

Article

# Perceptions of Forms of Address in European Portuguese in Online Metadiscourse or What Happens When You Use *você* in Court

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**Abstract:** The point of departure for this study is an incident in 2020 when a football manager testifying in a Lisbon court used the pronoun of address *você* and was reprimanded. With the aid of corpus linguistics, we qualitatively analyse the comments (understood as metacomments) that this case generated on media outlets and social media. The main conclusion is that the sociocultural foundations of EP (European Portuguese) address are polarised and unstable based on the following: the nexus between forms of address and the expression of (im)politeness is often rejected, with concerns that a complex system of address might impede an egalitarian society; despite this, discernment remains a core facet, expressed in the concern for finding appropriate sociolinguistic rules so as to arrive at forms understood as intrinsically (im)polite. Furthermore, a binary T/V dimension does not apply to the EP system, and although a N (neutral) dimension should be added, the polarised perceptions of EP address preclude clear candidates not only for the N platform but also, to an extent, for the V dimension. Fifty years after the 1974 ‘Carnation’ Revolution that initiated the transition to democracy in Portugal, EP conceptualisations of address show that sociocultural concerns for an egalitarian society coexist with persistent concerns for hierarchy and rules.

**Keywords:** European Portuguese; address; discernment; metadiscourse



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## 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to suggest that a metadiscursive approach to forms of address can further our understanding of the sociocultural foundations of these forms, particularly in complex, opaque systems such as European Portuguese (EP). The focus on metadiscourse on forms of address in EP attempts to shed light on the cultural and sociopragmatic norms governing why and how speakers select and use these forms to achieve their communicative goals. Our aim is, thus, to make a contribution to the study of forms of address located within the broader field of sociopragmatics.

To arrive at the sociocultural principles underlying address, we focus on a particular incident from 2020, highlighting the importance of address selection in EP and how this sociodiscursive practice can impact speakers’ lives. Jorge Jesus, who was football manager at the time for Benfica, a well-known team in Portugal, was summoned to testify in court amidst the Football Leaks investigations into corruption in football in October 2020 and used the pronoun *você* to address the prosecutor. The collective of judges at the court session reprimanded him and told him to use ‘Madam Prosecutor’ (*Senhora Procuradora*) instead. The case of the apparent infelicitous address on the part of Jesus was reported in the press<sup>1</sup> and social media and generated a number of comments from speakers, evaluating not only Jesus’s linguistic behaviour but also the complexity of EP forms of address in general. These comments constitute the data for this study, offering metapragmatic conceptualisations of the sociocultural foundations governing the selection and use of EP address, which are then qualitatively analysed so as to meet our research objective.

In the Introduction, we first focus on forms of address in EP and then explain the theoretical foundations of this study.

1.1. Forms of Address in EP

Address comprises the linguistic forms (words, phrases) used to refer to interlocutors (Braun 1988). As such, forms of address are deeply interpersonal items of prime social meaning and have traditionally been subsumed under a T (informal) or a V (formal) dimension, to be used reciprocally or non-reciprocally depending on a solidarity semantic or a power semantic, respectively (Brown and Gilman 1960).

In EP, address is morphologically divided into pronominal, verbal and nominal forms, each of which can syntactically occupy subject or object positions, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of address in EP.

Pronominal	Verbal	Nominal
<p><i>tu</i> + 2nd p. sing.  <i>você</i> + 3rd p. sing.  <i>vocês</i> + 3rd p. plural</p>	<p>2nd p./3rd p. sing. pro-drop                      3rd p. plural pro-drop</p>	<p><i>O senhor</i> ‘Sir’ / <i>A senhora</i> ‘Madam’ (preceded by definite articles <i>o</i>—masculine + <i>a</i>—feminine).  <b>Social titles</b> (preceded by definite articles <i>a/o</i>): <i>Senhor</i> + First Name/Last Name—men; (<i>Senhora</i>) <i>Dona</i> + First Name—women.  <b>Academic titles</b> (preceded by definite articles <i>a/o</i>): (<i>Senhora</i>) <i>Doutora</i> / (<i>Senhor</i>) <i>Doutor</i> ‘Doctor’; (<i>Senhora</i>) <i>Engenheira</i> / (<i>Senhor</i>) <i>Engenheiro</i> ‘Engineer’; etc.  <b>Occupational/professional titles</b> (preceded by definite articles <i>a/o</i>): (<i>Senhora</i>) <i>Professora</i> / (<i>Senhor</i>) <i>Professor</i> ‘Professor’; (<i>Senhora</i>) <i>Ministra</i> / (<i>Senhor</i>) <i>Ministro</i> ‘Minister’; (<i>Senhora</i>) <i>Diretora</i> / (<i>Senhor</i>) <i>Diretor</i> ‘Director’, etc.  <b>Kinship terms</b> (preceded by definite articles <i>a/o</i>): <i>a mãe</i> ‘mother’ / <i>o pai</i> ‘father’; <i>a tia</i> ‘aunt’ / <i>o tio</i> ‘uncle’; <i>a avó</i> ‘grandmother’ / <i>o avô</i> ‘grandfather’.</p>
		+3rd p. sing./pl.

The notation of nominal forms in Table 1 is based on Oliveira (2009, p. 420), who provides a detailed illustration of the ample variety of nominal address forms in EP. In line with the pervasiveness of third-person address, Cook (2013, p. 271) posits a ‘nominal format’ encompassing the third-person verbal inflexion and noun-based forms such as “‘você”, nouns “senhor/senhora” and any other nominal expression used as a subject marker, both singular and plural’. She adds that ‘the nominal format has taken the lead in second person provision’ (Cook 2013, p. 272), which is a crucial observation to understand the current EP system of address, where the second person seems to have contracted as opposed to the expansion of third-person forms.

In the realm of the nominal format, it is also important to note that *o senhor/a senhora* are semi-pronominalised forms (Cintra 1972; Duarte and Marques 2023; Nascimento et al. 2018) and show signs of clear grammaticalisation, namely semantic bleaching and an increasing deictic value, in addition to syntactic functions close to pronouns, as explained by Duarte and Marques (2023). They also elucidate that *o senhor/a senhora*, like personal pronouns, perform the function of a subject or complement and are fully integrated into the sentence structure (Duarte and Marques 2023, p. 300). This is not the case with the other many possibilities for nominal address, which, from a grammatical standpoint, are third-person references retaining their full semantic content and are disambiguated as forms of address only by context. For example, whilst the noun phrase *a doutora* (‘the doctor’, feminine singular) in *a doutora não me disse isso* ‘The doctor didn’t tell me that’ can indeed be a third-person reference to a female doctor, it can also be a full-fledged form of address with second person meaning, depending on the context. It should also be noted that ‘doctor’ may refer to a level of education and not necessarily to a medical doctor; in fact, anyone in Portugal who has obtained a first degree in a university can be addressed by the title ‘doctor’.

The expansion of nominal forms in the V dimension, replacing the now obsolete (in standard varieties, at least) second-person plural pronoun *vós* (Cintra 1972), has promoted the expansion of the morphological third person, albeit with a second-person referential meaning. This has caused significant ‘grammatical rearrangements’ (Faraco [1996] 2017; Lara-Bermejo 2023), whereby second-person pronouns can be indexed to third-person subjects. This is unlike Brazilian Portuguese, for example, where ‘the rather systematic usage of etymological oblique pronouns in European Portuguese’ (Hummel 2020, p. 35) reinforces the contradiction between a controlling third-person subject form and its indexed oblique second-person pronouns. Another consequence of the expansion of the third person and the nominal format is the upset of strictly binary T/V dimensions. As this study discusses later, it is unclear which EP forms can count as V; in addition, the third-person *você* and the pro-drop/subject omission option warrant the consideration of a neutral dimension, mediating T and V—this is what Cook (1997, 2013, 2019) calls the N platform and Oliveira (2009, p. 421) calls the zero-form or avoidance tactic when referring to the pro-drop option specifically.

The complexity of intervening factors in systems of address (regional variation, identity, features of reverence, respect, formality, in/out-group) has also prompted Hummel (2020) to posit ‘crisis’, defined as ‘searching for solutions’, as a useful approach in address, and a defining feature differentiating it from other linguistic functions or forms. The address system in EP seems to be in crisis insofar as its complexity illustrates a search for solutions which have proven difficult to find—perhaps nothing illustrates this as well as the current pragmatic complexity of the address pronoun *você*, the pronoun that warranted the reprimand to Jorge Jesus. *Você* is the result of the grammaticalisation of the nominal form *Vossa Mercê*, which also explains why it maintains grammatical agreement with third-person forms despite its second-person semantics. This seeming grammatical inconsistency is fully echoed in the variegated pragmatic effects of *você*, which, on the one hand, may lend itself to interactions where a fairly neutral, socially distant form is necessary or to situations where speakers may wish to avoid the T pronoun *tu* whilst maintaining an equality-based address occupying a middle ground between intimacy and distance (Cintra 1972; Hummel 2020). However, on the other hand, *você* is often seen as an intrinsically impolite pronoun, potentially causing offence and often avoided for the same reason (Carreira 2004; Duarte 2011; Guilherme and Lara-Bermejo 2015; Hammermüller 2004; Lara and Guilherme 2018; Nascimento et al. 2018; Oliveira 1994, 2009). Explanations for this negative assessment of *você* are difficult to ascertain and, again, as shown by the Jesus case, this pronoun is a sign of the complexity and even ‘confusion’ affecting the EP address system nowadays (Gouveia 2008; Roque and Pinto 2023). The criteria governing the use of *você* are connected to age and social class to some extent, as pointed out by Carreira (2004) and Hummel (2020, p. 20), who clarified that the pronoun is ‘traditionally avoided by middle-class speakers, especially those who are older’. Regional variation is also a factor, with ‘regional evaluations’ differing on *você* (Hammermüller 2020); in fact, the pronoun is viewed as a polite V address in some parts of the country mainly due to its third-person grammatical features, but not in others. In view of this complexity, Hammermüller (2020, p. 251) thus posits isoglosses as a useful heuristic tool to approach the address system in EP, highlighting its ‘numerous many-layered islands of address-norm systems’.

The perception of forms of address is, therefore, subject to an understanding of (im)politeness, given the nodal connection between these concepts (Truan 2022), which the potentially offensive meaning of *você* illustrates well. Carreira (2004) further observes that the nuanced ‘regulation of hierarchy’ conveyed by linguistic address in EP makes these forms particularly suited for the expression of politeness, which she takes to be the linguistic expression of consideration for others. Politeness and other related concepts are, therefore, crucial for our analysis and are the focus of the following subsection.

## 1.2. Theoretical Framework

The vast research available on (im)politeness in the literature is usually divided into three different historical stages of research, or three ‘waves’, according to Grainger (2011). The first wave is based on the classical Gricean approach of Brown and Levinson (1987), which sees politeness as a facework designed to mitigate a face-threatening act and a necessary deviation from conversational maxims; the second wave is termed ‘the discursive turn’ as it understands politeness as an eminently discursive event, the meaning of which is to be disputed in discourse. An important distinction is posited between scholarly views of (im)politeness (also termed second-order (im)politeness) and the understandings of lay members in a community (first-order (im)politeness). Politeness and impoliteness are seen as first-order concepts to which second-order views must give voice as they unfold in discursive interaction—this might explain why this second wave is also called the ‘post-modern’ turn (Grainger 2011). In this light, politeness and impoliteness—or (im)politeness, to merge both terms—are the respective positively or negatively marked ends of ‘the entire continuum of verbal behaviour’ encapsulated in the notion of ‘relational work’ (Locher and Watts 2005, 2008). This means that such verbal behaviour can merely be appropriate or ‘politic’, or in other words ‘unmarked’ when it passes unnoticed. A discursive look at (im)politeness paves the way for the third wave of research in the field, the ‘interactional’ approach (Grainger 2011), emphasising the relational nature of (im)politeness whilst maintaining a robust second-order approach, namely ‘the fundamentally Austinian notion that speech is social action’ (Grainger 2011, p. 171) and, therefore, the underlying ‘moral norms of considerateness which bind individuals qua interactants’ (Goffman [1983], cited in Grainger 2011, p. 172). Our discussion of forms of address in EP is, therefore, also a discussion of how speakers conceptualise (im)politeness, given the interactional nature of address and how it can be perceived as (im)polite behaviour.

When defining impoliteness specifically, Culpeper (2011, p. 23) places emphasis on the violation of expectations as an essential factor—impoliteness comprises situated elements insofar as it is ‘a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts’; however, this negative attitude is founded on underlying ‘expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation’—the previously alluded norms that bind individuals. This is a particularly useful take to apply to EP forms of address, which can be perceived as impolite or offensive when their deployment fails to meet the expectations of addressees. The impolite values attributed to *você* can then at least partly be explained in this way—the reduced semantics of the form preclude the deference conveyed by nominal forms, including titles and honorifics. When the addressee expects the latter but receives *você*, the ensuing conflict generates judgements of impoliteness.

The EP address system, thus, evinces a preoccupation with the elaboration of form, which may explain its complexity and which is also the reason why we find the concept of discernment useful to make sense of this complexity. Discernment politeness, or *wakimae*, as posited by Ide (1989), is the selection of the appropriate form based on the previous knowledge of social norms and collective expectations—the use of a specific form of address is, thus, discerned by speakers based on this knowledge and is ‘inherently dependent upon the speaker’s observation of the social conventions of the society of which he or she is a member’ (Ide 1989, p. 230). Discernment politeness is, thus, the automatic and, unlike Brown & Levinson’s proposition, non-strategic selection of forms, which are linguistic obligations deriving from societal conventions. This would allow for an appropriate match between form and interlocutor/context: a concern that the EP address system seems to evince. This selection, however, applies to a ‘stable society’ where everyone knows their sense of place and status (Ide 1989, p. 230). When this stability falters, then there is room for speakers to submit less passively to collective expectations and have a more ‘active choice’ in the advancement of their own intentions and communicative goals—volition (Hill et al. 1986, p. 348). As Hill et al. (1986) further elaborate, all languages resort to discernment and volition, albeit in unequal measure, with discernment providing a basis of shared social rules which bring ‘social punishment’ if ignored. It can, thus, be argued that

discernment politeness is not, in fact, politeness or positively marked behaviour, but rather a socially appropriate or political form of behaviour since it entails undertaking what is expected by following sociolinguistic rules (Watts 2005). It is the ‘enhanced’ use of forms of address based on ‘a correct assessment of the relevant socio-cultural factors’, which counts as over-politic, and thus polite and proper behaviour (Watts 2005, p. 62).

The concept of discernment applied to EP forms needs to be carefully pondered, mainly because it is historically situated, and its metapragmatic meaning differs from its second-order or technical meaning (Kádár and Paternoster 2015; Paternoster 2024). The primordial meaning of *wakimae* applies to the Japanese automatic selection of honorifics conveying individual rank and consists of obligatory choices that speakers cannot escape. When under the light of historical metapragmatics in the West, discernment bears a different understanding, as shown by Kádár and Paternoster (2015). They analyse the lay notion of discernment by tracing back the Italian verb *discernere* and its synonyms in Italian etiquette manuals in the 16th century, as these influenced the historical understandings of ‘discernment’ in Europe during the Renaissance; what they find is that these first-order meanings of discernment were not so much about the automatic selection of a form based on a pre-existent rule, but a term encapsulating the mental effort required to discern the appropriate form when the rules of appropriateness are unclear. Discernment is thus a ‘heuristic method to reach a decision on appropriateness in a specific interactional context’ (Kádár and Paternoster 2015, p. 381) more than the ability to behave non-strategically according to pre-existing rules. Paternoster (2024), thus, highlights the apparent contradiction between first-order notions of discernment (Discernment1) and second-order notions (Discernment2): whilst Discernment2 (that is, scientific notions of discernment) is rigid and based on ‘scripted’, ‘pre-negotiated behaviour’, Discernment1 (lay notions) is a ‘heuristic toolkit’ preparing speakers for ‘complex real-life situations’ when rules of social appropriateness are not easily discerned.

We argue that the address system in EP evinces a definite concern for the appropriate, non-strategic selection of a form to convey obedience to a pre-established rule that must be collectively followed, but also that the notion of discernment as a heuristic category, or ‘the intellectual capacity necessary to act appropriately’ (Kádár and Paternoster 2015, p. 381) is an accurate depiction of the workings of address selection in this language—especially because the opacity of EP address precludes the non-strategic, automatic selection of form. The rapid social changes in Portuguese society which have taken place since the 1974 ‘Carnation’ Revolution, signalling the end of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship and the beginning of democracy, impede a clear knowledge of socially appropriate rules and one’s sense of place in society, which is now more fluid as democratic equality advances. Whilst notions of hierarchy and rank remain important (as illustrated by Carreira 2004, who avers that the complexity of EP address forms is the linguistic coding of numerous possibilities to convey hierarchy, rank and deference), the march towards equality has thrown a hazy cloud over what used to be a rigid stratification and a clear knowledge of ‘one’s sense of place or role in a given situation’ (Ide 1989, p. 230). Discernment is closer to the mental reasoning underlying the selection of an appropriate address against a background of uncertainty than the sure selection of a form driven by safe knowledge of what the rules demand, as illustrated by the reprimand that Jorge Jesus suffered in court. Lacking a clear rule which would allow the (almost) automatic selection of form, Jesus opted for what seemed the safest option, the third-person pronoun of address *você*; the judges who reprimanded him, however, felt that he should have discerned or reasoned, that the semantic void of this pronoun was lacking in a formal setting. Judges and prosecutors must be addressed in such a way that clarifies their occupational standing and importance, warranting a nominal form—*Madam Prosecutor*.

Prompted by this opacity of address, which speakers feel interferes directly with the achievement of their communicative goals, they often engage in lay debates on social media, evaluating the appropriateness of forms of address and commenting on the difficulties they pose. An examination of these online debates, tantamount to the metadiscourse into

perceptions of EP address, could significantly further our awareness of emic conceptualisations and evaluations of address (what Eelen 2001 describes as speakers' 'common-sense' notions and Kádár and Haugh 2013 designate as the understandings of cultural insiders).

Metadiscourse is based on reflexivity, or 'to use language to communicate about the activity of using language' (Lucy 1993, p. 9), and it highlights that 'all linguistic choice-making implies some degree of consciousness' (Verschueren 2000, p. 445). This consciousness depends on how linguistic behaviour (addressing others in EP, in this case) is conceptualised by the participants themselves. In this light, metadiscourse is part of metapragmatics, broadly defined as 'the study of awareness on the part of ordinary or lay observers about the ways in which they use language to interact and communicate with others' (Kádár and Haugh 2013, p. 181), and is a lead-in approach to real speakers and how they rationalise their linguistic decisions. A further advantage of metadiscourse (or metalanguage), as explained by Culpeper (2011, pp. 72/73), is that it can offer 'articulations of prescriptive rules concerning behaviours in the light of particular social norms'. This is indeed what this study aims to explore—social norms as conceptualised by speakers that inform their decisions and selection of address forms, and the emic, common-sense notions that they carry with them and activate when engaging in interactions. This also means that metadiscourse on address often extrapolates from localised interactions to become wider in scope, focusing on the broader social normativity informing expected behaviours in society—in other words, the moral order, or the 'socially constructed set of understandings we carry with us from situation to situation. It is moral because it guides our sense of right and wrong, good and bad' (Domenici and Littlejohn 2006, cited in Culpeper 2011, p. 38).

The moral order is, therefore, part of speakers' social competence and encapsulates their expectations about what is appropriate or adequate—our sense of how things ought to be conveyed based on pre-existent normative understandings used as benchmarks to regulate our expectations (Kádár 2017; Kádár et al. 2019). It becomes salient when it is perceived to have been violated, triggering moralisation via metadiscourses of penalisation. The EP idiom *você é de estrebaria* 'você is in the stable' is a prime example of such negative assessments due to its fixed phraseological nature (there are other, albeit less stable, expressions such as *você é feio* 'você is ugly'). The fact that EP exhibits a fixed set of idioms that constitute, in practice, a metalanguage designed to evaluate address reinforces the sociocultural relevance of these forms and points to a third-layer moral order, one that transcends localised and group-based norms and undergoes a 'scale shift' (Kádár and Haugh 2013) invoking wider sociocultural tenets and expectations.

Investigating the nexus between forms of address and a third-layer moral order is all the more necessary given the previously mentioned background of uncertainty and the necessary intellectual reasoning it demands from speakers, which is often so burdensome as to trigger judgements of impoliteness, as illustrated by the Jorge Jesus case. This is further complicated by the fact that the recognisability of politeness and appropriateness is fundamentally reflexive and recursive (Kádár and Haugh 2013, p. 185); that is, evaluations of politeness 'reoccur or are repeated in a self-similar way over time and across social spaces', causing a 'circular relationship' between localised occasions when politeness is perceived to occur and the evaluation of politeness itself. It is this reflexive circularity that makes politeness (or (im)politeness) recognisable, with this recognisability hinging on evaluations that span past, present and future moments of recognisable (im)politeness evaluations (Kádár and Haugh 2013, p. 185). What happens, then, when such recognisability is hindered by the erosion of this historical—past, present, future—foundational basis in societies, such as the Portuguese, that have undergone rapid and dramatic social changes?

We argue that the metadiscourses found on social media expressing existing social concerns towards EP forms of address are an attempt to answer this exact question, hence demonstrating the importance of casting an analytical eye upon metadiscourses on EP forms connecting speakers' conceptualisations of address to wider interpretations of social relations and the foundations of society.

The paper unfolds in the following way: Section 2 explains the methodology for data collection and analysis; Section 3 presents the results extracted from the corpus, that is, the extended context of concordance lines pertaining to the Jorge Jesus case; and Section 4 concludes with a discussion of these results.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The materials for this study comprise a corpus of 476 manually collected comments on the Jorge Jesus case posted on Twitter (now X) or left on online versions of newspapers, including comments left on the Facebook accounts of newspapers. All comments were fully anonymised for the analysis and were collected after the fact, in April and May 2023, following two methods, depending on the platform as follows: on Twitter, the keywords *Jorge Jesus* or keyword combinations *Jorge Jesus + você*, *Jorge Jesus + juíza* ‘judge’ + *procuradora* ‘prosecutor’ were used, so as to locate tweets referring to the case. The comments themselves where the keywords occurred were manually collected (including tweets issued by mainstream media outlets pertaining to the case and featuring relevant keywords)<sup>2</sup> and also the ensuing replies and sub-replies that it generated. It should be pointed out that not all sub-replies included a keyword—they were, however, in response to original posts that did include keywords and were, thus, relevant commentaries on Jorge Jesus’s selection of address.

The other method consisted of locating online newspaper articles covering the incident and collecting the comments left on these articles, including one case where the newspaper posted the article on its Facebook page.<sup>3</sup>

This initial methodological step yielded a total of 476 comments, posted on 20 and 21 October 2020, with their distribution according to the platform illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of comments according to online platforms.

Online Newspapers	Twitter (X)	Total
414 comments	62 comments	476 comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the online versions of <i>Jornal de Notícias</i> and <i>Tribuna Expresso</i>: 94</li> <li>From the broadsheet <i>Expresso</i>’s Facebook page: 320</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Including replies to tweets posted by mainstream media outlets (CNN Portugal and TVI)</li> </ul>	

These comments were taken to be metacommentary or metapragmatic comments since they pertained directly to Jorge Jesus being reprimanded in court due to his choice of address, and they were metapragmatic assessments of the appropriateness of forms of address (Truan 2022, p. 228), offering this study a core sociopragmatic view into what speakers believe are the sociocultural foundations of address selection and use.

After constituting the corpus, the next methodological step was to establish a coherent analytical approach, which was found with the help of corpus linguistics. A frequency list of lemmas was drawn from Sketch Engine, then narrowed down to nouns and adjectives, all the while using lemma as a search unit so as to better capture the range and use of a certain term. The extended context of the resulting concordance lines for each list was then subjected to a qualitative reading to ascertain the unfolding patterns of perceptions of address in EP. To ensure the manageability of the research, the frequency lists were shortened to ten examples each, with the ensuing concordance lines working as a practical sample of analysis.

Finally, it should be added that the reason why this study undertook a corpus approach, albeit quite a reduced one, was because it allowed us to obtain an objective view of the data despite the fact we were dealing with a small-scale dataset, the contents of which were to be analysed in detail. Frequency is a lead-in to a hopefully unbiased reading but not a controlled analytical category. As McEnery and Hardie (2012, p. 18) note, qualitative

analysis ‘is so labour-intensive that a large-scale study using the corpus may not be possible’, which is exactly the case here. We did find, however, that a corpus-assisted small-scale study was productive in terms of how useful corpus software can be to emphasise patterns that may have otherwise remained hidden, thus hindering the full thrust of the analysis.

### 3. Results

Jorge Jesus is a football personality who, in 2020, was the manager for Benfica, a top-tier team in the Portuguese league. In October of the same year, he was summoned to testify in court pertaining to Football Leaks, which was an investigation into corruption in football. Whilst in court, Jesus addressed the prosecutor as *você* and was reprimanded, with the collective of judges presiding over the session telling the football manager he should address her as *Senhora Procuradora*, ‘Madam Prosecutor’. The case was mentioned in the press and social media, generating metadebates on the acceptability of *você* and, interestingly enough, about the wider social meaning of forms of address in Portuguese society.

As explained in the methodology section, the first step was to examine a keyword frequency list of lemmas, where frequency works as a guide for exploring the contents of the corpus instead of a category of analysis itself (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Wordlist (lemmas) ordered by frequency in the Jorge Jesus dataset.

	Words	Frequency
1.	<i>tratar</i> ‘to address’	154
2.	<i>você</i>	104
3.	<i>senhor</i> ‘Sir’ / ‘Madam’	74
4.	<i>procurador</i> ‘prosecutor’	58
5.	<i>dizer</i> ‘to say’ / ‘to tell’	58
6.	<i>saber</i> ‘to know’	54
7.	<i>respeito</i> ‘respect’	53
8.	<i>dever</i> ‘duty’ / ‘should’	48
9.	<i>poder</i> ‘power’ / ‘can’ — ‘to be able to’	45
10.	<i>doutor</i> ‘doctor’	44
2876 items   15,643 total frequency		

A brief overview of Table 3 is already revelatory of the social concerns affecting the EP address system; whilst the lemmas *tratar por* ‘to address as’, *senhor* and *procurador* pertain directly to the nature of the case itself, items such as ‘respect’ and ‘doctor’ immediately convey the concern for rank and deference that the system seems to evince.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the modal verbs *dever* and *poder*, coupled with their deriving forms (namely the adjective *devido* ‘due’ and the noun *poder* ‘power’), indicate the heavily deontic conceptualisations of address.

The concordance lines for item 2, *você*, in Example 1, show the panoply of differing evaluations of this form:

- (1) Concordance lines—*você*
- a. *Era suposto tratar por tu?* </s><s> *No Minho, tratar por você não é falta de educação.*  
</s><s> *O país só pode falar à moda de Lisboa?*  
‘Was he supposed to use *tu*? In Minho, to address someone as *você* is not impolite. Can the country only talk in the Lisbon style?’
  - b. *No Minho?! </s><s> Onde?* </s> <s> *Você é rude como as casas, só ouvi usar a gente de Lisboa e soa como unhas num quadro a giz.*  
‘In Minho?! Where? *Você* is as rude as can be, I’ve only heard it from Lisbon people and it sounded like fingernails on a chalkboard.’
  - c. *Cresci numa aldeia e sempre ouvi dizer que “você” é estrebaria*  
‘I grew up in a village and I’ve always heard people say that *você* is for the stables.’
  - d. *“Você” é má educação em qualquer parte do país.*  
‘*Você* is impolite is any part of the country.’

The first aspect resulting from these concordance lines is the geographical sensitivity of the differing (im)politeness evaluations of *você*, which has been pointed out by a number of studies (Duarte 2010; Guilherme and Lara-Bermejo 2015; Hammermüller 2020; Lara and Guilherme 2018). What Example (1) shows, however, is how oscillating this criterion is—speakers from the same region, Minho, in north-western Portugal, find it acceptable in Minho and unacceptable in Lisbon (1a), whereas (1b) posits the exact opposite, using a powerful sound metaphor to convey the impoliteness of *você* in Minho, as opposed to its acceptability in Lisbon. Examples (1c) and (1d) state the impoliteness of the pronoun across the board, regardless of geographical region, with (1d) resorting to the felicitous expression *má educação* (literally ‘bad education’), which can mean impoliteness or rudeness, bad manners or even lack of knowledge or academic education (as in other Romance languages, the polysemic noun *educação* can both mean ‘politeness’, ‘manners’ or ‘education’ in EP), adding that evaluations of *você* surpass localised community standards and are intrinsically impolite at a wider, national level.

Clearly, the geographical impoliteness of *você* is not reliable, attracting as it does disparate pragmatic conceptualisations from speakers of the same region. Socialisation and upbringing emerge as factors which, thus, trump the regional criterion—examples (1c) and (1d) are relevant precisely because they point to the fact that the impoliteness of the pronoun is learned and based on the replication of what elders commonly say (that *você* is in the stables). This also connects to item 5 in Table 2, *dizer*, which is a verbal form encapsulating the learned aspect of impoliteness. The semantics of *saber* ‘know’, item 6, seem to be similar (Example 2):

- (2) Concordance lines—*saber*
- a. *Jorge de Jesus pode não saber falar no vosso entender pretensioso, mas não podem dizer que ele não é claro e directo. </s><s> Quantos dos que “sabem” falar mastigam as palavras e ninguém os entende, ou, levam os “entendidos em linguagem” a comprar banha da cobra? ‘Jorge de Jesus may not know how to speak in your pretentious opinion, but you can’t say he isn’t clear and straightforward. </s><s>How many of those who “know” how to speak chew their words and no one understands them, or lead the “language experts” into buying snake oil?’*
  - b. *Um pouco de humildade, reconhecendo as nossas fragilidades, sabendo fazer autocrítica, e reconhecendo os erros. </s><s> Na minha opinião faz parte do saber estar e viver em sociedade. ‘A bit of humility, recognising our weaknesses, knowing how to self-criticise, and acknowledging mistakes. </s><s>In my opinion, this is part of knowing how to be and to live in society.’*

Example (2a) praises Jesus’s direct style, seemingly deriving from his lack of knowledge of the Portuguese language, whilst equating knowledge and ‘knowing how to speak’ with deceitful language. This negative judgement might be connected with an insincere value that the speaker attributes to politeness and, in particular, to over-politic language (Culpeper 2011, p. 102) reflected in the mandatory use of terms that the speakers feel to be excessive, such as ‘Madam Prosecutor’. Comment (2b), however, is interesting in the connections it allows between knowledge and discernment, where being able to select a form of address equates to self-knowledge, to discern and reason the appropriate manner and to ‘be and live in society’, which Jesus lacked when selecting *você*.

As for the aspect of ‘respect’, the comments drawn from Table 3, are as follows:

- (3) Concordance lines—*respeito*
- a. *O Jorge Jesus teve uma postura de falta de respeito no tribunal. </s><s> De desprezo pela justiça e pela procuradora. </s><s> Um tribunal não é um café. ‘Jorge Jesus was disrespectful in court. </s><s> He had an attitude of contempt for justice and for the prosecutor. </s><s> A courtroom is not a coffee-shop.’*
  - b. *Só é desrespeito para quem ainda vê algo que não decadência e pedantismo na insistência em títulos honoríficos. </s><s> Sempre foram uma forma de manter o “respeitinho” e não de mostrar respeito. ‘It’s only disrespectful for those who still see anything other than decay and pedantry in the insistence on honorific titles. </s><s>They’ve always been a way of keeping “respect” [little respect] rather than showing respect.’*

This set of examples (3) shows differing cultural values at work—(3a) posits a nexus between the selection of form and the interlocutor/context in terms close to the category of discernment postulated by Ide (1989). Here, the formal context of a courtroom and judge preclude the informal *você*, with failure to meet this social rule triggering a penalty that Jesus indeed received due to his ‘disrespect’ and ‘contempt’. However, (3b) takes nominal addresses (titles and honorifics) as evidence of a failing moral order where a stifling notion of ‘respect’ (conveyed by the suffix *-inho*, resulting in the diminutive form *respeitinho*) takes over actual respect. Contrary to (3a), (3b) postulates that the selection of linguistic form is unrelated to respect. These conflicting views of social concerns entailed in the linguistic expression of ‘respect’ via the selection of an appropriate form of address and the dismissal of such concerns as ‘decaying’ and ‘pedantic’ are also shown when examining the modal verbs *poder* ‘can’/‘to be able to’ and *dever* ‘should’ and deriving forms (Example 4):

- (4) Concordance lines—*poder, dever*
- a. *Quando nos dirigimos a magistrado deve ser por “Sra Procuradora”, “doutor”.*  
‘When we address a magistrate, it **should** be as “Madam Prosecutor”, “doctor”.’
  - b. *O tratamento por você revela apenas que o JJ não tem noção do respeito devido a terceiros com quem não há proximidade.*  
‘Addressing as *você* simply means that JJ has no notion of the respect **due** to others who aren’t close.’
  - c. *O “você” por si só não é falta de respeito, ponto. </s><s> O tom, o que disse a seguir, etc, podem ser (e foram), mas ele podia ter sido perfeitamente educado e ainda assim usado o “você”.*  
‘*Você* in itself is not disrespectful, period. </s><s>The tone, what he said next, etc., **may** be (and were) disrespectful, but he **could** have been perfectly polite and still use “*você*”.’

Examples (4a) and (4b) reveal the heavily deontic load of metadiscourses assessing the impoliteness of *você*. Whilst (4a) restricts the deontic negative judgement to a court of law, (4b) extrapolates this to a wider moral order, stating that addressing socially distant interlocutors by *você* fails to show adequate respect—respect which is ‘due’ for no other reason than the fact it is dictated to be so. However, (4c) shows a different take, relevantly removing the selection of forms of address from an intrinsic link to politeness.

In addition, the noun *poder* was used in the corpus to refer to the power of the judiciary, negatively assessed in its attempt to control language and impose a scripted use of nominal forms. The root of this linguistic display of authority is seen as a remnant of dictatorship, as shown by the use of terms such as ‘dictatorship’ and ‘fascism’ in the following add-on examples (although these lexical items are not displayed in the frequency list, a close qualitative reading of the concordance lines where they were employed made it possible to detect them):

- (4)
1. **Ditadura ‘dictatorship’**  
*A subserviência ainda é prática em muitas instituições, uma réstia dos tempos da ditadura que perdura no tempo*  
‘Subservience is still common practice in many institutions, the remnants of **dictatorship** that last in time’
  2. **Fascismo ‘fascism’**  
*A justiça portuguesa é que está habituada a uma posição de superioridade que até se reflete na linguagem. Resquícios do passado fascista . . .*  
‘It’s the Portuguese justice that is used to superiority to the extent that it’s reflected in language. The remnants of a **fascist** past. . .’

The lemma *doutor* yielded similarly conflicting examples (5):

- (5) Concordance lines—*doutor*
  - a. *Tem de tratar por “a senhora procuradora” ou “Sra. doutora”.* </s><s> *O “você” ainda que possa parecer respeitoso é informal.*  
‘He has to address her as “Madam Prosecutor” or “Madam Doctor”.’ </s><s> *Você,* although it may seem respectful, is informal.’
  - b. *O problema não é o regionalismo, é o doutorismo.*  
The problem is not regionalism, it’s **doctorism**.
  - c. *Mas Portugal é país dedoutores, sem doutoramento.*  
But Portugal is a country of **doctors** without PhDs.

The obligatory choice of form posited by the deontic modality in (5a) is contravened by (5b) and (5c), both negatively evaluating the ostensible importance of nominal titles in Portugal. (5c) alludes to the fact that in this country, a Bachelor’s degree warrants the nominal address ‘Doctor’ (usually followed by a surname, but also a first name) without the need to obtain an actual doctorate. The country is, therefore, designated as ‘a country of doctors’, whereas (5b) resorts to suffixation (*doutor* plus the nominal suffix *-ismo*) to convey the conspicuous social concern with titles.

Turning now to the list of the most relevant nouns and adjectives found in the Jorge Jesus dataset, the results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Nouns and adjectives (lemma) ordered by frequency in the Jorge Jesus dataset.

	Nouns (Lemma)	Frequency	Adjectives (Lemma)	Frequency
1.	<i>senhor</i>	74	<i>procurador</i> ‘prosecutor’	33
2.	<i>respeito</i> ‘respect’	53	<i>bom</i> ‘good’	13
3.	<i>pessoa</i> ‘person’	49	<i>bronco</i> ‘boor/boorish’	12
4.	<i>doutor</i> ‘doctor’	44	<i>importante</i> ‘important’	11
5.	<i>educação</i> ‘education’ / ‘politeness’	43	<i>social</i>	11
6.	<i>tribunal</i> ‘court’	41	<i>português</i> ‘Portuguese’	11
7.	<i>país</i> ‘country’	38	<i>mau</i> ‘bad’	9
8.	<i>Portugal</i>	34	<i>superior</i>	9
9.	<i>juiz</i> ‘judge’	32	<i>correto</i> ‘correct’	8
10.	<i>falta</i> ‘lack’	29	<i>judicial</i> ‘judiciary’	8
	1406 items   3820 total frequency		326 items   684 total frequency	

The noun list exhibits occurrences that have been analysed before (*respeito*, *doutor*, *educação*) and other cases pertaining directly to the incident in court (*senhor*—pertaining to *Senhora Procuradora*—*tribunal*, *juiz*). We focus on the concordance lines of *pessoa* ‘person’, *país* ‘country’, *Portugal* and *falta* ‘lack’:

- (6) Concordance lines—*pessoa*
  - a. *Portugal pequenino em que importante é tratar a pessoa pelo título e não por você. . . enfim o pedantismo de uma certa classe social deste país*  
‘Little/Small Portugal where what’s really important is addressing **people** by their title and not as *você*. . . in short, the pedantry of a certain social class in this country’
  - b. *É tido como falta de educação, no Minho ou noutro sítio qualquer, dirigir-se directamente a alguém tratando-o por “você”.* </s><s> *E isto vale para quem se dirige a uma Procuradora como a outra pessoa qualquer.*  
‘It’s considered impolite, in Minho or anywhere else, to address someone directly as *você*. </s><s> And this goes for anyone who addresses a prosecutor as much as any other **person**.

Example (6) echoes the divergent evaluations not only concerning *você* but of forms of address in general and their nexus to a certain societal depiction of Portugal, pedantic and

class-ridden, as summarised in (6a) Example (6b), however, issues a declarative speech act enunciating impoliteness as an embedded feature in the form *você*, which is, thus, seen as intrinsically impolite.

We found similar results in the analysis of concordance lines for *país* ‘country’ and *Portugal*:

- (7) Concordance lines—*país, Portugal*
- a. *É um país de Drs, Srs.. triste de quem precisa disso para se afirmar!*  
‘It’s a **country** of Drs, Sirs. . . sad for those who need it to assert themselves!’
  - b. *É só vaidade em Portugal!!!* </s><s> *No estrangeiro quem são doutores são os médicos.*  
‘It’s all vanity in **Portugal!!!** </s><s> In other countries, it’s the physicians who are doctors.’

Example (7) evinces an emergent cultural depiction of Portugal based on a conceptualisation of forms of address as excessive linguistic demands—these forms signal vanity in a country preoccupied with titles and social status (to note, 7a repeats the aforementioned idiom ‘a country of doctors’). However, the concordance lines pertaining to item 10 (*falta* ‘lack’ as in *falta de educação, respeito* ‘lack of education, respect’), summarised in Example 8, contradict this rebellion against a politeness of discernment:

- (8) Concordance lines—*falta*
- A sociedade tem regras!!!!* </s><s> *O nosso mal é este!!!* </s> <s> **Falta de civismo, educação e discernimento para entender o que é a instituição tribunal!**
- ‘Society has rules! That is what’s wrong with us! **Lack of civility, education/manners and discernment to understand a court of law as an institution.**’

Once again, we are left with polarised, conflicting conceptualisations as to the sociocultural meaning of forms of address. For every metacomment disassociating politeness from the selection of forms, the corpus shows countering conceptualisations and deep concerns for finding and following rules of social appropriateness via the selection of address—it is noteworthy that Example 8 uses the first-order term ‘discernment’ to encapsulate the mental effort to ‘understand’ how things work in a court of law, thus approximating the notion of ‘discernment’ to the heuristic effort described in the introduction of this study.

Example (9) displays relevant occurrences of frequent adjectives drawn from Table 4 (excluding *procurador* and *juiz*, whose frequency can be explained due to their direct connection to the incident in court):

- (9) Concordance lines—*bom, bronco, importante, social, português, mau, superior, correto*
- a. **bom**  
*Tenho a quarta classe mas ensinaram-me a ter boa educação, ser humilde e a aprender.*  
‘I am only 4th-grade-educated but I was taught to be polite/have **good** manners, to be humble and to learn.’
  - b. **bronco**  
*o tribunal tem regras e o Juiz deve ser tratado com a dignidade do cargo que exerce e todos sabemos que o treinador Jorge Jesus é um bronco sem cultura.*  
‘a court of law has rules and the judge needs to be addressed with the dignity his job demands and we all know the manager Jorge Jesus is an uneducated/uncultured **boor.**’
  - c. **importante**  
*Preocupem-se com o que é mais importante na vida!!!!*  
‘Concern yourselves with what’s most important in life!!!!’
  - d. **social**  
*Continuar a manter estas tradições frívolas de diferenciação só reforça a estratificação social em vez de a diluir numa sociedade mais igualitária.*  
‘Keeping these frivolous traditions of differentiation only reinforces **social** stratification instead of diluting it in a more egalitarian society.’

- e. *português*  
*Ele é português, se fala mal a sua língua concordo que tente aprender a falar corretamente a sua língua materna*  
 ‘He’s **Portuguese**, if he speaks his language badly, I agree that he should try learning how to speak his native language correctly’
- f. *mau*  
*você ou dr não são sinônimos de má educação pelo contrário, simplesmente ainda há mto arcaísmo parolo na nossa sociedade. . .*  
 ‘*você* or *Dr* are not synonymous with **bad** education on the contrary, there is simply still a lot of simple-minded archaisms in our society’
- g. *superior*  
*Um bronco com dinheiro que se julga superior aos outros, nada mais.*  
 ‘A **boor/boorish person** with money who thinks he’s superior to everyone else, nothing more, nothing less.’
- h. *correto*  
 1. *Senhora procuradora, seria a forma mais correta, mas é do conhecimento de todos que o JJ tem esta maneira de falar. . .*  
 ‘Madam Prosecutor’ would be the most **correct** form but it’s common knowledge that JJ talks this way. . .’  
 2. *Mas está tudo doido??? </s><s> Você está correto, qual o problema?*  
 ‘Has everyone gone mad??? *Você* is **correct**, what’s the problem?’

On the one hand, the examples above corroborate a politeness of discernment insofar as they evince the social penalties that come with a perceived breach of pre-established rules of appropriate address (Examples 9a, b, e, g and h1), where the football manager not only lacks the humility but also the knowledge to follow societal rules expressed by an appropriate selection of address in a court of law. Failure to follow rules by performing this selection triggers moralisation—Jesus is ‘boorish’, ‘uneducated’, speaks his own language badly and lacks the knowledge to select the ‘correct’ form. However, shifting conceptualisations of address counter this social concern for the knowledge and deployment of rules, as demonstrated in (9c), (9d), (9f) and (9h2). These metacommentary see conceptualisations of address as evidence of an archaic society, excessively concerned with social distinctions and unimportant, ‘frivolous’ matters such as forms of address and the impoliteness of *você*.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

What can a qualitative analysis of the metapragmatic comments elicited by the reprimand issued to Jorge Jesus for his selection of address in court tell us about emic understandings of the sociocultural norms governing the use of forms of address in EP, which is the central concern of this study?

Firstly, the nexus between EP forms of address and (im)politeness is complex—as mentioned in the introduction to this study, (im)politeness hinges on recognisability, which, in turn, is based on relatively established evaluations across past, present and future moments of evaluation (Kádár and Haugh 2013). Perceptions of address in EP, however, are polarised to the extent that such recognisability has been eroded by social change, marked by the 1974 Revolution and the transition to democracy, resulting in the disparate assessments of the sociocultural significance of these forms.

On the one hand, concerns for discernment (understood here as concern for meeting socially shared expectations by following pre-established sociolinguistic rules governing the selection of address) remain. They are evinced in metadiscourses positing a specific nexus to politeness and an established moral order of authority and deference—addressing the interlocutor by means of a form conveying their due rank, which is in line with Carreira’s 2004 view that EP forms of address are linguistic encoders of deference and hierarchy. This is supported by the recurrence of fixed idioms (*você* is in the stable’) and a first-order lexicon of (im)politeness (*falta de educação, respeito, bronco. . .*) encapsulating the nexus between the selection of a form of address and a third-layer moral order. In addition, the recurrence of intrinsic impolite values is attributed to the form *você* and the negative evaluations of the football manager’s own identity (uneducated, boorish) when he failed to

meet expectations of perceived appropriate in his selection of address, which is seen as a linguistic operation ideally performed by diligently following pre-established rules. This would fit discernment politeness as posited by Ide (1989), but as the results also illustrate, knowledge of these rules is nebulous. It is prevented by the opacity of a system where the semantic meanings of address are difficult to grasp not only because of its grammatical second-person and third-person contradictions but also because of the spanning pragmatic values attributed to forms of address and mostly to *você*. This lends support to the view that discernment can be suitably seen as a mental inferential effort (Kádár and Paternoster 2015; Paternoster 2024) to arrive at appropriate forms hinging on speakers' ingrained cultural values which result from their socialisation and upbringing on the one hand, and their assessments of particularised contexts and interlocutors on the other.

However, metacomments dissociating the selection of address from the expression of politeness contravene the quest for pre-established rules imposed by discernment politeness. Fixed phrases such as 'a country of doctors' seconded by suffixation (*respeitinho*, *doutorismo*. . .) and loaded nouns ('pedantry', 'vanity') constitute a set of linguistic encoders of a heavily critical view of the EP address system, rejecting a negatively evaluated moral order which is excessively reliant on authority and formalisms. This is tied to the conceptualisation of *você* as a generally appropriate form and to negative evaluations of nominal forms, which are further evinced in the metacomments, effectively separating forms of address from the communication of politeness. In fact, whilst *você* is undoubtedly the most contentious and pragmatically complex form, results show that it is not the only one subjected to negative assessments—nominal forms such as titles and/or honorifics are also negatively conceptualised as over-politic behaviour; in other words, the 'substantive' semantic specifications of nominal forms (Cintra 1972), particularly those pointing to rank and social hierarchy—such as 'Madam Prosecutor', which is an occupational title—are perceived as excessive for speakers less concerned with rigid form–interlocutor matching. When examining cognitive strategies of EP address forms, for example, Oliveira (2013) finds that nominal address formulas such as a 'senhora dona + FN' (Mrs. + First Name) are often described by speakers using metaphors of light/weight and that such formulae are deemed too 'heavy'. This negative assessment of the formality (taken to be the proliferation of form) of nominal address is connected to equally negative evaluations of an over-politic, 'enhanced use' of forms of address conceptualised as an unreasonable imposition in an egalitarian society.

The pronoun *tu* and third-person pro-drop can be construed as the only forms gathering some consensus if we accept the fact that these forms do not attract much attention from speakers as some kind of 'consensus'. Some metacomments, regardless of whether they condone Jorge Jesus for using *você* to address a prosecutor in court, restrict *tu* use to familiar and intimate circles, such as that which the commenter in (1a) states. ('Was he supposed to use *tu*?') seems to be positing by default—the only form that Jesus could not have used, presumably because of its familiarity, is *tu*. However, the possible advancement of the T dimension in EP is an avenue of future research deserving serious consideration; for example, Cook (2019) mentions a language of globalisation that may have extended the English 'you' to other systems, whilst Pires (2023) laments a *tu-você* dyad responsible for the increasing 'desertification' of the wealth of EP forms of address. If there is indeed a tendency towards a standardised bipartite address, this can perhaps be explained by the grammatical simplicity of *tu*, with its referential second-person meaning matching its equally second-person grammar, the forces of globalisation and a more democratic view of address intending to dilute linguistic encoders of power and rank such as nominal address. This would be in line with the progression of democracy in Portugal, which has been ongoing since 1974, and some metacomments in this study seem to corroborate this when they negatively evaluate the remnants of 'fascism' encapsulated in the excess of nominal forms.

These variegated perceptions of EP forms of address lead us to a core observation pertaining to the nature of EP systems of address themselves—its complexity does not cor-

roborate a binary T/V distinction since none of the third-person forms available (Cook 2013 'nominal format'), especially *você*, gather consensus as suitable candidates for the V, or polite, dimension. Some authors (Cook 1997, 2013, 2019, seconded by Roque and Pinto 2023) thus posit a N dimension, 'a noncommittal platform' (Cook 2013, p. 278) of neutrality, where retaining some informal and formal features of both T and V. *Você* could be a likely candidate for N address, were it not for its 'shifty' nature ('*você movediço*', or shifty, as Roque and Pinto 2023, p. 254 call it). Indeed, the disparate assessments of this pronoun evinced in many of the metacomments of this study preclude a true value of neutrality, which is best found in the pro-drop option or subject omission (Roque and Pinto 2023). Whilst a tripartite T – N – V categorisation of the EP system of address seems undoubtedly useful, it would nevertheless be important to further investigate the pro-drop option as an actual form of address for two reasons. Firstly, it seems doubtful that an interaction of some complexity can be conducted by resorting to subject omission without the need to ever resort to a more substantial form, either pronominal or nominal. Secondly, the options to fill the position of the omitted subject (in other words, to know what this substantial form would be) are not straightforward. As Oliveira (2009, pp. 419–21) explains, 'the verb form used is the one corresponding the pronoun *você*, but the pronoun itself is not expressed'. Nominal forms are also grammatically sound possibilities to express the subject of a third-person verb. In both cases (either by dropping *você* or by dropping a nominal form), the third-person pro-drop remains as an avoidance or zero-form tactic to some extent but loses its value of neutrality if we accept that it needs to be indexed to an expressed subject, which the speaker is attempting to elide.

This brings us back to the concept of 'crisis' that Hummel (2020) applies to systems of address—what the EP system seems to evince to a great extent is the search for sensible solutions that seem very hard to find. The polarised conceptualisations of address uncovered in this study point to a need to find appropriate forms to fill the T, the V and certainly the N dimensions, but, with the exception of *tu* in the T dimension, there are no clear answers.

To counter binary distinctions that do not adequately capture the actual use of polite or impolite forms (and, we would add, neutral forms), Terkourafi (2023) suggests a language continuum between strategic or content-based politeness and non-strategic or form-based politeness. Strategic or content-based politeness comprises creative strategies whose polite value comes from their meaning, requiring reflexive reasoning so as to better achieve particular communication goals. Non-strategic or form-based politeness consists of a 'closed repertoire' of polite meaning derived from 'habitually discharged' forms. Between a strictly binary strategic and non-strategic politeness lies a middle ground comprising forms to achieve politeness that are not fully driven by the speaker's intention and based on an established repertoire of forms, but nor are they strategic and depending on the speaker's agency. Applied to forms of address, this middle ground could be construed as the N platform that Cook (1997, 2013, 2019) argues for, providing a continuum linking the T dimension to the V dimension. In our view, this continuum could be useful to underpin not only the importance of discernment and normativity in EP address but also to better understand the T–N–V dimensions. Further research on EP forms of address and their nexus to unstable values of politeness would benefit from this view that speakers operate in social contexts and make their choices in a continuum ranging from established scripts of verbal behaviour to 'agentive' creativity. According to Jorge Jesus's 'habitually discharged' repertoire, *você* would be adequate to address a prosecutor and was probably part of form-based politeness, with little agency involved. According to the judges, the setting required a more restricted selection of form, and Jesus breached established rules and repertoires by supposedly asserting his agentive volition when he used *você*. This clash of evaluations regarding expected forms of address, therefore, occurred due to the difficulty in drawing from socially shared, established scripts of verbal behaviour—the system of EP address seems too unstable to provide for that. Appropriate forms to fill the T, N and V dimensions would, thus, depend on speakers' perceptions of particular forms of address. For example, if the favourable emic assessments of *tu* are confirmed and

increased in the future, this pronoun may stand to become part of a N-dimension repertoire whilst preserving its connotations of intimacy (which, in fact, is in line with a tendency observed by Cintra as early as 1972, predicting the expansion of *tu* beyond its restricted circle of intimacy). The same can be said for *você*, the expansion of which Cintra (1972) also predicted and has been equally suggested by Cook (2013), and which many speakers already perceive as dissociated from impoliteness and appropriate in a range of situations.

In summary, and by focusing on speakers' metadiscourses of address, this study uncovered at least part of the sociocultural foundations of the complex system of address in EP. These foundations are unstable and preclude socially shared norms of address, torn as they are between the following polarised conceptualisations: a politeness of discernment positing intrinsic politeness and the meaning of forms, thus linking address to a moral order of normative expectations based on pre-established rules of sociolinguistic appropriateness (leading to the outright rejection of *você* as intrinsically impolite); on the other hand, there is the rejection of the nexus form/politeness whilst criticising a failing moral order marred by excessive hierarchy and authority which is, thus, conceptualised as contrary to the demands of an egalitarian society (leading to the negative evaluations of nominal forms and to the acceptability of *você*). A metadiscursive examination has therefore allowed this study to reveal two truly conflicting sociocultural views underpinning the disparate evaluations and perceptions of EP address 50 years after the 1974 'Carnation' Revolution—the concern for abiding by established rules and respecting hierarchy, and the concern for more egalitarian, and necessarily less complex, linguistic address forms pointing to a less authoritarian path.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The newspaper articles on Jorge Jesus using *você* in court can be found by following these links: *Jornal de Notícias*, 20 October 2020: <https://www.jn.pt/justica/jesus-tratou-a-procuradora-por-voce-porque-e-que-nao-deve-faze-lo-12942310.html>, accessed on 17 July 2023; *Tribuna Expresso/Sic Notícias*, 20 October 2020: [https://tribuna.expresso.pt/football-leaks/2020-10-20-Jesus-tratou-insistentemente-a-procuradora-por-voce-os-tres-magistrados-avisaram-no-que-era-senhora-procuradora.-Foi-repreendido?fbclid=IwAR1cSzYcKJE5Sz4iZ6BqZWk\\_3q3Vpf9tUVzJSrvSkb1r3ml6p4MBk60hENg](https://tribuna.expresso.pt/football-leaks/2020-10-20-Jesus-tratou-insistentemente-a-procuradora-por-voce-os-tres-magistrados-avisaram-no-que-era-senhora-procuradora.-Foi-repreendido?fbclid=IwAR1cSzYcKJE5Sz4iZ6BqZWk_3q3Vpf9tUVzJSrvSkb1r3ml6p4MBk60hENg), accessed on 17 July 2023; *Tribuna Expresso* Facebook post: [https://www.facebook.com/jornalexpresso/posts/10158385969272949/?locale=ms\\_MY](https://www.facebook.com/jornalexpresso/posts/10158385969272949/?locale=ms_MY). Last accessed on 17 July 2023.
- <sup>2</sup> The tweets posted by mainstream media outlets are available here: CNN Portugal—<https://twitter.com/cnnportugal/status/131855212974608395>, accessed on 17 July 2023; TVI Notícias—<https://twitter.com/tviultimas/status/1318487303476609024>. Last accessed on 17 July 2023.
- <sup>3</sup> The link to the article posted on broadsheet *Expresso* Facebook account on 20 October 2020 is: [https://www.facebook.com/jornalexpresso/posts/10158385969272949/?locale=ms\\_MY](https://www.facebook.com/jornalexpresso/posts/10158385969272949/?locale=ms_MY). Last accessed on 23 July 2023.
- <sup>4</sup> An important proviso is to be added—the frequency list was run based on lemma; this means that the ensuing concordance lines capture both masculine and feminine forms—*o senhor/a senhora; doutor/doutora*, etc.

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