

## INTRODUCTION

The system of address in European Portuguese is known for its enormous complexity. The existing literature underlines this fact, even though there are not so many studies that account for the current reality of the paradigm, either pronominal or nominal. On the one hand, several works and many grammars (see Vasconcellos 1901, Nunes 1945, Ali 1965, Vázquez and Mendes da Luz 1971, Cunha and Cintra 1992 and Mira Mateus *et al.* 2006) insist that the pronominal system is based upon two pronouns in the singular: *tu*, plus second person singular; and *você*, plus third person singular. In the plural, they oppose *vós*, plus second person plural and *vocês*, plus third person plural (Table 1).

Table 1: Current system of pronouns of address (based on certain grammars)

	Informality (T)	Formality (V)
Singular	Tu+2sg	Você+3sg
Plural	Vós+2pl	Vocês+3pl

However, this very clear division must be greatly nuanced, since, as the latest grammar by Raposo *et al.* (2013) and scholars such as Carreira (2003) suggest, the pronoun *você* in the singular poses an evident pragmatic risk: depending on the speaker, its pragmatic categorisation may be offensive, impolite or, on the contrary, may satisfy expected needs. Likewise, to compensate for the lack of politeness that the pronoun *você* is supposed to entail in Portugal, the nominal alternative *o senhor*, plus third person singular, has emerged as the true possibility for a V context. This resource, albeit formally nominal, is between a noun phrase and a pronoun, for its grammatical behaviour is becoming increasingly like the latter, to the point that in some Lusophone areas, such as Brazil, it has been completely grammaticalized and begun to lose pho-

netic weight (Ramos 2011: 70). In addition, all the literature states that, since *você* is not an adequate pronoun, as it can be evaluated as impolite or even offensive, a large number of alternatives have emerged to replace its pragmatic loss. These cover the use of the null subject plus third person singular or the use of a noun phrase that refers to the social status, profession or even the first name of the interlocutor, plus third person singular.

The plural seems much simpler than the singular form. The standard establishes a dichotomy between *vocês*, plus third person plural for intimate and informal contexts, and *os senhores*, plus third person plural for contexts of distance or formality. That is, the tripartite system that seems to exist in the singular with a T pronoun (*tu*), a quasi-pronominalized noun phrase for V (*o senhor*) and a series of alternatives for in-between contexts —called N, where it is possible to attest both *você* and null subject or noun phrase plus third person singular, is reduced to a bipartite system that opposes the aforementioned pronouns: *vocês* and the quasi-pronominalized plural noun phrase *os senhores*.

Table 2: Current system of pronouns of address (based on certain grammars)

	T	V
Singular	Tu+2sg	O senhor+3sg
Plural	Vocês+3pl	Os senhores+3pl

However, caution must be applied to the foregoing assertion, because *vocês* can induce a double agreement. On the one hand, the verb and the reflexive adopt third person plural morphology, while the possessive and object pronouns adopt second person plural, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (1) Vocês<sub>3pl</sub> levantam<sub>3pl</sub>-se<sub>3pl</sub> tarde  
(‘You wake up late’)
- (2) Vi-vos<sub>2pl</sub> ontem [a vocês<sub>3pl</sub>]  
(‘I saw you yesterday’)
- (3) Comprei-vos<sub>2pl</sub> um presente [a vocês<sub>3pl</sub>]  
(‘I bought you a present’)
- (4) Os vossos<sub>2pl</sub> amigos [de vocês<sub>3pl</sub>] estão no parque  
(‘Your friends are in the park’)

The instances presented above indicate that, although *você*s must induce third person plural morphology, this is not the case for all syntactic elements that depend on or refer to such a pronoun, as objects and possessives still inflect with *vós* morphology, even in the standard. The complexity in the plural does not end there, given the presence of an extra pronoun, *vós*, which coherently induces second person plural, and which is, in principle, constrained to very specific communicative situations related to ceremonial and extremely stereotyped contexts —specifically, church, military and politics; therefore, *vós* represents a highly reverential strategy. Furthermore, grammars insist that *vós* still exists dialectally in northern Portugal to address a group of people in an informal or intimate context; that is, it continues to be T plural.

Table 3: Current system of pronouns of address (based on the latest research)

	T	N	V
Singular	Tu+2sg	Você+3sg Noun phrase+3sg Null subject+3sg	O senhor+3sg
Plural	Vós+2pl (dialectally) Vocês+3pl/2pl	Vocês+3pl/2pl	Os senhores+3pl

The complexity of the paradigm continues, since the literature has repeatedly insisted that it is possible to even find archaic forms of the grammaticalization of *vossa mercê* to *você*, either in the singular or the plural, in very rural areas and in older informants as a highly formal resource. Such alternatives in the grammaticalization process are *vossemecê(s)* or *vomecê(s)*. Likewise, *você* would have a rather positive consideration in a specific geographical area of continental Portugal; I am referring to the region between Cascais and Estoril, where it would be a sociolinguistic upper-class marker. This social status, even among family peers, would involve address employing this pronoun instead of the expected *tu*.

In regard to the above, one shortcoming is, undoubtedly, the lack of empirical and exhaustive research across Portugal, with quantitative data, especially pronominal, taking into account not only the continental area, but also its archipelagos, the sociolinguistic profile, as well as the grammatical complexities involved in some of the apparent ongoing changes in contemporary European Portuguese. Even textbooks on Portuguese as a foreign language do

not provide the same information regarding pronouns of address and politeness in Portugal (Fidalgo Enríquez *et al.* 2024).

Moreover, the pragmatic perspective in Portuguese society has gradually changed in recent decades, with several authors at least pointing out this tendency. For instance, Gouveia (2008) suggests that pragmatic solidarity has spread in the country, for the usage of informal strategies in contexts and towards addressees that were previously conceived as distant and/or formal has increased. Lara Bermejo and Guilherme (2021) underpin these statements and contribute data spanning the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrating empirically that Portugal has journeyed towards pragmatic solidarity. However, this shift has developed quite gradually and started in the last quarter of the 1900s. Despite this inclination, Portugal is catalogued as a country which favours pragmatic distance and, despite having risen, pragmatic solidarity has not yet reached the levels found in other countries in the Western world.

This brief summary of the complexity of forms and pronouns of address in current European Portuguese, as well as the lack of empirical studies that account for the current state of the politeness system presently operating in the country, call for in-depth research. This is why, in this monograph, I aim to address this gap in Portuguese linguistics, through specific fieldwork carried out between 2021 and 2024 across the country, in which I offer innovative and contemporary data on the system of address in European Portuguese. The objectives I set out for this investigation are the following:

- a) To collect spontaneous data from Portuguese speakers covering all sociolinguistic profiles and geographical origins (from both the continent and the archipelagos), in order to compile quantitative occurrences of both singular and plural pronouns of address.
- b) To determine the current and actual system of pronouns of address in Portugal, as well as the system of politeness that predominates in this country.
- c) To pinpoint the importance of sociolinguistic and geographical factors in the usage, dismissal and extension of each pronoun of address and politeness strategy in present-day Portugal.
- d) To outline the geographical distribution of pronouns of address, focusing mainly on the emergence of *vós*, the extension of *vocês*, as well as the usage of *você* in its different pragmatic values.

- e) To analyse the grammatical behaviour, especially regarding disagreements between *vocês* and its inflecting elements, triggered by the usages and changes that affect pronouns of address and politeness in European Portuguese.
- f) To establish Portugal's pragmatic evolution and the reasons why this country exhibits the paradigm it possesses.

In order to achieve the foregoing aims, I have led a fieldwork campaign I will describe in the following chapters. The geographical extension and sociolinguistic coverage will also then be detailed, but I wish to make clear that the approach of this investigation is based upon the variationist theory. As a consequence, the results will be discussed following the parameters of sex, age and educational background, and the mapping of the data will be analysed by taking into account spatial diffusion theories, where demographic factors may also play a significant role.

Together with the aforementioned features, in order to reach the remaining objectives outlined in the previous paragraph, I will follow the theses about cross-linguistic paradigms of politeness, the reasons why a society transitions from one system to another, and the motives that prompt so many strategies in singular and so few in plural. Additionally, I will resort to the findings that the literature has provided regarding the behaviour of grammatical person, grammatical case, syntactic function, and both the emergence of new pronouns and its correlation with the deletion of existing ones. As will be argued, the apparent chaotic situation observed in European Portuguese can be justified on the basis of it being a process that has frequently occurred in such a variety. This process responds to the pragmatic need Portuguese society has periodically experienced to substitute one form of address with another, because the existing one no longer satisfied the pragmatic requirements it was expected to fulfil. This contingency is responsible for the multiple choices and grammatical mismatches attested throughout history and in the present day.

Consequently, in Chapter 2, I will summarise the theoretical framework on which I base the arguments that explain today's system, as well as the hypotheses I have envisaged. Later, in Chapter 3, I will describe the corpus and methodology I have applied. In Chapter 4, I will synthesise the history of forms of address in European Portuguese, although I will also refer to other Lusophone areas. Afterwards, in Chapter 5, I will provide the data and analyse

the results I have obtained, following four parameters: geolinguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and grammatical, devoting a specific passage to confirming or rejecting the hypotheses mentioned in Chapter 2. Lastly, I will conclude with a summary of findings and the bibliography consulted throughout.