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How to Be Polite without Saying ‘Please’ in Classical Greek?

*The Role of δῆ in Polite Requests**

Camille Denizot

1 Introduction

It is well known that Ancient Greek had no equivalent word for ‘please’. It is nevertheless possible to make a polite request in Ancient Greek, i.e. to soften an inherently face-threatening act such as a directive act.¹ Several polite strategies are available, and among the devices that modify the utterance itself,² the inventory made by Poccetti (2014) includes syntactic devices (conditional sentences, embedded clauses), including parenthetical verbs that make the kind of speech act explicit³ (such as ἵκετεύω ‘I beg you’, δέομαι ‘I ask you’, etc.); morpho-syntactical devices (e.g. optatives with ἄν or interrogative sentences); and lexical devices (such as the use of ‘only’, ‘small’ or indefinites as softeners). More subtle and indirect strategies may also mitigate orders and requests.⁴ All these strategies share the characteristic of not being formulaic.⁵

However, in Ancient Greek, the vast majority of imperatives are bare, without any explicit mitigation. Moreover, many of these devices, including those that seem closest to ‘please’, i.e. parenthetical

* The chapter has benefited from a close reading by Łukasz Berger, Luis Unceta Gomez and two anonymous internal reviewers, whom I would like to thank for their help.

¹ When using a directive act, a speaker tries to get his/her addressee to perform a certain act. Imperatives play an important role in directive acts but there are other means for that purpose and imperatives may have a use which is not directive (e.g. in wishes).

² Alcón Soler et al. (2005) call them internal devices as opposed to external peripheral devices. External devices are part of the preceding or following utterance whereas internal devices modify the utterance itself. In Ancient Greek, external devices of different kinds can be used, see Denizot (2011: 142–4) for a commented example.

³ Also called metadirectives. The concept was coined by Risselada (1993: 258): ‘Metadirectives are expressions by means of which the speaker explicitly mentions the perlocutionary effects that are systematically connected with the speech act that is being performed and “directs” the addressee to realize these effects.’ From a diachronic point of view, metadirectives may develop into pragmatic markers in many languages; for Latin, see Ghezzi and Molinelli (2014b), among others.

⁴ See Lloyd (2004) for the importance of off-record strategies; Lloyd (2006) for a broad inventory in Sophocles’ plays; and Denizot (2011: 400–91) for an attempt at a typology of indirect directive acts.

⁵ See Dickey (2016b: 241–3) on that point.

metadirectives, are used when the ranking of impositions is high, i.e. when the requested act is not easy or straightforward.⁶ Compare examples (1) and (2), both uttered by Elektra to a messenger:

- (1) ΗΛΕΚΤΡΑ. [...] Ἐπεὶ δὲ κινεῖς μῦθον, **ἴκετεύω**, ξένε, **ἄγγελλ'** Ὀρέστη τὰ μὰ κακείνου κακά. (E. *El.* 302–3)
ELEKTRA. [...] Since you begin the story, **I beg you**, stranger, **announce** to Orestes my sorrows along with his.⁷
- (2) ΗΛΕΚΤΡΑ. [...] Λεχῶ μ' **ἀπάγγελλ'** οὔσαν ἄρσενος τόκω. (E. *El.* 652)
ELEKTRA. [...] **Report** that I have just given birth to a boy.

In (1), Elektra asks a supposed messenger to repeat her words to Orestes, in the hope that the story of her misfortunes would provoke Orestes' revenge. She asks a stranger to create a condition for the murder of the local king and queen, as all in the situation of interaction are aware. With such a high ranking of imposition she is cautious enough to remind her hearer that he asked for her explanation and she uses a metadirective ('I beg you'). In (2) Elektra asks an old man to deliver a false message to Clytemnestra in order to draw her into a trap. The expected effect is as serious as in (1) but it is not a demanding request to utter since the old man is ready to help her reach her goal. In such a context the imperative may be bare.

Given this background, we may assume that mitigation was not required for small routine requests. The present chapter aims to explore the expression of politeness in routine requests with a low ranking of imposition, i.e. when the request is not demanding. Drawing upon languages that do not use an equivalent to 'please', I will examine the possible role of particles in politeness, particularly in routine requests.

2 When Do We Need 'the Magic Word'?

2.1 Looking for an Equivalent to 'Please'

In a recent development within the field of Historical Pragmatics, equivalent expressions for 'please', 'thanks' and 'sorry' have been explored in Ancient Greek and Latin.⁸ The scope of the equivalents is usually defined by semantic and pragmatic criteria.⁹ Such a direction has proved to be

⁶ In Latin, where the topic has been well studied, metadirectives differ on that point, with *uelim* and *quaeso* being used for minor requests and *rogo* and *peto* for major requests (see Dickey 2012b).

⁷ See also v. 332. Unless otherwise stated the translations are my own.

⁸ For the Latin equivalents of 'thank you', see Unceta Gómez (2010); for 'sorry', see Unceta Gómez (2014a).

⁹ See Dickey (2012b: 731), who admits the semantic nature of her definition: 'A "please" equivalent can be defined as a word or phrase commonly attached to requests to make them more polite.'

fruitful, since it has introduced new questions and initiated a new field with its first results. It has led to contrastive inventories of the lexical and syntactic means available for politeness, mainly verbs and verbal categories.¹⁰ However it is worth considering what is expected from an equivalent to ‘please’ when studying polite requests.

First, it should be noted that the functions of ‘please’ are various and complex, even in English. According to Ervin-Tripp (1976: 48), *please* is not restricted to the softening of the imposition but is also used for marking an act as a directive act, or as an emotionally loaded expression to beg for the addressee’s cooperative assistance, or even as a reinforcement marker without polite inference (e.g. ‘Oh! why don’t you shut up, please!’). It can also appear in initial position as an attention-getter, where it expresses an apology for the interruption. Most of these uses are not meant to mitigate a directive speech act, even if they are derived from the basic politeness use.

Second, even if *please* plays a central role in English polite utterances (the ‘magic word’ that children are asked to utter), impositions can be softened by other means in other languages. The range of ‘please’ words can be broader: e.g. in Swedish *tack* (etymologically ‘thanks’) encompasses both ‘thanks’ and ‘please’, and is widely used in any normal interaction.¹¹ It can also be shorter: the ‘please’ word may be less used, as in Modern Greek, or totally absent as in Ancient Greek, if we admit that the role of metadirectives such as *ἵκετεύω* (‘I beg’) is to significantly soften the speech act. The situation of Modern Greek is paradoxical since a word for ‘please’ is available (*παρακαλώ*), but not used as often as could be expected from an English-speaking point of view (Ekonomidou-Kogetsidis 2008).

2.2 *What Modern Greek Teaches Us: Assessing the Rank of Impositions*

The reason for the Modern Greek situation comes from a different assessment of impositions, which gives rise to other strategies, as shown by Sifianou (1992b):

From a Greek perspective, it is easily understood why the small things available, such as a cigarette or coffee, can be obtained without even

¹⁰ Such an inventory is made by Unceta Gómez (2014b) for Latin, and Poccetti (2014) for Ancient Greek.

¹¹ Cultural reasons also play a role, in a positive politeness culture. According to Pedersen (2010): ‘For ethnic Swedes, there are some higher-order cultural scripts, such as equality, self-sufficiency, consensus seeking and conflict avoidance, which make people say *tack* a lot in order to show that they agree, and in order not to be indebted to other people.’

asking, by simply taking them and stating the action [...]. Although such requests can be unmitigated, more often than not they are softened by devices indicating in-groupness and stressing solidarity, such as diminutives. (Sifianou 1992b: 161)

Small requests for free goods or routine interactions are thus uttered without mitigation. For example, in requests for services offered by shop assistants, since roles are clearly defined, mitigation would be odd; other strategies are used instead, namely the use of diminutives, but without παρακαλώ. See examples (3) and (4), given by Sifianou (1992b: 162), with her translations:

- (3) Δώστε μου ψαράκι τότε (in the open-air market)
Give me fish-DIM then
'Could you give me some fish then?' (lit. 'Give me a fish-DIM then')
- (4) Και λίγο κασεράκι να μου κόψετε (at the supermarket)
and a.little cheese-DIM MOD for.me cut
'Could you please give me some cheese, too?' (lit. 'And cut a little of cheese-DIM for me')

Diminutives are used in Modern Greek in almost all types of everyday exchanges and indicate closeness and reciprocity regardless of the size of the item being referred to. They can be considered part of routine formulae, in the sense of Coulmas (1979), i.e. 'expressions whose occurrence is closely bound to specific social situations and which are, on the basis of an evaluation of such situations, highly predictable in a communicative course of events' (Coulmas 1979: 240).¹²

Diminutives pertain to a positive politeness strategy, as they can convey esteem and concern for the addressee. Brown and Levinson (1987: 108) noted that diminutivized terms of address, which soften face-threatening acts when used with imperatives, are a way for the speaker to implicitly claim in-group solidarity with the addressee. Sifianou (1992b: 157) emphasized that the Modern Greek use of diminutives is part of a positive politeness strategy, expressing familiarity, informality and endearment. An indication of the positive politeness orientation in Modern Greek can be spotted in the way Greek learners of English model their use of *please* on their native use of παρακαλώ. According to Ekonomidou-Kogetsidis (2008), they use the marker *please* less than

¹² As Ł. Berger (p.c.) points out, in Coulmas' sense, routine formulae are lexically-based; the use of diminutives in Modern Greek introduces the possibility of morphological formulae.

expected, because it is associated with formality, which does not conform to their perception of politeness.

2.3 'Give' in Classical Greek

Modern Greek is an example of a language where politeness is conveyed through other means than a 'please' word. Was Ancient Greek somehow in a similar situation? Is there any device functionally equivalent to Modern Greek diminutives that might have been overlooked so far in Ancient Greek? To explore this possibility, I consider the 153 utterances of imperative forms of *δίδωμι* (*give*) in Classical Greek.¹³ Such a directive act creates an unbalanced relationship between the speaker and the hearer since it constitutes a threat for the negative face of the addressee (that is to say, their desire of independence and freedom from impositions). Without mitigation it may thus be rude.¹⁴ What are the devices available without any 'please' word? The following remarks are not intended to be exhaustive but to emphasize the characteristics of mitigation through a particular example and to give a background to my suggestion.

A mitigating strategy with the imperative 'give' is the use of minimizers (including a diminutive), as in (5):

- (5) ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ. Ἄπελθέ νύν μοι.
 ΔΙΚΑΙΟΠΟΛΙΣ. Μάλλά μοι δός ἐν μόνον,
 κοτυλίσκιον τὸ χεῖλος ἀποκεκρομένον.
 ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ. Φθειρίου λαβῶν τόδ' (Ar. *Ach.* 458–60)
 EURIPIDES. Leave me alone. DICAEOPOLIS. But **give** me **just one thing**, a little cup whose edge is broken. EURIPIDES. Take it and go and hang yourself.¹⁵

Nevertheless, mitigating strategies are rarely to be found in the imperative clause itself but in the surrounding context.

In example (6) where Oedipus addresses Theseus, the directive act itself is a bare imperative. The term of address is a first feature of positive politeness;¹⁶ the directive act is further balanced with a positive politeness argument (the speaker and the hearer have a long relationship of *πίστις*

¹³ Mainly utterances of *δός* (imperative aorist, second-person sg., 103 utterances) along with *δότε*, *δίδου* and *δίδοτε*. Results are taken from TLG, with a time span from Aeschylus to Demosthenes.

¹⁴ Provided that the speaker is not socially superior to the hearer, prior to any negotiation.

¹⁵ See Ar. *Ach* 463 and 478 with an overwhelming use of mitigators for a rude request.

¹⁶ See also Lloyd (this volume) on the role of friendship terms. The strategy may be found already in Homeric poems (e.g. *Od.* 17.415–17).

‘good faith’). The use of several mitigating strategies is understandable given the situation of Oedipus at the end of the play.

- (6) ὦ φίλον κάρα,
δός μοι χερὸς σῆς πίστιν ἀρχαίαν τέκνοις. (S. *OC.* 1631–2)
 My dear friend, pray **give** the ancient pledge of a handclasp to my children.
 (Lloyd-Jones 1994a: 581–3)¹⁷

Example (7) shows other strategies to mitigate a bare imperative. In the preceding context Cyrus has just given the game he has caught to his grandfather Astyages, who thanks him but says that he does not need it. Cyrus then asks to have his gift back for another use, a rather awkward demand addressed to someone he has to show deference to:

- (7) Εἰ τοίνυν μὴ σὺ δέη, ἱκετεύω, ὦ πάππε, ἐμοὶ **δός** αὐτά, ὅπως τοῖς ἡλικιώταις ἐγὼ διαδῶ. (X. *Cyr.* 1.4.10)
 Well, if you do not need them, grandfather, I beg you, **give** them to me so that I may divide them among my friends.

Even if the imperative *δός* is bare in the clause itself, many redressive devices are used: the utterance echoes the addressee’s words (Astyages has no need of the game), signals that the request is not in the speaker’s own interest, and with the help of a metadirective (‘I beg you’), the request is immediately accepted by Astyages.¹⁸ Remedial strategies, i.e. softening devices that aim at repairing the damage caused by the speech act, signal a very unbalanced relationship and a high ranking of imposition.

Besides these well-known (though still understudied) remedial strategies, other elements that have not yet been studied as such co-occur in polite utterances, i.e. particles such as *δή*¹⁹ and imperatives used as interjections such as *ἄγε* (lit. ‘lead!’, used as ‘come on!’). They appear in the sausage seller’s reported speech in (8):

- (8) Ἄγε **δή** Σκίταλοι καὶ Φένακες, ἦν δ’ ἐγὼ,
 Βερέσχεθοὶ τε καὶ Κόβαλοι καὶ Μόθων,
 ἀγορά τ’ ἐν ἧ παῖς ὦν ἐπαιδεύθην ἐγὼ,
 νῦν μοι φράσος καὶ γλώτταν εὔπορον **δότε**
 φωνήν τ’ ἀναιδῆ. (Ar. *Eq.* 634–8)
 I said, ‘**Come on**, you demons of Puffery, Quackery, Foolery, Chicanery, and Debauchery, and you Marketplace where I was reared as a boy, now **give** me boldness, a ready tongue, and a shameless voice!’ (Henderson 1998a: 307)

¹⁷ See D. 19.195.2 for lengthy remedial strategies after a bare imperative *δός*.

¹⁸ For the use of metadirectives with *δός*, see, e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 415 with a preparatory ἀντιβολῶ πρὸς τῶν γονάτων σ’, Εὐριπίδη (‘I implore you by your knees, Euripides’).

¹⁹ To give a rough impression of the meaning of *δή* in isolation, it is, according to LSJ, a ‘particle used to give greater exactness, to the word or words which it influences’.

In (8) ἄγε and δὴ co-occur with a lengthy vocative which emphasizes the shared interest of the speaker and his addressees; but the particle δὴ can be used alone in contexts where a request is softened as in (9):

- (9) “Ἔως ἂν τοίνυν, ἔφη ὁ Ἀγησίλαος, ἐκέϊσε πορεύωμαι, **δίδου δὴ** τῇ στρατιᾷ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια. ἐκείνω μὲν δὴ ὁ Τιθραύστης δίδωσι τριάκοντα τάλαντα. (X. *HG*. 3.4.26.6)
 ‘Then, until I go there,’ said Agesilaus, ‘**give** me provisions for the army.’
 Tithraustes accordingly gave him thirty talents. (Brownson 1918: 243,²⁰)

In the preceding context, Agesilaus is given instructions by Tithraustes: it is an unbalanced relationship where the speaker is in an inferior position. The directive act is nevertheless performed through a bare imperative and the following sentence proves that the request is fulfilled. A possible reason is that the ranking of imposition is not really high (Agesilaus asks for what he judges necessary to meet the army’s needs). In examples such as (8) or (9) do δὴ or ἄγε play a role in politeness?

To sum up my hypothesis, if orders expressed by means of bare imperatives are not rude, it is probably not due to the imperative itself: being neutral as far as politeness is concerned, imperatives may appear in polite or impolite utterances;²¹ it may be due to the ranking of imposition bare imperatives express, which is a cultural question as much as a linguistic issue. Among the available strategies, in the case of a low ranking of imposition, the speaker may present a request as part of a routine interaction with the help of particles. That is the hypothesis that I intend to test.

3 Underrated Suspects: Particles in Routine Interactions

3.1 What Danish Teaches Us: Polite Particles

To further explore the hypothesis, a parallel with a modern language may be useful. As in Ancient Greek, in contemporary Danish there is no equivalent word for ‘please’ and several syntactic strategies (similar to those in many other languages) are available to signal mitigation.²² More interestingly, as has been shown by Levisen and Waters (2015), a discourse particle is used in Danish in many requests that can be translated in English with ‘please’. The particle *lige* is also used as an adjective ‘even,

²⁰ Another example is E. *Hel*. 1259, where Menelaus, who is supposed to be a sailor in the role of a suppliant, presents his request as obvious, innocuous and part of the usual rite for a king’s burial.

²¹ See Denizot (2011: 244–61). Risselada (1993: 98, 109) reaches the same conclusion for Latin.

²² Expressions such as *Jeg vil gerne + V* (‘I would like to’), *Må jeg bede om* (‘May I ask to’, the normal ‘magic-word’ expected from children), *Kan du* (‘Could you’), *Vil du være venlig at* (‘Would you be so kind as to’), *Vær så venlig at* (‘Be so kind as to’) inter alia.

equal' and as an adverb 'just, right, quite'. According to Levisen and Waters (2015: 248), in requests *lige* is used as a discourse particle as a trivialization and 'dedramatization' device. It is normally added to any routine request (10a), and particularly in coded interactions such as in a shop (10b) or in a bus (10c):

- (10) a. *Luk lige døren* 'Close *lige* the door'
 b. *Jeg skal lige have et brød* 'I will *lige* have a loaf'
 c. *Jeg skal lige ud* 'I shall *lige* go out'

Lige is used in any routine request with a low ranking of imposition since it signals the request as expected in the context: the request corresponds to the mutual expectation of the speakers in a routine interaction. Interestingly enough, the particle cannot be used for a request of greater importance:

- (11) a. **Giv mig lige en gave* *'Give me *lige* a gift'
 b. **Skriv lige min afhandling for mig**'Write *lige* my dissertation for me'
 c. **Underskriv lige kontrakten* *'Sign *lige* the contract'
 d. **Lad os lige købe et hus* 'Let's *lige* buy a house'²³

The examples (11a–d) are considered very strange and almost impossible by native speakers, unless a co-text (e.g. explicit agreement on a procedure or on obedience) creates possible conditions for such utterances.

In a sense, Danish *lige* can be compared to *just* in English directive acts (a possible literal translation of *lige*). In a study of the semantics of *just* in doctor–patient interviews, Lee (1987) comments on doctors' requests including *just* ('Just squeeze my hand', 'Just close your eyes') in a similar way as a part of routine interaction:

In using *just* here, the speaker suggests that the action involved is a relatively unimportant one – that it will perhaps involve little effort on the patient's part, that it has no significant consequences, or that it is one which it is natural for a doctor to ask a patient to perform in these circumstances. (Lee 1987: 383)

The semantic motivation seems similar to Danish *lige*, but the comparison between English *just* and Danish *lige* has its limitations: the extension in English is narrower and a doctor–patient relationship is quite specific, in the sense that the doctor's authority allows him/her to utter directive acts that should be effective without the need for mitigation.

²³ Examples from (10a) to (11b) are taken from Levisen and Waters (2015). I added (11c) and (11d) with the help of different native speakers.

The reason for the *lige*-strategy and its extension in Danish is explained by Levisen and Waters (2015) as a cultural specificity: Danes generally avoid formality, have an egalitarian representation of society and usually share the feeling of belonging to the same ‘family’. The particle *lige* is thus a typical strategy of a positive politeness culture.

These characteristics are interesting for a comparison with Ancient Greek where the rise of routine polite formulae in the Hellenistic period has been linked to a change in society, from (roughly speaking) a democratic and egalitarian society to a highly stratified society (see Dickey 2010a, 2016b).²⁴ If the image is true, a positive politeness strategy similar to the Danish *lige* could be expected in Classical times. As far as linguistic devices are concerned, Classical Greek has a wide range of discourse particles that can be candidates for signalling small routine requests. Among them are the particles $\delta\eta$ and $\nu\nu$, and the imperatives $\alpha\gamma\epsilon$, $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$ and $\imath\theta\iota$ used as interjections. The following sections aim at determining which ones among those elements can contribute to the expression of politeness.

3.2 Possible Candidates in Classical Greek: The Imperatives $\alpha\gamma\epsilon$, $\imath\theta\iota$, $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$ used as interjections

As pointed out by Biraud (2010: 26), $\alpha\gamma\epsilon$, $\imath\theta\iota$ and $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$ retain a trace of their imperative origin, since they are derived from second-person imperatives of verbs (and can be used as such): $\alpha\gamma\epsilon$ literally means ‘lead’, $\imath\theta\iota$ ‘go’ and $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$ ‘bring’. When they are used as pragmatic markers, $\alpha\gamma\epsilon$ is a marker of directive acts (Denizot 2011: 81–5), whereas $\imath\theta\iota$ and $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$, though widely used in directive acts, are not restricted to them: $\imath\theta\iota$ is used as an encouragement to action and $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$ for an appeal to comply with circumstances (Denizot 2011: 207–13). A detailed account is given by Biraud (2010: 26–42); for this study I specifically address the combination of $\alpha\gamma\epsilon$, $\imath\theta\iota$, $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$ with $\delta\eta$ and $\nu\nu$ in Classical times.

The data in Table 3.1 confirm the preferred link of $\alpha\gamma\epsilon$ and $\imath\theta\iota$ with imperatives, and of $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon$ with questions.²⁵ More interestingly when

²⁴ See also Barrios-Lech (this volume) for a general characterization of politeness in Greek classical times.

²⁵ Significant results are in bold. The *z*-score indicates when data cannot be randomly distributed by comparing the actual distribution to the expected distribution if data were randomly distributed: when the *z*-score is above 2, data are significantly overrepresented; under 2 they are significantly underrepresented (in both cases it corresponds to 2.5 per cent of cases in a random distribution, a figure that falls to 0.02 per cent when the *z*-score is above 3 (or under -3). The *z*-score is not calculated for the last column, because the required data are not available (e.g. for the first line, we would need to know the total number of first-person plural subjunctives in the whole corpus).

Table 3.1 *Verb combinations with ἄγγε, ἴθι, φέρε*

	ἄγγε (δή/νυν)		ἴθι (δή/νυν)		φέρε (δή/νυν)		Total
	Number	Z-score	Number	Z-score	Number	Z-score	
Subj. 1st pl.	6	-2	18	1.2	21	0.7	45
Imp. 2nd p.	34	0.3	76	6.6	10	-5.5	120
Imp. 3rd p.	2	0.4		-1.2	3	0.7	5
Declaratives	6	-0.3	4	-1.1	13	1.3	23
Questions	12	-1.8	2	-4	53	5.1	67
Future	9	-1		-3.6	34	4	43
Noun phrases			1	1.3		-0.6	1
Total	69		101		134		304

looking for a preferential use in polite requests, hortatory subjunctives are equally represented for the three interjections.²⁶ The fact that no pragmatic marker is obviously linked with milder requests can also be checked when looking at the authors that use them (see Table 3.2). If a pragmatic marker were used for milder requests, we should expect different uses in Aristophanes and in Plato, for example: the dialogic nature of their texts makes them comparable, but milder requests are expected to be more frequent in Plato's cooperative dialogue than in Aristophanes' comic exchanges.

The distribution indicates that the authors most prone to use these imperatives as interjections are Aristophanes and Plato.²⁷ The fact that ἄγγε is mostly used by Aristophanes is not a good indication for a polite use. Note that φέρε and ἴθι are over-represented in Aristophanes' and Plato's works. We can conclude for these two imperatives used as interjections that the distribution cannot be explained directly by the type of texts or by the register, and that they do not have a clear link with polite utterances, since the difference in tone between Aristophanes' and Plato's

²⁶ The use of hortatory subjunctives is an indication of milder requests due to the use of the first-person plural. The speaker utters an order while concealing the superior position given by an order behind the participation in a wider group. This concealed superiority is mentioned explicitly by Apollonios Dyscolos, *Syntax* 3.109.3–8. Cf. Lammermann (1935: 78–80), Denizot (2011: 151–3).

²⁷ ἄγγε and ἴθι are used in Homeric poems. The first use of φέρε as a pragmatic marker is in Aeschylus (fifth century BCE).

Table 3.2 *Distribution of ἄγε, ἴθι, φέρε by author*

	ἄγε (δῆ/νυν)		ἴθι (δῆ/νυν)		φέρε (δῆ/νυν)		Total	
	Number	Z-score	Number	Z-score	Number	Z-score	Number	Z-score
Aeschylus	3	1.3	0	-1.5	0	-1.6	3	-1.3
Sophocles	1	-1	0	-2	0	-2.3	1	-3.1
Euripides	2	-1.8	0	-3.1	2	-3	4	-4.6
Herodotus	0	-2.5	0	-3	1	-3.2	1	-5.1
Aristophanes	47	23.6	31	11.6	25	7.1	103	22.7
Xenophon	10	-0.2	10	-1.5	2	-4.1	22	-3.7
Plato	6	-3.1	58	5.2	71	5	135	4.9
Demosthenes	0	-3.2	2	-3.3	16	-0.8	18	-4
Other orators ²⁸	0	-2.7	0	-3.3	17	0.6	17	-2.8
Total	69		101		134		304	

is not reflected in their use of pragmatic markers.²⁹ This conclusion is consistent with their qualitative characteristics: φέρε is seldom used with an imperative, ἄγε and ἴθι co-occur both with insults and with respectful addresses.³⁰ Even if further study is probably needed on the use of these pragmatic markers, their role in mitigating a face-threatening act is certainly not a crucial one.

3.3 Possible Candidates in Classical Greek: Particles δῆ and νυν

The particles δῆ and νυν are among the most widely used with imperatives.³¹ Could they have something to do with politeness? As for νυν, it is generally absent from descriptions about particles since it is obviously

²⁸ Lysias, Aeschines, Antipho, Isaeus, Andocides.

²⁹ The quantitative indication could be checked against a more fine-grained qualitative analysis.

³⁰ For example, ἄγε δῆ with an insult (Ar. *Ach.* 111) or with a mark of respect (Ar. *Ra.* 1500), ἴθι νυν with an insult (Ar. *Pax.* 195) or with a mark of respect (Pl. *Euthphr.* 9a1).

³¹ The three most frequent particles with directive acts are ἀλλά, δῆ and νυν (Denizot 2011: 83–5). I rule out ἀλλά as a possible candidate: it expresses a ‘break-off in the thought’ (Denniston 1950: 14), and it constitutes a corrective device (Basset 1997).

linked to $\nu\tilde{\nu}$.³² In LSJ, $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ with imperatives is simply translated by ‘now’, without any further comment. In DELG, a quite vague ‘emphatic’ meaning is acknowledged. If a sense of immediacy is implied, $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ is probably not the best candidate for polite requests.

The particle $\delta\eta$ is more promising. I do not intend to give an overall description of the particle in all contexts because a unified account of its uses is a debated issue in the literature: in the different attempts to define the use of $\delta\eta$, the particle is seen as emphatic (Denniston 1950), as marking personal involvement (van Ophuijsen in Sicking and van Ophuijsen 1993), as an attitudinal particle asking for attention (Wakker 1997) or as a marker of evidentiality (Bakker 1997). Many of these studies, however, give interesting insights for my hypothesis that $\delta\eta$ plays a role in making routine requests polite. Interestingly enough, it has been acknowledged for a long time that $\delta\eta$ helps present an act as obvious, as already noted by Bäumlein (1861: 104 and 106):

$\Delta\eta$ is therefore used where something is to be described as clear, evident, obvious, decisive, and is then used in general to give greater emphasis to the thought (the assertion, question, demand, desire) [...]. Very often, $\delta\eta$ is used with the imperative to designate the demand or request as a decisive, natural one, justified under the circumstances.³³

Even if the quite vague notion of emphasis is mentioned, it is worth noting that $\delta\eta$ is described as making a request obvious and natural.³⁴ This meaning of $\delta\eta$ with directive acts is quite coherent with the other meanings of the particle and with a possible etymology.³⁵ According to the previous literature, a directive act with $\delta\eta$ is presented as linked with a previous action or speech (Denniston 1950: 216); but this link with the situation is grounded in the personal involvement of the speaker who

³² $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ is absent from Denniston (1950) and from Bonifazi, Drummen and de Kreij (2016). Dictionaries indicate a difference between $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ (adverbial, with long vowel) and $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ (particle, with short vowel); but the distribution is not systematic (see Ruijgh 1962: 64–7), and the accented adverb itself may be used as a discourse marker (see Ruiz Yamuza 2014).

³³ ‘ $\Delta\eta$ steht also da, wo etwas als klar, am Tage liegend, offenbar, entschieden bezeichnet werden soll, und wird dann überhaupt gebraucht, um dem Gedanken (der Behauptung, Frage, Forderung, dem Wunsche) grösseren Nachdruck zu geben [...]. Sehr häufig steht $\delta\eta$ beim Imperativ, um die Forderung oder Bitte als eine entschiedene, natürliche, unter den Verhältnissen Berechtigte zu bezeichnen.’ (My translation.)

³⁴ See also Kühner and Gerth (1904: 678): ‘die bildliche Bedeutung in der auf bereits (*jam*) Bekanntes, Offenbares, Augenscheinliches hinweist’ (‘the figurative meaning which refers to what is already (*jam*) known, revealed, apparent’; my translation).

³⁵ Linked with $\delta\eta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ (‘obvious’) a possibility accepted recently by de Kreij in Bonifazi et al. (2016: 11.3.3.1, Section 53).

asks the hearer to comply with this view.³⁶ This acknowledged role of δῆ is possibly of consequence for the question at stake. As Drummen (in Bonifazi et al. 2016: III.2.2.8, Section 79) puts it, ‘With act scope δῆ either marks the content of its act or the uttering of the act as perceptible, evident, or expected to the speaker. These functions reflect the speaker’s attention to her addressee: she presents the content or the action as evident to both herself and a “you”.’ All these characteristics make δῆ the best candidate for a possible polite use in requests.³⁷

My corpus study of ἄγε δῆ/νυν, ἴθι δῆ/νυν and φέρε δῆ/νυν utterances confirms this view.

According to Table 3.3, νυν is almost never used with hortatory subjunctives, in affirmative and interrogative sentences, and in third-person imperatives, whereas its main uses are in second-person imperatives and the first-person future: given its use in non-cooperative contexts, the particle has probably nothing to do with polite requests. Note that νυν can be used in curses (see Ar. *Av.* 960 or 1226), which is not the case for δῆ. On the other hand, δῆ is mainly used with second-person imperatives but also in questions and with hortatory subjunctives, i.e. in the environment of linguistic expressions with a low degree of imposition, in cooperative contexts. This general view is confirmed by the distribution by author: 83 per cent of νυν in association with imperatives used as interjections are to be found in Aristophanes (55 utterances), but only 18 per cent of δῆ (48 utterances). The particle δῆ is widely used in Plato’s works (131 utterances, i.e. 48 per cent).³⁹ The particle δῆ is found more often in urbane Attic than in comedies, where rough relationships and insults are frequent.

³⁶ See van Ophuijsen (in Sicking and van Ophuijsen 1993) and Bakker (1997: 75) who considers it a marker of evidentiality: ‘the δῆ clause signals that the speaker assumes that the hearer is capable of witnessing the same evidence, and in uttering the δῆ clause the speaker wants to convey that the hearer shares the same evident environment’.

³⁷ Note that a δῆ νυν combination is possible (seventeen examples in my corpus), but it seems restricted to drama (Aristophanes and Euripides), and to two verbs (ἀκούε ‘listen’ and εἰπέ ‘speak’). With this combination, νυν seems to be prominent semantically; see Denniston (1950: 218): ‘δῆ νυν expresses an increased urgency in command or appeal’.

³⁸ The *z*-score indicates that the distribution between δῆ and νυν is actually random, given the difference between the number of utterances of the two particles. The various uses of δῆ are not significantly different from what a random distribution would have given; νυν is under-represented in questions (*z*-score = -3.3) and in future first- and second-person (*z*-score = -2.8 in both cases).

³⁹ Denniston (1950: 216) reaches a different conclusion: ‘It is rare in tragedy and, though not wholly foreign to the grand style, appears to have been mainly colloquial in the fifth and fourth centuries.’ See Drummen in Bonifazi et al. (2016: 11.2.2.8, Section 73) for data about tragedy.

Table 3.3 Association of **δή** and *νυν* with predicates³⁸

	(ἀγέ/ἴθι/φέρε) δή	(ἀγέ/ἴθι/φέρε) νυν	Total
Subj. 1st pl.	39	6	45
Imp. 2nd p.	86	34	120
Imp. 3rd p.	5	0	5
Declaratives	19	4	23
Questions	66	1	67
Future	22	21	43
Noun phrases	1	0	1
Total	238	66	304

Recall that my general hypothesis is that particles can help mark a request as routine. I can now refine the hypothesis as follows: *δή* plays a role similar to *lige* in Danish, i.e. that of a trivialization device used in routine requests that are presented as expected. To further explore it, I focus now on the role played by *δή* in directive acts.

4 Does *δή* Have a Role in Polite Requests?

In assessing a polite use, a difficult task is to handle irony or mock politeness. The problem is clearly set by example (12) where Dicaeopolis addresses Pseudartabas:

- (12) ΔΙΚΑΙΟΠΟΛΙΣ. [...] **Ἄγε δή** σὺ **φράσον** ἔμοι σαφῶς πρὸς τουτονί, ἵνα μὴ σε βάψω βάμμα Σαρδιανικόν. (*Ar. Ach.* III–12)
 DICAEOPOLIS. [...] **Come now, explain** to me clearly, if you do not wish me to dye your skin red.⁴⁰

The directive act with *δή* is followed by a direct threat, which points to an impolite use. But if my hypothesis is correct, the utterance may be ironic: in that case, the request is presented as obvious and easy, and then corrected by a threat. As this remark makes clear, there is a risk of circular reasoning here. Can we prove anything?⁴¹ In the following sections, I

⁴⁰ For a similar example, see below (21).

⁴¹ See van Emde Boas (this volume) for another answer to that question.

Table 3.4 *Directive acts with δή*

	Aristophanes	Plato
with ἄγε	15	4
with ἴθι	12	47
with φέρε	1	19
without ἄγε, ἴθι, φέρε	39	142
Total	67	212

gather as much evidence as possible pointing to the hypothesis I support. For that purpose, I have added a secondary corpus study (see Table 3.4). This second corpus is more restricted: it takes into account only δή, only directive acts and only Aristophanes and Plato's works (since the two authors represent two-thirds of the uses of δή in my first corpus); but it comprises all directive acts, even if they are not uttered along with an imperative used as an interjection:

4.1 *Person, Negation and Type of Predicate*

The directive speech acts in the first-person plural subjunctive, which are cooperative directive acts, tend to be used with δή. In Aristophanes' plays, out of 67 examples of directive acts with δή, 5 utterances are first-person plural subjunctive (i.e. 7 per cent), whereas in the whole corpus first-person subjunctives account for 4.4 per cent (see Denizot 2011: 154). Even if it is not statistically significant (with a z -score under 2),⁴² δή is more frequently used with hortatory subjunctives, which is confirmed by the data from Plato's works. Plato makes considerable use of hortatory subjunctives. According to Denizot (2011: 254), first-person plural subjunctives constitute 17 per cent of directive acts in Plato's dialogues.⁴³ Considering the 212 directive utterances with δή, first-person plural subjunctives are even more over-represented: with 65 out of 212 utterances (30 per cent), the over-representation of hortatory subjunctives with δή cannot be random (z -score = 5.33). These data show that δή tends

⁴² See note 27 for details about the z -score.

⁴³ In Denizot (2011), only a set of dialogues is considered (youth dialogues written before 388 BCE, i.e. *Hippias minor* and *major*, *Alcibiades*, *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Menon*) but they are the most interactive dialogues in Plato's work.

to be used preferentially in the same clause as first-person plural subjunctives, which is a good sign of a possible polite use of *δή*.

Among the characteristics of the directive acts with *δή*, it is worth mentioning that prohibitive expressions are not used. In my whole corpus of 343 directive acts with *δή* only 2 have a negation *μή* (E. *Hel.* 1259; Pl. *Prt.* 333b7). These two utterances can even be ruled out since they are in fact examples of double negatives.⁴⁴ By contrast 12 out of the 123 utterances with *νυν* are negative. A negative directive act is not necessarily less threatening but given the polemic nature of negation, it should be taken as an encouraging sign of a polite use of *δή* since directive acts are expected in the situation.

Similar evidence is provided by the semantic type of verbs used in directive acts uttered with a particle *δή*. Table 3.5 gives the most frequently used verbs.

Strikingly enough, the verbs used are mostly verbs of speech or of thought, i.e. verbs that are mainly used in directive acts that are not binding (at least in dialogues and comedies such as Plato's and

Table 3.5 *Most frequently used verbs in directive acts with δή*

Verbs	Aristophanes	Plato	Total
λέγω 'tell'	12	34	46
σκοπέω 'examine'	0	25	25
(ἐπι)σκέπτομαι 'examine'	1	21	22
ὁράω 'see'	0	19	19
ἀκούω 'listen'	1	12	13
ἀποκρίνομαι 'answer'	0	11	11
πειράομαι 'try'	0	8	8
λαμβάνω 'take'	3	3	6
εἶμι 'be'	0	5	5
τίθημι 'put'	2	3	5
φράζω 'explain'	5	0	5

⁴⁴ E. *Hel.* 1259: *δυσγενές μηδὲν δίδου* ('don't give anything unpleasant'), Pl. *Prt.* 333b7: *μή ἀποκάμωμεν* ('let's not falter'); the syntactic negative is combined with a semantically negative term.

Aristophanes'), and may possibly benefit the hearer in the case of verbs of thought. In the whole corpus the majority feature verbs of speech (seventy-three utterances) and verbs of perception and thought (ninety utterances, most of them listed in Table 3.5).

4.2 Conversational Contexts

Another clue for a mitigating meaning of δὴ in directive acts is given by the conversational context: directive acts with δὴ, like the other kinds of directive acts, take place in an overall interaction, with preceding and following utterances that are a good indicator of their semantic value. In many examples such as (13) and (14), the directive act is not meant to arouse conflict and the hearer complies willingly with it:

- (13) Νῆ Δί', ἔφη, εἰ γὰρ μηδὲ ταῦτα οἶδα, καὶ τῶν ἀνδραπόδων φαυλότερος ἂν εἶην. Ἰθὶ δὴ, ἔφη, καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐξηγήσῃ αὐτά. Ἄλλ' οὐ χαλεπόν, ἔφη. (X. *Mem.* 4.2.31.4)
'Of course, for if I don't know even that, I must be worse than a slave.'
'Come then, **explain** it to me.' 'Well, it is not complicated.'
- (14) ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ὅπως ἀποστρέψαι ἂν ἀντιδικῶν δίκην μέλλων ὀφλήσειν, μὴ παρόντων μαρτύρων.
ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ. Φαυλότατα καὶ ῥᾶστ'.
ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. **Εἰπέ δὴ.**
ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ. Καὶ δὴ λέγω. (Ar. *Nu.* 776–8)
SOCRATES. See if you can present a counterargument that rebuts a lawsuit you were about to lose for lack of witnesses. STREPSIADES. That's very simple and very easy. SOCRATES. **Tell me.**
STREPSIADES. **Here goes then.** (Henderson 1998b: 115)⁴⁵

In the following sentences, the addressee's reaction clearly indicates that the directive act is understood as normal and innocuous.⁴⁶ Note the presence of δὴ in the answer: even if an echo to Socrates' order is possible, δὴ probably plays its evidential role.⁴⁷

As for the preceding context, as already stated by Denniston (1950: 216), δὴ 'sometimes implies a connexion, logical or temporal, the command either arising out of, or simply following upon, a previous

⁴⁵ For similar examples, see Ar. *Eq.* 21, *Pax* 973, *Nu.* 90, 652, 683, *Ra.* 1378; Pl. *Euthphr.* 5d7, *Th.* 157d6; E. *Ion* 336, etc.

⁴⁶ In only two examples does the addressee refuse to comply with the order: A. *Pr.* 630 (where the compliance is only postponed) and Ar. *Pax* 1238. In the latter example, a seller asks for money, which could be considered a normal part of the interaction (thus the use of δὴ): see *infra* example (22).

⁴⁷ Καὶ δὴ λέγω could be rephrased 'And that is exactly what I am doing, as you can see' (see Denniston 1950: 252).

action or speech'. In my corpus the directive act can be linked with a previous agreement, as explicitly mentioned in example (15):

- (15) Ὁ δὲ Κύρος εἶπεν. Ἄγε δὴ, ἔφη, ἐπειδὴ ὁμονοοῦμεν ταῦτα, **πέμψατε** ἀπὸ λόχου ἕκαστος πέντε ἀνδρας τῶν σπουδαιοτάτων (X. *Cyr.* 4.2.47)
Then Cyrus said: 'Come then, *since we are of one mind on this point*, **send** each of you five of the most reliable men from his platoon.' (Miller 1914: 347)⁴⁸

The previous agreement may be sought and made explicit by the speaker as in example (16):

- (16) ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ῥήτορα ἄρα χρή σε καλεῖν;
ΓΟΡΓΙΑΣ. Ἀγαθὸν γε, ὦ Σώκρατες, εἰ δὴ ὁ γε εὐχομαι εἶναι, ὡς ἔφη Ὅμηρος, *βούλει με καλεῖν*.
ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ἄλλὰ βούλομαι.
ΓΟΡΓΙΑΣ. **Κάλει δὴ**. (Pl. *Gr.* 449a10)
SOCRATES. So we are to call you a rhetorician? GORGIAS. Yes, and a good one, *if you are pleased to call me what – to use Homer's phrase – 'I vaunt myself to be.'* SOCRATES. Well, I am pleased to do so.
GORGIAS. Then **call** me such. (Lamb 1925: 265)⁴⁹

When the directive act with δὴ is initiated by a request, it grants permission as in (17):

- (17) ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ. Ἔκστρεψον ὡς τάχιστα τοὺς σαυτοῦ τρόπους, καὶ μάθων ἔλθων ἂν ἐγὼ παραινέσω.
ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ. **Λέγε δὴ**, τί κελεύεις;
ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ. Καί τι πείσει;
ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ. Πείσομαι
νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον. (Ar. *Nu.* 90–2)
STREPSIADES. Reverse your way of life as soon as possible, and *go learn* what I'm going to recommend. PHIDIPPIDES. All right, **tell** me what you're asking me to learn. STREPSIADES. And will you obey?
PHEIDIPPIDES. I will obey by Dionysus. (Henderson 1998a: 19–21)

Pheidippides' reaction clearly shows that the interaction does not imply any conflict. In 71 examples (out of 279, see Table 3-3) one or several of the above-mentioned characteristics appear: compliance of the hearer,

⁴⁸ Similar examples are Pl. *Gr.* 449a10, 498e10, *Cra.* 399d5, *Phd* 78c10.

⁴⁹ Parallel example in Pl. *Gr.* 449a10. See Pl. *Gr.* 449d8 or 496c6 for the acknowledgement of the hearer's judgment.

previous agreement, preparation by a request.⁵⁰ They are all signs of a routine interaction where face cannot be seriously threatened.

These characteristics of $\delta\eta$ could be rephrased in terms of the Common Ground approach.⁵¹ According to my description, $\delta\eta$ hedges expected and unmarked requests and presupposes that the speech act it has scope over is taken for granted because it is entailed by the common ground, i.e. the background information that is assumed to be shared among participants. The common ground can be conventional and conversational as in (13) and (14): when a participant announces that he knows something, it is expected that he is able to explain it to the others' profit. Since each utterance constitutes an update of the shared knowledge, the grounding may be explicit as in (15) to (17): a new common ground is created by the interaction. Both participants agree on a common ground made explicit by agreements as in (15) and (16) or implicitly created by a request in (17). The use of $\delta\eta$ in requests can be interpreted as a contextual clue to shared expectations, whether given by the interaction or negotiated by the participants.

4.3 Context of Interaction

When establishing the criteria for assessing politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) define the seriousness of a face-threatening act by three factors: the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, the relative power of the speaker and the hearer, and the absolute ranking of impositions in the culture considered (see Introduction, Section 2.1). Table 3.6 displays the results for my corpus. For a more accurate description, I have added two criteria put forward by Risselada (1993: 46–8) in her study of Latin directive acts: bindingness, i.e. whether the directive act is binding or whether compliance to it is optional (order *vs* request), and benefit, i.e. who the propositional content of the directive act is supposed to benefit (request *vs* advice). The corpus examined is that of directive acts with $\delta\eta$ in Plato and Aristophanes' works (279 utterances); for the sake of comparison, I also mention the results for directive acts with $\nu\nu\nu$ in the same two authors (120 utterances where imperatives used as interjections are also present).

⁵⁰ A figure that should be compared to the very small number with $\nu\nu\nu$ in my corpus (only six examples out of 123).

⁵¹ See among others Clark and Brennan (1991) and Stalnaker (2002).

Table 3.6 *Interactional characteristics of directive acts with $\nu\nu$ and $\delta\eta$*

		$\delta\eta$		$\nu\nu$	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Distance	Minimal	233	83	40	33
	Equality	231	83	40	33
Hierarchy	Hearer < Speaker	16	5	29	24
	Hearer > Speaker	32	11	51	42
Ranking of imposition	Low	275	99	101	84
Bindingness	Optional	267	96	98	82
Benefit	For both	250	89	51	42
	For the speaker	6	2	43	36

The impression given in Table 3.6 is clear. Directive acts with $\delta\eta$ are used by a speaker who is close to the hearer, without any hierarchical relation to him; the directive acts uttered are almost exclusively with a low imposition and non-binding, and they should benefit both the hearer and the speaker. A comparison with the figures for directive acts with $\nu\nu$ confirms that the description is quite specific to utterances with $\delta\eta$. It fits with a possible use for polite routine requests.

A few remarks can be added to this general picture. First, when uttered by an inferior, directive acts with $\delta\eta$ always benefit the hearer or both participants, which is another sign pointing to a polite use. Second, strikingly enough, 140 out of 212 utterances of directive acts with $\delta\eta$ in Plato are uttered by Socrates. It is difficult to evaluate whether Socrates uses more directive acts with $\delta\eta$ than other speakers, because Socrates is a prominent speaker in Plato's works and he is probably one of the speakers who utters the most directive acts in general. However, it could be interpreted from a stylistic perspective as an indication of Socrates' way of speaking and leading the interaction.⁵²

All the characteristics described in Section 3 point to a polite use of $\delta\eta$ in directive acts, mostly for routine requests. Even if it seems to ground my hypothesis, I would like to come to a firmer conclusion by discarding

⁵² See Lloyd (this volume) for Socrates' high competence in politeness matters.

the other possible interpretations. For instance, in seven utterances directive acts with $\delta\eta$ are addressed to slaves.⁵³ Is any mitigation really needed for such orders?

5 Can the Data Be Interpreted Differently?

5.1 Is Shared Expectation Polite?

Another possible interpretation of the data presented above is the following: expected directive acts in routine requests are neutral as far as politeness is concerned, and mitigation arises only from the context. Such an interpretation has been put forward for Latin discourse particles in directive acts. According to Barrios-Lech (2016: 134–9), the particles *sis*, *age*, *dum*, *uero*, *quin*, *modo* and *i(te)* are strengtheners which can be polite or impolite depending on what is being strengthened. A more detailed analysis of *modo* used in directive acts was done by Risselada (1994). She showed that, given its scalar nature ('no more than'), *modo* is situated on a scale of expectation, where orientation is given by the context. As a result, the possible effects of *modo* in directive acts are mitigation as well as reinforcement, i.e. polite or impolite interpretations.⁵⁴

In the case of $\delta\eta$, which presents the utterance as obvious and grounded in the surrounding context, both conversationally and interactionally, I suggest that the polite effect of $\delta\eta$ can be described in the following way: a directive act with $\delta\eta$ is presented as expected in the current situation. The speaker using $\delta\eta$ signals that there is nothing to worry about, and that the request pertains to a low ranking of imposition, as both participants should know.

Given this background, if the speaker is superior to the hearer, using $\delta\eta$ is a way of softening the interaction. In example (18), Aeacus intends to find out which of the two, Xanthias or Dionysus, is a slave and prepares them to be beaten to prove it. It is quite a strong imposition to force upon someone but all the interactants have agreed on that solution:

- (18) ΑΙΑΚΟΣ. [...] Ἀποδύεσθε $\delta\eta$ (Ar. *Ra.* 641)
 AEACUS. [...] Now both of you, strip. (Henderson 2002: 111)

By using $\delta\eta$, Aeacus reminds his addressees that the order is issued after they have agreed to it and should be considered a normal expectation given the nature of the discussion. On the other hand, if the speaker is

⁵³ Ar. *Au.* 434, 656, *Ra.* 569, *Eq.* 21, 106, 152, *Pax* 956.

⁵⁴ See Section 4.2 for possible impoliteness.

inferior to the addressee, using δῆ is a way to mitigate the face-threatening act. In example (19), Dionysos has to judge which of the two poets, Euripides or Aeschylus, is the better and should be saved from Hades:

- (19) ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ. Πρῶτον δέ μοι τὸν ἐξ Ὀρεστείας λέγε.
 ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ. **Ἄγε δῆ, σιωπά** πᾶς ἀνὴρ. Λέγ', Αἰσχύλει. (Ar. *Ra.* 1124–5)
 EURIPIDES. First, recite to me the one from the Oresteia.
 DIONYSUS. Come on, every one, **be quiet!** Go ahead, Aeschylus.
 (Henderson 2002: 179)

Dionysus is in a superior position thanks to his role as arbiter and he is the one handling speech turns. Asking for silence may be quite face-threatening unless the audience agrees on the importance of it, as here, since it is time to let Aeschylus speak. Using δῆ is a way to compensate the unbalanced relationship: Dionysus signals that the order is expected in the situation and constitutes a routine request.

5.2 What about Non-Polite Utterances?

As I mentioned in Section 3 (see example (12)), several utterances with δῆ are not polite or even impolite. Two possible interpretations can account for the non-polite meaning: either directive acts with δῆ are neutral with respect to politeness (see Section 4.1), or they may express mock politeness.⁵⁵

A parallel with Latin is useful, since Latin *modo* is an example of a particle which is neutral with respect to politeness and sensitive to context (see Section 3.1). For instance, Risselada (1994: 329) notes that in cases such as *tace modo* ('only be quiet') the particle reinforces the verb (i.e. 'just shut up!'). In my corpus two examples with the verbs 'be silent', σιγάω and σιωπάω are used, but in a way which cannot be compared to the corresponding Latin expressions:

- (20) ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. [...] Ἔστι δ'ὁ χρησμός οὔτοσί.
 ΓΥΝΗ. Λέγ' αὐτὸν ἡμῖν ὃ τι λέγει.
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. **Σιγαῖτε δῆ.** (Ar. *Lys.* 768–9)
 LYSISTRATA. Here is the oracle. WOMAN. Tell us, what does it say?
 LYSISTRATA. **So, keep silent.**

In (20) the order 'keep silent' is a condition made necessary by the overall interaction, as in (19) above. It is expected in the situation (someone is about to speak and the others must therefore keep silent) and has

⁵⁵ See Fedriani (2017) for a similar ambiguity in Latin, and Hall (2009: 78–106) for the use of polite phrases in a hypocritical way in Cicero's letters.

nothing rude in it. One could refuse the argument and argue that in a smooth and respectful conversation there is no need to ask for silence and that the request ‘keep quiet’ is impolite in itself. However, in (19) and (20) the request ‘keep silent’ is not due to any irrelevant interruption: in (19) no sign of noise or interruption is given by the text and in (20) Lysistrata reacts to the eagerness of her addressee. In both cases the request emphasizes a new turn (‘Let’s begin now’).⁵⁶ Even with contexts and verbs that are potentially face threatening, directive acts with δὴ retain a polite meaning.

That is why the second possibility seems more likely: impolite directive acts with δὴ are in reality expressions of mock politeness. If my interpretation of δὴ is correct, mock politeness can be easily explained. Trivialization devices can in fact be rude if they are used for demanding requests. If a speaker forces an imposition of great importance upon an addressee and presents it as an obvious and natural request, then the impolite effect arises. Aristophanes makes a comic use of the device, as in (21):

- (21) ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ. Ὑμῖν δὲ πόθεν περὶ τοῦ πολέμου τῆς τ’ εἰρηνῆς ἐμέλησεν;
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. Ἡμεῖς φράσομεν.
 ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ. **Λέγε δὴ ταχέως, ἵνα μὴ κλάης.**
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. Ἄκροῦ δὴ.
 καὶ τὰς χεῖρας πειρῶ κατέχειν.
 ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ. Ἄλλ’ οὐ δύναμαι χαλεπὸν γὰρ
 ὑπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτὰς ἴσχειν. (Ar. *Lys.* 502–5)
 MAGISTRATE. Why are you meddling in matters of war and peace?
 LYSISTRATA. We’ll explain. MAGISTRATE. **So tell me quickly, if
 you don’t want to cry.** LYSISTRATA. Listen carefully and try to keep
 your hands off me. MAGISTRATE. But I can’t! It’s difficult with my
 anger to keep them off you!

In example (21), the overall interaction is polite: Lysistrata agrees to explain, so there is no need to threaten anybody. But as the magistrate himself admits, he is so angry that he cannot resist threatening Lysistrata. The utterance creates a comic contrast between the polite directive act and the threat which is a way of characterizing the magistrate.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See Wakker (1997: 239–47) for the use of δὴ as an attitudinal particle asking for special attention to be paid to the importance and the interest of the proposition presented.

⁵⁷ Similar example: Ar. *Lys.* 941 where a female character, Myrrhine, makes a superficially polite offer (πρότεινε δὴ τὴν χεῖρα κἀλείφου λαβών, ‘stretch out your hand and take the perfume to put on you’). In reality, the addressee has already refused the offer and Myrrhine has stated that his opinion does not matter (ἦν τε βούλη γ’ ἦν τε μή, ‘whether you want it or not’).

In my opinion, example (22), the only example which is clearly rude without any other possible interpretation, should be interpreted in a similar way:

- (22) ΤΡΥΓΑΙΟΣ. [...] Οἶε γὰρ ἂν
 τὸν πρῶκτον ἀποδόσθαι με χιλίων δραχμῶν;
 ὍΠΛΩΝ ΚΑΤΗΛΟΣ. Ἴθι δὴ ἔξενεγκε τάργυριον.
 ΤΡΥΓΑΙΟΣ. Ἄλλ', ὦγαθέ,
 θλίβει τὸν ὄρρον. Ἀπόφερ', οὐκ ὠνήσομαι. (Ar. Pax 1236–9)
 TRYGAEUS. Do you think I'd sell my arsehole for a thousand drachmas?
 ARMS DEALER. All right then, fetch the money. TRYGAEUS. On
 second thought, dear fellow, it irritates my bottom. Take it away; I won't
 buy it. (Henderson 1998b: 585)

In a relationship between a seller and a customer, payment is expected and any request about payment would be a normal request; using δὴ in such a context is therefore appropriate. In example (22), Trygaeus makes it clear that it is out of question that he will buy anything. When the armourer insists ('Just give me the money') and presents his request as expected in the situation, he has actually infringed the limits of polite behaviour.⁵⁸ An explanation may be given in terms of common ground: the armourer pretends that the conventional common ground (the relation between a seller and a customer) is still valid, whereas Trygaeus has updated the common ground conversationally by his refusal. The use of δὴ presupposes that the request is accepted by both participants, which is explicitly not the case.

This use is similar to Danish *lige* when used with a high rank of imposition. In examples (11a–d) I mentioned 'impossible' examples, such as 'Give me *lige* a gift', in which the imposition forced upon the addressee is high. For Danish native speakers, this immediately conjures up a contradictory image, which is inappropriate and can therefore be exploited for comic effect: the use of *lige* presupposes a common belief according to which the orders are routine requests, which is difficult to accept. The same happens here since a demanding request is presented as obvious and natural.

⁵⁸ Does the use of ἴθι play a role in the impolite effect in (22)? It is difficult to rule out the possibility; but see Section 2.2 for some arguments against this idea.

6 Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, *δή* plays a role in the mitigation of requests and can be considered as a conventional politeness marker. Even if this role is difficult to prove, there are good and coherent indications that *δή* is used to signal a request as natural and obvious in the context, for routine interactions with a low level of imposition, and can be therefore interpreted as a mitigating device. When studying the equivalent forms to ‘please’, we are usually influenced by diachrony and by the fact that, for many languages, we can trace back the path of grammaticalization of pragmatic markers. This is particularly striking in Romance languages, since highly grammaticalized discourse particles arose from Latin, and our understanding of modern languages permitted us to spot equivalent forms in Classical times (*obsecro, quaeso, amabo*). We should however remain aware that a grammaticalization path is not a compulsory evolution. A diachronic approach is not teleological, and one should not judge the past situation in the light of the present one.

In Modern Greek, even if a ‘please’ word has been grammaticalized, it has a smaller range than in English: it is not an attention-getter (*συγγνώμη* ‘sorry’ is used instead), and it is not usually used in informal, intimate situations or in highly coded routine interactions. A morphological device, i.e. the use of diminutives, is widely used instead. Even more striking, modern languages can do without a ‘please’ word, which does not mean that they ignore politeness strategies. Danish is a good example of this situation; unsurprisingly, research into alternative strategies in such a language is rather recent, because these syntactic strategies can easily go unnoticed, even by native speakers.⁵⁹ The use of the particle *lige* in Danish is a trivialization device, conveying positive politeness. These languages invite the linguist to broaden the range of what can be considered as a politeness marker, all the more so as trivialization devices are an underrated strategy in politeness studies.

The Modern Greek and Danish alternatives to ‘please’ are examples of positive politeness strategies, used to mitigate a speech act that is potentially threatening to the negative face of the addressee, since the speakers

⁵⁹ See Levisen and Waters (2015: 247) on the particle *lige*, ‘a culturally significant word hidden in plain sight.’ A similar remark has been made for diminutives in Modern Greek: ‘Even native speakers, who use diminutives and expressions meaning ‘a little’ very frequently, are not aware of their function as politeness markers’ (Sifianou 1992b: 172).

who use diminutives or *lige* show in-group solidarity and make the utterance part of informal interaction. In these two languages, grounded in two very different cultures, different reasons may account for positive politeness strategies, i.e. a tendency for intimacy in Modern Greek and for informality in Danish. If Classical Greek δῆ is somehow comparable to Modern Greek diminutives and Danish *lige*, this leaves open new questions for Classical Greek politeness that should be further explored: what is the importance and the role of positive politeness devices in Classical Greek and how informal are they?