro-drop is slightly preferred to 3P, revealing the nuanced nature of address selection in the corpus and its sensitivity to context – the aforementioned informality of Twitter/X as a medium allows for the selection of 2P forms, usually reserved for settings of familiarity in the offline world, but slightly surpassing the conventionalised social distance of the 3P in the corpus.

As for vocatives, Figure 6 illustrates the variety of options displayed in the corpus, ranging from informal vocatives used for banter, to insults but also to conventionalised forms of address such as titles:

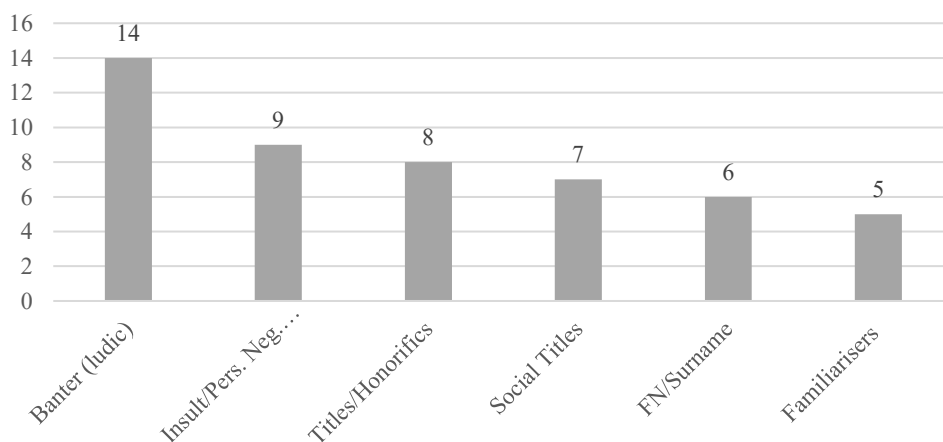


Figure 6. Number of vocatives coded segments

Total vocatives coded segments -	49
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Ludic vocatives used to address the mayor for banter were the preferred option, followed by personalised negative vocatives used as insults. Due to the online nature of the corpus, it is not surprising that this type of vocatives is recurrent; what is surprising is perhaps that they are not the most frequent type.

Regarding indirect address, and as previously shown in Figure 4, this was almost as significant as direct address. Its distribution is displayed in Figure 7 and Table 9:

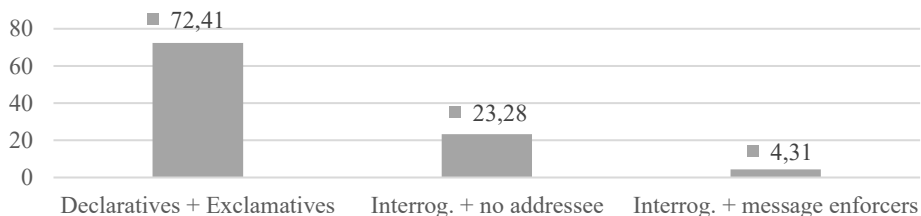


Figure 7. Indirect address code distribution (percentage)

Table 9. Number of indirect address coded segments

Total segments coded for indirect address – 232
No. of declaratives + exclamatives coded segments – 168
No. of interrogatives + no specific addressee - 54
No. of interrogatives + message enforcers coded segments – 10

The preference for clauses of the declarative and exclamative types surpasses interrogations, which may be explained because the former require less intellectual effort than interrogative clauses – as seen earlier in this study, interrogations can reverse polarity and become sophisticated stance markers, whereas declaratives and exclamatives can often merely be expressive speech acts or declarations serving as outlets for speakers’ emotional outbursts (Example 4):

- (4). *Alojamento Local inclusivo. Coisas que não se inventam...*
 ‘Inclusive Local Accommodation. You can’t make this stuff up...’

Regarding how stance and address intersected, the most significant code relations are presented in Figure 8.

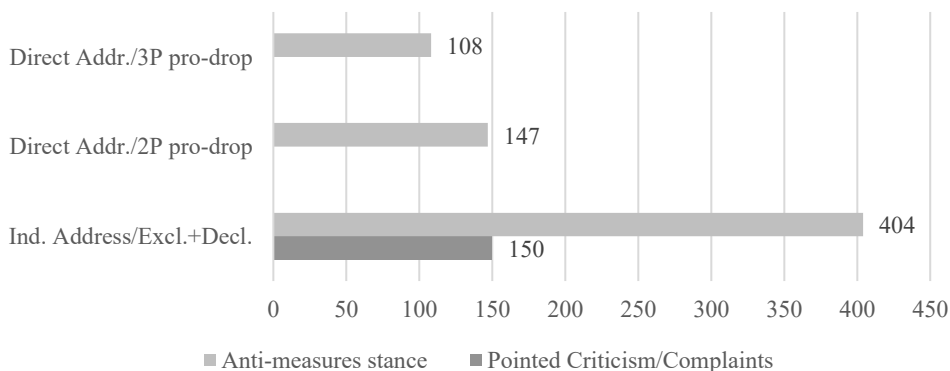


Figure 8. Intersections with address
 (no. of times codes attach to segments coded for address)

The nexus between address and stance comes in the shape of indirect address, by means of declarative and exclamative clause types; this is likely related to the

aforementioned leaning towards indirectness, reinforced by the fact that the single forms that present a clear intersection with stance are *pro-drop* forms without an expressed subject or vocative – all others are connected, but in too scattered a manner to warrant a relevant analysis. It is also not surprising that criticism and complaints intersect with exclamation and declaratives, given their propensity to convey assertions on the one hand and the aforementioned emotional outburst on the other.

4.3 Analysing impoliteness

The impoliteness categories as distributed in the corpus are displayed in Figure 9 and Table 10:

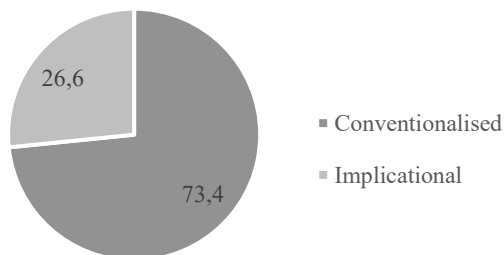


Figure 9. Impoliteness codes distribution (percentage)

Total segments coded for impoliteness –	316
No. of conventionalised impoliteness coded segments –	232
No. of implicational impoliteness coded segments –	84

It is noteworthy that, although conventionalised impoliteness was more recurrent than implicational impoliteness, pointed criticism and complaints and challenging questions were more significant than the more confrontational insulting forms of personalised negative assertions or 3P references (see Figure 12).

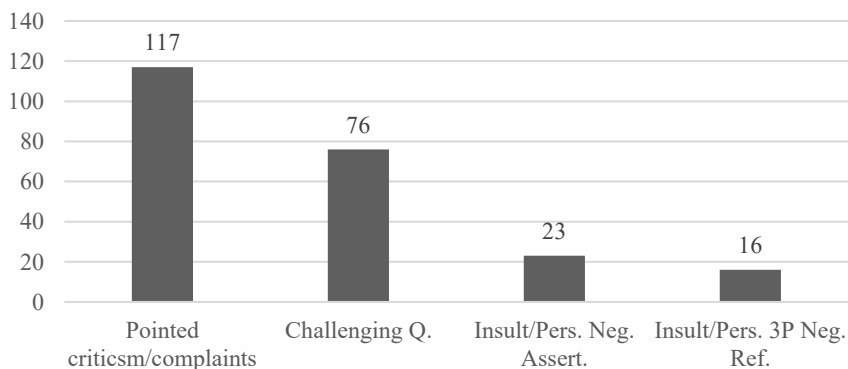


Figure 10. Conventionalised impoliteness (no. of coded segments)

Table 11. Number of conventionalised impoliteness segments
Total segments coded for conventionalised impoliteness – 232

The reason why pointed criticism, complaints and, to some extent, challenging or unpalatable questions are more recurring than insulting forms (either negative assertions or 3P negative references) connects, again, to a certain detachment participants seem to feel towards direct address and confrontation, akin to the reduced relevance of insulting vocatives in the category of address.

As for implicational impoliteness, its distribution in the corpus was fairly even (Figure 11):

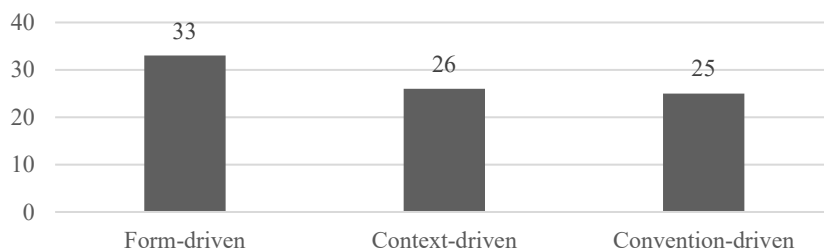


Figure 11. Implicational impoliteness (no. of coded segments)

Table 12. Number of implicational impoliteness segments
Total segments coded for implicational impoliteness – 84

Form-driven impoliteness is the most recurrent in terms of implicational impoliteness; as mentioned before, this should be seen in articulation with the recurrence of the demonstrative pronoun *which*, as a determinant to the noun, is an absolute conventional implicature inducer in EP.

The nexus between impoliteness and stance has already been illustrated in Table 6, showing that pointed criticisms and challenging questions intersected more often with stance than any other features. The intersections of address and impoliteness were, again, very scattered and not recurrent, although there undoubtedly is a qualitative link between insulting forms of direct or indirect address (be it insulting vocatives or personalised negative assertions) and impoliteness – the variegated options of address displayed in the corpus reinforce this observation. However, this link was not recurrent enough to form an observable pattern – one the one hand, this is a consequence of the small scale of the data, but on the other hand, it relates to the fact that the most recurrent impoliteness devices were not direct addressive insulting forms, but more generalised criticisms and complaints and challenging questions instead.

4.4 Concluding remarks on the analysis

The analysis of the data seems to have revealed a preference for indirectness, since the most significant intersection between address and stance is anti-measures stance and indirect address, coupled with a recurrent preference towards more generalised,

and less confrontational, impoliteness devices. These findings raise the question of what indirectness is and why it seems pervasive in the corpus.

Searle (1979) refers to indirect speech acts as those where the illocutionary force of the literal act does not match the illocutionary force of the pragmatic meaning – that is, “a sentence that contains the illocutionary force indicators for one kind of illocutionary act can be uttered to perform, in addition, another type of illocutionary act” (Searle, 1979, p. 30). Indirect speech acts are used for the speaker to “say one thing and mean that” (the literal act), and for the speaker to add an intentional meaning “to mean something else” (Searle, 1979, p. 31), that is, to add a layer of pragmatic meaning, indirectly communicated, to the surface form of the utterance. In the case of indirect address, for example, the target remains the Lisbon mayor and his policies, but the linguistic means used to address him is not a direct form of address. Furthermore, the widespread usage of the conventionalised 3P in the EP address system can be seen as a means to mark the surface form for the indirect communication of address as opposed to literal 2P forms.

Grainger and Mills (2016) explore the extent to which indirectness can become a cultural feature of language, revealing ‘styles of speech’ profoundly linked to conceptions of politeness. Indirectness, then, would be a feature of an English style of speech which sees direct statements as “fairly brusque” (Grainger & Mills, 2016, p. 2) and tends to prefer indirectness to add a layer of politeness to utterances, when that is felt necessary. This particular tenet of English culture is in line with the seminal work by Brown and Levinson (1987), who see politeness as a universal linguistic feature, working on a scale of directness and indirectness – the more indirect the act, the more polite it would be. However, not only does indirectness not always signal politeness (as shown in the corpus for this study, where implicational impoliteness was not tantamount to less impoliteness than the one carried by conventional features), its potential to convey politeness is culture sensitive. As Grainger and Mills (2016, p. 249) elucidate, “participants’ judgement of indirectness and directness is contextually and culturally specific”. This should give us pause to reflect upon the cultural tenets of Portuguese culture and whether indirectness is indeed a core preference, something that has already been suggested by Cintra (1972, p. 15), noting a certain “enjoyment” or “delight” (*comprazimento*) in a stratified, complex system of address refusing a levelling of interlocutors; it has also been noticed by Saraiva (2007) who, in his comprehensive study of Portuguese culture, draws a parallel between the EP address system and its ubiquitous 3P as a hallmark of a cultural tendency to avoid confrontation (Saraiva, 2007, p. 85):

... o domínio dos sistemas ternários sobre os sistemas binários. As formas de tratamento entre as pessoas são muito complexas e difíceis de ensinar a estrangeiros. Em lugar do sistema binário tu e usted (...) admitimos um sistema oblíquo na terceira pessoa (usando o nome do interlocutor, o que parece ser uma maneira de evitar o frente-a-frente.

... the predominance of ternary systems over binary systems. Forms of address are very complex and difficult to teach to foreigners. Instead of the binary

system *tu* and *usted* (...) we posit an oblique system in the third person (using the name of the interlocutor, which seems to be a way to avoid the face-to-face interaction/confrontation. [translation ours]).

Another important observation resulting from the analysis has to do with the arguments put forward to mark a stance of opposition towards the measures proposed by the mayor to mitigate the housing crisis. Because taking a stance on this issue prompts debates about the housing and cost of living crises at large, participants sometimes offer an explanation as to the who and why of the crisis, often blaming immigration for it (Example 5):

- (5). *Quando Portugal for um estado islâmico, quem pôs a pá nas mãos deste senhor vai ser apedrejado em praça pública.*
'When Portugal becomes an Islamic state, whoever put the shovel in the hands of this gentleman will be stoned in a public square.'

Although discourses on immigration and immigrants used as scapegoats fall beyond the scope of this article, they are also inevitably related. It is therefore noteworthy that anti-immigration discourses in the corpus signalled a stance of opposition; example 5 in particular seems to configure a “temporal dislocation” projecting migration into a dystopian multicultural future for which migration itself is seen as responsible (Bartoszewicz et al., 2022, p. 9).

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined the EP complex address system in an online corpus drawn from Twitter/X in order to ascertain the crucial role of forms of address in marking stance and communicating impoliteness, the latter understood here as an important pragmatic reinforcer of stance. The study hypothesised that EP forms of address are used dynamically, are not static and are able to surpass strict conventional meanings to fulfil several interactional purposes, namely stance. The second, related hypothesis was that this dynamic use of forms of address served as an important stance-taking device.

This study elicited mixed results precluding firm validation of the second hypothesis. There is an undoubtedly dynamic use of forms of address with little constraints, confirmed by the full panoply of EP forms and modes of address deployed in the corpus and adapted to the relatively free communicative environment of Twitter/X, and which explains the slight preference for 2P forms. The corpus thus becomes a showcase of the multiple, complex lexical and syntactic options afforded by the address system in EP. However, it is important not to lose track of the significance of conventionalised forms in the corpus, namely the 3P *pro-drop* which, albeit less recurrent than the 2P, was prominent.

The subsequent hypothesis that EP forms of address are stance-taking devices of relevance was not fully supported. There is not only a nexus between

indirect address and the anti-measures stance, but also a preference for a certain self-effacing communicative tone, which explains that direct forms, such as vocatives (especially insulting vocatives) and more confrontational impoliteness devices such as personalised negative assertions, tend to occur less frequently than indirect address or generalised impolite devices, namely pointed criticisms or challenging questions. A clear nexus between stance and address would see expressed forms of address occurring in a more relevant way in the corpus.

The analysis of the data shows that the linguistic complexity of EP forms of address point to sociocultural factors at play, namely a leaning towards linguistic indirectness that might be culturally motivated. This is a facet warranting further exploration which could also benefit from studies resorting to larger-scale datasets. In fact, acknowledging the sociocultural relevance of the EP address system would be significant for education purposes as well. Fully integrating the complexities of address in education, be it in Portuguese as First Language or as Second/Foreign Language, would be a worthwhile project.

A final remark worthy of mention pertains to the anti-immigration discourses marking an anti-measure stance that this study has uncovered by focusing on a corpus where the current Lisbon housing crisis was debated. These discourses, much as other discourses of crisis, echo fears and discriminatory actions which tend to emerge in times of deep social, political fractures and which should be central focal points of future research.

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