

## Abstract

The current paper aims at analysing and describing the functions of the vocative in European Portuguese. The vocative has been a rather neglected aspect of research in the field of pragmatics (Osenova and Simov, 2002). In the literature in the past decades we find very few studies addressing the issue (McCarthy and O’Keeffe); Osenova and Simov, 2002; Haverkate, 1978).

This study is based on a larger research project on the vocative in European Portuguese, the only one to date as far as we know. We establish a distinction between forms of address and vocative. We try to assert that the vocative main value is purely for enunciative with features such as:

- it can be preceded by the element “ó” in European Portuguese;
- it can be used by nominal and pronominal forms;
- it has no specific syntactic function, but it may establish a co-reference relation with some elements in the sentence;
- it can occur at the beginning, middle or at the end of the sentence, and in this case it has to be separated by a comma;
- It can be an independent statement.

For the analysis of the vocative in European Portuguese we shall concentrate on the use of three elements: (i) “pá” (a reduced form of “rapaz” (boy)); (ii) “meu” (possessive pronoun); (iii) “ó” (element to be considered as a determiner of the vocative. We also establish a relationship between the syntax of the vocative with its pragmatic function(s):

- address or call;
- conversational opening;
- keeping or reinforcing contact;
- conversational closing and turn taking
- conversational softener or intensification.

The study of the role and characteristics of the vocative is important both in terms its pragmatic functions, and also from a sociolinguistic perspective (Rendle-Short, 2010). The vocative can be identified at the syntax-pragmatics interface (Osenova and Simov, 2002) but can also perform a semantic role in discourse.

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