

Exploring (Im)politeness in Ancient Languages: An Introduction

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1. Introduction: Why do historical (im)politeness research?

Historical (im)politeness research was formally ‘established’ as a field in 2010 when Kádár and Culpeper published a collection of studies with the title *Historical (Im)Politeness*. In the introduction of this collection, they argue that while topics related to historical (im)politeness have been present in pragmatics since its formation, it is a timely step to focus historical (im)politeness research as an independent area of inquiry.¹ Yet, in spite of this spearheading attempt (and subsequent ones like Bax and Kádár 2011) to elevate historical (im)politeness research to a place it deserves, so far the field has remained relatively low-key in the booming field of politeness studies: if one looks into the number of publications on historical (im)politeness,² it may rightly appear as far less popular than synchronic politeness studies. The emphasis here is on the word ‘far less’: while history by its very nature may not be as popular as modernity when it comes to the analysis of a theme like (im)politeness, it has significance to the study of a variety of synchronic themes. This raises a question that we intend to investigate in this paper: are there ways through which we could increase the visibility of historical (im)politeness research?

Researchers involved in historical (im)politeness generally agree that historical data can rightly be studied for its own sake (see Section 3.1 in Kádár 2017). A wide variety of areas in the field represent this autotelic approach, spanning research on terms of address (e.g. Taavitsainen and Jucker 2001), through explorations of historical ideologies on interpersonal politeness (e.g. Klein 1994), to the study of insults in Old English (e.g. Pakis 2011). While this historical focus is arguably the most representative line of research in the field, it is relevant primarily to those who work either on historical pragmatics or related fields, such as socio-historical linguistics (e.g. Nevelainen 2003) or historical sociolinguistics (e.g. Bergs 2005). A number of scholars working on both synchronic and diachronic politeness (e.g. Kádár and Culpeper 2010; Jucker 2011; Bax and Kádár 2011; Kádár and Haugh 2013) have pointed out that historical (im)politeness may as well have a key applicability beyond this scope: it can both operate as a testing ground for modern (im)politeness frameworks and bring innovative analytic concepts into synchronic research (see Section 2). As Bax and Kádár argue, perhaps no politeness theory can be complete without

‘the establishment of diachronic trends in (im)politeness, including cross-cultural historical developments in (im)polite language behaviour and its evolutionary antecedents’. (Bax and Kádár 2011: 12)

In fact, there are certain datatypes for which the analysis simply begs for a diachronic scope of inquiry. For instance, Kádár and Haugh (2013: 166) refer to the genre of narratives to point out that, owing to the fact that narrations represent a cluster of historically-loaded evaluative stances, even seemingly ‘very synchronic’ texts like Example (1) could be rigorously examined *vis-à-vis* the inventory of historical (im)politeness research:

¹ Importantly, politeness has also been featured in historical ‘proto-scientific’ research on language across cultures (Kádár and Haugh 2013).

² While it would be difficult to ‘count’ publications in a field like historical (im)politeness, as a reference one may consult the online bibliography that Kádár and Culpeper published on the website of the Linguistic Politeness Research Group (<https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/politeness/bibliographies-2/historical-impoliteness/>).

(1)

Carolyn Bourne, the mother-in-law from hell, hits back: Politeness is the greatest gift... even if you're a tramp in a hedgerow

'Meeting Carolyn Bourne is a prospect many people might find somewhat intimidating. After all, she is the woman who has widely been described as 'the mother-in-law from hell' following the now notorious email she sent to her stepson Freddie's fiancée. In it, she attacked Heidi Withers' 'staggering uncouthness and lack of grace' before suggesting she attend a finishing school at the earliest opportunity to correct her 'bad manners'. Yet the slight, quietly spoken woman bustling around her immaculate home to make tea for us is difficult to reconcile with the uptight, etiquette-obsessed harridan she has been labelled. In person, Mrs Bourne, 60, is painstakingly polite, and although at times she can appear prim, she is friendly.

(Retrieved from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2013020/Carolyn-Bourne-mother-law-hell-hits-Politeness-greatest-gift--tramp-hedgerow.html>)

As Kádár and Haugh (2013: 167) argue, it does not really matter whether a text was published a millennium or just 2 days ago, in the respect that narratives may simultaneously describe the narrated community's (im)politeness evaluations and deliver evaluations themselves. For instance, Example (1) features

1. a quoted evaluation of a narrated form of behavior;
2. the narrator's own analytic stance (which indicates that Carolyn Bourne may have been right);
3. intertextual reference to a/an (im)politeness related conversation ("Bourne [...] hits back);
4. the webpage also includes 102 comments³ dating from 2011, which discuss the then-fresh conflict between Bourne and her daughter-in-law-to-be.

There is a cluster of historically situated evaluative features involved in such pieces of data, and to understand such evaluations, the synchronic politeness researcher needs to 'go historical', by analysing issues, such as diachronic evaluative tendencies, in the outlet where the narrative is published (e.g. the Daily Mail may take Bourne's side as it is a conservative newspaper), the history of the community whose story is narrated, other contemporary texts that feature the incident, and so forth.

While demonstrating the relevance of diachronic research to synchronic analysis represents an important step in promoting historical (im)politeness research, it assumes that synchronic (im)politeness research is meant to be *the* default line of inquiry in the field of (im)politeness. The analysis of Example (1) above has departed from the assumption that (im)politeness can be reliably observed in the form of evaluative moments, which has been a pillar of synchronic politeness research since Eelen's (2001) seminal work:⁴ an analysis like Example (1) indirectly positions historical research as a 'back-up', as it focuses on a research agenda set by synchronic directives.

The relationship between synchronic and historical (im)politeness research at the moment is somewhat similar to what one can observe in the cross-cultural politeness arena: as Kádár and Mills (2011) argue, it is often English that is perceived as the language through which (im)politeness theories come into existence, whereas 'exotic' languages, such as Chinese

³ We last accessed this website on 2018/08/15.

⁴ Note that evaluation as a phenomenon has occurred in earlier studies such as Watts (1992), and Eelen himself has also published a paper on this issue (see Eelen 1999), but it was mainly due to the high impact of Eelen (2001) that evaluation has become a central theme in the field.

or Japanese, tend to be (dis)regarded as cross-cultural ‘testing grounds’ for such theories. In terms of sheer numbers of researchers who pursue synchronic *v.* diachronic research this well might be the case. At the same time, there is a set of interrelated self-reflexive questions that historical (im)politeness researchers may want to ask themselves: Is historical (im)politeness research destined to be only an ‘asset’ to synchronic inquiries, provided that one examines synchronic data? Are we thus satisfied with using historical research to examine modern data within the boundaries of the inquiries that synchronic frameworks of (im)politeness would take? If not, could we offer analyses grounded in historical (im)politeness, which could transfer the relationship between diachronic and synchronic research into a more equal one? At the centre of these questions is the fact that, as philosophers, such as Heidegger (1991 [1927]), have convincingly argued, it is impossible to precisely define what ‘history’ is, and exactly because of this it is not ideal to distinguish ‘synchronic’ and ‘diachronic’ (im)politeness research purely on the basis of a timescale. It is perhaps more accurate to position historical and synchronic (im)politeness research as:

1. ontologically and methodologically different to a reasonable degree;
2. being juxtaposed to (im)politeness so that they are supposed to ask very different but ultimately interrelated questions.

As such, synchronic and historical research may *complement* each other, since one may ask questions that are simply not part of the repertoire of the other. In addition, due to this difference, there is a variety of *present-day* phenomena and datatypes, which can be more accurately studied through the lens of historical (im)politeness research.

As an example, let us refer here to an excerpt of Justin Bieber’s popular song “Sorry”:

(2)

Yeah
Is it too late now to say sorry?
‘Cause I’m missing more than just your body, oh
Is it too late now to say sorry?
Yeah, I know-oh-oh, that I let you down
Is it too late to say I’m sorry now?

A piece of pop music like this seems to have a loose relationship not only with historical (im)politeness research, but (im)politeness research in general. It is actually a noteworthy phenomenon that, while popular culture has been at least touched on in (im)politeness studies (see e.g. various studies in Werner 2018), only very few researchers, such as Brown (2017), have touched on pop songs. This is a surprising gap, if one considers that:

- Pop music has a huge influence on people’s daily lives, actually beyond the boundaries of youth culture (see Feezell 2017).
- Pieces of pop music, such as Example (2), are, in fact, often heavily loaded with utterances that are relevant to the (im)politeness researcher. For instance, Bieber’s song above is practically all about metapragmatics: its title ‘Sorry’ is a metalexeme, and the narrative revolves about the rhetorical question as to whether the singer should express an apology to an (anonymous) woman (see an overview of such metapragmatic functions in Silverstein 2003).

In our view, the reason why such pieces are not on the politeness agenda is that in linguistic (im)politeness researchers tend to focus on evaluative moments in a specific way: since the

‘discursive turn’ (i.e. the post-2000 paradigmatic change in (im)politeness research that kick-started with Eelen’s 2001 work), it has been largely agreed that, in order to understand the use/interpretation of an utterance or other units of analysis, one needs to have access to the context in which the utterance takes place, the relational history of the interactants, and other factors (e.g. Eelen 2001; Watts 2003). While there is a sense of interpersonal evaluative activity in Example (2) as well, it is different from how evaluation is often observed in synchronic research: the apology is supposedly fictional and as such symbolic (there may not be a real incident behind it), and it is part of a repeated performance rather than an actual interpersonal interaction. From the point of view of linguistic (im)politeness research, other music genres, such as ‘rap battles’, would be more fortunate to study, due to their dialogic and ritual nature.

Yet, if one looks into the analytic inventory of historical (im)politeness, it becomes evident that texts, such as Example (2), could definitely be on the plate of the historian:

- Historical pragmaticians, such as Magnusson (2007), have extensively studied genres like sonnets, and they have demonstrated that one cannot dismiss such texts as merely ‘poetic’. This is partly because authors of sonnets write in a style that “sounds like half of a silent conversation” (Magnusson 2007: 172), and also because actually many sonnets are loaded with intertextual references. Thus, texts like sonnets may become a noteworthy dataset for the historical pragmatician, since they represent a major generic representation of historically-situated interpersonal politeness, which is both interpersonal (cf. intertextual elements) and written with the goal of entertainment. Bieber’s *Sorry* shows significant parallels with what Magnusson (2007) argued about sonnets. First, many of Bieber’s fans speculate about interpersonal references in the script of this song,⁵ and it would be an interesting project to conduct further research into such speculations as they are heavily metapragmatic by nature. Second, as a genre type, such songs reveal a key relationship between norms of interpersonal relationships, sexuality and politeness: Bieber’s apology in the song animates the norm of sincerity (see an overview in Márquez-Reiter (2000) regarding this norm in the context of apologies), which appears to be positioned *in contrast* with sexual desire. This, in turn, opens up a noteworthy politeness theoretical question, i.e. how sincerity and sexuality correlate in the speech act of apology.
- Following a somewhat similar logic, it could be fruitful to explore (im)politeness in pop music from a developmental perspective, by looking into the ways in which the relationship between gender and (im)politeness has evolved since the appearance of the pop genre. It is relevant to note that a recent synchronic corpus study by Kreyer (2015) has successfully captured how masculinity and femininity are represented in pop-discourses in terms of language use, and such a corpus-based approach could be replicated in a diachronic fashion, to capture the interrelated development of (im)politeness and ‘musical sexualisation’ (Richter 2008) during the 20th and 21st Centuries. Along with its academic potential, such research would be capable of delivering significant social impact, considering that sexuality and (im)politeness in pop music (such as Bieber’s reference to the person’s “body” to whom he apologises) have been frequent topics in public discourses on the influence of pop music on young people.⁶ Historical (im)politeness would be particularly well-disposed to investigate the development of the sexuality-(im)politeness interface in a corpus of pop music,⁷ owing

⁵ For instance, on 26 October 2015 the Daily Mail published an article with the title “Justin Bieber reveals meaning of sorry” (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/aap/article-3290792/Justin-Bieber-reveals-meaning-Sorry.html>).

⁶ See, as an example, a discussion on the following website: <http://theconversation.com/celebrity-youth-culture-and-the-question-of-role-models-46945>

⁷ On such corpora see e.g. de Clercq and Temperley (2011).

to the diversity of methodologies that experts in the field have developed to capture pragmatic change (see an overview in Kohnen 2005).

- Pop songs, in a similar way with other popular genres, spread across cultures and some particularly popular songs may even be translated to other languages. For instance, a Latino remix of “Sorry” has been popular since 2016, while various Japanese and Korean websites have released local translations of this song as well.⁸ Such translations raise various relevant questions, e.g. whether the text of pop songs can be translated to other languages, and if not, what might be the socio-historical reasons behind the difficulty of composing such translations. For instance, an amateur Japanese translation of the line “cause I am missing more than just your body” reads as *Kimi no karada wo naku-shitakunai-dake-jyanai* 君の体をなくしたくないだけじゃない, lit. “Your (socio-indexical pronoun) body [is something that I] do not want to disappear.”⁹ The apparent awkwardness of the Japanese text comes from the following: apart from referring to the recipient of the song with the pronominal form *kimi* 君, which in the present context indexes a specific gendered relationship (Kurokawa 1972) between lovers, the Japanese version entirely lacks the sexual implication of the English expression “missing someone’s body”. While it would be ambitious for the historian to claim that the relationship between translation and (im)politeness as an entirely historical area, such translational issues can often be approached through historical lenses (see also a reference to this issue in Janney and Horst 1993). And indeed, if one revisits the social history of cultures influenced by classical Confucian ideology, such as Japanese or Chinese, it becomes evident that in these societies sexuality remains a salient linguistic taboo (Gao *et al.* 2016). The linguistic inventories of such cultures tend to be poor in sexually-loaded expression compared with that of many Western languages. It is relevant to note the translation-politeness interface recurs in several contributions to the present Special Issue.

In the present section we have provided a taster of the synchronic applicability of historical (im)politeness research. Importantly, we do not argue that it is better or worse than its synchronic counterpart, but rather than it should be regarded as something more than simply an ‘analytic backup’, since historical research has the potential to provide alternative lines of inquiry into modern data. Note that the contributions to this Special Issue — while all of them share a focus on ancient data — open up innovative ways to engage in such alternative lines of research, since the authors address topics such as the relationship between translation, history, humour and (im)politeness, implications of historical (im)politeness research to the study of nonverbal communication, the interrelation between etiquette and morality (a theme that frequently recurs in modern metadiscourses), and so on.

2. (Im)Politeness in the ‘BCE’

The present volume is a collection of studies that examine (im)politeness in ancient languages. ‘Ancient’ is a diverse concept in pragmatics (see e.g. Nichols 1992: 44); our definition of ‘ancient’ refers to languages and cultures that were formed during the BCE period. While some ancient languages, such as Latin or Classical Chinese, continue to be in use to a certain degree as written mediums, and the norms of their use might have been subject to some changes since ancient times (see e.g. Liu 1995), the Special Issue pursues an explicit interest in the BCE period pragmatics of these languages.

⁸ See e.g. http://www.yogakuhack.com/entry/sorry_justinbieber.

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Ancient politeness has been relatively marginal in the field of historical (im)politeness research, even though conventionally ancient languages have had an ‘elegant’ role in historical linguistics (e.g. Lass 1997). A reason for this might be data related: experts of historical pragmatics like Jucker (2000) have convincingly demonstrated that, generally speaking, the more diachronically distant a piece of data is, the more challenges may arise in its analysis. Doing (im)politeness research assumes engagement in the study of sociopragmatic factors such as interpersonal relationships, situated understandings of social realities, and so on; thus, if one examines a diachronically very distant dataset, one may find it particularly difficult to simply adopt modern frameworks for in-depth data analysis, considering that modern frameworks are grounded in present day understandings of factors that may constitute the basics of an analysis — a problem which leads us back somewhat to the issues we discussed in Section 1. For instance, can we reliably argue that, in a family conversation recorded in Classical Chinese more than two millennia ago, a particular form of behaviour is ‘strategic’ in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) sense? In other words, when one ventures into the analysis of diachronically (or spatially) distant cultures, one may find that notions such as ‘strategy’ in the Anglo-sense of the word (Ide 1989) become redundant simply because they reflect modern (and often culturally situated) sociopragmatic realities. This is not to mean that one should categorically refuse the potential applicability of frameworks such as Brown and Levinson (1987; cf. Culpeper 2017) to modern data, but one may rightly ask the questions: Is it ideal to use such frameworks? Should we rather not develop alternative frameworks, which are designed for the study of historical data, specifically? Since such questions become particularly salient in the case of ancient data, it is perhaps simply logical that ancient languages have been less on the radar in the field than, say, early modern texts.

It is relevant to note here that our goal is not to single out Brown and Levinson (1987) in the regrettable way in which it is often being (unjustly) criticised in the field. Brown and Levinson’s framework is often one of the first to be applied to ancient datasets (Ridealgh 2016b), due in the most part to its comprehensive methodology, and although many issues of incompatibility do arise, the concepts of face and consideration of social hierarchy often provide illuminating results (Ridealgh 2016a: 246; Unceta Gómez 2016: 268; Culpeper 2017: 211). Yet, one may as well refer here also to theories such as Ide’s (1989) ‘discernment’, modern theories of ritual (Bax and Streekstra 2003), or theories of ‘face’ (Ruhi and Kádár 2011), which one may attempt to deploy for the analysis of ancient texts. All these theories have definite merit for the historical analyst, but when it comes to the examination of (im)politeness in ancient languages and cultures, a more historically-grounded approach to data has yet to be developed. It might not be an overstatement to say that, instead of thinking about which ‘waves’ of politeness research should historical (im)politeness research contribute to (e.g. van der Bom and Grainger 2015), rather a relevant question for historical analysts could be whether (im)politeness research could profit from a ‘historical wave’.

Another reason for the relative lack of studies on ancient languages might be the relatively strong English focus in the field, which is a key problem picked up already in Kádár and Culpeper’s (2010: Section 1) ‘introduction’ of historical (im)politeness as a field. That is, even in the early modern and medieval research arena, English has been the far most popular language to study (for a few representative examples in diachronic order, see Brown and Gilman 1989; Kopytko 1995; Jucker 2000). Notwithstanding the obvious importance of English as a world language and its consequent academic weight, it has been somewhat regrettable that spatially and geographically distance languages have remained underrepresented in the field.

The papers presented in this Special Issue fill a knowledge gap, as several authors engage in lines of inquiry that count as alternative in the field of (im)politeness, and practically all authors work on data that have been relatively rarely studied and which bring antique

literacy to the scope of (im)politeness inquiries. While we will overview the contributions in Section 3, as an excellent example let us refer here to the paper of Christopher Handy, which examines historical (im)politeness through the lens of etiquette and morality, and by taking Sanskrit as a case study. Handy asks a set of research questions, which may occur for the first sight as somewhat ‘redundant’ from the point of view of framework grounded in the research of present-day data. However, all these questions turn out to be very important not only to model interpersonal politeness in the ancient world, but also to further our understanding of the interface between (im)politeness and (im)morality, which has recently become a key area in synchronic politeness research (e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2015).

2.1. The value of multimodality and historicity

Whilst ancient languages can rightly be studied for their own sake, we should also note that their research is relevant to experts of other periods and datatypes. When it comes to ancient texts, we cannot ignore the difficulty of working with incomplete and fragmented data sets, the fixed hierarchy of the societies under review, the dominance of social elites in the written sources, or the gap in contextual understanding of cultures in the distant past. Yet, sometimes it is exactly this imperfect characteristic of ancient data that makes its study noteworthy. Ancient documents may be fragmented but may as well include unique artwork and other multimodal features, which become important for the historian exactly because of the relative lack of information that one can retrieve from the text itself.

Many ancient texts have such multimodal characteristics: ancient Egyptian texts can include (elaborate) artwork or images to replace words or to reinforce the textual meaning (especially to a non-literate audience). While ancient Chinese manuscripts include features such as seals that index complex interpersonal relationships, such as whether the recipient of the manuscript is a subordinate or superordinate of the one who dispatched the document. These multimodal features are invaluable not only because they further our understandings of the text they accompany, but they also often provide insights into complex interpersonal relationships beyond the boundaries of language use (see Kádár 2010). For instance, by studying the ways in which an ancient Chinese letter was designed to be opened and read in public, and how their seals were to be displayed to an audience, explains why the writers of such documents used politeness in a specific way. Considering the importance of multimodality in research on certain features of modern (im)politeness, such as (im)politeness in computer-mediated communication (Locher 2010), a historical inquiry into (im)politeness and multimodality may be highly relevant to academic inquires beyond the historical scope.

Additionally, a multimodal methodology for the study of (im)politeness research itself is needed in order to avoid a common sense approach to the analysis of a social situation. A multimodal approach to (im)politeness ensures that certain precautions are utilised to avoid taking up the evaluators role ourselves (Kádár and Culpeper 2010: 18). This is an epidemic problem in scholarship and text translation of the ancient world. Translators and scholars rarely gave/give any consideration to differing politeness systems. This is due to several reasons: the lack of formal pragmatics training, the sheer number of texts that required translating quickly, the date to which the translation is ascribed (for some historical disciplines, it is perfectly normal to use publications from the 1800s), and so forth. Politeness is not often something considered and several articles in the Special Issue highlight this in further detail. To provide an example of this, the following sentence from the ancient Egyptian Papyrus Turin 1973 was translated by Edward Wente (1990: 189) as a polite directive: *jX Dd=tn n Jmn* ‘Please call upon Amun’. The lexeme *jX* in this case is directly translated as ‘please’. Two things are important to note here: 1) semantically, *jX* is an interjection, it is not a polite discourse marker; 2) contextually, the letter is sent by a superior to a subordinate and no polite linguistic forms were needed within this relationship dynamic; hence this directive does not need a ‘please’ as

we understand the word today, especially within a British English contexts (see Ridealgh 2016a). Yet, the translation by Wente has been popularised and many students and scholars alike do not visit the original source text to check the quality of translation. It could of course be argued that we should embed such features into our translations of ancient texts, to make the content accessible for modern readers, however, we still need to question whose politeness system we are embedding.

Along with multimodality, a theme that we should at least touch on in this discussion is the historicity of ancient documents (Heidegger 1991[1927]), which makes their study relevant to scholars who work on other areas. Simply put, a huge portion of our modern written civilisation across languages and cultures has its root in ancient times, and both our daily language use and norms of (im)politeness are loaded with elements that we have ‘inherited’ through history. As a matter of course, this inheriting procedure is not direct, and it is inaccurate for instance to refer to Chinese politeness as ‘Confucian’ (e.g. Kim and Strudler 2012) — even though such references recur in intercultural communication — simply because it is a clear overgeneralisation to argue that the ideology of a person who lived more than two millennia ago would directly influence the language use of speakers of Chinese. Clearly, it would be a fruitful venture to attempt to capture which elements of Chinese politeness actually coincide with how Confucius defined appropriate interpersonal behaviour, and to do such a study one would need to undertake a rigorous examination of the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 论语), an ancient collection of texts attributed to Confucius. Interestingly, while scholars have studied personal pronouns and some other politeness-related features of this source (e.g. Lee, 2012), no study so far has attempted to overview the *norms* of politeness in the *Analects* beyond some ideological discussions. Such a project would open up new vistas in the examination of the question of which elements of present day Chinese politeness are actually (rather than stereotypically) Confucian.

3. Overview of the Special Issue

This present volume looks to promote research currently being undertaken by scholars specialising in ancient languages, with six papers presented within this Special Issue. Several different languages are covered in the collection, including Early and Late Latin, Sanskrit, and ancient Greek (including Ptolemaic Greek) and over all the volume covers about 1000 years of language use across several different continents. At first glance, this looks slightly diasporic, yet all the authors looks to challenge current thinking around semantic or contextual understanding, and offer different approaches to the texts under review, firmly based in politeness research. We are very grateful to Dawn Archer and Graham Williams for accepting the premise of this Special Issue into the prestigious *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*. This publication compliments an earlier Special Issue in the *Journal of Politeness Research* (Ridealgh 2016b).

The first paper by Amy Coker looks at dysphemistic words in Ancient (Ptolemaic) Greek, using a joke supposedly uttered by the infamous Cleopatra VII to explore the socio-cultural criteria on which the joke was based upon. In doing so, Coker explores inherent biases of the translators, temporal differences in the semantic values of words, and the interpersonal value of metaphors in supporting (im)politeness, as well as the problems in assessing the level of offense caused. She adeptly uses this joke to highlight language change over distinctly long periods of time, stating that although the original meaning may not have intended to be sexual, it was translated as such by later readers, who had a different cultural cognitive schemata:

It does not matter in this respect whether Aristophanes’ uses of *torunē* were intended to indicate the penis or not: they are taken as such by a later reader of the texts, and used anew, but perhaps with the added thrill of displaying clever learning to fellow members of the

intelligentsia. For historical texts the semantic-pragmatic gap in intention between the producer of an utterance and its hearers exists in an unlimited range of instantiations through time.

In the following paper, Eleanor Dickey looks to challenge the established understanding of the verb *sis* in Latin. Traditionally, *sis* has been translated by scholars as roughly being equivalent to the English word ‘please’, and with some scholars attributing a sense of urgency to it. Using Terkourafi’s work for inspiration, Dickey has collected a corpus of 134 examples of this verb, in order to look at this supposedly polite term in practice. Her findings are striking, revealing that in the majority of cases *sis* was neither polite nor linked with a sense of urgency. Dickey argues that *sis* was rather a focus-marking clitic particle, attached to imperatives rather than directives. It is likely though that *sis* started life as a genuinely polite term, as the surviving occurrences of the lexeme only cover a short chronological period, however, at some point it lost its polite meaning and connection to the cultural politeness system, evolving into the focus-marking clitic particle, before disappearing from the language system altogether. Dickey’s study strongly demonstrates the need for 1) a diachronic semantic study of lexemes to fully understand their use in any given culture, particularly when linked to polite language; 2) translators of texts to fully consider the bias of assigning a politeness value to lexemes, and the problems of overlapping two, often diachronically remote, politeness systems when translating texts.

Jon Hall’s paper is somewhat different, as he, instead, looks to explore the role of non-verbal elements in interpersonal interactions, especially those connected to possible Face Threatening Acts. Hall uses the Latin text *De Beneficiis* written by Seneca the Younger around the first half of the First Century CE. Via a series of case studies based upon interactions between the social elite, Hall looks at the non-verbal actions in the petitioner/donor interactions. What Hall finds is that there were certain expectations within the social elite around using the correct facial expressions during the petition process. The donor must present himself as being aware and careful of the petitioner’s awkward circumstances; whilst the petitioner must demonstrate humility and good grace in the face of a negative response. Often such some points of detail in interactional exchanges are overlooked in scholarship, and Hall rightly highlights their importance within this article, adding yet another layer to relationship dynamics.

Following on from Hall’s paper, yet still very much connected with the idea of understanding socio-politeness, Christopher Handy explores the link between politeness, etiquette and morality in the *vinaya*, or Buddhist monastic laws written in Sanskrit in India from 600BCE onwards. He also questions scholarly understanding of these texts, which are generally dismissed as trivial or used to highlight a deeper religious meaning. Handy, rather looks to attribute them to a possible projection of a monastic politeness system, and goes on to argue that the monks and the lay people had two opposing politeness systems used to demonstrate the social distance between these two groups of people.

Again using a socio-politeness lens, Francesco Mari employs examples of the *Illiad* to explore Greek politeness based within the *Oikos* or ‘Household’, and how politeness is constructed within this very specific context. Mari sheds the confinements of first wave politeness research, taking his inspiration for analysis directly from Elias and Goffman, and creates his own framework, which focuses on social situation, social density, and distribution of authority. Via this framework, he establishes the various cultural-specific schemata manifested in the household, particularly within the *Thalamos*, the master bedroom. He argues that the *Thalamos* is an architectural representation of the head of household’s public face, one that demonstrates his authority and maintains the social balance of the household. Analysing examples of Helen of Troy and her failure to support her husband Paris in their

most sacred chamber, Mari argues that the mistress of the house is (rather, should be) the defender of her husband's public image:

However, even if the wife of the Homeric householder is supposed to be submissive, in practice, it is she who governs the *thalamos* and is responsible for its public image. To preserve his authority over the *oikos*, the householder delegates a core part of his control to his wife, in exchange for which she must show herself virtuous, faithful and willing to comply with her husband's will. In other words, she must maintain the subordinate role of women in Homeric society.

In the final paper of this collection, Luis Unceta Gomez looks to present an overview of Latin linguistic politeness and current scholarship on the topic, in order to present a framework by which it can be analysed in Latin texts. He stresses, and rightly so, the importance of such static variables in this context, such as hierarchy and social distance. Unceta Gomez identifies a politeness system in Latin that is based on four distinct elements: Affiliation, Deference, Intensification of Closeness, and Redress. He, however, does point out two issues with this model, highlighting challenges of working with data sets from the ancient world: 1) it is based on written sources produced by the aristocracy; 2) the conclusions that are made are based on written sources covering the whole period of Latin development used during the Roman period, which may skew results.

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