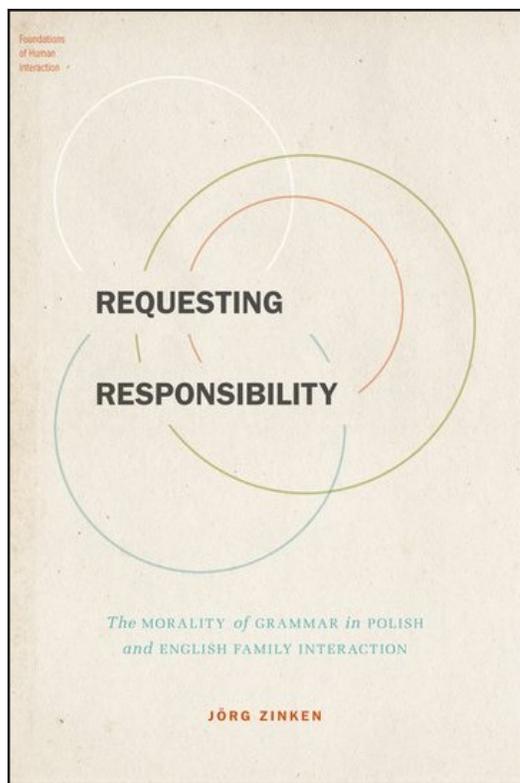


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REQUESTING RESPONSIBILITY

THE MORALITY OF GRAMMAR IN POLISH AND ENGLISH FAMILY INTERACTION

By Jörg Zinken



This book examines requests for action in everyday contexts by analyzing natural video-recorded data of everyday interaction in British English and Polish families. Requests for carrying out little jobs—passing some object or fetching items from the next room—are pervasively relevant in contexts such as preparing and consuming food, caring for and playing with children. Requests therefore provide a useful window onto general qualities of human sociality as well as on aspects of cultural diversity. Jörg Zinken describes features of interactional context that people across cultures might be sensitive to in designing a request. In particular, the other person's locally observable commitment to a shared task emerges as a quality of context that systematically enters into the way a speaker builds a request. He then analyses the relationship between diversity across the grammatical resources of languages, and diversity in the action affordances provided by these structures. Focusing on grammatical structures that exist in Polish but not in English (impersonal deontic statements, a certain type of double imperative, and a grammaticalized distinction between perfective and imperfective verbal aspect), the analyses show that language-specific turn formats can index and project social orientations within the on-going interaction in culture-specific ways. By examining social actions at a fine level of grain, the book points a way toward an understanding of cultural diversity that avoids the pitfalls of cultural relativism.

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Features

- Includes detailed analyses of types of social action in the area of requesting on the basis of natural data
- Provides book-length treatment of a substantial domain of interaction on the basis of natural interaction data in Polish
- Presents a new approach to the analysis of linguistic and cultural diversity, an alternative to relativistic arguments

Jörg Zinken is Research Fellow at Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim. After completing a PhD in Linguistics at the University of Bielefeld (Germany), he worked as a Senior Lecturer, then Reader in Language and Communication, in the Department of Psychology at the University of Portsmouth (UK) before joining the Institute for the German Language in Mannheim in 2014.

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