# Polarity, expression of degree and negation: the vernacular form *caraças*

## Polaridade, expressão de grau e negação: a forma vernácula *caraças*

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**Abstract**

This paper presents the vernacular form *caraças* which, in European Portuguese (EP) is associated to multiple contexts, different from its use as a feminine common noun. The data I will present shows that *caraças* behaves as a polarity item, without referential interpretation. On the one hand, *caraças* behaves as a minimizer, a subtype of Negative Polarity Item (NPI), being associated to the lowest point of a scale of value. On the other hand, it also behaves as a Positive Polarity Item (PPI), expressing maximal degree, therefore being a maximizer. The fact that *caraças* occurs simultaneously as a NPI and a PPI could indicate we are in the presence of a bipolar element, as described by van der Wouden (1997). Nevertheless, data suggests that there are two distinct items *caraças*, one of them being a NPI and the other a PPI.

The form *caraças* is also associated to other contexts of use, namely as a metalinguistic negation marker and in evaluative constructions such as N-of-an-N constructions. We also find it functioning as an interjection in exclamative sentences.

Although the feminine common noun *caraça* (augmentative of *cara* 'face') remains in the lexicon as synonym of *mask,* the polarity item *caraças* does not result from a process of grammaticalization of the common noun, as documented for other polarity items. In this paper I will put forth the idea that *caraças,* in its masculine singular form, appeared as an euphemistic variant of *caralho* 'dick', a highly offensive taboo term, used to designate the masculine sexual organ

**Keywords**

polarity items; taboo terms; degree; negation

**Contents**

**Resumo**

Neste artigo é apresentada a forma vernácula *caraças,* que, em Português Europeu (PE), surge associada a múltiplos contextos, distintos do seu uso enquanto nome comum feminino. Os dados que serão apresentados mostram que *caraças* se comporta como um item de polaridade, desprovido de interpretação referencial. Por um lado, *caraças* apresenta-se como um Item de Polaridade Negativa (IPN), sendo empregue como minimizador, ou seja, associado ao menor ponto de uma escala de valor. Por outro, surge igualmente como Item de Polaridade Positiva (IPP), estando associado à expressão de um grau máximo. A possibilidade de *caraças* surgir, simultaneamente, como minimizador (IPN) e maximizador (IPP) poderia indicar que se trata de um elemento bipolar (nos termos de van der Wouden 1997). No entanto, a conclusão a que se chega é a de que existem dois itens caraças distintos, um deles correspondendo a um IPN e outro a um IPP.

A forma *caraças* surge ainda associada a outros usos, nomeadamente como marcador de negação metalinguística e em construções de caráter avaliativo, tais como as chamadas construções N-de-N, e também com valor de interjeição em frases exclamativas.

Embora o nome comum feminino *caraça* (aumentativo de *cara*) permaneça no léxico e possa ser usado para designar um tipo de máscara, o item de polaridade *caraças* não parece ser o produto de um processo de gramaticalização a partir do nome comum, como acontece com outros itens de polaridade. Propõe-se que *caraças,* empregue no masculino, singular, terá antes surgido como eufemismo de *caralho,* termo tabu, considerado grosseiro e ofensivo, usado para designar o membro sexual masculino.

**Palavras-chave**

itens de polaridade; termos tabu; grau; negação

**Sumario**

# 1. Introduction

Aᴄᴄᴏʀᴅɪɴɢ to Israel (2001), words denoting minimal degrees are usually used as negative polarity items (NPIs), while words denoting maximal degrees give rise to positive polarity items (PPIs). It is, therefore, unexpected that one same item can be used both as a PPI and a NPI, expressing minimal and maximal degree, simultaneously. This is, apparently, the case of the European Portuguese (EP) item *caraças*.

In this paper I will investigate the item *caraças*, which is used in EP both as a PPI and a NPI and I will try to understand whether we are in the presence of a single item with mixed behavior or, alternatively, two independent items with the same lexical form. I will also show that the form *caraças* is associated to other contexts of use, such as evaluative constructions, as an interjection and associated to metalinguistic negation (Horn 1989). Finally, I will put forth a possible explanation for the emergence of *caraças*, in its multiple uses in colloquial language, as a replacement for another item considered offensive, i.e. *caralho* (slang word for 'penis').

# 2. The common noun *caraça* and the form *caraças*

In Portuguese, the word *caraça* is dictionarized as a feminine common noun meaning 'mask'. It is also registered as being the augmentative form of the noun *cara* 'face' and it can be used depreciatively to refer to an ugly face.  Below we reproduce the corresponding lexical entry:

> Caraça. s. f.
>
> Máscara de papelão; carranca 2. *Fig*. Cara larga e cheia: "*era um figurão baixo, rebolu-do, de pancinha soprada, caraça balofa com manchas vermelhas*" (José Gomes Ferreira, *O Mundo dos Outros*, pág. 177) 3. V. carantonha. •S. m. 4. Boi ou cavalo com malha branca no focinho.[1]
>
> (Ferreira 1986: 346)

Its use as a common noun can be tracked back as early as the 17th century[2], as illustrated in (1), where it appears with the meaning of *mask*, and (2), where it is used to refer to an unattractive face.

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1.　Caraça. s. f.: Cardboard mask; frown 2. Fig. Large and full face. 3. See ugly face. 4. Ox or horse with a white stain in the nose.

2.　The *Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa* indicates a much later date for the first attestation, namely 1771.

(1)  | E | afirmo | a | VM | que | me | não | parecem | isto | biocos | nem |
     | and | state.$_{1SG}$ | to | you | that | me.$_{Dat}$ | neg | seem.$_{3PL}$ | this | veils | nor |

*caraças,* | mas | que | hão de | ser | obras.
masks | but | that | will.$_{3PL}$ | be | deeds

'And I tell you that this do not look like veils nor masks to me but they must be deeds.'

(*Post Scriptum*, PSCR1418, 1600-1603)

(2)  Brites: | Se | da | minha | fermusura/ | tu | tens | raiva, | minha
     Brites: | If | of.the | my | beauty/ | you | have | rage, | my

Páscoa,/ | tem | pasciência, | que | assim | como | eu | sou | tão
Easter | have.$_{2SG}$ | patience, | that | like.this | as | I | am | so

fermosa | o | poderias | ser | tu/ | e | eu | ter | essa | *caraça.*
beautiful | it | could | be | you/ | and | I | have | that | mask

'Brites: If my beauty makes you angry, my dear, be patient, because, just like I am beautiful, you could be too and I could have that ugly face instead.'

(Teatro de autores portugueses do Séc. xvii – Base de datos textual: Anónimo, *O Pai Ambrósio*)

In both examples, *caraça* is a common noun and displays feminine gender. In (1) it appears in its plural form, while in (2) it is singular. Contemporary examples such as (3) and (4) illustrate, however, a use of the form *caraças* which is different from the ones presented before. In both cases the interpretation of the item does not correspond to any of the meanings listed in the dictionary entry above[3].

(3)  Aquilo | demonstra | uma | preparação | física | do | caraças.
     that | Shows.$_{3sg}$ | a | preparation | physical | of.the.$_{MASC.SG}$ | caraças

'That reveals a hell of a physical preparation.'

(Corpus CetemPublico, par=ext1066477-clt-92a-2)

(4)  «Teste | amanhã | e | ainda | não | estudei | um | *caraças.*»
     test | tomorrow | and | yet | neg | studied | a.$_{MASC.SG}$ | caraças

'Test tomorrow and I have not studied a thing yet.'

(Twitter, 21/05/2018)

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3.  Since there is absolutely no relation between the item *caraças* and the common noun *caraça* in terms of meaning, and, therefore, there is no translation available, I have decided to use the form of the item itself in the glosses. Whenever we are in the presence of the common noun the gloss will be "mask".

The first piece of evidence that clearly shows that *caraças* in (3) and (4) does not correspond to the plural form of the common noun *caraça* is the lack of referential meaning. None of the sentences admits a referential reading of the item, as we conclude by the awkwardness of sentences (5) and (6) in which the item *caraças* was replaced by the synonym common noun *máscara* 'mask'.

| (5) | #Aquilo | demonstra | uma | preparação | física | da | máscara |
|-----|---------|-----------|-----|------------|--------|-----|---------|
|     | that    | Shows.$_{3SG}$ | a | preparation | physical | of.the | mask |

'That reveals a physical preparation of the mask'

| (6) | #Teste | amanhã | e | ainda | não | estudei | uma | máscara. |
|-----|--------|--------|---|-------|-----|---------|-----|----------|
|     | test   | tomorrow | and | yet | neg | studied.$_{1SG}$ | a | mask. |

'Test tomorrow and I have not studied a mask.'

The presence of *máscara* in (5) and (6) produces a sentence with a different interpretation from the ones in (3) and (4). Aditionally, in example (4), the reading of *um caraças* as a Direct Object (DO) of the verb *estudar* 'study' is optional, while in (6), when interpreted as synonym of *máscara* 'mask', it is mandatory. Sentence (4) corresponds to a context of optionally transitive verb, allowing for the interpretation of *um caraças* as a DO or as a negation reinforcement particle (about optionally transitive verbs and negation see Willis 2010, 2012; Parry 2013, a.o.), this last reading not being available for the common noun *máscara*.

A second observation that indicates that *caraças* is independent from the common noun is related to its ɵ-features. While in (1) and (2) the common noun *caraça* displays feminine morphology and it agrees with the feminine possessive determiner *essa* 'that' in (2), that is not the case in examples (3) and (4). Here we find *caraças* occurring with the definite determiner *o* 'the', as in (3), and with the indefinite determiner *um* 'a', as in (4), both in the masculine. The replacement of the masculine determiners by their feminine counterparts would render the sentences ungrammatical, as we can see in (7), where we find the feminine definite determiner *a* 'the' and in (8), with de indefinite feminine determiner *uma* 'a':

| (7) | *Aquilo | demonstra | uma | preparação | física | da | caraças. |
|-----|---------|-----------|-----|------------|--------|-----|----------|
|     | that    | Shows.$_{3sg}$ | a | preparation | physical | of.the.$_{FEM.SG}$ | CARAÇAS |

| (8) | *Teste | amanhã | e | ainda | não | estudei | uma | *caraças.* |
|-----|--------|--------|---|-------|-----|---------|-----|----------|
|     | test   | tomorrow | and | yet | NEG | studied.$_{1SG}$ | a. $_{FEM.SG}$ | CARAÇAS. |

Similarly, both sentences (3) and (4) present an apparent plural form of the noun *caraça* due to the presence of the final <s>. Nevertheless, there is no number agreement between the item and the determiners preceding it, since both determiners occur in the singular. Once again, replacing the singular determiners by their plural counterparts would render the sentences ungrammatical, as illustrated in (9) and (10). This indicates that *caraças* displays plural morphology (visible in the final <s>) but singular number.

| (9) | *Aquilo | demonstra | uma | preparação | física | dos | caraças. |
|-----|---------|-----------|-----|------------|--------|-----|----------|
|     | that    | Shows.$_{3sg}$ | a | preparation | physical | of.the.$_{MASC.PL}$ | CARAÇAS |

| (10) | *Teste | amanhã | e | ainda | não | estudei | uns | *caraças.* |
|------|--------|--------|---|-------|-----|---------|-----|-----------|
|      | test   | tomorrow | and | yet | NEG | studied.$_{1SG}$ | a. $_{MASC.PL}$ | CARAÇAS. |

In fact, *caraças* in (3) and (4) is neutral as far as gender and number are concerned (there is singular masculine agreement by default), precisely due to its non-nominal nature[4].

At this point, it can be stated that the contemporary use of *caraças* illustrated in (3) and (4) does not correspond to the common noun *caraça* but it is actually a polarity item. Later on, in section 6, I will discuss the etymology of *caraças*, whose origin will become clear after its behavior as a polarity item (and associated uses) is thoroughly described.

## 3. *Caraças* as a polarity item

As we have seen in the previous section, there seems to be two different items with the form *caraça(s)*: one which is a common noun and another which is not. In the present section I will try to show that the non-nominal item *caraças* is actually a polarity item.

Languages display certain lexical items that can only appear in environments associated with a particular grammatical polarity: these items are known as polarity items and are usually divided into positive polarity items (PPI) and negative polarity items (NPI)[5]. Following Giannakidou (2011:74), "AFFIRMATIVE PIS,

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4. There are some NPIs that alternate between a form with a similar final <s> and another without it. One example of this alternation is the NPI *népia*, which can also occur under the form *népias*, which does not correspond to a plural form.

5. A third category needs also to be considered – modal polarity items (MPI's) – in the sense of Bosque (1996). Some authors also recognize the existence of bipolar items (cf. van der Wouden 1997 and Spector 2012).

or POSITIVE PIS (PPIS) are expressions that are 'repelled' by negation and tend to escape its scope". On the other hand, according to Horn (1989: 49), NPIs are "expressions which can only appear felicitously within the scope of negation (or a semantically related operator)".

Examples from (11) to (13) present the common noun *caraça* and the polarity item *caraças* in three sentences with different polarity: affirmative assertive, modal and negative, accordingly.

(11) a.

| O | Pedro | comprou | uma | caraça | para | o | Carnaval. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| the | Pedro | bought | a.FEM.SG | mask | for | the | Carnival |

'Pedro bought a mask for Carnival.'

b.

| Este | livro | é | do | *caraças*. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| this | book | is | of.the.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS |

'This book is awesome.'

(12) a.

| Se | tivesse | aquela | caraça | não | saía | à | rua. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| if | had.1SG | that.FEM.SG | mask | NEG | go.out.1SG | to.the | street |

'If I had that face, I would not go out on the street.'

b.

| Se | fizesses | um | *caraças* | não | estarias | aborrecido. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| if | did.2SG | a.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | NEG | would.be.2SG | bored |

'If you did anything, you would not be bored.'

(13) a.

| Na | loja | não | havia | uma | caraça | que | fosse | assustadora |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| in.the | store | NEG | there.was | a.FEM.SG | mask | that | was.3SG | scary |

'There was not one scary mask at the store.'

b.

| Este | livro | não | vale | um | *caraças*. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| this | book | NEG | be.worth | a.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS |

'This book is not worth anything.'

As it becomes clear from the comparison between the sentences in *a.* and *b.* from (11) to (13), only the common noun in *a.* maintains the referential meaning of *mask* or *ugly face*, regardless of the sentence in which it occurs. On the other hand, *caraças* as a polarity item in *b.* acquires different meaning depending on the polar context in which it occurs. In an affirmative assertive sentence such as (11b), *caraças* has positive interpretation, expressing a very positive evaluation of the book. Its presence in the sentence can be considered equivalent to saying that the book was *very good*. When in

the scope of a modal operator, such as in (12b), where it occurs within a conditional clause, *caraças* is a NPI with positive reading (existential reading), equivalent to *anything*. Finally in (13b) it appears in the scope of the negative operator *não* and has negative interpretation, similar to *nothing*.

A closer observation of the sentences in *b.*, with the polarity item *caraças*, makes clear that the item has scalar properties. In the affirmative sentence (11b), *caraças* actually expresses a maximal degree. Saying that the film was *do caraças* is equivalent to saying that it was good in a very high degree[6]. On the other hand, in (13b) *caraças* is used to reinforce a negative degree. If one says that the film was not worth *um caraças* that means it was not worth the most minimal amount, and, therefore, it is worthless. In (11b) we find *caraças* being used as a maximizer, while in (13) it is a minimizer. I will consider that maximizers are a subtype of Positive Polarity Items (PPI) that refer to maximal degrees, while minimizers are a subtype of Negative Polarity Items (NPI) which refer to minimal units of size or value (cf. Hoeksema 2001).

The fact that, apparently, *caraças* can occur in sentences with affirmative, modal and negative polarity brings an issue to the discussion. As stated before, PPIs are repelled by negation, the same way NPIs are not possible in affirmative assertive sentences. How is it, then, that the item *caraças* is legitimated in both contexts, presenting itself simultaneously as a PPI and a NPI? Two possibilities arise: one is to consider that *caraças* is what van der Wouden (1997) called a *bipolar element*; the other is to assume that there are two items *caraças* (apart from the common noun *caraça*), one being a PPI and another a NPI. Nevertheless, before addressing this question, let us take a brief look at the internal structure of the maximizer and minimizer expressions that include *caraças*, since this will prove relevant to determine its classification as a single polarity item or, instead, two distinct polarity items.

When we look at example (11b) on the one hand, and examples (12b) and (13b), on the other, we realize there is a difference regarding the internal structure of the polarity expressions. In (11b), where *caraças* is a maximizer (and, therefore, a PPI), it appears as the nominal head of a definite Determiner Phrase (DP) which is, by its

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6.   An anonymous reviewer draws attention to the fact that the evaluation conveyed by *caraças* may not be positive at all times. In fact, the function of *caraças* as a PPI is to express maximal degree, and this can be associated to a negative evaluation, as in example (i). Nevertheless, the possibility of emphasizing a negative characteristic does not affect its PPI status.

| (i) | Apenas | a | vizinha | do | 5.º | andar | é | uma |
|-----|--------|---|---------|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|
| | Only | the | neighbour | of.the | fifth | floor | is | a |
| | chata | do | caraças | | | | | |
| | boring | of.the.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | | | | | |

'Only the neighbor from the fifth floor is as boring as hell.'

<div align="right">Corpus do Português: (Web/Dialects)</div>

turn, the complement of a Prepositional Phrase (PP) introduced by the preposition *de* 'of' (*do caraças*). A different scenario is observed in examples (12b) and (13b) where *caraças* is a minimizer (and, therefore, a NPI) and appears as a nominal head of an indefinite DP (*um caraças*)[7]. The relevant fact here is that the minimizer cannot occur as the DP complement of a PP but the maximizer must occur in this configuration. Examples from (14) to (16) illustrate these restrictions.

(14)
    a.  [PP d [DP o caraças]]

Este livro é    [PP of [DP the.$_{\text{Def.MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]]

this book is    b.  *[DP o caraças]

        [DP the.$_{\text{Def.MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]

    c.  *[DP um caraças]

        [DP a.$_{\text{Indef.MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]

(15)
  a.  [DP um caraças]

     [DP a.$_{\text{Indef-MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]

Se fizesses  b.  *[PP d [DP o caraças]]    não estarias aborrecido

if did.$_{\text{2SG}}$    [PP of [DP the.$_{\text{Def-MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]]  NEG would.be.$_{\text{2SG}}$ bored

    c.  *[DP o caraças]

      [DP the.$_{\text{Def-MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]

(16)
    a.  [DP um caraças]

       [DP a.$_{\text{Indef-MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]

Este livro não vale  b.  *[PP d [DP o caraças]]

this book NEG be.worth    [PP of [DP the.$_{\text{Def.MASC.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]]

    c.  *[DP o caraças]

       [DP the.$_{\text{Def.Masc.SG}}$ CARAÇAS]

The ungrammaticality of the examples in *b.* and *c.* clearly shows that the PPI maximizer must assume the form (*d)o caraças* and appear as the complement of a PP. On the other hand, the NPI minimizer is always the indefinite DP *um caraças*.

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7.  For the intended discussion of the data it is not crucial to elaborate on a more fine-grained internal structure of the DP containing the item *caraças*. For sake of simplicity we will also refer to *um* and *o* in *um caraças* and *o caraças* as corresponding to the definite and the indefinite determiners, respectively. Nevertheless, the classification of *um* as a cardinal number (cf. Tubau 2016) is not discarded by our option.

## 4. A bipolar item or two different items?

The term *bipolar element* was used by van der Wouden (1997) to classify items that display mixed behavior between PPIs and NPIs. The author considers that a bipolar element is a negative polarity item (of the weakest type) which is only licensed in a monotone decreasing context and in antimorphic contexts. On the other hand, it is a (weak) positive polarity item in causing ungrammaticality in antimorphic contexts, that is to say, under the scope of direct negation.

According to van der Wounden (1997) a bipolar item may occur in a monotone decreasing (downward entailing) context. Monotone decreasing contexts allow inferences from a set to a subset, as illustrated in (17) with *do caraças* and (18) with *um caraças*.

(17)  a. Duvido  que  o  Luís  tenha  comprado  um  livro.

doubt.$_{1SG}$  that  the  Luís  has  bought  a  book

'I doubt Luís has bought a book.'

b. Duvido  que  o  Luís  tenha  comprado  um  livro  do  *caraças*

doubt.$_{1SG}$  that  the  Luís  has  bought  a  book  of.the.$_{MASC.SG}$  CARAÇAS

'I doubt Luís has bought and awesome book.'

(18)  a. Duvido  que  o  Luís  tenha  dormido.

doubt.$_{1SG}$  that  the  Luís  has  slept

'I doubt Luís has slept.'

b. Duvido  que  o  Luís  tenha  dormido  um  *caraças*.

doubt.$_{1SG}$  that  the  Luís  has  slept  a.$_{MASC.SG}$  CARAÇAS

'I doubt Luís has slept a thing.'

In both cases, we can infer that, if what is stated in the first sentence (sentence *a.*) is true, then the proposition of the second sentence (sentence *b.*) is also true. Nevertheless, if we reverse the order of the sentences, creating a monotone increasing context (or upward entailing), only the pair in (18) can be inferred. In (18), if I say that Luís did not sleep, it is implicit that he did not sleep a thing. On the other hand, if Luís did not sleep a thing, it is also true that he did not sleep. However, the same logic does not apply in (17). If I doubt that Luís bought a book, it is true that I also doubt that he bought an awesome book. But if I doubt that he bought an awesome book, one cannot infer that I doubt he bought a book (I may believe that he bought a very bad book).

Additionally, bipolar items are said to be ruled out from antimorphic contexts, under the scope of direct negation. Compare examples (19) and (20).

(19)  #O      CR7      não      é        um       jogador     do               *caraças*.
      the     CR7      NEG      is       a        player      of.the.MASC.SG   CARAÇAS
      'CR7 is not an awesome player.'

(20)  O       CR7      não      joga     um       *caraças*.
      the     CR7      NEG      is       a.MASC.SG   CARAÇAS
      'CR7 does not play a thing.'

While the scope of negation is the most frequent licensing context for *um caraças*, and, therefore, the sentence is grammatical, the occurrence of *do caraças* in the direct scope of a negative operator renders the sentence unnatural. These contrasts clearly indicate that *um caraças* behaves like a NPI, while *do caraças* behaves like a PPI. Further evidence is given in examples (21) to (23).

The observation of examples below shows that the two polarity expressions including *caraças* cannot occur in the same contexts. In (21) the PPI, but not the NPI, can occur in affirmative assertive sentences, while only the NPI is adequate in a negative context like (22). They are both possible in a modal context such as (23), in the protasis of a conditional sentence, since both PPIs and weak NPIs are legitimated in such environments.

(21) a.  *O      filme    vale          um              *caraças*!
         the     film     is.worth      a.MASC.SG       CARAÇAS
         'The film is worth a thing'. (minimizer reading intended)

     b.  O       filme    é             do              *caraças*!
         the     film     is            of.the.MASC.SG  CARAÇAS
         'The film is awesome.'

(22) a.  O       filme    não    vale          um                *caraças*!
         the     film     NEG    is.worth      a.MASC.SG         CARAÇAS
         'The film is not worth a thing.'

     b.  #O      filme    não    é             do                *caraças*!
         the     film     NEG    is            of.the.MASC.SG    CARAÇAS
         'The film is not awesome'

(23) a.

| Se | o | filme | valesse | um | *caraças,* | as |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| if | the | film | was.worth | a.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | the |
| bilheteiras | teriam | arrecadado | muito | dinheiro. | | |
| ticket offices | would. have | raised | much | money | | |

'If the film was worth anything, the ticket offices would have raised a lot of money.'

b.

| Se | o | filme | fosse | do | *caraças,* | as |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| if | the | film | was | of.the.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | the |
| bilheteiras | teriam | arrecadado | muito | dinheiro. | | |
| ticket offices | would. have | raised | much | money | | |

'If the film was awesome, the ticket offices would have raised a lot of money.'

Another argument in favor of the existence of two different items sharing the same form is illustrated by metalinguistic negation contexts. Metalinguistic negation (Horn 1989) is a type of negation which depends on a specific discursive context and does not imply the truth or falsity of the propositions being denied. It is based on the notion of *assertability of an utterance* and, therefore, it does not constitute an instance of logical negation. In negative concord languages, such as Portuguese, metalinguistic negation does not trigger negative concord phenomena, therefore being incompatible with NPIs, but licensing PPIs under its scope. Examples (24) and (25) below illustrate the compatibility or incompatibility of the NPI *um caraças* and the PPI *(d) o caraças* in metalinguistic negation contexts.

As mentioned before, metalinguistic negation differs from regular negation. Most instances of metalinguistic negation are reinterpreted as such only in the presence of a corrective statement that usually follows the negative sentence.[8] These statements are what Horn calls *garden-path utterances* and their function is to clarify the reason why the speaker rejects a certain fact by means of metalinguistic negation. This means that most cases of metalinguistic negation are only interpreted as such after the *garden-path utterance* is produced. If no *garden-path utterance* is present (or somehow understood), then the negative sentence will be interpreted as regular negation.

In (24), the presence of the NPI is incompatible with the interpretation of the sentence as metalinguistic negation, which becomes clear after the *garden-path utterance* is introduced. Since in this case the negative sentence does not express regular negation, it does not trigger negative concord and, therefore, it does not legitimate the presence of the NPI.

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8. This does not apply when we have unambiguous metalinguistic negation markers.

| (24) | # Este | filme | não | vale | um | *caraças.* | É | o | melhor | filme |
|------|--------|-------|-----|------|-----|-----------|-----|-----|--------|-------|
|      | this   | film  | NEG | is.worth | a.$_{MASC.SG}$ | CARAÇAS. | Is | the | best | film |
|      | de     | sempre. |   |      |     |           |     |     |        |       |
|      | of     | always |    |      |     |           |     |     |        |       |

'This film is not worth a thing. It is the best film ever.'

On the other hand, PPIs are allowed in metalinguistic negation contexts such as (25), precisely because we are not in the presence of regular negation (which would be incompatible with PPIs).

| (25) | Este | filme | não | é | do | *caraças.* | É | o | melhor | filme |
|------|------|-------|-----|---|-----|-----------|-----|-----|--------|-------|
|      | this | film  | NEG | is | of.the.$_{MASC.SG}$ | CARAÇAS. | Is | the | best | film |
|      | de   | sempre. |   |   |     |           |     |     |        |       |
|      | of   | always |    |   |     |           |     |     |        |       |

'This film is not awesome. It is the best film ever.'

We have seen so far that, not only *caraças* is not a single element with mixed behaviour, falling under the category of van der Wouden (1997)'s bipolar elements, but also that both the PPI *(d)o caraças* and the NPI *um caraças* assume rigid forms[9].

As expected, the NPI can only occur in negative and modal contexts, being ruled out from affirmative assertive sentences. It is always an indefinite DP that seems to occur with most verbs. Differently, the PPI is licensed in affirmative assertive and modal contexts but it cannot occur in the scope of negation. It assumes the form of a definite DP, but it must be the complement of a PP introduced by the preposition *de* 'of'. The only exception is when it occurs in comparative sentences with *como* 'as' (apparently a comparative of equality), as in (26). It can appear with adjectives, as in (26), but also with a verbal form (27) or, eventually, with a noun (28)[10].

---

9.    An anonymous reviewer argues in favour of a polyssemic status of the item *caraças*. I consider that all the uses described for *caraças* are built upon the common noun and emerge due to its strong emphatic meaning. Nevertheless, both the NPI and the PPI are syntactically independent items and seem to function as indivisible units (it is not possible to insert lexical material such as an adjective between the two units forming the NPI *um caraças*, as in *um só *caraças*)

10.    Data from corpora shows a use of *caraças* that seems to correspond to a PPI but assuming a bare form and selected by a PP introduced by the preposition *para* 'for', as in (i):

| (i) | É | lento | pra | caraças. |
|-----|---|-------|-----|----------|
|     | Is | slow | for | CARAÇAS |

'It is as slow as hell'

Corpus do Português (Web/Dialects)

(26) Ele     fala    alto    como    o              *caraças*.

he      talks   loud    as      the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS

'He talks as loud as hell'

(27)      Choveu       como    o              *caraças*,    ontem.

Rained.<sub>3SG</sub>    as      the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS     yesterday

'It rained as hell, yesterday.'

(28) Vi        pessoas    como    o              *caraças*    na        rua.

Saw.<sub>1SG</sub>   people     as      the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS     in.the    street

'I saw a hell of people in the street.'

The PPI also presents a much stricter group of contexts in which it may appear. Excluding comparative sentences like (26) to (28), its use is circumscribed to predicative contexts, mainly with verbs *ser* and *estar* 'to be'[11] (29) or directly modifying a DP as in (30). The DP can be indefinite as in (30), definite as in (31), or assume the form of a bare noun as illustrated in (32).

(29) Este    bolo    é /está    do              *caraças*.

this    cake    is      of.the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS

'This cake is awesome.'

(30) O      Pedro    tem     uma    força       do       *caraças*.

the    Pedro    has     a      strength    of.the   CARAÇAS

'Pedro is fucking strong.'

(31) Vê         a      sorte    do              *caraças*    que    o      Rui    teve!

See.<sub>2SG.IMP</sub>   the    luck     of.the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS     that   the    Rui    had

'Look at the hell of a luck Rui had!'

(32) Há        dias    do              *caraças*!

there.are    days    of.the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS

'There are awesome days.'

---

11.   It can also occur with other predicate verbs such as *parecer* 'to seem', *ficar* 'to remain'.

## 5. Other uses of *caraças*

*Caraças* is a very productive item in colloquial oral speech[12]. As we have seen in the previous sections, it can still occur as a common noun and it is used both as a PPI maximizer and a NPI minimizer. Despite these contexts, *caraças* can also be found occurring with other independent uses, such as that of a metalinguistic negation marker, under the form of the definite DP *o caraças*. I have previously introduced the notion of metalinguistic negation to test the possibility of the NPI *um caraças* and the PPI *(d)o caraças* appear in such contexts. Here I will focus on the use of *caraças* as an unambiguous metalinguistic negation marker, comparing it to other similar markers available in EP.

The term metalinguistic negation was used by Horn (1989) to refer to contexts as the one illustrated in (33), in which the negative sentence does not imply the falsity of the fact under statement but is related to the *assertability of the utterance*.

(33) I didn't manage to trap two mongeese – I managed to trap two mongooses.

<div align="right">(Horn 1989: 371)</div>

In Horn's own words, metalinguistic negation is

> a device for objecting to a previous utterance on any grounds whatever, including the conventional or conversational implicata it potentially induces, its morphology, its style or register, or its phonetic realization.

<div align="right">(Horn 1989: 377)</div>

In EP, metalinguistic negation can be conveyed by sentences equivalent to the one in (33), as shown in (34), but EP also exhibits unambiguous metalinguistic negation markers.

(34) | Eles | não | têm | três | filhos. | Têm | quatro! |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| they | NEG | have | three | sons | Have.3PL | four |

'They do not have three kids. They have four!'

---

12. Blogs and personal websites are said to present an informal register similar to colloquial oral speech. It is not surprising, therefore, that *caraças* is frequent in this type of source and its occurrence is registered in all the contexts described in this paper. A search in the Web/Dialects subpart of *Corpus do Português* returns 1875 occurrences of *caraças*, most of which do not correspond to the original nominal use.

One of the features proposed by Horn (1989) to distinguish regular negation from metalinguistic negation is related to its compatibility with PPIs and NPIs. As we have seen in the previous section, metalinguistic negation is compatible with PPIs but does not legitimate NPIs, since it does not trigger negative concord. In (35) and (36) I illustrate the occurrence of the metalinguistic negation marker *o caraças* with the PPI *dos diabos* (lit. 'of the devils') and the NPI *nem morta* (lit. 'not even dead'), respectively.

(35) A:  O          paciente    teve     uma     sorte    dos        diabos.

the        patient     had      a       luck     of.the     devils

A: 'The patient had a hell of a luck.'

B:  Teve       uma      sorte    dos       diabos,     o              *caraças.*     Ia            morrendo.

had.<sub>3SG</sub>    a        luck     of.the    devils      the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS      went.<sub>1SG</sub>    dying.

B: He had a hell of a luck, my butt. He almost died.


(36) A:  Hoje          cozinhas      tu!

today         cook          you!

A: 'You're cooking today!'

B:  *Cozinho,     o             *caraças*     nem         morta.

cook.<sub>1SG</sub>     the.<sub>MASC.SG</sub>   CARAÇAS     not.even    dead

B:'The hell I'm cooking, not even dead'


As expected*, o caraças* is compatible with the PPI *dos diabos* in (35) but not with the NPI *nem morta* in (36). It also requests the presence of a previous discursive background to which the speakers can object to.

According to Martins (2010, 2012) metalinguistic negation markers can be internal, such as *lá* (lit. 'there') and *cá* (lit. 'here')*,* or peripheral, as *agora* (lit. 'now') and *nada* (lit. 'nothing') (for this last one see Pinto 2010). In the group of peripheral markers we also find idiomatic expressions such as *uma ova* (lit. 'a fish egg'). I will try to show that *caraças* behaves as a peripheral idiomatic metalinguistic negation marker.

A characteristic feature of peripheral metalinguistic negation markers is that they can co-occur with regular negation in the same sentence. As example (37) illustrates, *o caraças* behaves as a peripheral idiomatic metalinguistic negation marker in respect to this point, having scope over the negative sentence.

(37)  «Tom,  não  esquente»

Tom  NEG  heat

«Não  esquento,  o  *caraças*!  Não  saio  daqui  sem  saber.

NEG  heat.1SG  the.MASC.SG  CARAÇAS  NEG  leave.1SG  of.here  with-out  know

'Don't overreact, my butt! I will not leave here without knowing.'

(Santos 2005: 520)

A similar context with internal markers would be ruled out, as illustrated by example (38), where the negative sentence can only be rejected by means of a peripheral marker such as *o caraças* or *uma ova*, but not with *lá/cá*.

(38)  A:  Nunca  mais  faltei  às  aulas.

never  more  missed.1SG  to.the  classes.

A: 'I never missed classes again.'

B:  Nunca  mais  faltaste  às  aulas,  *\*cá/lá*

never  more  missed.2SG  to.the  classes  here/there

*uma ova/*  *nada/*  *o caraças*

a.FEM.SG OVA/  nothing/  the.MASC.SG  CARAÇAS

B: 'You never missed classes again, my butt/ ass.

The marker *o caraças* is also compatible with the emphatic adverb *sempre* ('always') (cf. Gonzaga 1997), just as verified for other peripheral markers (cf. Pinto 2010), but contrary to what happens with internal markers. Please observe examples (38) and (39), which illustrate both phenomena.

(39)  A:  Afinal  sempre  choveu.

after.all  always  rained

A: 'It did rain after all.'

B:  Sempre  choveu,  *\*cá/lá*  *uma ova/*  *nada/*  *o*  *caraças*

always  rained,  here/there  a.FEM.SG OVA  nothing  the.MASC.SG  CARAÇAS

B: 'It did rain after all, my butt/ ass.

Furthermore, peripheral markers are said to be able to occur alone or with nominal fragments, contrary to internal markers which return ungrammatical results in these contexts (cf. Martins 2012). Examples below show that *o caraças* presents similar behavior to the peripheral markers *uma ova* and *nada*, but differently from the internal ones *cá/lá*, being able to occur both with nominal fragments (40) and alone (41).

(40)

| É | que | embirrou | que | queria | ter | o | vidro |
|---|-----|----------|-----|--------|-----|---|-------|
| is | that | picked | that | wanted | to.have | the | window |
| aberto | fresh | air - | dizia! | Fresh | air | o | caraças |
| open | fresh | air - | said | fresh | air | the.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS |

'The thing is that (s)he insisted (s)he wanted the window open – fresh air – (s)he said! Fresh air, my butt/ass.'

(Corpus do Português: Web/Dialects)

(41)

| Ah | e | tal | mas | é | tão | bom | sentir | o |
|----|---|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|--------|---|
| Oh | and | so | but | is | so | good | feel | the |
| frio(?) | e | usar | cachecóis | quentinhos(?) | e | a | lareira | acesa(?) |
| cold | and | wear | scarfs | warm | and | the | fireplace | burning |
| e | o | frio (?) | e | nhénhénhé. | O | caraças! | | |
| and | the | cold | and | bla bla bla | the.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | | |

'Oh, and come on, it is so nice to feel the cold and wear warm scarfs and the fireplace burning and the cold and bla bla bla. My butt/ass!'

(Corpus do Português: Web/Dialects)

From the examples above we can conclude that *o caraças* is a metalinguistic negation marker in EP, belonging to the set of peripheral markers. It is, nevertheless, associated to a very colloquial register and metalinguistic negation involving *o caraças* may be considered rude and offensive.

Under the form of a definite DP, *caraças* is also used as what is usually referred in the literature as a N-of-an-N construction[13] (cf. Kayne 1994; Bennis et al. 1998). This use is illustrated in (42):

---

13.   In Brito (2003), these constructions are referred to as *qualitative expressions*.

(42) O          mecânico   não   arranjou   o                    *caraças*      do         carro.

the        mechanic   NEG   fixed      the.~MASC.SG~         CARAÇAS     of.the    car

'The mechanic did not fix the fucking car.'

N-of-an-N constructions are composed by a sequence of a Noun followed by a preposition (in some languages the preposition does not exist) and a second Noun.

Among the main features of this construction are the fact that the first Noun cannot be set apart from the rest of the construction (that is to say, the PP), as illustrated in (43). Additionally, it is never the real direct object of the sentence, as highlighted in (44a). Only the second noun of the sequence can be interpreted as the DO, fulfilling the selection criteria imposed by the verb, as in (44b).

(43) *Do       carro,   o     mecânico   não   arranjou   o               *caraças*.

of.the    car      the   mechanic   NEG   fixed      the.~MASC.SG~   CARAÇAS

(44) a.   #O        mecânico        não   arranjou   o                    *caraças*.

the       mechanic        NEG   fixed      the.~MASC.SG~         CARAÇAS

b.   O         mecânico        não   arranjou   o               carro.

the       mechanic        NEG   fixed      the             car

For these (and many other) reasons, the first Noun is considered to be semi-functional. The nature of the nouns participating in the construction, as well as its internal structure are ongoing topics of research, but outscope the purpose of this paper (see Alexiadou et al. 2007 and references therein for an overall discussion). Nevertheless, what I want to highlight here is the fact that, according to Matushansky (2001), the nouns that appear before the preposition are scalar. This means that *caraças* exhibits scalar properties in other uses beyond those as PPI and NPI.

Finally, *caraças* can also appear as an interjection in exclamations[14], appearing in its bare form (45), as a definite DP (46) or an indefinite DP (47)[15]:

_____

14.   *Caraças* seems to be very productive in this particular context, although I lack statistical data to confirm this intuition. A statistical analysis of the distribution of *caraças* in its several contexts of occurrence is a topic worth future work.

15.   An anonymous reviewer calls attention to the occurrence of *caraças* in exclamations, associated to a wh-element, as in (i).

(46)

| Ai | o | *caraças*!-, | a | senhora | Ieltsin | voltou | a | correr | para |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| oh | the.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | the | lady | Ieltsin | came.back | to | run | to |
| o | telefone. | | | | | | | | |
| the | phone | | | | | | | | |

'Oh, damn! – lady Ieltsin came back running to the phone.'

(CETEMPúblico - par=ext1546519-pol-96b-1:)

(47)

| C' | um | *caraças*! | Aquela | explosáo | foi | enorme! |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| with | a.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | that | explosion | was | huge |

'Holly crap! That explosion was huge!'

In all the examples, the use of *caraças* is highly expressive and conveys surprise, fright or shock regarding a certain unexpected event, such as in (47), or it may express the dislike of the speaker when facing a particular unpleasant situation, as in (45) and (46).

# 6. The origin of the non-nominal uses of *caraças*

It is usually assumed that the great majority of minimizers and maximizers originate from a common noun with relevant semantic/scalar interpretation. In the case of maximizers, the common noun usually refers to something of great size or importance, while in the case of minimizers it refers to things of little size or value. The common noun would progressively loose its nominal properties until it grammaticalized into a (semi)-functional item. Given the existence of a common noun with the form *caraça*, we might expect to find an evolution path from the common noun to a polarity item, but that does not seem to be the case, since there was never a semantic relation between both uses to start with. The semantics associated to the noun *caraça* does not seem to directly or indirectly relate to neither the PPI interpretation nor the NPI interpretation.

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(i)

| estou | há | duas | horas | a | tentar | descodificar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (I) am.1sg | there.is | two | hours | to | try | decode |
| o | que | caraças | são | as | SWAPS. | |
| the | what | CARAÇAS | are.3pl | the | SWAPS | |

'I have spent the last two hours figuring out what the hell are SWAPS.'

(Corpus do Português: Web/Dialects)

Wh-elements may establish a close relation to degree expression, particularly in their ability to encode discursive values (cf. Dikken & Giannakidou 2002; and also Amaral 2009 for Portuguese data)

In this section I claim that the several uses of the form *caraças* are actually only orthographically related to the common noun *caraça*. The form *caraças*, in its multiple uses, has emerged as a very colloquial term in replacement of a taboo term considered extremely offensive – the swear word *caralho* 'dick' – which is frequently used as an intensifier.

According to Rhee (2016), intensifiers "share the function of marking the speaker's stance of emphasis" and they are related to degree expression (cf. Quirk et al. 1985). Taboo/swear words are considered productive sources of intensifiers, according to Napoli and Hoeksema (2009), and they may correspond to lexical items which only receive such interpretation when they are not used with their literal meaning, or they may be interpreted as taboo words at all times. That is the case of the root 'fuck', as Napoli and Hoeksema (2009) point out, which is a taboo at all times, as can be illustrated with sentences (48) and (49):

(48) I don't give a fuck.

(49) This is fucking awesome.

Both expressions – *a fuck* and *fucking* – are taboo terms that clearly serve as intensifiers, one intensifies negation in (48), and the other intensifies the positive degree of the adjective *awesome* in (49). Taboo and swear words are usually linked to specific lexical areas. Napoli and Hoeksema (2009) identify four main sources: religion, health, sex and bodily excretions. Due to their social inadequacy and offensive nature, a great number of these items developed euphemistic variants, socially more acceptable. That is the case of examples in (50) and (51) which illustrate the replacement of a term considered taboo for another socially more acceptable.

(50) doodly-squat (EN) < doodly-shit

(51) blooming < bloody < blessed

<div align="center">(Vachek 1990: 29)</div>

According to Vachek (1990), the adjective *blessed* had itself been a replacement of another offensive term and was latter replaced by *bloody* and then again by *blooming*. In other cases, the taboo terms are phonologically changed, constituting what Napoli and Hoeksema (2009) call 'phonological tamperings'. This strategy may consist of vowel change (as in *shit* > *shoot*), consonant changes (as in *fuck* > *fugde*) or insertion of a polite <r> in addition to consonant change (as in *damn* > *darn*).

Parallel to the aforementioned examples, I argue that the item *caraças* is a replacement of the taboo and swear word *caralho*, a term considered highly offensive and obscene which designates the masculine sexual organ. Although its origin is uncertain (cf. Machado 1967, a.o. for etymological explanations), the word *caralho* is found

very early in the language and already with a vulgar and obscene interpretation. One of the earliest attestations of *caralho* is found in Galician-Portuguese Medieval Songs, as the one illustrated in (52).

| (52) | E | nun | *caralho* | grande | que | comprou, | \|oonte | ao | será[o] | o |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | and | in.a | dick | big | that | bought | yesterday | in.the | evening | it |

| | esfolou, | \|e | outra | pissa | ten | ja | amormada. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | skinned | and | other | dick | has | already | sick |

'And yesterday evening she skinned a big dick she bought and made sick another dick.'

<div align="right">(TMILG, song by Pero Garcia Burgalês)</div>

The example in (52) is extracted from a satirical song by Pero Garcia Burgalês concerning a woman named Maria Negra. It is considered one of the most obscene songs and it was written during the 13th century. The word *caralho* appears directly referring to the masculine sexual organ but with a very rude connotation that is maintained until nowadays.

The term *caraças* presents itself as a good candidate to be a more acceptable replacement of the offensive term *caralho* since it shares the same initial syllabic sequence *cara-*. Other terms also usually found as replacements for *caralho* are *carago*, which also shares the same syllabic beginning *cara-*, but also *cacete*, which only shares the first syllable. The term *caralho* is associated to slang and its use is socially reprehensible. Nevertheless, it is highly expressive and occurs in all the contexts described before for *caraças*. Examples from (53) to (57) bellow illustrate the occurrence of *caralho* and *caraças* in the exact same contexts with equivalent meaning, but with *caraças* being less offensive[16].

| (53) | Esta | noite | não | dormi | um | *caraças* | /*caralho*. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | this | night | NEG | sleep | a.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS | /dick. |

'I did not sleep a fuck tonight.'

| (54) | A | geladaria | tem | uns | gelados | do | *caraças*/ | *caralho*. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | the | ice cream shop | has | some | ice creams | of.the.MASC.SG | CARAÇAS/ | dick. |

'The ice cream shop has some hell of an ice cream.'

---

16. The status of *caraças* as a swear word varies according to the speakers. For sake of simplicity I have used the same translation for both terms, but in an example such as (55), *caraças* probably corresponds to the English *my butt* and *caralho* to *my ass*. Similarly, in (57) *caraças* would correspond to *crap* and *caralho* to *shit*.

(55) A  Podemos  dar   ao      Rui   uma  viagem  a    Paris.
        Can      give  to.the  Rui   a    trip    to   Paris

    A:' We can offer Rui a trip to Paris.'

    B:  Viagem  a    Paris  o             *caraças*/   *caralho*.  Sabes       quanto
        trip    to   Paris  the.$_{MASC.SG}$  CARAÇAS/    dick      know.$_{2SG}$  how.much

        isso    custa
        that    costs?

    B: 'Trip do Paris, my butt. Do you know how much that costs?'

(56) O              *caraças*/   *caralho*  do       cão   ainda  não       parou    de   ladrar.
     The.$_{MASC.SG}$  CARAÇAS/    dick      of.the   dog   yet    $_{NEG}$  stopped  of   bark.

     'The fucking dog has not stopped barking yet.'

(57) C'    um            *caraças*/   *caralho*!  Isso  é    que   foi   sorte!
     with  a.$_{MASC.SG}$  CARAÇAS/    dick       That  is   that  was   luck!

     Holly crap! That is what I call luck!

As we can see, both items can occur as PPIs, NPIs, metalinguistic negation markers, in N-of-an-N structures and interjections. In any of the cases, the use of both items is clearly a marked strategy to highlight the speaker's point of view concerning a given situation. It can be used to strongly express likes, dislikes or beliefs, by means of degree intensification

All the contexts of occurrence described for *caraças*/*caralho* correspond to the uses described by Napoli and Hoeksema (2009) for taboo terms and swear words and they may serve as an argument in favor of the enormous versatility of these linguistic items, which have received very little attention in the literature.

# 7. Conclusion

In this article I have investigated the existence of an item *caraças* in EP which is independent from the common noun *caraça* meaning *mask*. I have come to the conclusion that *caraças* appears associated to different constructions. It is part of the PPI *(d)o caraças* and the NPI *um caraças*, but it also occurs as a metalinguistic negation marker, under the form *o caraças*. It participates in N-of-an-N constructions and in exclamations. All these contexts are somewhat related to its scalar properties and to the strong emphatic value associated to it, probably due to its taboo-like status. It oc-

curs mainly in pragmatic contexts expressing the speaker's evaluative point of view (as a PPI, NPI, a metalinguistic negation marker, but also in N-of-an-N constructions and exclamations).

The idea that polarity items may be sensitive to a kind of scalar inferencing and not necessarily to negation itself was put forth by Israel (2001) while drawing a parallelism between polarity items and quantification properties of superlative constructions. Data presented here suggests that, along with scalarity, *caraças's* emphatic force (which is largely given by its offensive interpretation) may be responsible for its occurrence in multiple contexts, all of them involving the expression of the speaker's point of view. This is a topic that deserves being deepened in future work.

I have also proposed that the emergence of *caraças* in all the mentioned contexts was motivated by a need to replace a term considered offensive and socially inadequate – *caralho*. This seems to be a frequent strategy in different languages and highlights the fact that taboo terms are extremely rich linguistic items that need further study from a more theoretical perspective.

## Acknowledgments

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