Metonymic construals of shopping requests

in HAVE and BE-languages

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1. Introduction

Requests are intrinsically face-threatening acts. In normal, polite interaction requests are, therefore, typically alleviated. The way a face-threat of a request is mitigated in a particular language may, amongst others, be determined by typological properties as well as the cultural background of the particular language. This paper looks at typological differences pertaining to the coding of 'possession' and 'transfer of possession' and the impact this typological property and the culture have on conventionally construing requests.

In his crosslinguistic study of 'possession,' Heine (1997: 83-108) distinguishes eight event schemas used to express the notion of possession. This paper will be concerned with two such schemata: the

Possession Schema,[1] which is used by "HAVE-languages" such as English, and the Location Schema, which is used by "BE-languages" such as Japanese.[2] HAVE-languages express possession by means of a transitive construction with 'have' as in *John has two children*, BE-languages express possession by means of 'be' and a locational expression as in Japanese, where this sentence is rendered as 'At/To John are two children' (see (9b) below). English and Japanese will be the two languages mainly considered in this paper as prototypical instances of a HAVE- and a BE-language. A scenario in which possession and its transfer as well as the form of requests are highly relevant is that of the shopping situation, which has been chosen as the object of this study.

In English, requests are typically expressed indirectly. The relationship between an indirect speech act and its intended meaning has been analyzed as involving metonymic reasoning: the hearer has to infer the speech act meaning as a whole from the part explicitly mentioned, such as one of its preconditions (see Gibbs 1986, 1994:351-357, Thornburg & Panther 1997, Panther & Thornburg 1999). Since HAVE- and BE-languages construe the notion of 'possession' differently, the metonymies linking the indirect wording

[1] In Heine's typology, possessive *have* is subsumed under the Action Schema *X takes Y*, since possessive verbs of 'having' derive from earlier meanings of 'seize,' 'hold' and the like.
[2] The terms 'HAVE-language' and 'BE-language' are used by Ikegami (1991) in his analysis of representational differences between English and Japanese.

to the intended speech act meaning will also be different, i.e. different speech communities make use of different metonymic reasoning in coding and understanding a request.

This paper investigates the successive stages of the shopping scenario in which the notion of possession is relevant and compares the ways a speaker of a HAVE-language metonymically asks for goods in a shop as opposed to a speaker of a BE-language. We will first present contrastive data of HAVE- and BE-languages on the metonymic construal of requests in a prototypical shopping scenario and then discuss these findings.

2. Metonymic construal of shopping requests in HAVE- and BE-languages

A shopping event is a complex scenario which involves, amongst other things, at a precondition, namely the article's availability, and the commercial transaction, or the proper act of buying. The customer initiates both these phases: he or she first finds out whether the article is available and then requests its transaction. The requested transaction itself typically involves several successive subevents: the salesperson hands the article over to the customer, the customer receives the article , the article changes ownership, the customer accepts the sale and pays

the price. Commercial events of course involve many more subevents such as choosing the right article, providing information about the article, settling on conditions of payment, etc. which, however, do not directly relate to the issue of possession and will therefore be disregarded in this paper. The stages of the shopping scenario that bear on the issue of metonymic construal of shopping requests are the following:

(i)   precondition: the article is available;

(ii)   transaction:

(a)   transfer: the salesperson transfers the article to the customer;

(b)   reception: the customer receives the article;

(c)   result: the article passes into the customer's possession.

Typically, only the precondition and one of the transaction stages are expressed in communicating a shopping request. We will first look at the ways the precondition of a shopping request, i.e. the article's availability, is conceptualized and will find that '' (Section 2.1). We willas a whole (Sections 2.2-2.4)

2.1. Precondition: the article's availability

The availability of an article represents the most important precondition for asking for it. In terms of obstacle theory (Francik and Clark 1985, Gibbs 1986), it is the first potential obstacle to be overcome. If a customer is not sure whether a store carries the type of article s/he is looking for, s/he will, as a first step, ask about its availability. For example, s/he may be looking for a 40-watt light bulb in the electrical appliance section of a department store. S/he knows that such light bulbs are produced but may not be sure if the store carries them. In an English-speaking country, the customer will ask a question such as (1a), while a Japanese customer will express his or her question as in (1b):

(1) a. *Do you have 40-watt light bulbs?*

b. *40 watto   no   denkyuu (wa)   ari- masu ka.*
    40 watt   POSS light bulb THEME be- HON   Q?
    Lit.: 'Are 40-watt light bulbs?'
    'Are there 40-watt light bulbs [available at this store]?'

Both types of languages typically construe the notion of availability by means of metonymy. In asking whether the salesperson "has" a certain article for sale, the speaker of a HAVE-language like English literally asks a question about the article as a possession. An object which one

possesses exists, is accessible and is under one's control and thus can be manipulated and given to other people—in short, possessions can be made "available" by the possessor. The metonymy POSSESSION FOR AVAILABILITY is, therefore, well motivated in the shopping scenario, in which the store is in control of the goods it offers for sale. BE-languages like Japanese, by constrast, form a question about an article's availability by literally asking about its existence as in (1b).[3] An object's existence establishes an essential precondition for its availability and accounts for the motivation of the metonymy EXISTENCE FOR AVAILABILITY.

In order to ask about an article's availability, an English speaker cannot use the EXISTENCE FOR AVAILABILITY metonymy. A customer's question *Are there 40-watt light bulbs?* can only be interpreted by the salesperson in the non-metonymic sense of existence ('Do 40-watt

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[3] A selection of BE-languages which render sentence (1a) in a similar fashion like Japanese in (1b) are listed below. We would like to express our thanks to Changhong Sui, Koo Izen, Jae Jung Song, Jeong-Hwa Lee, Aila Radden, Karol Janicki, Elʃbieta Tabakowska, Vitalija Liutvinskiene, Joe McIntyre, Rita Brdar Szabó and Mario Brdar for providing data on their native languages.

Chinese:	*You*	*40*	*wa*	*de*	*dengpao*	*ma?*
	be.HON	40	watt	of	light bulb	Q?
Korean:	*40-wattu*	*cenkwu*	*iss-upnikka?*			
	40-watt	light bulb	be-HON?			
Finnish:	*Onko*	*teillä*	*40*	*watin*	*lamppuja?*	
	be.3SG.Q	PRON.2PL.ADESS	40	watt-GEN.SG	lamp.PART.PL?	
Hungarian:	*Van/Lenne*	*40-wattos*	*villanykörtéjük?*			
	is/would be	40-watt.ADJ.SUFFIX	light bulb.POSS?			
Polish:	*Czy*	*s□*	*czterdziesto*	*watowe*	*ʃarówki?*	
	Q	are	40	watt	light bulb.GEN.PL	
Hausa:	*Àkwai*	*<wan*	*fitilàa*	*mài*	*Watt*	*à+bà'in?*
	there.is	egg.of	lamp	owner.of	watt	40

light bulbs exist?') and not in the sense of availability ('Are there 40-watt light bulbs available at this shop?'). Conversely, a Japanese speaker cannot use the POSSESSION FOR AVAILABILITY metonymy in the shopping scenario: the question *40 watto no denkyuu motte-masu ka* ('Do you have 40-watt light bulbs?') can only be understood in the sense of personal possession ('Do you personally have 40-watt light bulbs?'), not in the sense availability.

A question about an article's availability invites the conversational implicature that it is wanted by the customer. Thus, in both English and Japanese the salesperson may answer the question about the article's availability in (1) by replying 'How many do you want?' In this case, a possession or existence question is understood as a request for its transaction, i.e. as POSSESSION FOR TRANSACTION in HAVE-languages and EXISTENCE FOR TRANSACTION in BE-languages. The sense of availability is, however, still prevalent. Thus, an availability question may not be used to stand for the shopping request if the article's availability is taken for granted in a given scenario. For example, people "know" that McDonald's sells hamburgers and post offices sell stamps so that, unless special circumstances apply, asking for their availability as in (2) is felt to be a "stupid question" rather than a metonymic request.

(2) a. #*Do you have a Big Mac?*

    b.   [#]*Big Mac hitotsu ari- masu ka.*

          'Big Mac one   be- HON   Q?'

          Lit.: 'Is there a Big Mac?'

Asking such a question only makes sense in a situation in which the customer may reasonably suspect that the item is no longer available. In sentence (2), such a situation might arise at the moment the fast-food joint is closing.

The article's availability is an essential precondition for its purchase. It either needs to be explicitly asked about by the customer or is taken for granted. The customer cannot, as a rule, jump into the buying phase of a commercial event unless s/he feels sure that the article is available. Thus, if 40-watt light bulbs are usually only sold at electrical appliance stores, the customer will not directly ask for one at a gas station without first inquiring whether they are available. In this situation, a request such as *Can I have a 40-watt light bulb?* or *40 watto no denkyuu o kudasai* (lit.: 'Give me a 40-watt light bulb') is pragmatically inappropriate.

2.2. Transfer of the article to the customer

The transfer of the article by the salesperson establishes the central subevent of the commercial transaction requested by the customer. In terms of obstacle theory, this phase represents the second

potential obstacle to be overcome. The obstacle consists in having another person perform an accomplishment (in the sense of Vendler 1967). Like requests in general, directly asking for an article in a shop is a potential face threat and avoided in many cultures. For example, in buying a paper at a news-stand, an English-speaking customer will hardly choose a direct request such as (3a) and might not even use a more indirect wording such as (3b)[4]:

(3) a. *#Give me "The Times"!*

b. *?Could you give me "The Times"?*

In other HAVE-languages, directly requesting the salesperson to "give" the article may be quite appropriate as in Lithuanian (4a) and Croatian (4b):

(4) a. (*Duokit*) "*Lietuvos Ryt*"!

(Give-2.PL) Lithuanian.GEN Morning.ACC

'Can I have the "Lithuanian Morning"?'

b. *Dajte mi 3 marke za Austriju!*

Give.IMP me 3 stamps.ACC to Austria!

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[4] A customer will only express a request that the item be transferred to him or her in special situations; for example, when the customer has decided on one item from a choice of similar things displayed before him or her as in *Could you please give me the green one* or when a specific kind of transfer is involved as in *Could you deliver it to my home*.

'Can I have three stamps to Australia?'

In the East-Asian BE-languages Japanese, Chinese and Korean, asking the salesperson to "give" the customer an article is not considered offensive—it is, in fact, the most neutral way of expressing a shopping request as illustrated in the Japanese sentence (5)[5]:

(5)   *Asahi shinbun   (o)   kudasai.*

Asahi newspaper   OBJ give.HON

Lit.: 'Give the Asashi paper!'

'Can I have the Asashi, please?'

In other BE-languages, requesting the salesperson to "give" the article may sound rather inappropriate, as for instance in Hungarian [#]*Adjon nekem egy "Magyar Hírlapot"* ('give.IMP me a "Magyar Hírlap.ACC"!'). Using this direct form of request is only justified after the salesperson has ignored several polite attempts at being given the sales item.

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[5] Cf the comparable forms in Chinese and Korean:

Chinese: *Qing gei wo yi fen renmin ribao!*
please give me one copy people daily
Lit.: 'Please give me a copy of People's Daily'
'Can I have the People's Daily?'

Korean: *Tonga-ilpo(-lul)   cwu-si-psiyo*
Tonga-daily(-ACC) give-HON.VERBAL SUFFIX-HON. IMP.
Lit.: 'Please give [me] the Tonga-daily.'
'Can I have the Tonga Daily?'

As a variant form of request to be given the article the Hausa shopper uses the word for 'bring.' A shopping dialogue in Hausa proceeds as follows:[6]

(6)   Buyer: *Àkwai   tùmaati+?*

there.are   tomatoes?

Seller: *Ii,   àkwai.*

yes,   there.are

Buyer: *Tôo,   kàawoo   kilòo   biyu.*

good, bring   kilo   two

Lit.: 'Good, bring two kilos'

The verbs used to refer to the article's tranfer in the shopping scenario, 'give' and 'bring,' imply that the object bought will be received by the customer and pass into his or her possession. These expressions thus conceptually conflate the three stages of a transaction. But even these central subevents are metonymic in the sense that they do not include all of the relevant aspects of a commercial transaction: thus, giving and bringing do not, as a rule, imply payment. The metonymy involved is CENTRAL SUBEVENTS FOR THE WHOLE EVENT of

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[6] The Hausa examples have kindly been provided by Joe McIntyre.

the shopping scenario, or, more specifically with reference to the transfer stage, TRANSFER FOR TRANSACTION.

2.3. Reception of the article by the customer

The transaction of an article is only successful if the customer receives the article bought. This final stage of the transaction represents an achievement in Vendler's (1967) typology of situation types: it describes the non-volitional termination of an event. An achievement verb may often be used metonymically to stand for an action leading to its achievement as in *I am catching fish*, where the punctual achievement verb *to catch* is used in the dynamic sense of 'trying to catch.' In the shopping scenario, the achievement of the buyer's reception of the article may be used to stand for its transaction by the salesperson, i.e. the buyer expresses his wish to be given an article by means of the metonymy RECEPTION FOR TRANSACTION. This metonymy is conventionally used in some HAVE-languages like German (7a) as well as in many BE-languages like Japanese (7b), Polish (7c), Chinese, Hungarian and Finnish and, in special situations, also in Korean.[7].

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[7] Cf. Without a contrastive context the following Korean sentence is hardly acceptable:

> ʔ*thomatho   i   khilo-lul   pat-keyss-upnita.*
> tomato   two   kilo-ACC receive-FUT-HON. IND.
> Lit.: 'I will receive two kilos of tomatoes.'

Contrastive situations which might render the sentence acceptable are, for example, those of a customer who wants twó kilos of tomatoes, not thrée, or two kilos of

(7) a. *Ich bekomme zwei Kilo Tomaten.*

      I receive 2 kilo tomato-PL

      'Can I have two kilos of tomatoes?'

   b. *Tomato o ni kilo itadaki-masu.* or

      moraimasu.

      tomato OBJ 2 kilo receive-HON

      Lit.: 'I'll receive 2 kilos of tomatoes.'

   c. *Czy mog□ dosta□ 2 kilo pomidorów?*

      Q may receive 2 kilo tomato.GEN.PL

      Lit.: 'May I get two kilos of tomatoes?'

The RECEPTION FOR TRANSACTION metonymy has the effect of mitigating the face threat of the request, which may, amongst other things, be further alleviated by the use of a modal verb and the question form as in (7c). The indirectness conveyed by this metonymy accounts for its widespread use in the shopping situation. In Japanese, *itadakimasu* or *moraimasu* as in (7b) are the conventional forms used by a customer to express his or her shopping request. In other

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tomátoes, not potátoes, or of a customer who, after resisting to buy tomatoes, finally accepts. The buyer will then introduce his or her sentence with the discourse response marker *kulem* 'so, then,' which is set off by a pause, indicated here by a comma:

    [...] kulem, thomatho i khilo-lul pat-keyss-upnita.
    [...] then tomato two kilo-ACC receive-FUT-HON. IND.
    Lit.: 'So (*or* Then), I will receive two kilos of tomatoes.'

languages, the use of the reception phase for the article's transaction is pragmatically inappropriate. This applies to the HAVE-languages English (cf. [#]*I'll get/receive two kilos of tomatoes*), Croatian and Lithuanian.

2.4. Result of the article's transaction

As a result of a commercial transaction, the article bought passes into the customer's possession. This future state of an article's possession may, at least in some languages, metonymically stand for its requested transaction. A HAVE-language which conventionally uses the metonymy POSSESSION FOR TRANSACTION is English. It applies to situations which are mainly restricted to the ordering of food or drinks in a restaurant such as (8a), i.e. to non-permanent possessions. Of the BE-languages considered, only Hungarian allows the speaker to order food or drinks by metonymically referring to the resulting state as illustrated in sentence (8b), which might be said in the situation in which each member of a group places their order to a waiter. In accordance with its status as a BE-language, Hungarian construes such a request by means of the metonymy EXISTENCE FOR TRANSACTION.

(8)   a.   *I'll have a beer.*

        b.   *Nekem   egy sör   lesz.*

            'me   a   beer become'

Most of the HAVE- and BE-languages studied do not permit either of these metonymies. This may be because, in the chain of stages in the shopping scenario, the resulting state is one step further removed from the central subevent of transfer than the before-mentioned reception stage.

2.5. Summary

The metonymic construals of shopping requests used in the eleven HAVE- and BE-languages selected for this study are listed in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Even if the number of languages analyzed is too small to claim any typological generalizations, the comparative results allow us to discern certain cross-linguistic tendencies of metonymic construal. We can note the following observations, which will be discussed in Section 3:

First, as should be expected from their typological status, HAVE- and BE-languages use their own metonymic construals to express (i) availability and, to a lesser extent, (iv) the result of a requested transaction as 'possession' and 'existence,' respectively.

Secondly, the metonymic construal of the transfer stage (ii), i.e. the possibility of directly asking the salesperson to "give" the article wanted, is avoided in most European languages but commonly used in the East-Asian BE-languages Japanese and Chinese and, to a lesser extent, in Korean.

Thirdly, the metonymic construal of the reception stage (iii) is rare in most European languages but commonly found in the three East-Asian BE-languages as well as some European languages.

3. Discussion

The ensuing discussion will attempt to find cognitive and cultural explanations for the three phenomena observed. It is claimed that at least some of the structural differences discovered are not just arbitrary phenomena of language but reflect conceptual and possibly cultural differences.

We will first look at the notions of 'possession' and 'existence,' which, amongst other things, account for the different construals of

availability. We will next consider two forms of politeness, indirectness and deference, which account for the absence and use of direct forms of request. Lastly, we will look at the notions of action vs. process, which might account for the differences found with respect to the metonymization of the reception stage.

3.1. Possession vs. existence

We will investigate the conceptual impact of the notions of 'possession' and 'existence' by looking at interlingual and intralingual differences. As shown in the two different types of metonymy for availability, HAVE-languages make use of the Possession schema while BE-languages use the Location schema. An insightful conceptual analysis of these two schemata as in English (9a) and Japanese (9b) has been provided by Ikegami (1991:299):

    (9)   a.   *John has two children.*

           b.   *John ni   wa   kodomo   ga   futari iru.*

                   John at/to TOPIC child   SUBJ two   be

                   Lit.: 'At/To John are two children'

                   'John has two children.'

HAVE-languages like English pick out the possessor both as the theme and the subject of the sentence and, thus, give prominence to the human. This is in conformity with many other areas in which HAVE-languages, unlike BE-languages, focus on the human.[8] BE-languages such as Japanese may topicalize the possessor as in (9b), but do not subjectize it. BE-languages thus downplay the human element and present the relationship between the two entities as a contiguity relation, where the subject (the children) describes something which exists and the complement (John) describes something in relation to which the subject's existence is predicated. The Location Schema prototypically applies to the spatial location of things, but it also applies to the existence of things in the sense of availability.

In light of these observations we may now reanalyze the questions used in asking about an article's availability. In asking a question such as (1a) *Do you have 40-watt light bulbs?*, the English speaker presents the issue of availability in terms of one's personal possession,[9] while a Japanese speaker asks a question about an article's

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[8] Some of Ikegami's pairs of examples in which English emphasizes the human where Japanese presents the situation as thing-like or event-like include the following: English *I have a temperature* corresponds to Japanese 'temperature is,' English *John ran out of money* is rendered in Japanese as '(As for John), money became null,' English *I don't understand you* is expressed in Japanese as 'I *don't* understand what you say,' etc.

[9] Wordings such as (1a) in fact involve a further metonymy: it is not the salesperson who possesses the items but the store, i.e. the person is used to stand for the institution. The metonymy PERSON FOR INSTITUTION is motivated by a general principle of cognitive salience (see Radden & Kövecses 1999): humans are in general more salient than institutions, and entities we interact with, i.e. salespersons, are more salient than entities we do not interact with, i.e. the shop. This does not, however,

existence as in (1b) *40 watto no denkyuu (wa) arimasu ka* ('Are there 40-watt light bulbs?'). The metonymy EXISTENCE FOR AVAILABILITY is in accordance with a strong tendency in Japanese to avoid direct reference to persons, particularly in addressing the interlocutor. Especially in conversation, personal subjects tend to be avoided and deleted in 'have'-constructions and other transitive constructions. This tendency may be reinforced by the great number of personal pronouns, each of which has its own stylistic value. The most natural solution to the difficulty of choosing the appropriate personal pronoun among more than a dozen pronouns referring to 'you' is to make no reference to the interlocutor at all, which can be achieved in Japanese by using the existence construction.

The distinction between HAVE- and BE-languages tacitly assumes that the concomitant distinction between 'possession' and 'existence' is a matter of a clear-cut division. This is, however, not the case if the schemata are looked at intralingually. In the same way that HAVE-languages have forms meaning 'be' to express the notion of existence, BE-languages have forms meaning 'have' to express notions of

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apply to the Japanese view of the world: Japanese does not extend humans to institutions. Ikegami (1991: 301) nicely observed that the notice *We are closed today* on the door of a shop would strike a Japanese speaker as odd. Hence, the goods which are for sale at a store are neither seen as possessions of the store nor metonymically as possessions of the salesperson but simply as existing in contiguity to the store.

possession. The question is where, in a given language, the notion of possession passes over into that of existence.

We will once again illustrate this issue by focusing on Japanese. The Japanese word which comes closest to the English meaning of 'have' is *motsu*. *Motsu* typically applies to personal possessions as in *watashi-wa ie-wo motteiru* 'I have a house.' A question with *motsu* such as (10) will, therefore, not be understood as a question about an article's availability as in (1b) but as a question about someone's personal belongings:

(10) *kashimiya no   seetaa o   motte- masu ka.*
cashmere POSS sweater OBJ have- HON Q?
'Do you have a cashmere sweater?'
(= 'Do you personally possess a cashmere sweater?')

This poses the question of what counts as personal possession in Japanese. For example, stamps do, so that I may use *motsu* in asking a friend to help me out with stamps as in *50 yen kitte 10 mai motte-masu ka* ('Do you have ten 50-yen stamps?'). However, due to their temporary nature, hamburgers are not considered personal possessions and, therefore, do not go well with *motsu*: **Big Mac motte-masu ka* ('Do you have a Big Mac?'). Possessions may also be abstract things such as interest or expenses, which may be 'had': *kyoomi-o motsu*

'have interest' and *hiyo-o motsu* 'cover the expenses.' Also money may be possessed but is more likely to be seen as existing: for example, 'Do you have some money?' is rendered as *ikuraka okane aru* (Lit. 'Some money be/exist?'). Things which cannot be possessed are humans: thus, it is impossible to say 'I have two children' instead of (9b), i.e. children are not regarded as personal possessions in Japanese.

The notions of 'possession' and 'existence' are to be seen as forming a conceptual continuum, which different languages may cut up differently. In Japanese, only prototypical physical objects and abstract things can be possessed—these are things which can be controlled. Humans, transitory objects including money, objects which are available but exist independently of us, and objects in space cannot be possessed—they are only seen in a contiguity relation to us.

Other languages may make different distinctions. The BE-language Polish, for example, uses the Existence Schema in questions about an article's availability but the Possession Schema in negated replies, i.e. something that is available "exists" as in (11a), whereas something that is not available is "had" as in (11b):

(11) a. *Czy jest du∫skie mas≈o?*

Q   is   Danish   butter?

Lit.: 'Is (there) butter?'

'Do you have Danish butter?'

b. *Nie ma.*

not have

'We don't have any.'

The Possession Schema also takes over in shopping situations in which a customer regularly buys a certain product at a certain shop. For example, the customer may ask for his regular brand of beer such as EB by using a 'have'-question: *Pani ma EB?* (Lit.: Mrs. have EB?, 'Do you have EB?'). The relationship between the customer and the shop owner has become a personal one, and the commercial event appears like an exchange of possessions.[10]

The reverse situation holds in HAVE-languages, such as Lithuanian.[11] A customer asking a salesperson whether a specific item

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[10] We are indebted to El∫bieta Tabakowska for the Polish data. The situation is, in fact, more complex. The Existence Schema is associated with the standardized shopping scenario and expectations derived from it, while the Possession Schema tends to be associated with negative expectations. Thus, a Polish customer may no longer expect to get rolls at a bakery near closing time and ask 'Do you still have bread?' rather than 'Is there still bread?,' or he may not expect to find a specific book in a bookstore and, therefore, form the Polish question as 'Do you have books by Shakespeare?' and not 'Are there books by Shakespeare?' If the Possession Schema is used in situations which normally require the Location Schema as in 'Do you have beer?' asked at a supermarket, the resulting meaning of counter-expectation is that of the beer being sold illegally.

[11] We owe this nice observation to Vitalija Liutvinskiene.

is availabe in the shop will ask a 'have'-question as in (12a), but a third person asking the shopper if the item is available in the shop will use a 'be'-question as in (12b):

(12) a.   *Ar turite   40 vat∑ lempu□iu?*

             Q have-2P.PL40 watt lamp-GEN.DIMIN?

             'Do you have 40-watt bulbs?'

    b.   *Ar yra   (ten) 40 vat∑ lempu□iu?*

             Q be-3P.SG (there) 40 watt lamp-GEN.DIMIN?

             'Are there 40-watt bulbs?'

In asking question (12b), the third person takes a distanced view of the shopping scenario: the speaker's attention is directed towards the existence of the article in the shop, and the possessive relationship between the shop and the article is out of focus.

3.2. Indirectness vs. Deference

A major difference between western and eastern cultures pertains to the ways a person is attended to. Speakers of western languages tend to mitigate face-threatening acts by using strategies of indirectness. A direct request such as (3a) [#]*Give me "The Times"!* is felt to be rude in English and is therefore avoided in polite interaction. The Japanese

equivalent (5) *Asahi shinbun (o) kudasai* and those of Chinese and Korean show, however, that direct requests are the normal forms used in speaking to salespersons. However, it would be misleading to consider Japanese and English forms of request from a structural point of view only.

As convincingly argued by Matsumoto (1988), the notion of 'politeness' and the linguistic strategies of politeness employed by a speaker are culture-specific and fundamentally different in Western and Japanese cultures. The Western notion of 'politeness' is based on the individual's public self-image, and impositions on an indivual's face are minimized by means of redressive strategies such as conventional forms of indirectness. The Japanese notion of 'politeness' is based on a person's position in society., and forms of politeness are used to show the speaker's deference to the supposedly higher-ranking addresse. The most important "relation-acknowledging devices" are honorifics, i.e. conventional lexical or morphological forms by means of which the speaker exalts the addressee and humbles himself or herself. Interestingly, salespersons, who are of a much lower social rank than customers, are also spoken to in Japanese, Chinese and Korean by using honorific forms.

The deferential aspect of honorifics can be seen in the etymology of some Japanese honorific words. *Kudasai* in sentence (5) *Asahi shinbun (o) kudasai* has as its bare form the honorific word *kudasaru*,

which is etmologically related to *kudaru* 'go down' and suggests passing a favor down to an inferior person. Thus, in using the exalting form *kudasai*, the Japanese speaker used to express respect to a higher-ranking person. The same applies to the word *itadaki-masu* in (7b) *Tomato o ni kilo itadaki-masu* ('I'll receive two kilos of tomatoes'). Etymologically, *itadaku*, the bare form of *itadaki masu,* means 'to put something up above one's head, to be crowned' which one might do when one receives something important from a person higher up in status. In using this honorific verb the speaker used to demonstrate his lower status.

Most Japanese speakers are, of course, no longer aware of the original honorific meanings of *kudasai* and *itadaku*. Hence, they do not feel any contradiction between their use and present-day society, in which it is salespersons who show deep respect to their customers rather than the other way around. Politeness in a shopping situation shows up in another guise: for example, an elderly Japanese woman may be vague in expressing her shopping request and ask the clerk at the post office to be given "about two 50-yen stamps" as in (13a) or "two or three 50-yen stamps" as in (13b):

(13) a. *Gojuen kitte o ni mai hodo kudasai.*
       50 yen stamps OBJ two pieces about give
       'Please give me about two 50 yen stamps.'

b. *Gojuen kitte   o   ni san mai   kudasai.*

50 yen   stamps   OBJ two three pieces give

'Please give me two or three 50 yen stamps.'

Vagueness is listed among Brown and Levinson's (1987) strategies of politeness. As a quantity hedge, an expression of vagueness provides not as much or less information as might be expected (Brown and Levinson 1987: 166). Its effect of politeness derives from appearing less intrusive: the final decision about a quantity is left to the other person. However, in a shopping request like the one under (13), the clerk of course needs to know the exact number so that the ensuing dialogue is about settling the number of stamps wanted. The use of vague and, hence, unintrusive and polite language appears to be so natural that the shopper is not necessarily aware of saying something puzzling.[12]

3.3. Action vs. process

Section 2.3 showed that some languages, in particular the three East-Asian languages, allow the speaker to refer to the requested transaction by metonymically highlighting the reception stage of the shopping

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[12] We thank Yoshihiko Ikegami for providing this nice example of Japanese politeness.

scenario. We will look again at Japanese, where shopping requests are typically expressed as in (7b) *Tomato o ni kilo itadaki-masu* ('I'll receive 2 kilos of tomatoes'). The metonymy has the effect of focusing away from the agent's action and viewing the event as a process. This may be seen as a manifestation of more general typological properties of Western as opposed to Eastern languages.

The distinction made by Ikegami (1991) between 'DO-languages' and 'BECOME-languages' seems to be relevant here. DO-languages such as English tend to emphasize the agent and his result-oriented actions while BECOME-languages such as Japanese tend to weaken the notion of agentivity and present things as happening. These different views are illustrated in the contrast between the ungrammatical English sentence **I burned it but it didn't burn* and the grammatical Japanese equivalent *moyashita keredo moenakatta.* The English sentence involves a contradiction between an agent's accomplishment of burning a thing, which results in its being burned, and the statement that it did not burn. The Japanese counterpart, however, is acceptable because *moyasu* describes the process of burning but does not necessarily imply a final result. *Moyasu*, like many other Japanese transitive verbs, is less telic in meaning and more process-oriented. The different types of metonymy used in English and Japanese shopping requests are thus in line with general tendencies observed in

these two languages. English as a DO-language focuses on the result, while Japanese as a BECOME-language focuses on the process.

4. Conclusions

This study investigated the ways requests in an everyday situation, the shopping scenario, are coded in different languages. Such requests are typically construed metonymically, where the different stages of a commercial scenario may serve as metonymic vehicles. These are, in particular, the availability of the article, the transfer of the article by the salesperson, the reception of the article by the customer, and the resulting possession of the article by the customer. The choice of metonymies was shown to depend, amongst other things, on typological properties of the given language. The two types of languages distinguished for this purpose are HAVE- and BE-languages, the former being typically represented by English, the latter by Japanese. HAVE-languages metonymically express the notions of availability and, to a lesser extent, that of requested transaction, as possession, BE-languages construe these notions as existence. It has been argued that the notions of possession and existence form a conceptual continuum, which is cut up differently by different languages and thus also accounts for different metonymic usages.

HAVE- and BE-languages also tend to display different metonymic usages with respect to the transfer and reception stage of the commercial transaction. The use of a direct request is felt to be impolite in Western cultures but represents, in conjunction with honorifics as expressions of deference, the normal form of shopping requests in East-Asian languages. The different cultural systems of politeness—indirectness vs. deference—account for the absence or presence of the TRANSFER FOR TRANSACTION metonymy. The metonymic use of the reception stage for a requested transaction in East-Asian languages may be relatable to culture-specific ways of viewing events: DO-languages such as English focus on actions and their results, BECOME-languages such as Japanese focus on processes as happening.

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stages	HAVE-languages	BE-languages
(i) availability	POSSESSION FOR AVAILABILITY (English, German, Lithuanian, Croatian)	EXISTENCE FOR AVAILABILITY (Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Finnish, Hungarian, Polish, Hausa)
(ii) transaction		
(a) transfer	TRANSFER FOR TRANSACTION (Lithuanian, Croatian)	(Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Hausa)
(b) reception	RECEPTION FOR TRANSACTION (German)	(Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Polish, Hungarian, Finnish)
(c) result	POSSESSION FOR TRANSACTION (English)	EXISTENCE FOR TRANSACTION (Hungarian)

Table 1: Metonymic construal of shopping requests in HAVE- and BE-

languages