

Metaphorical and metonymic motivations behind Hungarian forms of address¹

1. Forms of address, i.e. linguistic markers of the addressee (nominal or pronominal forms as well as inflectional morphemes, cf. Domonkosi 2002: 4) are the most direct linguistic means available for indicating the relationship between discourse participants. Thus, they make a key contribution to the linguistic construal of social reality. This importance explains why all approaches highlighting the functions and social aspects of language have concerned themselves with the topic. In particular, the variety and functions of forms of address have been explored by sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis, pragmatics and cognitive linguistics. In the present paper, I focus on only one aspect of this highly complex phenomenon, namely the conceptual background (more specifically, metaphorical and metonymic motivations) behind the linguistic devices in question. The criteria of my analysis are supplied by functional cognitive semantics and pragmatics.

2. By default, languages use second person singular forms for referring to the addressee of a message. However, some languages allow for shifts in the use of grammatical person and number, with the discourse partner possibly referred to by second person plural, third person singular or plural, or even first person plural (cf. Head 1978, Helmbrecht 2003). Early studies in sociolinguistics, based primarily on the bipartite system of European languages, attributed specific social value to this grammatical differentiation. In their classical analysis, Brown and Gilman (1960: 253–276) interpreted the differentiation of forms of address as reflecting the semantics of power and solidarity. Under the proposal, the primary second person forms (T-forms) generally indicate proximity, solidarity, equality and intimacy, whereas the chronologically secondary V-forms signal distance, power, an asymmetrical relationship and respect.

Beyond second person pronouns and inflectional morphemes marking personal deixis (cf. Tátrai 2011: 131–132), the discourse partner can also be referred to by nouns; adjectives or participles used in a nominal capacity; attributive or appositional structures with a nominal head; or appositional structures headed by a pronoun (Tompa 1962: 63–64). These linguistic elements may either appear as independent sentences with a vocative function, or as parts of a more complex syntactic structure, captured by Braun (1988: 12) as a distinction between “free” and “bound” forms of address.

In addition to marking personal relations, forms of address also contribute to the construal of the discourse participants’ social relations and attitudes. Hence, their deictic role is two-fold: they mark both discourse roles and the nature of the relationship between participants. In Levinson’s terminology, they instantiate personal deixis and social deixis at the same time (1983: 90). In Verschueren’s alternative classification, the category of social deixis divides into personal deixis and attitude deixis, corresponding to the two functions mentioned above (Verschueren 1999: 20–21, Tátrai 2011: 134–135).

3. The processing and interpretation of interpersonal relations are also aided by metaphorical and metonymic mappings. Based on a huge sample of languages, historical pragmatic and cognitive studies on the variety of forms of address have found that spatial relations play a decisive role in the construal of interpersonal relations, especially as a function of metaphorical uses of the CLOSE/DISTANT, INSIDE/OUTSIDE and UP/DOWN oppositions. In addition to these spatial metaphors (or even in combination with them), the conceptual domain of SIZE, the opposition between ONE and MANY, and the metonymic mappings CONCRETE/ABSTRACT as well as POSSESSOR/PROPERTY have also been noted in

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studies on the construal of interpersonal relations between discourse participants (cf. Listen 1999, Keown 2002, 2004, Simon 2003, Koch 2004, Tolcsvai Nagy 2011).

With regard to Hungarian forms of address, Tolcsvai Nagy (2011: 171) observes the role of the distance metaphor, with distance interpreted vis-à-vis the deictic centre of the speaker. In the present paper, I also consider the history of forms of address and their present-day distribution, using characteristic examples to demonstrate how the distance metaphor influences the construal of interpersonal relations, and how it is supplemented by other dimensions of space as well as other kinds of metaphorical and metonymic mappings.

3.1. Functional differences between second and third person forms of address, i.e. what is known as *tegezés* [the use of T-forms] and *magázás* [the use of V-forms] in Hungarian folk categorization (corresponding to *duzen* and *siezen*, respectively, in German), have their conceptual basis in the metaphorical mapping from spatial PROXIMITY/DISTANCE onto the domain of social relations. In particular, second person pronouns mark proximity, whereas third person ones mark greater distance (cf. Head 1978: 194–195, Tolcsvai Nagy 1999: 165, 2011: 271–272).

The metaphorical background of distancing in the development of V-forms was already invoked as an explanatory principle in early accounts of the language of politeness. In his systematic survey of the syntactic expression of politeness, Ponori Thewrewk has the following to say about the divergent ways of addressing the discourse partner.

“Forms created by language to express person are deemed ordinary, the speaker as a person is hiding himself, finding any contact with other people overly confidential; he uses language to create an artificial space between speaker and addressee; the former pushes the latter to the distance, as if he were a third person, speaking to him rather like speaking about him, and the very nature of that person, i.e. his status as a person, is discarded, to be replaced by artificial abstraction” (Ponori Thewrewk 1897: 13).

The use of PROXIMITY/DISTANCE as a source domain for interpreting social relations has an experiential basis (cf. Kövecses 2005: 87–88), since intimacy is primarily experienced through physical proximity (Lakoff–Johnson 1999: 50–51). Therefore, the key metaphorical element of Hungarian formal address is the mapping SOCIAL DISTANCE IS SPATIAL DISTANCE.

3.1.1. With regard to the spatial structure underlying forms of address, the dimension of PROXIMITY/DISTANCE is supplemented by the INSIDE–OUTSIDE parameter. This follows from the fact that third person forms not only express distance with respect to the first and second persons, but also crucially position their referents outside of the speech event (cf. Tátrai 2011: 132). The result is grammatical metaphor, with a participant of the speech event coded by a form with external reference. In addition to its function in distancing, the INSIDE/OUTSIDE parameter also allows for the avoidance of informality. The metaphorical basis of spatial separation in the conceptualization of the speech event is also documented by early accounts of the language of politeness in Hungarian:

“the speaker is not addressing a person, as it were, but rather raises an artificial wall between himself and the addressee, as if he was afraid to get in touch with the addressee directly with his words” (Kertész 1996: 137).

It is all the more crucial to note the relevance of the INSIDE/OUTSIDE parameter for the conceptualization of space (in addition to PROXIMITY/DISTANCE), as subtle differences in DISTANCE can be expressed by various lexical devices (pronominal and nominal forms of address); however, the grammatical distinction between second and third person forms is more clear-cut and salient in both language use and reflections thereupon than other aspects of

variation. In particular, the findings of my previous empirical study of Hungarian language use (Domonkosi 2002, 2010) suggest that the choice between T-forms and V-forms has a much more profound effect on the linguistic regulation of discourse participant relations than associated variation resulting from the use of pronominal and nominal elements. Moreover, the speech community is also more aware of the contrast based on grammatical number than of the contribution of other devices. The majority of my informants (59%) only reflected on the distinction between *tegezés* (the use T-forms) and *magázás* (the use of V-forms), identifying all occurrences of third person forms as instantiations of the latter.

3.2. In the history of Hungarian communicative strategies, the 16th century saw the appearance of the first device to rely in part on the use of grammatical third person as a marker of the relationship between speaker and addressee. In letters written during this period, the addressee is frequently referred to by the formulas *te kegyelmed*- 'your mercy' (singular), *ti kegyelmetek*- 'your mercy' (plural), *te nagyságod*- 'your greatness', *te felséged*- 'your highness' and the like, in a grammatically bound position (Braun 1988: 12), i.e. in the middle of sentences. These forms include the marking of second person in their internal structure (with person and number agreement between the possessor and its head); however, they have the distribution of nominals in third person (cf. D. Máta 1999). Therefore, as subjects, "they are linked to a 3rd person verbal predicate even when more distant passages make it clear that the two parties are on polite informal terms, using T-forms" (G. Varga 1992: 462).

The most frequent form of address, *te kegyelmed* or *kegyelmed* 'your mercy', is based on a metonymic mapping in which a person is named with the use of an abstract property. Drawing on the POSSESSOR/PROPERTY metonymy (cf. Svennung 1958: 68–87, Koch 2004: 16), these expressions also bring into play metaphorical distancing in the mental processing of the speech situation by construing a concrete second person addressee as an abstract entity in third person. The CONCRETE/ABSTRACT metonymy attains a distancing role through its association with pragmatic indirectness (cf. Listen 1999: 57). Formulas such as *te kegyelmed*- 'your mercy', while unambiguously marking second person, present the discourse partner via a third person abstract concept, which may be regarded as the most polite addressing strategy (cf. Aalberse 2009: 55).

In the forms of address *te nagyságod*- 'your greatness' and *te felséged*- 'your highness', metaphorical mappings interact with the POSSESSOR–PROPERTY metonymy. The formula *te nagyságod*- 'your greatness' evokes the concept of GREATNESS in comparison to the speaker, based on the SIZE IS POWER metaphor (Listen 1999: 40–49), which in turn instantiates the correspondence SMALL IS INSIGNIFICANT – BIG IS IMPORTANT metaphor (Lakoff–Johnson 1999: 50) with regard to roles in social relations (Keown 2002: 4).

The expression *te felséged*- 'your highness' characterizes the relationship between discourse participants in the vertical dimension of space. As applied to social relations, the DOWN IS BAD – UP IS GOOD metaphor is elaborated as GOOD SOCIAL STATUS IS UPWARD ORIENTATION – BAD SOCIAL STATUS IS DOWNWARD ORIENTATION (cf. KÖVECSES 2005: 254).

The strategy of avoiding direct personal reference through metonymic abstraction can be traced back to Latin formulas of correspondence, and gained popularity in several European languages in the 16th and 17th centuries. In German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Dutch, it also had a significant impact on the grammaticalization of particular modes of attitude deixis (cf. Listen 1999, Moreno 2002, Aalberse 2009).

3.3. Hungarian historical linguistics explains the birth of third person forms of address by the above metonymic mappings, and the corresponding requirement of person and number agreement imposed by objectified references to the discourse partner (Kertész 1996, Pusztai 1967, G. Varga 1992, D. Máta 1999). The metaphor of spatial distancing inherent in the grammatical marking of person is therefore based on metonymic mappings, lending support to the claim that metaphorical and metonymic correspondences are often closely intertwined in

conceptualization. We may also assume, however, in keeping with the findings of Listen (1999) on the evolution of German addressing pronouns, that such a large-scale transformation of linguistic rituals in the entire speech community cannot be put down solely to the requirement of grammatical agreement in the formulas mentioned above. Rather, it must have been motivated by a variety of metaphorical and metonymic mappings for marking social status, social attitudes and the indirectness of communication.

3.4. The development of social deixis from spatial deixis can be regarded as a typical path of language change (cf. Traugott–Dasher 2002: 144). However, in the case of Hungarian third person forms addressing the discourse partner, a two-step process can be detected. Distance and being outside of the speech event (as grammaticized in the form of third person personal deixis) first play their roles in attitude deixis before giving rise to an independent mode of referring to the addressee.

Accounts of forms of address in 16th and 17th century letters often note the intermingling of second and third person references to the discourse partner, even in one and the same sentence (Kertész 1996, Pusztai 1967). It is indeed common that expressions of politeness (unusual from today's perspective) contain both second and third person forms, as shown by the following example:

„Nám te kegelmed Ennekem Egiebkor Mynden dolgot... meg yrt, wag pedig Enmagamnak meg mondtad” ‘On another occasion, **your mercy wrote** about everything to me, or else **you told** it to me’ (from a letter to Tamás Nádasdy by his servant, Lőrinc Farkas in 1543, quoted by Kertész 1996: 125).

To evaluate this variation as a sign of mixing up forms of address, or even as evidence of the “confusion of one’s sense of language” (Kertész 1908: 402) amounts to the anachronistic projection of usage norms back to a previous era. Both Kertész (1931) and Pusztai (1967) present several examples of the co-occurrence of second person and metonymic third person forms in early texts. Viewed in their historical context, third person forms associated with metonymic forms of address seem to have had only an attitude deictic function for a long time. That is to say, they merely highlighted the attitudes of discourse participants to one another, and marked politeness, while reference to the addressee continued to require the use of second person grammatical forms.

According to Traugott and Dasher, the deictic meaning of V-forms in languages employing the T/V opposition can be divided into two subcomponents, one of which marks social distance with respect to the speaker while the other accounts for the form’s second person singular denotation (2003: 233–234). In the era under study, Hungarian third person forms only marked social distance, and their role in person deixis had not yet undergone grammaticalization. Thus, the history of Hungarian forms of address gives evidence of a diachronic trend whereby forms with a personal deictic function develop into attitude deixis through the changing of grammatical person, before assuming a complex role as elements marking both personal and attitude deixis.

These third person forms of politeness, gradually becoming pronominal in character, are ubiquitous in 16th and 17th century texts, appearing in every clause in which the addressee is relevant for the utterance (cf. Kertész 1996: 124). Apart from accentuating politeness, the repetition of such forms also indicates that during this time, the third person inflection of verbs does not yet have a social deictic function.

3.5. In communication relying on the use of third person forms, pronouns and pronoun-like metonymic expressions are not the sole devices for referring to the discourse partner; rather, nouns and noun phrases may also fulfill this role. So-called role nouns such as *az úr* ‘the lord’, *az asszony* ‘the lady’ become increasingly frequent from the early 18th century, thus

reinforcing the association of social deictic value with grammatical third person (Kertész 1996: 124, Pusztai 1967: 302). Following Svennung's (1958: 34) terminology, representation of the discourse partner by third person forms embedded in syntactic structure is known as indirect address. The functioning of indirect address is presumably motivated by the metaphorical mapping NAMING IS TOUCHING, which can be subsumed under the more global metaphor COMMUNICATION IS PHYSICAL INTERACTION, an oft-analysed example of which is the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor (Kövecses 2005: 22). In particular, the politeness inherent in third person reference seems to be motivated by the intention of speakers to avoid metaphorically touching and thereby physically threatening their addressees.

In Hungarian, indirect addresses lacking proper names are frequently preceded by a definite article with deictic function: *A tanárnő is eljön velünk?* 'Is the teacher [FEM.] also coming with us?' (used to address a woman who works as a teacher). These forms of address, which are regarded highly polite, place the discourse partner farthest from the speaker. Nominal markers mostly result in construals in which the linguistic representation of the addressee is clearly displaced from the speaker's deictic centre. More specifically, these indirect forms presuppose a neutral vantage point (Sanders–Spooren 1997: 86), detached from the speaker's referential centre. Therefore, the politeness function of nominal addresses also follows from the fact that their application results in objective conceptualization (Kövecses–Benczes 2010: 155), with the discourse partner represented from a more global perspective than that of the speaker. With regard to spatial relations, these third person forms position speaker and addressee farthest from each other.

3.6. The independent politeness function of third person forms (even without an explicit subject requiring agreement in person and number) is established by the beginning of the 18th century (Pusztai 1967: 304). On the one hand, this development means that third person representations of the discourse partner attain a separate honorific function. On the other, it increases the variety of personal deictic devices with a capacity to refer to the discourse partner. The fact that third person inflectional morphemes can function as personal deictic elements pointing at the addressee creates a special situation. Since these suffixes fulfill a deictic function even by themselves, their use is compatible with a variety of pronominal and nominal variants, with zero anaphors also serving as an option (cf. Helmbrecht 2003: 191).

Accordingly, the history of V-form-based discourse and its current, functionally differentiated subtypes are determined by the pronouns and nominals accompanying the use of grammatical third person. A key linguistic factor behind the observed changes is that a neutral addressing pronoun fails to emerge, one that would be appropriate in any formal situation (cf. Laczkó 2006: 46). The two forms in currency today, *maga* and *ön* both have tight restrictions of use.

4. In his analysis of Hungarian T-forms with different social values, Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy divides up the abstract spatial structure of participant roles as follows: "The two versions of the simple paradigm consisting of the ego (1SG), the close (2SG) and the distant (3SG: *maga/ön* '[V-type forms address], *ő* 'he/she') were replaced by a paradigm including the ego (1SG), the close 2SG, the more formal 2SG, the neutral 2SG and the distant (3SG), or to put it more precisely: there are multiple 2SG functions positioned with respect to the speaker's centre in a radial network" (2011: 272). In my view, the idea that discourse partners may be positioned at various distances from the deictic centre, in other words the view that the spatial structure of addresses is potentially subtly differentiated within the CLOSE/DISTANT dichotomy assumed by Tolcsvai Nagy, may contribute to a more complete understanding of the conceptual background of addresses.

Varying degrees of distance in the metaphorical space of T-form based communication may be construed by particular combinations of linguistic elements with an attitude-marking function (Domonkosi 2002: 192–197). When third person forms are used, the structuring of

space appears to be even more varied both historically and in present-day Hungarian, with the help of pronouns and periphrastic expressions construing more formal relations. These pronominal and nominal expressions allow for the careful regulation of distance between interlocutors.

4.1. The processing of these varieties may be affected not only by the SOCIAL DISTANCE IS SPATIAL DISTANCE mapping but also by the PEOPLE ARE AREAS IN SPACE metaphor/metonymy (cf. Inchaurrealde 1997: 135, Chen 2002: 100). The latter may influence how the relationship between interlocutors is conceptualized through the GREATNESS/IMPORTANCE correspondence. The concept of GREATNESS associated with certain forms of address may exploit not only the conceptual domain of SIZE (as in the address *nagyságod* 'your greatness') but also, more indirectly, the BIGGER FORM IS BIGGER CONTENT correspondence (KÖVECSES 2005: 254). The prevalence of this experiential metaphor in the language of politeness is also shown by the evolution of *kegyelmed*, which finally developed into a pronoun. The phonological erosion exemplified by *kegyelmed* > *kelmed* > *kend* > *ked* went hand in hand with the loss of the word's honorific function (D. Máta 1999).

In present-day Hungarian usage, a related point can be made about addresses with multiple attributes and the phenomenon of *tetszikelés* 'tetszik-ing', i.e. use of the auxiliary *tetszik* (employed in polite questions) with an infinitival complement. These patterns may owe part of their role in construal to their complex, lengthy and cumbersome character. In particular, politeness expressions are subject to a proportional correspondence between length and degree of politeness (according to Martin [1975: 353], the longer the expression, the more polite it is), which may be iconically motivated by the GREATNESS IS IMPORTANCE metaphor.

4.2. Figure 1 below models the abstract spatial arrangement of the ways in which the discourse partner may differ in size from the speaker as a deictic centre, and fall at a shorter or longer distance from her. The figure illustrates possible differences between the major non-T-forms; however, it is also grossly simplifying by foregrounding the social deictic function of particular personal pronouns while ignoring the utterance context in which they appear (cf. Agha 2007: 288). Note, for example, that the construal of distance may be affected by nominal addresses accompanying the highlighted elements. The V-pronoun *maga* frequently co-occurs with, or is substituted by, given names, which decreases the distance between interlocutors, whereas the combination of *ön* with role names enforcing a general (not speaker-bound) perspective has the opposite effect. The conceptual elaboration of discourse participants also invariably depends on the number and proportion of elements referring to them.

In the figure, thick arrows signal distance from the speaker, ellipses define the boundaries of the speech situation, while circles mark the space occupied by discourse participants.

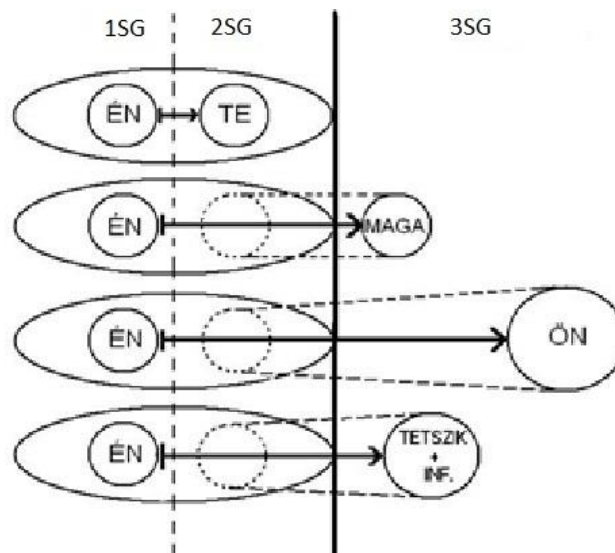


Figure 1. The construal of distance by pronominal elements

5. The above overview of metaphorical and metonymic mappings underlying the functioning of Hungarian forms of address supports the conclusion that spatial relations play a key role in the conceptualization of interlocutors and their relationship. The construal of spatial relations with respect to the deictic centre is affected by the INSIDE/OUTSIDE opposition in addition to the CLOSE/DISTANT dimension. Further, within the abstract space construed by forms of address, the personal space associated with discourse participants can be determined by additional linguistic devices. Under the proposal presented in the paper, distance with respect to the speaker's deictic centre is best modelled with a scale rather than a binary opposition. Its elaboration in specific speech situations is influenced by a variety of linguistic devices over and beyond the grammatical person of forms of address.

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Metaforikus és metonimikus motivációk a magyar megszólításokban

A tanulmány a beszédpartnerek viszonyának megjelenítésére, illetve folyamatos alakítására alkalmas magyar nyelvi eszközök történetileg kialakult változatainak fogalmi hátterét vizsgálja. A beszédpartnerek közötti viszony konceptualizálásában metaforikus és metonimikus leképezések is szerepet játszhatnak. Vizsgálatomban történeti adatokra és saját empirikus felmérésem eredményeire is támaszkodva igyekszem rámutatni, hogy a magyar megszólítási módok alakulásában milyen metaforikus és metonimikus motivációk fedezhetők fel, illetve ezek hogyan függenek össze. A metaforikus térbeliség egyrészt a beszélők közötti fizikai távolság, másrészt az egyén térben elfoglalt, helye, kiterjedése és a szituációban felismert fontossága, szerepe közötti leképezés révén járul hozzá a személyközi kapcsolatok feldolgozásához. A megszólításoknak ebbe az elvont térstruktúrájába a TÁVOLSÁG és a MÉRET fogalmi tartományai révén más metaforikus és metonimikus leképezések is beépülhetnek.