

‘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.

Keywords: *Forms of address; European Portuguese; Stance; Impoliteness; Twitter.*