**Forms of Address in European Portuguese and Teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE)** *Forms of Address in European Portuguese and the Teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL)*

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**SUMMARY**
Forms of address are one of the regulators of interpersonal relationships, being both influenced and influencing by the society in which they are inserted. Based on a literature review, this study aims to analyze the classifications and specificities of forms of address in European Portuguese, including the wide variety of existing forms, the inconsistent use of pronouns such as "você" and the various sociocultural factors that influence the choice of forms of address. Currently, the growing use of the 3rd form of address stands out.the verbal person without a subject expressed in the singular, which has become increasingly popular in communicative situations, as it does not imply any personal trait of the addressee. Characteristics of creativity and informality in the use of forms of address are also observed, resulting from new forms of communication, especially in digital interactions. The study also addresses the main difficulties faced by learners in mastering this aspect of the language, as well as the pedagogical strategies that can be implemented in teaching practice, such as systematic explanations of the rules of use, carrying out role-playing activities, writing letters, among others. It is concluded that, although the forms of address in European Portuguese present characteristics of instability and complexity, addressing them in the context of PFL contributes not only to the development of the learners' oral communication skills, but also to the deepening of their intercultural competence.

**Keywords:**Forms of address. European Portuguese. Teaching PLE

**ABSTRACT**
Forms of address are one of the regulators of interpersonal relationships, being both influenced by and influencing the society in which they are embedded. Based on a literature review, this study aims to analyze the classifications and specificities of forms of address in European Portuguese, including the wide variety of existing forms, the inconsistent use of pronouns such as "Você," and the various sociocultural factors that influence the choice of forms of address. Currently, the growing use of the third-person verb without an expressed subject in the singular stands out, as it has become increasingly popular in communicative situations for not implying any personal trait of the addressee. Characteristics of creativity and informality in the use of forms of address are also observed, stemming from new forms of communication, especially in digital interactions. The study also addresses the main difficulties faced by learners in mastering this aspect of the language, as well as the pedagogical strategies that can be implemented in teaching practice, such as systematic explanations of usage rules, role-playing activities, letter writing, among others . It is concluded that, although forms of address in European Portuguese present characteristics of instability and complexity, addressing them in the context of PLE (Portuguese as a Foreign Language) contributes not only to the development of learners' oral communication skills but also to the deepening of their intercultural competence.
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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Forms of address are one of the regulators of interpersonal relationships, playing an essential role in social interactions. Knowing how to use forms of address appropriately in different communicative contexts is crucial for learning a foreign language. However, in European Portuguese, the system of forms of address is characterized by its complexity and instability, which makes it difficult for learners of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE) to understand the appropriate use of forms of address.

Several Portuguese linguists highlight this specificity of Portuguese. According to Carreira

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(2001), forms of address present aspects that constitute areas of difficult learning, even for speakers of typologically similar mother tongues. Duarte (2010) also states that forms of address in Portuguese are a recognized difficulty in the context of language teaching, whether as a foreign language or as a mother tongue.

Its complexity, mainly of a pragmatic nature, lies in the fact that the speaker does not always know how to choose the appropriate form of address to address the addressee, not only due to the variety of forms and the morphosyntactic functioning of European Portuguese, but also, especially, because of the suitability of these forms to the context. For example, Lešková (2012) points out that, in contemporary European Portuguese, depending on sociolinguistic factors, there are at least nine different ways for a speaker to address an interlocutor, in this case, a lady called Maria:

the) *Do you like coffee?*
b) *Does Maria like coffee?*
w) *Does Mrs. Maria like coffee?*
d) *Does Dona Maria like coffee?*
and) *Does Mrs. Maria like coffee?*
f) *Do you like coffee?*
g) *Do you like coffee?*
h) *∅ Do you like coffee?*
i) *∅ Do you like coffee?*

The example above illustrates the diversity of forms of address in Portuguese. Each form presents several possibilities of use and implies different social relations and distances between speakers, particularly with regard to the use of pronouns. *You* and *You*, which represent, respectively, intimacy and distance in contemporary Portuguese society. In addition, factors such as social position, age, gender, level of education, formality and informality of the discursive situation, among other socio-communicative roles, also exert important influences on the choice of a particular form of address. As a result, both Portuguese learners and native speakers find it difficult to use these forms appropriately in verbal interactions.

Taking this specificity into account, the work aims to analyze the forms of treatment in European Portuguese, especially their classifications and evolution trends, as well as to address the pedagogical practices related to the forms of treatment in the context of PLE teaching.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 FORMS OF ADDRESS IN EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE

Among linguistic studies on the system of forms of address in European Portuguese, three main classifications stand out, respectively from the morphosyntactic, semantic-pragmatic and semantic-lexical points of view. However, in this work, the first two proposed by the linguist Lindley Cintra are considered, since they are more recognized in the linguistic field.

From the morphosyntactic perspective, according to Cintra (1972), the system of forms of treatment is divided into three categories:

the) Pronoun Treatment:
*you, you, you, you, Your Excellency, Your Highness, Your Majesty, Your Lordship, Your Grace,* etc.
b) Nominal Treatment:
- *you, sir, madam, doctor, lady, lady,* etc.
- *the doctor, the minister, the engineer,* etc.
- the father, the mother, the grandmother, etc.
- *Carlos, Ana,* etc.
- *the boy, the girl, my friend,* etc.
w) Verbal Treatment:

In Portuguese, this involves the use of the 2nd person and 3rd person of the verb without an expressed subject. For example, *Do you want to study? Do you want to study? Do you want to study?*

Regarding pronominal treatment, many forms, such as *you, Your Highness, Your Lordship,*

*Your Grace,* have fallen into disuse nowadays.

Nominal treatment is always accompanied by the 3rd person verb and generally alludes to some personal traits associated with the addressee we are speaking to. These traits may be: sex (*you, madam*), the profession (*Mr. Doctor, Mr. Minister*), kinship (*the father, the mother*), the proper name (*Carlos, Ana*) or the name of the special relationship (*my friend, the girl*). In this context, it is important to highlight the asymmetry in the use of *the Lord* and *the lady* which are more formal forms of address to designate male and female interlocutors. For example, for women, the proper name is used after *the lady* (*Mrs. Maria*), while for men it is more polite to use the nickname after *the Lord* (*Mr. Pinto*).

As for verbal treatment, the use of the 3rd person without an autonomous subject in the singular allows to avoid references to the social status of the addressee, being a neutral form of treatment in contemporary European Portuguese. For this reason, it is increasingly common in daily interactions, when the speaker wishes to avoid both the intimacy of the use of *you* as the distance associated with *you*.

From a semantic-pragmatic point of view, taking into account the strong hierarchy of Portuguese society, Cintra (1972) distinguished three types of forms of address:

> the) *you* can be used to express intimacy;
> b) *you* ê is suitable for interlocutors in situations of equality, from superior to inferior or when one wants to avoid implying intimacy;
> w) the forms of courtesy, such as *you, sir, Doctor, Joaquim, Maria, Mrs. Maria, Mrs. Maria, Your Excellency*, etc., imply the various distances
> cies between the interlocutors.

This distinction is relevant because it reflects the functioning of Portuguese society, that is, a hierarchical society. Cintra (*ibid.*) points out that the Portuguese system seems to be associated, on the one hand, with a strongly hierarchical society and, on the other hand, with a certain taste for hierarchy and stylistic nuances, as we can see in the use of the numerous forms of address that exist. However, as society has evolved, these rules no longer completely correspond to the way people communicate in their daily lives.

Considering the factors that influence the choice of forms of address, Carreira (2001, p. 3) proposes two axes that organize the set of forms of address, that is, "a vertical axis, bringing together the different hierarchies, and a horizontal axis, corresponding to the degree of distance or familiarity expressed (or suggested)". In other words, hierarchy and distance/familiarity are two main elements that interfere in the choice of an appropriate form of address for the interlocutor. In addition, it is necessary to take into account other important factors, such as education and academic qualifications, the formality or informality of the situation, the superiority and inferiority between the speakers or the equality between them, respect and courtesy, age, kinship, among others.

The various forms of address and the various factors that affect their choice demonstrate once again the complexity of the system of forms of address in European Portuguese. In fact, there are no well-defined rules regarding the most "correct" use of these forms, because the interpretation of the various forms of address can vary from social group to social group.

## 2.2 CHANGES AND TRENDS IN FORMS OF TREATMENT

Indeed, as linguistic elements, forms of address are not immune to the influences of social transformations. As Gouveia (2008, p. 93) points out, "forms of address constitute one of the most obvious links between the structure of the language itself and the structure of society, in the sense that they reflect the organization of society in terms of institutions (the family, the legal and educational systems, etc.) and stratification (age, class, gender, profession, education, etc.)". Thus, it is evident that, with the development and transformation of society, forms of treatment are constantly changing.

In this sense, according to Gouveia (*ibid.*, p. 97), Portuguese society is "suffering the transformations of the transition from a system of face and solidarity based on hierarchy and differentiation to a system based on equality and involvement". In other words, in the first system, people recognize hierarchical differences and resort to distancing strategies to highlight these hierarchies. In the second, social actors do not feel these differences in relation to those they address and use forms of familiarity to get closer and reduce the distance.

Cintra (1972) summarized four striking trends in the evolution of the use of forms of translation:

treatment in European Portuguese. In your opinion, these four trends would predominate in European Portuguese:

the)    The suppression of treatment by *Your Excellency* in everyday language. It is found, to a limited extent, in certain situations (courts, diplomacy, academia, etc.) and in some professions (telephone operators, shop assistants, etc.), but the latter situation is no longer seen today. On the other hand, it continues to exist in written language.

b)    The expansion of the scope of use of the pronoun *you* and the 2nd person singular verb. It is becoming increasingly common, especially among young people of both sexes and even people of different ages. Thus, this treatment would lose the intimate character it had before.

w)    The expansion and, at the same time, the reduction of the use of the pronoun *you.* The derogatory hue would disappear and *you* would be considered more of an affectionate form of address.

d)    The progressive elimination of differences in treatment based on social differentiation. For example, there is a tendency to eliminate the difference between *Mrs. Maria* (lower social status) and *to D. Maria* or *Mrs. Maria* (higher social condition).

Observing the phenomenon of forms of treatment today, it is true that the form *Your Excellency* It is rarely used in conversation, but frequently on ceremonial occasions. It is still prevalent in written language, especially in formal letters.

Nowadays, it is used *you* not only between intimate and close people, but also "between young strangers, colleagues in the same profession, from superiors to inferiors, with family members, from children to parents" (Lešková, 2012, p. 22). Thus, it becomes evident that the treatment by *you* loses its original meaning of intimacy and begins to reflect an egalitarian position between the interlocutors.

The use of treatment *you* is problematic, even though it is widespread in verbal interactions at the present time. Gouveia (2008) states that even among highly educated speakers of standard Portuguese, a consensus is not easily reached on the appropriate contexts for the use of *you*.

With regard to the use of *you*, some people use *you* to address someone with respect, which often happens in rural areas. For example, in universities there are students who address teachers as *you* to show respect, but this usually causes teachers to feel uncomfortable. In contrast, the urban middle class considers the use of *you* such as lack of respect and education, as in the case of teachers.

Often, *you* is used as a form of distancing in relationships between superiors and inferiors (in age, social class or hierarchy), without any derogatory value. However, for some people, it could also be a pejorative treatment when addressing someone of inferior condition (social position). On the other hand, in standard Portuguese, *you* should not be used in relations between inferior and superior. But among elderly people, it can be considered as equal treatment.

We can state that the interpretation of the use of *you* in current Portuguese society changes from person to person, from social group to social group. In addition to diatopic factors, each speaker has his own judgment based on his education, hierarchy, age, etc. Therefore, the use of *you* in European Portuguese is full of contradictions. In fact, most Portuguese people rarely use *you* in your daily life. In this sense, in order to avoid misunderstandings and not cause discomfort to the interlocutor, the most polite and safest thing to do is not to use it and to replace it with either the person's name, or with o/a senhor/a, o/a chefe, o/a professor/a, or with the verbal treatment of the 3rd person singular verb without an expressed subject that does not refer to any personal trait of the interlocutor.

As for the last trend, there are still phenomena of differentiating people according to the forms of address. For example, the distinction between the use of "senhor/a Dr./Dr.ª" and "senhor/a doutor/a" continues to be present in the workplace, the first to refer to someone who has a degree and the second to refer to someone who has a degree. for those with a doctorate or for doctors.

Today, technology is transforming our lives in unprecedented ways. New phenomena of social interaction are being observed in terms of the use of forms of address, which were not foreseen in Cintra's theories. New forms of communication, especially in digital interactions, have led to the emergence of new dynamics, where flexibility and informality stand out. In addition, the transformation of interpersonal relationships is also shaping new forms of address.

Bazenga's study (2024), for example, reveals that in contexts of greater proximity between the couple, there is a growing tendency towards creativity and diversity in forms of nominal treatment, such as *prince*, *baby*, *little dog*, *shorty*, etc. Among friends and between children and parents, there is a preference for

more socially standardized forms. Thus, this flexibility in the use of forms of address reflects the transformations in social norms and forms of social interaction.

Marque and Duarte (2024), on the other hand, when analyzing televised political debates in Portugal between 1975 and 2022, highlight that forms of address, especially nominal ones, demonstrate more proximity and informality in recent debates, and greater distance and deference in the initial debates of democracy. These differences are observed in the interactions between journalist-moderators and politicians.

In short, the use of forms of address in European Portuguese reveals that, over time, there has been a significant evolution driven by social, cultural and technological changes. These transformations reflect a society in which hierarchy and formality give way to a more egalitarian and flexible model, shaped by new social practices and digital communication, profoundly altering the norms of interaction.

## 3. TEACHING FORMS OF ADDRESS IN THE CONTEXT OF PLE

As previously discussed, forms of address, as well as other principles of courtesy, are an important issue in regulating interpersonal relationships. When addressing the addressee, the appropriate use of forms of address in a given context can contribute to the success of verbal interactions. On the contrary, ignorance of the differences between the various types of forms of address can lead to misunderstandings, because "inappropriate use of this resource for regulating interaction can seem like a threat to the interlocutor's face" (Duarte, 2010, p. 137). Therefore, it is essential that PFL learners understand the differences between each type of form of address and know how to use them appropriately in different communicative situations.

The difficulty of forms of address is largely due to their pragmatic nature. On the one hand, forms of address, together with forms of greeting, conventions and exclamations, are part of the linguistic markers of social relations. On the other hand, they are closely linked to the principles of courtesy. Furthermore, given the complexity and instability of the system of forms of address in European Portuguese, teaching these forms by teachers and acquiring them by students becomes even more challenging.

Consequently, it is undeniable that the teaching and learning of forms of address should be integrated into PFL classes, especially in a systematic and continuous manner. It is observed that teachers often introduce students to the different forms of address in passing, without explaining in detail the differences between them and the current trends in their use. Furthermore, it is found that many teachers only address forms of address in the initial phase of learning PFL, and then rarely refer to this topic. Such pedagogical methods not only hinder students' full understanding of forms of address, which are complex in European Portuguese, but also limit the development of students' intercultural communicative competence.

Considering the importance of forms of treatment and common pedagogical methods in teaching-- learning PLE, the following pedagogical practices are proposed to improve the teaching of forms of treatment in PLE classes:

First, when teaching forms of address, teachers should consider the differences between forms of address in the student's native language and European Portuguese, with the aim of reducing the influence of "negative transfer" from the native language. For example, when teaching forms of address to Chinese students, it is essential that the teacher explains the variable and sensitive use of *you* in European Portuguese. In Chinese, there is a form of address equivalent to *you*, that is, 您 (*nín*), which is used to show respect to the interlocutor or when addressing someone unknown. However, in European Portuguese, the use of *you* is very sensitive and can vary significantly depending on the social context and the relationship between the interlocutors.

cutters. In many situations, it is more appropriate to avoid the use of *you*, especially to avoid misunderstandings about respect or formality. Therefore, if the teacher does not clearly explain this differentiation, it is very likely that students will interpret the forms $\varnothing$ (*nín*) and *you* as equivalent, which may lead to inappropriate use of *you* in social interactions.

Second, it is essential to explain the rules of the forms of address in standard Portuguese, the uses of each form in its respective contexts and the trends of evolution over time. This step should be carried out systematically and continuously, as it allows students to obtain a panoramic view of the system of forms of address in European Portuguese. The diversity and complexity of forms of address often cause confusion among students, especially at the beginning of their learning.

To deal with this difficulty, teachers can use authentic resources, such as films, newspapers, radio, and television programs, to illustrate the different uses of each form of address in real contexts. In this way, students can observe the forms of address in everyday situations and better understand the rules of use in different contexts.

Third, it is recommended to role-play different social roles in different situations. The best way to understand the use of forms of address is to practice them in oral interactions. In this way, the teacher can guide students to create dialogues and role-play different roles in different communicative situations, such as asking the time to a stranger on the street, asking a favor from a lady they know at the store, or talking to the boss about work, etc. Through these exercises, the teacher can identify the difficulties that students face in using forms of address and, thus, help to correct inappropriate uses, promoting greater awareness about the choice of forms of address in specific contexts.

Fourth, writing formal and informal letters also contributes to learning forms of address. Written language, unlike spoken language, usually requires more formal language. In this context, when writing formal letters, students can reflect on forms of address and polite expressions that are less observed in oral conversations. For example, when addressing the university president, it is necessary to use the form of address as *Your Excellency* to show respect. On the other hand, in informal letters, such as to friends or family, students can explore more intimate and personal forms, adapting their language to the degree of closeness with the interlocutor, developing their ability to adapt to the context and the relationship between the interlocutors. These writing exercises in different situations help students to deeply understand the various social and cultural dimensions of European Portuguese.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The forms of address in European Portuguese are complex. On the one hand, the variety of existing forms and the differences are not well defined, especially the unstable use of *you*, makes it difficult for interlocutors to master the use of forms. On the other hand, the various sociocultural factors that influence the choice of forms of address, such as hierarchy, distance or familiarity, formality or informality of the discursive situation, education, age, among others, make it even more difficult to choose the appropriate form in certain contexts. In addition, forms of address are constantly changing. Currently, the growing use of the 3rd person verbal form without a subject expressed in the singular stands out, which has become increasingly popular in current communicative situations, as it does not imply any personal trait of the addressee. Characteristics of creativity and informality in the use of forms of address can also be observed, resulting from new forms of communication, especially in digital interactions.

Forms of address, being one of the regulators of interpersonal relationships in verbal communication, are an indispensable part of the teaching and learning of PFL. To this end, it is necessary to adopt effective pedagogical strategies to integrate forms of address into PFL classes, such as explaining the system of forms of address and their tendencies, considering the differences between the mother tongue and the target language, carrying out role-playing activities in different communicative situations, writing formal and informal letters, among others. In conclusion, although forms of address in European Portuguese present characteristics of complexity and instability, they are an extremely relevant topic in the context of teaching PFL. By studying these forms, learners not only improve their oral communication skills, but also deepen their intercultural competence, since forms of address are closely linked to society and culture.

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6

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