Exploring Third-Party (Im)politeness in the Late Ramesside Letters

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Abstract

Traditional (im)politeness research approaches, and indeed traditional approaches within wider pragmatic theories, work very much on the idea that communication takes place between a sender and a receiver. This typically means that it is dyadic, i.e., between two individuals, with the analysis of the communicative act limited to the direct interaction between two interlocutors. However, research by Hatfield and Hahn (2014), Xia and Lan (2019), van Gils and Risselada (2022) highlights that communicative events are far more complex that the dyadic approach suggests, and that triadic or third-party involvement in communication needs further investigation. This paper will look to conceptualise third-party (im)politeness in ancient Egypt via a case study analysis of the New Kingdom Late Ramesside Letters, a corpus of over 70 letters dating to the reign of Ramesses XI (ca. 1099–1069 BCE). Particularly, this paper will present a framework for exploring "identified" third-party (im)politeness, those individuals named in the letter, and "unidentified" third-party (im)politeness, those not named but who would have been part of the communicative event that took place outside of the letter itself.

1.Introduction[1]

As Xia and Lan (2019, p. 224) aptly highlight, traditional (im)politeness research is grounded in the theoretical assumption that communication is dyadic, i.e., between two individuals, even when multi-party. This is certainly true in frameworks originating from the so-called first wave of politeness research, where (im)politeness and Face-Threatening/-Enhancing Acts are typically considered in verbal exchanges between one speaker and one hearer (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1989; Culpeper, 1996; Chen, 2001; Grainger, 2011; Xia & Lan, 2019). The involvement of third parties is somewhat acknowledged, but as Xia and Lan (2019, p. 224) stress, the problem here though is that "hearers with different roles in multi-party communication are either neglected or reduced to a homogeneous group", which does not necessarily reflect the multi-dimensional complexities of interaction (i.e., Goffman's (1971) side participants category).[2]

This paper looks to build on the growing research on third-party (im)politeness (Hatfield & Hahn, 2014; Xia & Lan, 2019; van Gils & Risselada, 2022) by presenting a framework for analysing third-party (im)politeness in historical texts, that explores 'identified' (named individuals in the letter itself) and 'unidentified' third-party (im)politeness (individuals evaluating and interpreting the letter but who are not named in the letter). The framework will be presented via a case study of the Late Ramesside Letters (ca. 1099–1069 BCE), a collection of over 70 texts written in Late Egyptian Hieratic that date to the reign of Ramesses XI, the final king of the New Kingdom. The community

[1] I am very grateful to the peer reviewers of this paper for their insightful comments.

[2] For example, that an utterance can be directed at two addressees simultaneously with differing illocutionary forces (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1997, p. 4) and different participants within a communicative act perceiving utterances as polite or impolite simultaneously (Culpeper, 2011, p. 234; examples taken from Xia & Lan, 2019, p. 224).

encapsulated in the letters consisted predominately of scribes based on the Theban West Bank (modern-day Luxor), living in a community situated around the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu. To undertake this analysis certain assumptions will be made about communication practices in ancient Egypt, firstly that reading was likely conducted out loud and not in silence and that it was likely that letters were read to an audience of some kind (Wente, 1990, p. 9; Nevalainen, 2007, pp. 1-9; Poster, 2007, pp. 1-4; Ceccarelli, 2013, pp. 1-19); and secondly, that power and hierarchy underpinned social and communicative practices in ancient Egypt (Ridealgh & Jucker, 2019). It is important to note that there are limited examples of third-party (im)politeness within the corpus and this paper looks to contribute to theoretical discussions on third-party involvement in communicative events from an (im)politeness perspective, particularly unidentified third parties and how their involvement within the interactional process impacts on the recipient of the letter.

2.Theoretical Background

Traditional models of communication frame interaction as the encoding and decoding of meanings, based principally on the dyadic model of one "sender/speaker" and one "receiver/hearer" (Arundale, 2006). As Arundale (2006, p. 195) explains "a speaker has a meaning that he or she intends a hearer to have, encodes it using knowledge of the language, and transmits the language forms by producing an utterance. The hearer decodes the utterance using knowledge of the language, and recovers the speaker's meaning". When communication is seen in this way, as essentially a one directional process stemming from an individual, the wider context and participants in the interaction, whether literal or metaphorical, are excluded. As Arundale (2006: 195) highlights, "the Western preoccupation with the individual as the central factor in explaining human activity could not be more evident" and is fundamental to this model. As such, the communication is a static process between two clearly defined individuals; yet in reality we rarely experience communication in this way, with naturally occurring speech containing multiple voices (sometimes simultaneously) and multiple (and often conflicting) expectations and desires.

As Xia and Lan (2019, p. 225) emphasise, foundational scholars in politeness research "seem to be aware that third parties, present or not, may be important to the analysis of Face and politeness", but do not elaborate on the phenomenon. For example, Leech (1983) defines politeness as a relationship between two participants, which he called *self* (the speaker) and *other* (the hearer). Leech (1983, pp. 131-132) clarifies that "the label other may therefore apply not only to the addressees, but to people designated by third-person pronouns" (the addressee or bystanders; Leech, 2007, p. 181). Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 12) make a brief reference to third-party (im)politeness but only in discussion of how Face-Threatening Acts are conceptualised: "we underplay the influence of other factors, especially the presence of third parties, which we now know to have much more profound effects on verbal interaction that we had thought".

Xia and Lan (2019, p. 227) summarise research on multi-party communication in more recent years, highlighting that most focuses on impoliteness, as research in this area sought to catch up with politeness research:

> Politeness research after Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) and Leech (1983) has made remarkable steps forward (Ide 1989; Gu 1990; Culpeper 1996; Eelen 2001; Watts 2003; Mills 2003; etc.), among which the most notable is the "discursive turn" initiated by Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), Mills (2003) and their colleagues early in this century. The discursive theorists question the classical politeness theories (primarily Brown and Levinson's face theory and Leech's Politeness Principle) from various perspectives, advocating going beyond the analysts' interpretation, the universalist paradigm, and the neglect of impoliteness (cf. Linguistic Politeness Research Group 2011; van der Bom and Mills 2015). In recent years the multi-party context has gradually attracted discursive researchers' attention. The reason is that discursive approaches to (im)politeness research call for the study of naturally occurring conversations, which encourages researchers to frame (im)politeness in a multi-party context, because naturally occurring conversations, more often than not, involve more than two participants (e.g., Yedes 1996; Locher and Watts 2005). Accordingly a number of recent works have moved beyond the dyadic model of communication and begun to investigate the other parties' role in the working of (im)politeness in multi-party communication (Geyer 2010; Lorenzo-Dus et al. 2011; Bou-Franch et al. 2012; Culpeper 2011: 233–238; Dynel 2012; Dobs and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2013; Kádár and Haugh 2013; Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2014; van der Bom and Mills 2015). (Xia & Lan, 2019, p. 227)

Xia and Lan's (2019) own discursive research utilises naturally occurring multi-party conversation from a Chinese dinner table, where they analyse politeness and impoliteness simultaneously. Importantly, their study highlights the importance of 'coalitions' in naturally occurring conversations as a distinctive feature of multi-party communication. As Xia and Lan (2019, p. 247) point out, coalitions are not a necessarily new concept, and several scholars have highlighted that coalitions often result in a power imbalance (Caplow, 1968; Bruxelles & Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2004; Laforest, 2009; Heinemann, 2009; Perelmutter, 2013; Haugh, 2013, pp. 64-65).

> To better account for the (im)-politeness in the conversation that we are looking at, we propose a different type of coalition, namely, relational coalition, by which we mean that in a multi-party context, there is not always a conflict of interest between a coalition and the other participants; members of the coalition may share their stances and collectivize their understandings of (im)politeness. A relational coalition does not necessarily emerge in the interaction as part of a power struggle or (dis)affiliation. It is also likely to be established based on the participants' pre-existing interpersonal relationships and unbalanced multi-party distances. A relational coalition, once formed, not only shapes the mechanism of utterance design, but also pervasively constrains the understandings of (im)politeness in multi-party contexts. (Xia & Lan, 2019, p. 247)

The concept of coalitions in communication also has significant consequences for traditional understandings of participants in communication acts. Existing politeness approaches tend to limit who can be a participant within a communicative event, as Kádár & Haugh (2013, p. 87), highlight, a "participant is an individual in interaction who takes up a particular position or perspective in relation to that talk or conduct".

Kádár and Haugh (2013, p. 87) further distinguish participants as ratified and unratified: ratified participants have an active involvement in the interaction and can hold the producer accountable for social actions and meanings that arise through talk. Goffman (1979) was the first to propose that a ratified participant could be the addressee or an unaddressed side participant — both participant types have "recognised entitlements to respond to the talk, although their degree of responsibility to do so varies" (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, pp. 88). Conversely, unratified participants tend to be bystanders or overhearers, who may hear all or some of the interaction (intentionally/unintentionally). Kádár and Haugh (2013, p. 91) stress the complexities of identifying participants as participants start to evaluate the communicative event and the distinction between ratified and unratified participants blurs when (im)politeness is considered. Kádár and Haugh (2013, p. 91) also promote the role of metaparticipants: "people whose evaluations of politeness arise through vicariously taking part in the interaction by viewing it on the television or internet. Both participant and metaparticipant understandings are first-order[3] in the sense that they involve some kind of participant in the evaluative moment". Work on this by Dynel (2011, p. 1633) in her research of film audiences, provides an interesting assessment of how an audience engages with conversation on screen, which could certainly be applied to multi-party conversations:

> The recipient, another ratified hearer category, should be placed among ratified participants, yet distinct from interlocutors. Following the prevalent assumption of active audiences (e.g. Hobson, 1982; Duranti, 1986; Morley, 1980, 1994), it is argued that recipients do participate in interactions by interpreting utterances and meanings conveyed nonverbally. Needless to say, they cannot contribute verbally to fictional conversational interchanges (cf. Short, 1981/1989). Generally, mass media communication is one-way communication (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Jucker, 2003), with audience's participation being restricted to active recipientship. Recipients are then ratified hearers but are not conversationalists, which is why they cannot be presented as being subordinate to other ratified hearers. (Dynel 2011: 1633)

Here the audience as a metaparticipant becomes a ratified overhearer, and whilst an 'audience' cannot engage with the fictional communicative event, they can interpret and evaluate it.

As the data to be used here are letters, we cannot analyse specific multi-party conversations, but certainly letters can be viewed as having their own process and culture for information and relational transfer. Ceccarelli (2013, p. 9) explains that letters are a "written process of communication between two or more specific individuals or groups (real or fictional) who find

[3] First-order refers to first-order Politeness or Politeness1, i.e., lay interpretations of (im)politeness, or rather understanding of every day (im)politeness by users of that politeness system.

themselves in a situation of spatial distance, or more precisely, who are not in direct, face-to-face contact". The spatial and temporal distance of letter writing and sending result in specific temporal deixis being used in the letters themselves to reflect this. What then can be formulated about third-party (im)politeness concerning letters and the role of participants here? In this paper, I will distinguish third-party (im)politeness into identified (im)politeness (third parties are named, or otherwise identified) and unidentified (im)politeness (secondary receivers of letter who are wider members of household but form a single relational coalition). By separating the categories as such, the world created inside the letters, and the interpersonal interactions supported by the letter itself (via identified (im)politeness), can be better understood in partnership with the world outside the letter and the interpersonal relationships influenced and shaped by the letter itself. Hence the relational communicative act that is evaluated starts with the writing of the letter but continues past the complete reading of the letter, as its contents is discussed and interpreted for a longer period then reading the letter itself.

When considering identified third-party (im)politeness, individuals may not be an 'active' speaker, producer, or recipient in the communicative event itself (i.e., the specific letter under review), yet they observe, interpret, and evaluate the interaction at some point in the broader interaction. Just as we see in multi-party interactions in that although there can be multiple "active" participants at any given time, other participants are not passive nor subordinate to the "active" participants, they may be "active" at different points in the conversation but evaluate the *whole* interaction. In a similar vein, the same occurs with unidentified third-party participants who observe, hear or read an interaction, they still interpret and evaluate the interaction, yet with a distinction that their involvement in the interaction is not directly recorded in the letter, i.e., injections, non-verbal communication, etc. These unidentified third parties can be side participants, bystanders, and overhearers, their involvement can be intentional or unintentional, but, from a (im)politeness prospective, they are still interpreting and evaluating the interaction and may have the ability to share this evaluation with the recipient of the letter directly (in turn shaping the evaluation of the recipient), and, as such, do not fit neatly into the metaparticipant category. This is certainly true if unidentified third-party individuals form long- or short-term 'coalitions' in communicative events with united interactional goals or can influence the recipient's interpretation of the communication event.

The Late Ramesside Letters highlight a close-knit community centred on households, with a Head of Household responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the household's dependents, generally extended family members. Although today we tend to think about whether letters belong to a public (i.e., politicians resignation letter) or private (i.e., love letters) domain, this dichotomy between public and private did not exist in the same way in the ancient world. What we can ascertain is that letters would have had an audience of some kind, and as discussed above, this audience would be made up of fully ratified participants. In the case of many of the Late Ramesside Letters it is likely that this audience was members of the household into which the letter was

received, particularly plausible if the letter contained news of the Head of House or community members.

There are certainly exceptions to this, such as Example (1), where the most High-power individual in the late Ramesside Letters, the General Piankh, who essentially ruled southern Egypt at this time, openly discusses the Pharaoh with his subordinate. How widely this letter would have been shared is unclear and the letter goes on to instruct his subordinate to interrogate and kill two men; what is clear, however, is that this letter contained a negative evaluation of Pharaoh. Due to the rigid power structure of ancient Egypt, it is not normal for subordinates to criticise superiors. However, at this time, the Pharaoh's power had significantly declined and the General Piankh was the highest-powered individual in Southern Thebes at this time. Example (1) may well be evidence of him firstly recognising his superiority over the Pharaoh and secondly not fearing the consequences of being open about his negative evaluation of the Pharaoh (i.e., the Pharaoh really is no longer his superior).

> (1) *kt md(w).t jr Pr-ꜥ ꜥ.w.s j.jrj=f pḥ pꜣy tꜣ mj-jḫ zp-2 jḫ-jr Pr-ꜥ ꜥ.w.s ḥry njm m-r-ꜥ*, "Another matter: as for Pharaoh, Life, Prosperity, Health (LPH), how will he ever reach this land? Now, as for Pharaoh, LPH, whose superior is he anyway?"[4]

Recent work by van Gils and Risselada (2022, pp. 255-256) highlights that its vital between specific third parties and an anonymous audience to fully understand all "faces involved" and how they are affected by (im)politeness in different ways. Van Gils and Risselada (2022, p. 254) particularly focus on Facework, Face-Enhancing/Face-Saving Acts of third parties named in Cicero's letters. Certainly, using their approach, Example (1) could be interpreted as a Face-Threatening Act towards the Pharaoh (as it directly challenges the power of the sovereign) — hence an example of impoliteness in play toward an identified third-party. However, Example (1) could also be an example of a superior utilising High-power language to refer to a subordinate; Face is then minimalised by Power and there is no need for the superior to utilise any forms of reference needed to maintain positive interpersonal relations (Ridealgh & Unceta Gómez, 2021).

Although focused primarily on Face, van Gils and Risselada (2022, p. 254) do distinguish between the absent third-party and the present third-party involved in what they call "face matters", stressing:

> These two types of audience must be distinguished from what we call 'third parties'. By the latter we exclusively mean:
>
> - in case of speeches: those members of the audience that are explicitly mentioned as third persons by the speaker or writer ('present third party'); or third parties that are mentioned in, but are not present at the speeches involved ('absent third party');

[4] P. Berlin 10487, 8- v.1: (Černý, 1939, p. 36); (Wente, 1967, p. 53); (Wente, 1990, p. 183); (Sweeney, 2001, p. 80 and p. 145); (Ridealgh, 2013, p. 194). Please kindly note, all translations are the author's own, as are any errors.

- in case of letters: third parties, and their social alliances, that are mentioned and that could be expected to read the letters themselves, or be informed about their content. (van Gils & Risselada, 2022, p. 254)

However, Face is only part of the issue in play during interaction, as already highlighted above. Within Ridealgh (2020), a "community-embedded" model is proposed for analysing religious requests within relational interactions with a named deity, highlighting the different participants (all of whom are also ratified) included in the utterance. These participants were not just simply the dyadic sender and receiver of the communicative act, but also includes the wider community in which the belief system is supported, the direct recipient of the request act, and the intermediary who makes the request on behalf of the sender (see Table 1). Example (2) is a standard form of a religious directive used within the letters. If we just apply Facework here to this analysis of the utterance, meaning we would just explore the interaction between either the sender and receiver or the sender and the deity, then the broader interpersonal interactions and nuances go unrecognised in the analysis, yet are essential to the situational and cultural importance of the request act itself. It is not clear to what extent these religious requests to or involving deities are examples of third-party (im)politeness, this needs further investigating as neither the deity nor the intermediary (i.e., the human receiver of the request act) are technically a 'third-party' within this context — when the deity is invoked, they become present within the interaction taking on the role of recipient through the human intermediary.

(2) *wnn pꜣy=j šꜥ.t spr r=k jw=k ḏd n Jmn jnj wj*, "When this letter reaches you, you shall speak to Amun to bring me back alive".[5]

[PLACE TABLE 1 HERE]

Table 1. visual representation of the utterance maintaining distinct culturally specific relationships (Ridealgh, 2020, p. 73)

3. Identified Third-Party (im)Politeness

As van Gils and Risselada (2022) highlight, third-party (im)politeness, i.e., where an individual is named in the correspondence, certainly has a strong link with Face, and similarities between their work on Cicero's letters can also be found in the Late Ramesside Letters, particularly when the sender is looking to maintain a positive relationship with the recipient, as found in Example (3). This is an example of Face-Enhancing Acts both towards the recipient, i.e., highlighting his good standing in front of the High-power superior, and towards the General himself, as a third-party, by highlighting Piankh's good standing with his subordinates and that he is safe (Ridealgh, 2013 p. 191).

[5] P. BM EA 10300, v.5: (Černý, 1939, pp. 37–39); (Wente, 1967, pp. 55–56); (Wente, 1990, pp. 181–182).

As letters would likely have been read and shared, and good news passed on, it ensures that both the recipient and Piankh's positive Faces are maintained within the wider community.

> (3) *ḫr tw=k m-šs m-bꜣḥ pꜣ (j)m(j)-r mšᶜ mn btꜣ m-dj=f ḫr bw-pwy r(m)ṯ nb smj tw=k m-bꜣḥ=f mj.tt*, "Now, you are all right before the general, there is no harm done to him. Now, no man has reported you before him either".[6]

This idea of third-party (im)politeness supporting and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships also manifests across a range of utterances. Named individuals are mentioned as ways of reassuring recipients that loved ones are ok, as in Example (4), or to encourage further correspondence containing updates about them, as in Example (5), or as part of relational directives, as in Example (6). This does not really come under Face as van Gils and Risselada (2022) observe, but certainly supports the ongoing interpersonal relationship between interlocutors (i.e., via meeting social expectations in normative letter correspondence), as well as supporting one of the main functions of the letters themselves (i.e., sharing of information).

> (4) *ḫr m-dj ḥꜣ.tj=k m-šꜣ pyꜣ=k jtj sḏm(=j) ᶜ=f m-šs zp-2 hꜣb n=j pꜣ (j)m(j)-r-n-pr-Jmn wᶜb N.j-sw-pꜣ-mdw-špss r-ḏd m-dj ḥꜣ.tj=ṯ m-sꜣ=f sw m-šs sw snb mn btꜣ r=f*, "Also, don't worry about your father. I hear he's in excellent health. The head of the Amun temple and Wab priest Nesupamedushepes sent it to me with the words: "Don't worry about him. He is in good condition. He is in good health. There is no action against him"".[7]

> (5) *ḫr-ᶜ tn ḫr-ᶜ n Ḥm.t-šrj.t tꜣy=st ᶜḏd.t tꜣ šrj.t zḫꜣ.w […] zḫꜣ.w Jmn-ḥtp.w Tꜣ-kꜣmn-šrj.t Šd-sw-Mw.t nꜣ r(m)ṯ*, "How are you? How are Hemeshri and her little daughter, the Scribe […], the Scribe Amenhotep, Takamenescherit, Shedsumut, and the people [….]".[8]

> (6) *mtw=k ptr nꜣ ᶜḏd.w šrj.w mtw=k ꜣtj n=w m-šs mj-qd tꜣj šrj.t n Ḥm(.t)-šrj(.t) tꜣy=st mw.t tꜣy=st mnᶜ.t*, "And you should also look after the little boys and you should take good care of them, just like the little daughter of the Hemetsherit, her mother and her wet nurse".[9]

Within the letter corpus there are other examples of third-party (im)politeness, although not as apparent or as frequent outside of the occurrences discussed above. Example (7) is sent from the Scribe Butehamun to a peer, who was part of the same military expedition south into Nubia (North

[6] P. BM EA 10419, rt.8–v.1: (Janssen, 1991, pp. 16–20).
[7] P. Geneva D 191, v.6-8: (Černý, 1939, pp. 57–60); (Wente, 1967, pp. 71–74); (Wente, 1990, pp. 174–175).
[8] P. Turin Cat. 1973, 7-9: (Černý, 1939, pp. 2–5); (Wente, 1967, pp. 20–21); (Wente, 1990, pp. 188–189).
[9] P. Leiden I.370, v.1-2: (Černý, 1939, pp. 9–11); (Wente, 1967, pp. 27–31); (Wente, 1990, pp. 180–181).

Sudan) as Butehamun's father, Dhutmose (referred to here by his nickname Tjory[10]) the (senior) Scribe of the Necropolis. The reference here to Dhutmose as 'a man who lacks experience', should not be seen as a Face-Threatening Act, but rather as part of the request act by Butehamun to his friend. The description of Dhutmose as 'a man who lacks experience' adds an additional emotional element to the request act and is designed to encourage an emotive response in the recipient to ensure they fulfil the request issued. It may also act as a way of mitigating the request to a socially equal individual, encouraging them to help someone less able than themselves. Dhutmose was gravely ill on this expedition and ultimately died before he could return to Egypt, looking after ones' elders and possible kin, was normative and expected behaviour, particularly if they were of higher social power, as was the case here.

> (7) *yꜣ mntk nfr ḫr mntk pꜣy =j jtj ꜥš ḥꜣ.t n zḫꜣ(.w) Ṯry n ḫr tw=k rḫ rḏd rmṯ jw bn ꜥꜣ=f jwnꜣ ḫr bw-pw.wy=f jrj nꜣ mšꜥ n.tj sw jm=w ꜥn jmj ḏr.t m pꜣ dp.t ptr n rs tp r hrw grḥ mj.tt jw=k sw=f*, "Oh yes, you are good, because you are responsible for my father. Summon for the First Scribe Tjory of the Necropolis. You know he is a man who lacks experience, because he has never been on such expeditions as he is on now. Assist him in the boat. Observe and be vigilant day and night alike when you are with him".[11]

Identified third-party (im)politeness also occurs when interlocutors disagree on actions or topics. Example (8) contains an identified third-party as part of an apology and an attempt to shift blame for the offence taken of a joke to that named third-party, hence the third party is named in an attempt to restore the positive Face of the sender of the letter.

> (8) *r-n.tj sḏm=j r-ḏd tw=k ḥḏn.tw dj=k šf=j m sḥwr ḫr s.t-rꜥ n tꜣj mdw.t sbj j.ḏd=j n pꜣ ꜥꜣ-n-št ḥr tꜣj šꜥ.t jw m Ḥnw.t-tꜣwj j.ḏd n=j j.ḏd nhy n mdw.t n sbj n pꜣ ꜥꜣ-n-št ḥr tꜣy=k šꜥ.t*, "Furthermore, I have heard that you are angry and that you have disparaged my reputation because of this telling a joke I made about that letter to the tax collector, but it was Henuttawj who said to me: "Do a joke to the tax collector about this letter"".[12]

4. Unidentified Third-Party (im)politeness

In regard to unidentified third-party (im)politeness, I propose that for consideration here and particularly for letters, that wider hearers, or secondary unacknowledged (i.e., not directly named) receivers of the letter as they could be framed, must be taken into account in third-party (im)politeness. However, as these are individuals or participants not explicitly named in the

[10] Nicknames are not uncommon in ancient Egypt, where many people had the same name and nicknames were used to differential between individuals. Nicknames do not necessarily immediately denote in group/kin relational interactions.

[11] P. BM EA 10284, 6-10: (Černý, 1939, pp. 48–49); (Wente, 1967, p. 65); (Wente, 1990, p. 196).

[12] P. BN 198 II, 3-7: (Černý, 1939, pp. 67–68); (Wente, 1967, pp. 79–81); (Wente, 1990, p. 173).

correspondence, they are 'unidentified' in the letter. We likely can anticipate that the unidentified third-party participants are members of the household to which the recipient belongs. Their active engagement comes from essentially a cost/benefit scenario connected with being part of a firmly hierarchy society, where there is a significant (and life-depending) dependency on Heads of Households within the ancient Egyptian societal sphere. The reputation and success of the Head of Household is fundamental to the wider of success of all dependents, yet the Head of Household is also the sole authority within that household. If we take the assumption here that letters would have been read out loud to a broader audience within the household beyond the named recipient(s), recognising that this may not have included all letters, then we need to consider the involvement of unidentified third-party participants in this interaction. It is important to understand how this group evaluated interaction and how the receiver of the letter felt about this evaluation, but of course recognising the highly theoretical nature of this discussion.

The unidentified third parties are secondary receivers of letter who are wider members of the household and form a single relational 'coalition'. Work by Dynel (2011, p. 1633) is very much relevant here, particularly the idea that there may be an element of the third-party being an 'audience' in the same way as her research into film audiences, which has revealed that an audience is both ratified and not subordinate to the interlocutors on screen, they still interpret and evaluate the interaction. Yet Dynel's work presents the audience as a metaparticipant, their involvement is due to their viewing and evaluating the on-screen interaction. The act of reading a letter out loud to a household has distinctive differences in that its likely at least some members shared their evaluations as the letter was being read or afterwards to the recipient of the letter — hence their role is not limited to observer and they do not fit neatly into the metaparticipant category, nor are they truly side participants, bystanders, or overhearers. What likely distinguishes them from these categories is that they may have had the ability to inform or influence the interpretation of the recipient of the letter.

In respect to unidentified third-party (im)politeness, we need to understand 1) evaluations of the third-party hearer or secondary receiver, and 2) the impact of this third-party evaluation on the named recipient of the evaluation. This is a difficult task when working with ancient linguacultures, and so to explore this phenomenon, this section will look at examples of evaluations of behaviour, although acknowledging that very little of these utterances are found in the corpus. Firstly, evaluations of recipient actions need to be explored from an unidentified third-party perspective, as there are participants in the interaction who are hearing these evaluations but have no 'identified' involvement in the communicative act itself. Yet the evaluation, whether positive or negative, impacts them and is also evaluated by them. Below, Example (9) provides a positive evaluation (whether this is a compliment needs further research) and Example (10) provides a negative evaluation. Both are sent by the Head of Household, the Scribe of the Necropolis Dhutmose, to his son Butehamun, who is deputising for his father in his absence as interim Head of Household.

(9) *pꜣ ḏd j.jrj=k tꜣ md(w).t n nꜣ ḥn.w n wꜣḏ rḫb 2 j.ḏd=k tw=j ḏj.t grḫ=w j.m=w ḥr m-dj tꜣ mdw.t n nꜣ ꜥꜣ(.w) j.ḏd=k dj st n wꜥb Ṯꜣ.-mḥ.j-m-ḥꜣb r fꜣy nꜣ jt j.nꜣk sw m=šs pꜣy j.jrj=k*, "The remark you said regarding the matter of the green stone jars and 2 bottles, you said, "I had finished them", and also the matter with the donkeys, you said: "I gave them to the Wab priest Tjaimehiemhab in order to carry the grain", so you said. It is alright what you have done".[13]

(10) *ḥr m-dj tꜣ mdw n tꜣ qd.t 2 nbw j.ḏd=j [n=k j]mj st r pꜣ pj jw=k tm ḏj.t=w jm yꜣ tw=j jy.t r [jw]=j tm gmj=w bn nfr pꜣy j.jrj=k*, "Now regarding the matter of the 2 kites (i.e., measure of weight) of gold. I said to you "Put it in the base". You did not place it there. Oh! I have returned to [...] but I have not found them. It is not good what you did".[14]

If wider members of the household are participants in this interaction and as such hearing these evaluations as third parties in the communication, what are the wider implications here? Firstly, we need to assume, that they are interpreting the utterances and making their own evaluations, and that likely their ability to voice their evaluations depended on their own status in the household. What we can perhaps theorise here is that the third-party participants form multiple evaluations, one linked with the individual, and one linked to the household itself as a singular entity. This could be the point where a possible imagining of group Face could emerge, but it is vital to stress that reconstructing a notion of Face, especially for the ancient world, is a very difficult task.

Nwoye (1992) was one of the first scholars to argue that in Igbo, from southeast Nigeria, "Face" has a dual manifestation. This stems from the idea that within Igbo society politeness is viewed as "a form of social contract existing between the group, as a whole, and the individual members of that group. The individual is expected to behave properly, i.e., be polite, as defined by the group, in return for which (s)he is entitled to reciprocal behaviour from the other group members" (Nwoye, 1992, p. 310). Importantly Nwoye's (1992, pp. 326-327) research highlights:

> Because face is associated both with self, as a reflector of personality, and more importantly with others (the group), there is a type of duality in the Igbo notion of face: the distinction between what I have called "group" and "individual" face. Individual face relates to the self-centered desires of the individual to have his/her behavior, attitudes, wants, and desires approved of by others; in other words, it has to do with the positive evaluation of a person's public self-image. Group face, on the other hand, addresses one's need to act in conformity with socially dictated ways of behavior, and not to act in ways that can bring dishonor or shame (imecu iru) on the group. These two aspects of face are hierarchically ranked, with group face ranking higher than individual face. Actions or behavior that lead to the loss of individual face

[13] P. Leiden I.370, 5-7: (Černý, 1939, pp. 9–11); (Wente ,1967, pp. 27–31); (Wente, 1990, pp. 180–181).
[14] P. BN 199 V-IX-196 V-198 IV, v.2-4: (Cerný, 1939, pp. 5-7); (Wente, 1967, pp. 21-24); (Wente, 1990, 186-187).

> are generally seen as minor and are fewer in number. Most other improper acts and behavior are interpreted as threatening group face, because they are relatable ultimately to other members of society whose responsibility it was to socialize the deviant member; thus, deviant behavior is seen as resulting from the failure of the group. An Igbo is therefore cautious about how (s)he behaves. Good behavior is the expected norm, misbehavior is aberrant. The closest equivalent of politeness in Igbo, ezigbo omume, is good behavior. Igbo good behavior guarantees the smooth operation of social interaction, just as its opposite, ajo omume, threatens it. Ultimately, the Igbo notion of politeness, linguistic and non-linguistic, is thus a set of behavioral norms closely woven into the very fabric of the society and geared towards the smooth operation of the entire society.

This concept of Face as being a notion of a larger connected community with shared values and goals, which takes priority over the individual, resonates with earlier work by Goffman (1990), where he used the term "performance team" (or, for short, "team") "to refer to any set of individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine". Although his work here is in reference to informal coalitions in interaction, and perhaps should be brought into the discussion in Section 2, there are theoretical insights here into foundational understandings of group Face that stem from this work on coalitions:

> A team is based on a common sense of institutional belonging and on common interests (example: the team made up of the staff of a restaurant, hotel, or hospital). This common sense of belonging to the same institution creates a feeling of in-group solidarity, which should normally be reflected in behavior demonstrating loyalty to the team ('normally', for the possibility of betraying the team that one belongs to is always open). Thus, the concepts of 'team' and of 'coalition' interact in the following way: (1) the team as a whole is a set of potential 'allies', who become 'coalition-members' when there is a confrontation with another team; (2) inversely, any coalition brings about the forming of a team. (Bruxelles and Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2004: 84)

Hatfield and Han (2014, p. 222), however, do raise concerns about the notion of group Face particularly regarding how the term is used, ambiguity about the theoretical underpinnings of Face, and "the relationship between group Face and Facework on behalf of another individual", which they call "Third Party Face". In terms of the ambiguity of the term itself, Hatfield and Han (2014, p. 222) highlight that the definition provided above by Nwoye (1992, p. 313) is more linked with the self-image of the group rather than group Face, and "to an individual whose focus or desire is the expectations of the group". This is then further undermined by conflicting theoretical discussions on Face itself. For example, Arundale (2006) argues Face is relational and co-constructed in interaction, so not belonging to any individual. Kádár et al. (2013) also argue a relational notion of Face but that group Face and individual Face are inter-related dimensions of an inclusive concept of face. O'Driscoll (2011) rejects the concept of group Face as he argues that Face only exists when

people are interacting, while others argue Face must exist beyond the moment of interactions as its not built anew each time (Sifianou, 2011; Hatfield & Han, 2011). Hatfield and Hahn (2011) refer to this notion as "Persisting Face" and as they point out in a later article, "if face can exist over time, beyond a single interaction, then group face becomes more plausible as individuals in a group can each make moves towards defining and maintaining a group face across unique interactions" (Hatfield & Hahn, 2014, p. 224).

In the case of the Late Ramesside Letters, what is problematic here in support of a concept of group Face is how much the success or failure of the household is linked not with the household itself but rather the Head of Household. It is certainly a possibility that the whole household, members of it, and their actions form part of the Face of the Head of Household, rather than a communal Face of the household itself. As such, the whole household can be seen as an extension of the Head of Household and not separate from them. Thus, rather than conceptualising this as being linked to Face, perhaps we need to seek inspiration from Discernment Politeness. In other words, rather than a collective evaluation based on the public Face of the household, the evaluations of the unidentified third-party is formed from a communal and culturally embedded understanding of the superior-subordinate relationship, hierarchy, and power. A head of household is successful if they adhere to this system and fulfil their own role in this structure.

Hence, in Example (9) when the temporary Head of Household, Butehamun, receives praise from their superior, the unidentified third-party evaluations are also positive, and vice versa for negative evaluations of behaviour, like in Example (10). As Butehamun's father, and ultimate Head of Household, Dhutmose is adhering to his High-power position by evaluating his son's actions, even if his son is managing the household in his absence. Butehamun's status cannot surpass his father's, while Dhutmose is still alive. Hence the evaluation of the unidentified third-party would quite possibly align with Dhutmose's as Head of Household, as this is the societal norms of the communication behaviour and expectations that they all share. The same is true for Dhutmose in regard to his direct superior, the General Piankh. Example (11) highlights perceptions shared by their network that Dhutmose is in good standing with his superior, a relationship that benefits his wider household and is likely positively evaluated by his broader community.

> (11) *ḫr ptr r mḥ wḏ.yt 2 jw=k jrm pȝy=k ḥry jw bw jrj=k hȝb n=j ꜥ=k tw=j nḏnḏ=k […] r(m)ṯ nb nty jy jm m-ḫd mtw=w ḏd n=j tw=k m-šs sw nfr m-bȝḥ pȝy=f ḥry ḫr=w n=j mtr n=j*, "Now, see, it is the second campaign that you are with your superior, yet you have not written to me about your condition. I am inquiring about you […] from everyone who comes downstream from there (where you are), and they tell me that you are alright. 'He is good before his superior', so they tell me, confirming (it) to me".[15]

Secondly, if we focus again on the individual receiving the evaluations who is explicitly named in the letter as the recipient of the evaluations, to what extent do they feel evaluated by the other

[15] P. BN 198 I, 15-v.3: (Černý, 1939, p. 66); (Wente, 1967, p. 78); (Wente, 1990, p. 199).

participants? The ability to evaluate at least in written communication is very much the prerogative of the High-power interlocutor, and there are set superior-style language forms that are socially prescribed, which could be employed. A key point here is that High-power individuals are free to negatively evaluate the behaviour of subordinates, but the subordinate has no way to challenge these evaluations (Ridealgh & Jucker, 2019; Ridealgh & Unceta Gómez, 2020).

> (12) *ptr bw jrj=k sḏm n=j Jmn ḥꜣ.t=k jmn nꜣy=k sḫn.w ꜥšꜣ.w r=k bn jw=k rḫ šmj m pꜣy sḫn n Pr-ꜥꜣ ꜥ.w.s*, "Behold! You don't listen to me. May Amun be before you. If your commissions are too many for you, you know you cannot walk away from the commissions from Pharaoh, Life, Prosperity, and Health".[16]

Example (12) is sent by Dhutmose to a subordinate whose name has been lost from the letter and it is not clear if the subordinate is part of his household or belonged to another household (although it was a small community). The letter details a long list of tasks that the recipient has failed to complete after receiving instructions from his superior, Dhutmose, who does not hold back on his criticism of the recipient's failings. What we can assume is that an unidentified third-party would have heard this negative evaluation and formed their own evaluations, which likely mimicked the evaluations of the High-powered individual, in this case Dhutmose — the unnamed subordinate has failed to adhere to his superior and complete their directives in a prompt manner. The use here of the phase "May Amun be before you" could be a colloquial saying, metaphor, or an invocation of the god as a third-party witness to the failure of the recipient to fulfil the directives issued by his superior, invoking the god into to the communicative act itself (Ridealgh 2020). This further condemns the recipient and highlights his failure to comply with the directives of his superior, which was expected behaviour based on their relationship dynamic (Ridealgh and Unceta Gomes 2020). This negative evaluation is designed to pressurise the recipient into action, utilising the evaluation of those around him and the god himself in order to do this.

5. Conclusion

Although third-party (im)politeness remains under researched in general, historical texts can make crucially important contributions to the collective understanding of multi-party interaction, particularly in communication forms outside of the traditional face-to-face conversations. In this paper I have looked to present a framework for the analysis of identified (named) and unidentified (unnamed) third-party (im)politeness in the Late Ramesside Letters and the theoretical considerations needed to underpin this discussion. Particularly for unidentified third parties, it is vital to understand how they interpreted and evaluated interaction and what impact did this have on the named recipient of the letter. We have to be realistic here, the ability to understand third-party evaluations of behaviour is limited in such a historically remote context. What I have looked to do here is better understand that if a collective third-party group do evaluate behaviour, then

[16] P. BN 198 III, v.3–v.4: (Černý, 1939, pp. 68-70); (Wente, 1967, pp. 81-82); (Wente, 1990, pp. 172-173).

how can we as a secondary reader with limited socio-cultural context look to conceptualise these evaluations and how they could have been formed. This is certainly an approach that can be applied to historical texts from any era, although particularly letters, as well as replicability within studies on third-party (im)politeness from the ancient world to the present.

Another key consideration in this paper is the understanding of a "participant" in interaction when analysing third-party (im)politeness. The existing categories of participant, side participant (ratified), bystanders or overhearers (unratified) and metaparticipants do not fully accommodate third-party participants when exploring (im)politeness. Although third-party participants are not an "active" speaker, producer, or recipient in the communicative event itself, they do observe, interpret, and evaluate the interaction, likely forming coalitions with the immediate Household or network community. The evaluations of third parties would have likely been shared with the recipient of the letter, and these evaluations would have been vital for maintaining positive Face of individuals, positive social relationships, and ensuring that all members of community adhered to social norms and expectations.

Keywords

Third-party (Im)politeness, Late Egyptian, Late Ramesside Letters, Ancient Egypt, Historical (Im)politeness

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