

## ***A pessoa* and *uma pessoa*: Grammaticalization and functions of a human impersonal referential device in European Portuguese**

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The grammaticalization of nouns meaning ‘man’ or ‘person’ into impersonal pronouns has been related to languages with obligatory subject expression, like Germanic languages (*man*) and French (*on*). Similar developments are nevertheless found in European Portuguese despite the fact that it is usually considered a null subject language. In addition to the noun phrase *a gente* ‘the people’ being used as an impersonal or first-person plural pronoun, the noun phrases *uma pessoa* ‘a person’ and *a pessoa* ‘the person’ also acquire readings that resemble human impersonal pronouns. In my talk I will present a study of the semantic, pragmatic and morphosyntactic properties of the *pessoa* constructions in a corpus of spoken European Portuguese collected in Porto and discuss the grammaticalization of these items into referential devices. I argue that the emergence of such constructions is favored by both pragmatic and morphosyntactic tendencies found in European Portuguese: avoiding direct reference to the interlocutor and a preference for expressed subjects even in contexts permitting null subjects.