Full NPs as personal pronouns: Reference, truth-conditional meaning, and use-conditional content

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This paper focuses on the behavior of full NPs used as 2nd person singular personal pronouns that trigger 3rd person singular verb agreement in European Portuguese, as in (1). Their interpretation is analyzed in terms of two dimensions of meaning: primary (two types of truth-conditional meaning) and secondary (or use-conditional, in the sense of Gutzmann 2015).

(1)  (Addressing the interlocutor) O Pedro/o Pai/o senhor quer um café?  
*‘Do you [lit. the Pedro/the father/the sir] want a coffee?’*

Besides having the deictic function of referring to the addressee in a specific conversation, these NPs have descriptive content; they denote a property of the addressee. Additionally, they have use-conditional meaning; they encode the social relationship between the interlocutors (in [1], the speaker shows respect and social distance towards the addressee). I propose that these forms are functional mixed use-conditional items displaying the features [+2d], [+f] in Gutzmann’s system; the argument of the descriptive content of the NP in the truth-conditional dimension is reused at the use-conditional level.

This paper shows that items displaying a multidimensional meaning can have more than one type of truth-conditional content. As for the use-conditional component, I discuss to what extent it can be considered backgrounded, as it can easily be refuted and become the main topic of the conversation.

*References:*  