**The evolution of the Ancient Greek deverbal pragmatic markers *áge*, *íthi* and *phére***

**Abstract**

In this paper, I look at the Ancient Greek expressions *áge*, *íthi* and *phére*, which are all usually translated as ‘come (on)’. After discussing some existing accounts of these items, I look at their structural-syntactic properties and argue that they can be regarded as pragmaticalized imperatives. Then, I propose a new interpretation of their function – on this analysis, they can be regarded as conversational ‘boosters’, increasing the degree of strength of the illocutionary point of the utterance. Finally, I look at their diachronic development – in the corpus under consideration, *áge* is gradually replaced by *íthi* as the expression used with other imperatives, while *phére* develops as the preferred expression for use with non-imperative directive utterances.

**Keywords**: Ancient Greek; pragmatic markers; pragmaticalization; imperatives; illocution; propositional attitude.

1. **Introduction**[[1]](#footnote-1)

The last few years have seen two important studies appear on the Ancient Greek grammaticalized imperatives *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* (all three usually translated as ‘come (on)!’),both incorporating recent developments in more general research into grammaticalization. Examples of the specific sense which I am considering here are provided in (1), (2) and (3):[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. *All’* *áge* *dē* *lûson*, *nekroîo* *dé* *déksai ápoina*

but come PART loose-IMP of-dead PART take-IMP ransom

(Homer, *Iliad* XXIV.137)

[The goddess Thetis is talking to her son Achilles, who is keeping Hector’s corpse from Hector’s father:] “Nay come, give him up, and take ransom for the dead.”

1. *Íthi* *dē* *káteip*’· *ísōs* *gár* *án* *peísais* *emé*.

Come PART speak-IMP maybe for-PART PART you-would-convince me

(Aristophanes, *Peace* 405)

[Trygaeus has promised to tell the god Hermes about a plan which is being hatched against the gods. Hermes reacts:] “Come, speak and perchance I shall let myself be softened.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. *phére* *gár*, *tí* *egkalōn*  *hēmîn* *kaí* *tēi* *pólei*

Come for-PART what while-bringing-a-charge for-us and ART for-city

*epikheireîs* *hēmâs* *apollúnai?*

 you-undertake us to-destroy

 (Plato, *Crito* 50c9-d1)

[Socrates is acting as if the laws of Athens are speaking to him:] “Come, what fault do you find with us and the state, that you are trying to destroy us?”

In all three examples, the imperatives can be described as pragmatic markers[[4]](#footnote-4) which encourage the hearer to perform the action described in the utterance which follows.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Michèle Biraud’s (2010) book on interjections in Ancient Greek drama treats these items as interjections derived through a process of desemanticization; Fedriani et al. (2012) take a cross-linguistic approach, considering *áge* and *phére* as pragmatic markers in the context of similar expressions in Latin and Italian. Although both of these studies are interesting and valuable, there are certain lacunae which need addressing (see §2).

In this article, I want to look more closely at these expressions from a diachronic point of view in order to ascertain whether the hypotheses presented by Biraud on the one hand and Fedriani et al. on the other are plausible. To do so, I have collected all instances of these markers in Homer, the tragic playwrights from the Classical period (Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides), Aristophanes and Plato. Besides being some of the traditional texts of interest for Ancient Greek linguists, the imperatives under consideration are most frequent here.[[6]](#footnote-6)

After a brief overview of the existing accounts of *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* (§2), I look at their structural characteristics as grammaticalized items (§3) – do they fulfil the central criteria for grammaticalization, and are there any differences between the individual markers (§3.1)? Subsequently, I will focus more on their function, i.e., their semantic contribution to the utterance from a grammaticalization point of view (§3.2). In §4, I analyze these markers’ semantics more generally, arguing that they encode information about the speaker’s propositional attitude. After that, I look at the distribution of these markers from a diachronic perspective in §5 – are there any changes in distribution between Homer and, for instance, Aristophanes? Do the different markers increase or decrease in popularity? After taking a look at these and related questions, finally, I formulate my conclusions (§6).

1. **Earlier accounts**

*Áge* (< *ágein*, ‘to lead’), *íthi* (< *iénai*, ‘to go’) and *phére* (< *phérein*, ‘to carry’ or ‘to bring’), are all second-person singular present imperative markers of their respective verbs.According to the authoritative *LSJ* dictionary[[7]](#footnote-7), all three can appear as “adverbs of encouragement” and can, as stated, be translated as ‘come (on)!’. In addition, the authors of the *LSJ* draw an explicit parallel between *áge* and *phére*,which points to the fact that they found them to be somehow related.[[8]](#footnote-8) Although these remarks are highly succinct and entirely pre-theoretical, they indicate that these unusual tokens of ubiquitous verbs were deserving of special attention (and, in the case of *áge* and *íthi*, even separate entries in a dictionary).

Biraud’s (2010: 25-42) analysis is mostly synchronic. She argues that these imperatives should be considered ‘interjections’ in the works of the tragic playwrights and Aristophanes, and that they were derived through a process of desemanticization (2010: 247). She points out that these imperatives can co-occur with verbs in the first and second person singular and plural, and with the third person singular.[[9]](#footnote-9) On her analysis, the imperative should be considered an interjection if it is located in clause-internal position and/or it co-occurs asyndetically with another verb, as in (4) (2010: 27):

1. *sú* *dé* *tí*, *phére*, *prós* *taûta* *lékseis*;

you PART what come to-PREP these-things you-will-say

(Aristophanes, *Frogs* 993)

[The chorus is asking Aeschylus for his reaction:] “Come now, what will you say to that?”

From a semantic point of view, Biraud proposes a distinction between *áge* and *íthi* on the one hand, and *phére* on the other. The first two are related to the Greek notion of *noûs* (‘mind’), while *phére* can be linked to the notion of *thumós* (‘spirit’). On the basis of this opposition, which, on her view, can be found in other areas of Greek thinking, she concludes that *áge* and *íthi* incite the hearer(s) to action, and use of *phére* to reflection (2010: 30).[[10]](#footnote-10)

The most glaring problem with Biraud’s account, besides her assumption of a fanciful *noûs-thumós* opposition in Greek thought (for which she cites no evidence), seems to be the fact that the distribution of these forms in Homer does not fit into her analysis. Although Homer does not form part of her corpus, a quick glance at the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would have demonstrated that there are exactly zero instances of *phére* in Homer (see also Table 1 *infra*). On Biraud’s account, this would mean that there are only calls to action (and not reflection) with these imperatives in Homer. Yet there are several instances of quasi-equivalent utterances containing *áge* in Homer and *phére* in, for example, Plato:

1. *All’* *áge* *moi* *tóde* *eipé* *tí* *toi* *phresín* *eídetai* *eînai*

but come to-me this tell-IMP what to-you for-midriff it-is-seen to-be

(Homer, *Iliad* XXIV.197)

[A messenger from Zeus has told Priam to collect the corpse of his son Hector from Achilles. He is asking his wife Hecuba for advice:] “But come, tell me this, how seemeth it to thy mind?”

1. *Phére* *dē* *moi* *tóde* *eipé*· *kaleîs* *ti* *alēthē* *légein* *kaí* *pseudē?*

Come PART to-me this tell-IMP you-call something true to-say and false

(Plato, *Cratylus* 385b2-3)

[Socrates and Hermogenes are discussing the naming of concepts. Socrates asks:] “Come, answer this question. Is there anything which you call speaking the truth and speaking falsehood?”[[11]](#footnote-11)

(5) and (6) are almost identical, save for the addition of the particle *dē*, for which Plato has a certain fondness.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, *dē* can also mark *íthi* in Plato and *áge* in Homer (cf. examples (1) above and (26) below), for instance, and, hence, cannot be considered a pointer to *phére*’s function exclusively.

Instances like (5) and (6), and the general fact that there are no examples of *phére* in Homer, seem to present insurmountable obstacles to Biraud’s analysis. However, I think Biraud makes several good points – as I will try to show later on, her distinction between *áge*/*íthi* and *phére*, in particular,seems to be warranted, albeit in a different sense than she intended.

Fedriani et al. (2012; see also Fedriani & Ghezzi 2014[[13]](#footnote-13)), as stated above, take a more diachronic perspective than Biraud. They have nothing to say about *íthi*, but only discuss *phére* and (mostly) *áge*. The main thrust of their argument is that these imperatives form part of a larger, cross-linguistic pattern of grammaticalized imperatives which “have gradually acquired a functional, (inter-)subjective and meta-textual value.” All of the resulting markers are derived from verbs of movement and exchange; in certain linguistic contexts, imperative forms of these types of verbs lose their original meaning in favor of a more abstract meaning:

“It is fairly safe to assume that from the idea of proceeding across space there gradually emerged the idea of ‘proceeding to do something’, thereby fostering the metaphorical mapping of urging somebody toward a location and therefore, figuratively speaking, toward an action that is to be accomplished.” (Fedriani & Ghezzi 2014: 123)

In this sense, they argue that *áge* (and *phére*, although it is treated only in passing) developed meaning at the interpersonal level of discourse, helping the speaker “handle social relationships among interlocutors, with a view to saving the face and to softening the speaker’s commitment with regard to a request that is felt as too rude, compromising, or intruding” (cf. also Fedriani & Ghezzi 2014: 123). On this view, then, *áge* and, by extension, *phére* (although Fedriani et al. are not explicit on this count) are conversational mitigators in Fraser’s (1980) sense, and have to do with politeness as it is construed by Brown & Levinson (1987).

Although I think that Fedriani et al. are very much on the right track, especially in their views on how these imperatives developed from their original meaning to their meaning as markers, there are some holes in their analysis. For one, they provide a synchronic account, focusing their analysis on Aristophanes’ comedies exclusively. In this paper, I will attempt to provide a diachronic account by looking at other stages of the language to see whether there are any (inter)changes in function between the different markers as they develop over time.

Secondly, Fedriani et al. do not make any functional distinction between *áge* and *phére*, as far as I can tell. This would seem to clash with Cruse’s principle of semantic contrast (1986: 271), under which “in the majority of cases a lexical item must, in some respects at least, be different in meaning from any of its cogntive synonyms” (cf. Hansen 2002: 515). As I will try to demonstrate later on, the forms can be distinguished on the basis of their distribution, i.e. according to *morphosyntactic* criteria – but Fedriani et al. make no claim either way and assume that *áge* and *phére* are simply synonyms.

Finally, and related to this point, is the fact that Fedriani et al. do not take *íthi* into account. *Íthi* appears quite often in Aristophanes (see Table 1 *infra*) – although its meaning is often slightly different from the other imperatives under consideration (‘go’ as opposed to ‘come’), this distinction is mostly relevant for Homer and has become largely blurred by Aristophanes’ time. Moreover, as a verb of movement which has grammaticalized, it would surely have deserved some attention from Fedriani et al.

Summing up, there have been some fruitful explorations of the grammaticalized imperatives which are under consideration here. However, there are still some obvious points for improvement, which this paper will tackle in an attempt to give a more subtle and nuanced analysis of (the evolution of) these markers. In what follows, I will provide an analysis of grammaticalized *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* from a diachronic perspective, focusing on the following time frames:

* Homer: 8th century BC
* Tragedy (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides): 5th century BC
* Aristophanes: end of 5th century-beginning of 4th century BC
* Plato: 4th century BC

I will discuss the distribution of the markers across these authors in order to tease out any diachronic shifts.[[14]](#footnote-14) First, however, I want to take a closer look at the structural and semantic traits of these markers. If they have indeed been grammaticalized, this does not tell the whole story – grammaticalization consists of a number of related processes, not all of which are relevant to *áge*, *íthi* and *phére*. Which of these processes have the imperatives undergone, and what does that tell us about their evolution and function?

1. ***Áge*, *íthi* and *phére* as grammaticalized imperatives**

There are some traditional grammaticalization criteria which apply unequivocally to *áge*, *íthi* and *phére*. I will first turn to the syntactic-structural criteria (§3.1) before turning to their semantic features (§3.2).

* 1. The structural criteria

As pointed out by Biraud (2010: 27) and Fedriani et al. (2012), these markers have ossified in the second person singular – that is to say, they invariably occur in the second person singular, even when they are used to address more than one person (cf. also Brinton (2005: 291) and Traugott (1995: 2)):

1. *all’ áge moi* ***dóte*** *nēa thoēn kaí eíkos’ hetaírous*

but come for-me give-IMP.2pl ship pointed and twenty friends

(Homer, *Odyssey* II.212)

[Telemachus, Odysseus’ son, is asking his mother’s wooers for resources to go look for his father:] “But come, give me a swift ship and twenty comrades […]”

1. *íthi nun*, *katathémenoi par’ emoí taût’* ***eísite***

come now after-having-put-down with-PREP for-me these-things go-in-IMP.2pl

*epí deîpnon hōs tákhista*

to-PREP meal like most-quickly

(Aristophanes, *Peace* 1207-8)

[A sickle maker is offering Trygaeus sickles and casks as wedding gifts. Trygaeus reacts:] “Come, put them all down inside there, and come along quick to the banquet.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

1. *phére*, *opósoi thermón* *kaí psukhrón ē tine dúo toioutō tá pant’*

come as-many-as warm and cold or some two of-this-kind ART all

*eînai phate tí pote ára toût’ ep’ amphoîn* ***phthéggesthe***

to-be you-say-2pl what at-some-time PART this to-PREP both you-say.2pl

(Plato, *Sophist* 243d8-e2)

[The stranger and Theaetetus are discussing what ‘being’ is:] “Come now, all you who say that hot and cold or any two such principles are the universe, what is this that you attribute to both of them […]?”

The previous examples demonstrate that these forms have decategorialized – the verbs have lost the ability to take complements in (7)-(9) (Brinton 2005: 291; Company Company 2006: 100). This ties in with the observation that these grammaticalized forms coexist with imperative forms which have retained their original, non-grammaticalized form – i.e., that there is layering here (Hopper 1991: 22-24). As such, the criterion of divergence is involved as well (Brinton 2005: 292; Hopper 1991: 22):

1. *mē me paréks áge nēa, diotrefés*

not me outside-of-PREP lead ship fostered-by-Zeus-VOC

 (Homer, *Odyssey* XV.199)

[Telemachus, who is on a chariot led by Peisistratus, is asking him to drop him off at his ship:] “Lead me not past my ship, O thou fostered of Zeus”.

1. *All’ íthi khaírōn*

But go being-happy

*tēs andreías hoúneka taútēs*

 ART of-courage because-of-PREP this

 (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 510-1)

 [The chorus is praising Strepsiades, an older man who is now studying with Socrates:] “Well, go in peace, for the sake of this your valour […]”

1. *mâllon dé oudén deî, allá phére, paî, fánai, tón psuktēra ekeînon*

rather PART nothing it-is-necessary, but bring, child-VOC to-say ART cooler this

(Plato, *Symposium* 213e11-12)

[Agathon, the host of the symposium, is ordering a servant to bring more drinks:] “Ah well, do not trouble,” he said; “boy, bring me that cooler there”.

In (10), *áge* takes the direct object *me*; in (11), *íthi* is modified by the participle *khaírōn*[[16]](#footnote-16); and in (12), *phére* takes the direct object *tón psuktēra*. In all three cases, in short, the imperatives are non-decategorialized.

Finally, as already indicated by Biraud (2010: 27), and as evidenced by examples (1)-(9), these forms co-occur asyndetically with other verbs (i.e., the verb of the clause to which the grammaticalized imperatives are connected asyndetically). Although this does not point to grammaticalization *per se*, it does demonstrate that these forms must have no longer been regarded as predicates.

This last point is important. As an asyndetic add-on to the clause, it would seem that *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* cannot be considered to be grammaticalized as straightforwardly as, for example, tense markers are. While elements which have traditionally been considered grammaticalized are characterized by so-called ‘obligatoriness’, the markers under consideration here become syntactically detached and optional. ‘Obligatoriness’ is one of the six grammaticalization criteria proposed in the seminal work of Lehmann (1985) – yet only two of them seem to apply to these markers (and one of these properties needs to be heavily qualified). The other five are as follows:

(a) Condensation: grammaticalized items are usually defined by a decrease in scope (i.e., they function at the subpropositional level); however, these imperatives seem to *expand* their scope – they no longer operate as verbs, but modify the proposition as a whole.

(b) Paradigmaticization: none of the markers under consideration become part of a tightly constrained morphological paradigm, as grammaticalized items are wont to do.

(c) Coalescence: grammaticalized elements tend to be syntagmatically dependent on neighboring items; none of the imperatives here can be said to be any less than syntagmatically fully independent.

(d) Fixation: this parameter has to do with an item’s freedom of movement. The more its position becomes grammatically fixed, the more that item can be considered grammaticalized. Although *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* can occur non-clause-initially, they have a clear predilection for clause-initial position. As a result, this parameter could be judged to be relevant to these imperatives. However, pragmatic markers have a tendency to appear initially in many European languages (Schourup 1999: 233) – as such, their preference for clause-initial position is not entirely unexpected.[[17]](#footnote-17)

(e) Attrition: grammaticalization usually goes hand in hand with both phonological and conceptual attrition – a grammaticalized item will lose its phonological integrity, and its original meaning will become ‘bleached’ in favor of another, more ‘pragmatic’ (or abstract) meaning. As Biraud (2010: 247) notes, these markers have obviously become desemanticized – from a semantic point of view, this criterion would, then, certainly seem to apply. As to phonological attrition, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions here – we are dealing with a dead language for which we have little to no tangible phonological evidence. But there are clues which seem to point in the direction of phonological attrition, for *áge* in Homer at least:

1. *eíp’ áge m’ ō polúain’ Oduseû méga kûdos Akhaiōn*

tell-IMP come me INT much-praised Odysseus big renown of-the-Achaeans

*ē r’ ethélei nēessin aleksémenai dēïon pûr*

or PART he-wants for-ships to-ward-off hostile fire

(Homer, *Iliad* IX.673-4)

[Agamemnon is asking Odysseus whether Achilles will fight with them:] “Come, tell me now, Odysseus, greatly to be praised, thou great glory of the Achaeans, is he minded to ward off consuming fire from the ships […]?”

In the above example, it would seem that *áge* is located in second position, the so-called ‘Wackernagel’ position, named for Wackernagel’s Law (Wackernagel 1892). Wackernagel’s Law relates to enclitic items, i.e. items which rely on the preceding word for their accent – they form a single phonological unit with the preceding word. These elements tend to gravitate towards second position (P2) in the clause in Ancient Greek (and many other languages) – P2 is a prosodically ‘weak’ spot after the prosodically ‘strong’ slot which opens a clause (Hopper & Traugott 2003²: 144; Janse 1993, 2008).[[18]](#footnote-18) This tendency can result in so-called ‘dual citizenship’, where an enclitic depends on the word in first position phonologically, but on a different constituent syntactically (Klavans 1985: 104; Spencer & Luís 2012: 15). In (13), *me* (elided to *m’*) is an enclitic personal pronoun, and *eipé* is the prosodically ‘strong’ item located in first position. This means that *áge* must be part of the prosodically weak material in P2 – in Ancient Greek, enclitics are wont to cluster in second position (cf. Wills 1993).[[19]](#footnote-19)

This is not to say that *áge* has become an enclitic – it has a clear predilection for *first* position, i.e. a prosodically prominent position, in Homer as well as the other authors considered in this paper. There are only 5 instances of *áge* in second position in Homer, including (13), and all occur with *eipé* in first position.[[20]](#footnote-20) In these instances, then, *áge* may have undergone phonological attrition and may have become somewhat similar to an enclitic.

In conclusion, these imperatives do not seem to fit in a traditional approach to grammaticalization – only two of the conventional parameters associated with grammaticalization are (arguably) relevant to *áge*, *íthi* and *phére*.

In this sense, they can be considered part of a larger debate in contemporary grammaticalization research. Scholars have pointed out that pragmatic markers across languages do not grammaticalize in the same way as purely grammatical items do – as Waltereit (2006: 74) puts it, there are “differences in diachronic recruitment between [pragmatic markers] and grammatical items” (cf. also Eckardt 2006: 48). A related yet distinct process called ‘pragmaticalization’ has been postulated which would explain the diachronic derivation of pragmatic markers from their source constructions (Aijmer 1997; Waltereit 2006; Hansen 2008: 55-64; see also the discussion in Eckardt 2006: 47-50). According to Hansen (2008: 58), pragmaticalization should not be regarded as “a subtype of grammaticalization, but rather the result of only partially identical kinds of changes”.
This is not the place to get into the specifics of the ongoing debate whether pragmaticalization is a separate process or only a subtype of grammaticalization (cf. Diewald 2011). However, it would seem an incontrovertible fact that the *end product* of (would-be) pragmaticalization is sufficiently distinct from the end product of conventional grammaticalization as to warrant a discrete label at the very least (cf. Aijmer 1997: 2). The function of pragmatic markers like *indeed*, *in fact* (Traugott 1995) and *after all* (Blakemore 1987) is unmistakably different from morphosyntactic items like tense markers.[[21]](#footnote-21) As such, then, it is obvious that *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* have undergone some changes which are conventionally correlated with the structural processes underlying grammaticalization: ossification of form, decategorialization and divergence all apply to these markers. However, other structural processes were found to be irrelevant (and sometimes even diametrically opposed) to the evolution and characteristics of these markers. As such, it would be better to label these imperatives ‘pragmaticalized’ instead of ‘grammaticalized’ (leaving aside the matter of whether pragmaticalization is a distinct diachronic process or a subtype of grammaticalization).[[22]](#footnote-22)

From a semantic point of view, as from a syntactic point of view, pragmatic markers are optional – they are non-truth-conditional. In the next section, I will take a closer look at the semantics of the pragmaticalized imperatives under consideration here, and how they fit in with a pragmaticalization analysis.

* 1. The semantic criteria

A central semantic feature of pragmatic markers is that they are non-truth-conditional.[[23]](#footnote-23) This is brought out by a deletion test (see e.g. Frank-Job 2006: 366; Bazzanella et al. 2007: 11) – the truth conditions of the host utterance do not change if *áge*, *íthi* or *phére* are left out:

1. *Phére logōn hapsōmeth’ állōn.*

Come of-the-words let-us-touch other

(Euripides, *Ion* 544)

[Ion is talking to his stepfather Xuthus:] “Come, let us touch on some other topic.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

1. *All’ íthi, éphē, peíthou kaí mē állōs poíei*

But come he-said obey-IMP and not otherwise do-IMP

(Plato, *Phaedo* 117a3)

[Socrates is trying to convince Crito that it is time for him (Socrates) to die:] ““Come,” he said, “do as I ask and do not refuse.”

In both cases, the circumstances under which the proposition would be true, do not change – if *phére* is left out in (15), Ion still wants to touch on another topic and will only be satisfied if Xuthus complies; in (16), leaving out *íthi* does not change the fact that Socrates wants his interlocutor to do as he asks. Now, of course, the question becomes what these markers *do* contribute to, if not to truth conditions.

When an item pragmaticalizes, that process usually goes hand in hand with several semantic processes. These have traditionally all been subsumed under the umbrella term ‘bleaching’, but, as Hansen (2008: 58) points out, this is a misnomer:

“While it is undeniable that lexemes and constructions gradually lose concrete, truth-conditional content as they develop marker functions, these losses are offset by corresponding gains in “pragmatic” import, i.e. contextualizing potential.”

Traugott (1988) also points out that pragmatic markers do not just lose (concrete) meaning, but gain (abstract) meaning (in a process she calls ‘pragmatic strengthening’). In Traugott’s & Dasher’s (2002: 40) popular model, semantic change (including but not limited to pragmaticalization) usually goes hand in hand not only with an evolution from truth-conditional to non-truth-conditional meaning, but also from conceptual to procedural meaning and non-subjective to subjective or intersubjective meaning.[[25]](#footnote-25) Let’s look at each of these in turn.

* + 1. Conceptual > procedural

The conceptual/procedural distinction is derived from relevance theory (Wilson & Sperber 1993; Sperber & Wilson 1995²; Blakemore 2002), where it is conceived as the fundamental distinction in semantics. Linguistic items can encode either conceptual or procedural information (or both, cf. De Saussure 2011: 65). ‘Conceptual’ refers to those linguistic items which form the building blocks of the utterance, the elements which together form a conceptual representation in the hearer’s mind – words like *tree*, *buy* and *gladly* are all conceptual. ‘Procedural’, on the other hand, refers to linguistic items which help the hearer perform computations *over* those conceptual representations, by guiding the hearer down certain inferential paths (Clark 2013: 312; Wilson & Sperber 1993: 10). *So*, for instance, instructs the hearer to take its host utterance as an implication of what was said previously (Blakemore 1988); *but* encodes a different constraint, indicating that its host utterance denies an expectation which was implied in the previous utterance (Blakemore 2002). Conceptual items are taken to be easy to bring to consciousness (it is easy to bring a mental image of a tree to mind, for example), while procedural items cannot be ‘unpacked’ in this sense (see the discussion in Curcó 2011).

From a diachronic point of view, relevance theory assumes that items move from conceptual to procedural meaning (Nicolle 1997; 1998; 2011), a view shared by, as stated, Traugott & Dasher (2002: 40), but also Hansen (2008: 67-8). At first, procedural and conceptual meaning can co-exist in the same item – the procedural meaning will be primary but the conceptual meaning will lie dormant “with the potential to give rise to a conceptual representation” (Nicolle 1998: 16). Over the course of time, the item loses its conceptual potential and becomes exclusively procedural in nature.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The conceptual > procedural evolution is probably what Fedriani et al. (2012; cf. also Fedriani & Ghezzi: 118, 122) and Biraud (2010: 247) have in mind when they discuss the ‘desemanticization’ of *áge*, *íthi* and *phére*. It is easy to see why – the original meaning of these imperatives seems to have disappeared entirely in the following examples:

1. *All’ áge diogenés Patróklees* ***éksage*** *koúrēn*

But come sprung-from-Zeus Patroclus lead-out-IMP girl

*kaí sphōïn dós ágein*

and for-both give-IMP to-lead

(Homer, *Iliad* I.337-8)

[Agamemnon’s messengers have arrived at Achilles’ tent to take Briseis away. Achilles tells Patroclus to give them the girl:] “But come, Patroclus, sprung from Zeus, bring forth the girl, and give her to them to lead away.”

1. *Íthi nun*  ***katábēth’****, ō Sōkratídion, hōs emé,*

Come now go-down-IMP INT little-Socrates to me

*hína me didáksēis hōnper hoúneka elēlutha.*

so-that me you-teach of-which-REL because-of-PREP I-have-come

(Aristophanes, *Clouds* 237-8)

[Socrates is talking about the heavens from a basket suspended above the stage. Strepsiades tries to get him to come down:] “Come then, my little Socrates, descend to me, that you may teach me those things, for the sake of which I have come.”

1. *phér’, hoîa dē ‘khō kaí dómoi keúthousí mou*

Come as-much-as PART I-have and house they-hide of-me

*kómēs agálmat’* ***eksenégkōmen****, phílai,* […]

of-hair ornaments let-us-bring-out friends-VOC

(Euripides, *Electra* 870-1)

[Electra has just heard of the death of Aegisthus, who had murdered her father Agamemnon. She is rejoicing while in the presence of the chorus:] “Come, let me bring out whatever adornment for hair that I have and my house contains, friends, […]”

In all three cases presented here, the imperative markers co-occur with a verb in the host utterance which is quasi-synonymous to its original meaning (in bold in the examples). In (17), *éksage* (‘to bring/lead out’) is a compound verb of *ágein*; in (18), *katábēthi* is a compound verb of *baínein*, which is synonymous with *iénai*, the infinitive of *íthi* (both mean ‘to go’); in (19), *eksenégkōmen* (‘to bring out’) is a compound verb of *phérein*. As such, the conceptual meanings of the markers do not make sense here, as they already reside in the semantics of the main verbs of the utterance.

* + 1. Non-subjective > (inter)subjective

Semantic meaning tends to evolve towards (inter)subjectivity as well. This means that original meanings come to encode speaker attitude towards the proposition or his interlocutor (subjectivity), or information about the relationship between speaker and hearer (intersubjectivity) – as such, subjectivity is speaker-oriented, while intersubjectivity is addressee-oriented (Traugott & Dasher 2002: 6; Traugott 2010: 35, 60). Subjective meaning can involve “responses, reactions, attitudes, understanding, tentativeness, or continued attention”; intersubjective markers can express “intimacy, cooperation, shared knowledge, deference, or face-saving (politeness)” (Brinton 2008: 18). *I mean*, in its parenthetical sense (‘*I mean*, it’s a difficult question, right?’),is an example of a subjective marker, according to Schiffrin (1987: 299), as it is employed when the speaker wants to focus attention on himself. *Look*, on the other hand, as in ““*Look*”, he said, deciding to trust her, “can I tell you something?””, seems to “[function] as an appeal to the listener to pay attention to (‘listen carefully to me when I say …’), accept the premise of (‘believe me when I say …’), or perform the action requested in the following proposition” (Brinton 2001: 177, 180) – in other words, it seems to function as an intersubjective marker.

Fedriani et al. (2012) argue that *áge* encodes intersubjective meaning (cf. also Fedriani & Ghezzi 2014: 118) – it encourages the hearer to “take the floor” or is added in order to avoid “possible face-threatening conflicts” between speaker and hearer (id.: 123, 127); Biraud’s (2010) account, with its emphasis on ‘incitation’ and, hence, speaker-hearer interaction, would seem to share that sentiment.

It would certainly seem that these accounts are warranted. However, I would argue that they are also somewhat underdeveloped, and that a more expansive analysis should focus even more on the role of *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* as (im)politeness markers. In the next subsection, I want to present my own analysis of the semantics of these expressions. In many ways, it will be quite close to Fedriani et al.’s (2012) and Biraud’s (2010) account. However, I want to tie some disparate theoretical threads together, including insights gleaned from illocutionary act theory (Searle & Vanderveken 1985; Vanderveken 1998), and Brown & Levinson’s politeness theory (1987). On the resulting view, *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* will still be procedural, intersubjective pragmatic markers – but in a different sense. I believe that this approach will give us a more detailed picture of what these markers do, and what they add to the discourse.

1. **The semantics of *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* revisited**

In the previous paragraph, *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* were found to be pragmatic markers, modifying the interpretation of their host utterance in a non-truth-conditional way, most likely as procedural and intersubjective markers. In this paragraph, I want to get into the details of their meaning and function.

*Áge*, *íthi* and *phére* co-occur asyndetically with directive illocutionary acts in an overwhelming number of instances.[[27]](#footnote-27) This may seem obvious, but it is important to make this explicit – imperatives (see e.g. ex. 17), hortative subjunctives (ex. 18) and questions (ex. 9) all perform the same, directive illocutionary act, i.e., getting the addressee to do or say something by making a request (Bach & Harnish 1979: 47). In traditional accounts of illocutionary force, illocution is a function of the speaker’s propositional attitude – an illocutionary act “expresses (or manifests) mental states of certain psychological modes about the state of affairs represented by the propositional content” (Vanderveken 1998: 181). On this view, directive utterances express desirability – that is, a propositional attitude by which the speaker expresses his desire that the hearer does or says what is expressed in the proposition (Searle & Vanderveken 1985: 18; Bach & Harnish 1979: 48; also Wilson & Sperber 1998: 274, 286).

Of course, *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* were originally imperatives, i.e. imbued with directive illocutionary force, as well. Given the fact that they are used with otherdirective utterances, it would seem plausible that at least *some* of the original directive sense should have remained throughout the pragmaticalization process.[[28]](#footnote-28) Put differently, it is reasonable to expect that these markers would express something of the propositional attitude tied to directive utterances – that is to say, of the sense of ‘desirability’ which is key to any interpretation of directives. In that sense, these markers would harmonize with their host utterances, which is surely the explanation behind their widespread tendency to appear with imperatives, hortatives and questions. At the same time, all three imperatives have lost their original, concrete meaning, as examples (16) through (18) demonstrated. So what has happened to their meaning?

The key lies in politeness, or, more to the point, *im*politeness. As Huang notes (2007: 117), directive utterances are prime examples of speech acts which are liable to “threaten negative face”. In Brown & Levinson’s (1987: 65) work on politeness, acts which “put some pressure on [the hearer] to do (or refrain from doing)” a certain action, threaten the interlocutor’s negative face, i.e. their freedom of action. Speakers will attempt to avoid threatening their hearers’ negative face, but requests (i.e., imperatives, hortatives and questions) run contrary to that desire.[[29]](#footnote-29) The speaker is presented with a dilemma: does his desire to get his addressee to do or say something trump his desire to maintain his addressee’s face? Usually, the speaker will have recourse to negative politeness strategies, lessening the impact of the face-threatening act (FTA). He will still attempt to get the hearer to perform the action, but will do so in a non-straightforward fashion by “minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects” (Huang 2007: 129) – in other words, the speaker will mitigate the ‘directness’ of the directive by using linguistic resources available to him (cf. Fraser 1980; Caffi 1999). Conventional examples include hedges which “function directly as notices of violations of face wants”, such as *frankly* and *I hate to have to say this, but…* (Brown & Levinson 1987: 171), or giving the interlocutor the option not to do what the speaker is asking him to do (id.: 172) – familiar examples are *if you have the time* or*,* more archaically, *if it pleases you*.

In the case of mitigation, the degree of strength of the illocutionary point is modified (cf. Holmes 1984; Sbisà 2001; Thaler 2012). As Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 15) put it,

“Different illocutionary acts often achieve the same illocutionary point with different degrees of strength. For example, if I *request* someone to do something my attempt to get him to do it is less strong than if I *insist* that he do it.”

In the case of hedges, then, the degree of strength of the illocutionary point is weakened. Thaler (2012: 913-4) points out that this does not mean that the speaker’s “desire actually is weaker (it can even be very strong despite the fact that he uses mitigation devices), but only that it is expressed with a lesser degree of strength. The actual psychological state of the speaker can differ from the one expressed”. The speaker could desire the requested act very strongly, but express his desire less strongly due to considerations of negative face.

Are *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* hedges, that is, mitigators of illocutionary degree of strength? Fedriani et al. (2012) seem to think so, as pointed out above – according to them, these markers are face-saving, “softening the speaker’s commitment with regard to a request that is felt as too rude, compromising, or intruding” (cf. Fedriani & Ghezzi 2014: 123). However, they give no evidence that this is the case. Indeed, it seems more likely that these markers would do the *opposite* – i.e., boost the degree of strength of the illocutionary point. Why would conceptual imperatives be recruited in a procedural sense as hedges? Direct imperatives are a characteristic example of what Brown & Levinson (1987: 95) call a ‘bald-on-record’ politeness strategy – they are only used in contexts where the speaker is not concerned with his interlocutor’s face, and is looking for maximum efficiency and communicative frugality in expressing his desire. It would seem strange that this type of expression evolves into a mitigator – at the very least, it would warrant a detailed analysis, which Fedriani et al. (2012) do not provide. They would also have to find an explanation for instances like the following:

1. *Ei d’ áge mēn peírēsai hína gnōōsi kaí oîde*·

*aîpsá toi haîma kelainón erōēsei perí dourí.*

(Homer, *Iliad* I.302-3)

[Agamemnon has ordered Achilles to give back the girl he took as loot. Achilles reacts:] “Come, just try, so that these too may know: forthwith will your dark blood flow forth about my spear.”

1. [Oedipus has entered the scene and starts talking to Creon:] “You, how did you get here? Are you so boldfaced that you have come to my house, you who are manifestly the murderer of its master, the palpable thief of its crown?”

*Phér’ eipé prós theōn, deilían ē mōrían*

*idōn tin’ én moi taût’ ebouleúsō poeîn?*

(Sophocles, *Oedipus King* 536-7)

“Come, tell me, in the name of the gods, was it cowardice or folly which you saw in me and which led you to plot this thing?”

[He continues:] “Did you think that I would not notice this deed of yours creeping upon me by stealth, or that if I became aware of it I would not ward it off? Is your attempt not foolish, to seek the throne without followers or friends—a prize which followers and wealth must win?”

1. [An Athenian ambassador to the Persian king has promised to provide Dicaeopolis with gold. Dicaeopolis is not convinced:] “Thou are but a great braggart; but get your way; I will find out the truth by myself.”

 *áge dē sú, phráson emoí saphōs prós toutoní,*

 *hína mē se bápsō bámma Sardianikón*

 (Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 111-2)

 “Come now, answer me clearly, if you do not wish me to dye your skin red.”

 [He continues:] “Will the Great King send us gold?”

It is very difficult to regard any of these contexts as expressing some sort of mitigation.[[30]](#footnote-30) Both (19) and (21) are examples of threats – mitigating a threat seems to defeat the purpose of uttering the threat in the first place. In (20), Oedipus is obviously angry with Creon, whom he suspects of having bribed a seer to finger him as the murderer of his father. Given this context, and the accusatory and insulting tone of the rest of the utterance (*deilían*, ‘cowardice’, and *mōrían*, ‘folly’ are not spoken lightly), it would be very strange for *phére* to mitigate the force of the proposition here as well.

There are other linguistic hints which would complicate a ‘mitigator’ interpretation. In Plato, the oath *prós Diós* (‘by Zeus’)can be used with the pragmaticalized imperatives:

1. *Phére dē prós Diós: pōs pote en tōi toioútōi sé mâllon edóksazon ē állon hontinoûn?*

(Plato, *Theaetetus* 209b2-3)

[Socrates and Theaetetus are discussing whether one can know more about a single person than one can know about people in general. Socrates asks:] “For heaven's sake! How in the world could I in that case have any opinion about you more than about anyone else?”

Sommerstein (2014: 239) argues that this oath “is not designed to diminish but to enhance the force of the statement to which it is attached”. As such, its co-occurrence with *phére* would make no sense if these markers were indeed mitigators – in that case, *phére* and *prós Diós* would cancel each other out.[[31]](#footnote-31) (23), from Aristophanes, can be approached in the same way:

1. *Ō Hērákleis, phére poî tis án*

*trápoito?*

 (Aristophanes, *Wealth* 374-5)

[Chremylus is denying Blepsidemus’ accusations that he has done something wrong. Blepsidemus reacts:] “But, great gods, what am I to think?”

The formula *ō Hērákleis* is used as “as an exclamation of surprise, anger, or disgust” (LSJ dictionary, *s.v.* Ἡρακλέης) – again, it would be entirely unexpected if *phére* were a mitigator in an utterance with this type of interjection.

The final piece of linguistic evidence I want to discuss is *antibolō se*, which can be translated as ‘I entreat you’ or ‘I supplicate you’. It is used only in Aristophanes with *áge* (once) and *íthi* (six times):

1. *Íth’, antibolō s’, eléēson autōn tēn ópa,*

*epeí se kaí timōsi mâllon ē pró toû*

(Aristophanes, *Peace* 400-1)

[Hermes has been ordered by Zeus to report on the person who has delivered peace between Athens and Sparta, so he can be put to death. Trygaeus asks for mercy:] “Have mercy, mercy, [I entreat you], let yourself be touched by their words; never was your worship so dear to them as to-day.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

As Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 19) put it, a speaker who begs “expresses a stronger desire than if he merely requests” – in other words, if a speaker makes explicit that he’s begging, he’s formulating his request more strongly. Begging usually involves some sense of urgency or desperation (as it does here – Trygaeus does not want to die), which are characteristic of Brown & Levinson’s ‘bald-on-record’ politeness strategies (1987: 95), i.e. strategies where mitigation is felt to be unimportant. As in examples (22) and (24), a ‘mitigator’ interpretation for *íthi* in (25) would be inconsistent with the presence of another marker in the utterance.

Even in the face of this evidence, it could be argued that *áge*, *íthi* and *phére do* function as hedges if they occurred in certain conversational contexts – more specifically, in contexts where the speaker is socially inferior to his interlocutor. In these cases, the speaker would like to get his addressee to do something, but would mitigate his request due to the social distance between himself and his interlocutor, or their asymmetrical relative power (Brown & Levinson 1987: 74). While this does happen (see e.g. ex. 24), it is certainly not set in stone, and the reverse happens as well:

1. *All’ áge hoi stóreson pukinón lékhos, Eurúkleia,*

*ektós eüstathéos thalámou, tón r’ autos epoíei.*

(Homer, *Odyssey* XXIII.177-8)

[Odysseus has just revealed himself as Odysseus to his wife Penelope. She reacts as follows to Euryclea, the wet-nurse of Odysseus and his son:] “Yet come, Eurycleia, strew for him the stout bedstead outside the well-built bridal chamber which he made himself.”

Penelope, Odysseus’ wife and hence the queen of Ithaca and the palace where this scene is set, uses *phére* when issuing a command to the wet-nurse Euryclea. She has more relative power than Euryclea, and there is considerable social distance between them – as such, a mitigator would be entirely out of place here (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987: 97).[[33]](#footnote-33) It would seem, then, that this parameter is irrelevant to the use of these markers. In general, the evidence seems stacked against the ‘mitigation’ interpretation. I would argue that these markers, in fact, have the *opposite* function – they ‘boost’ the illocutionary degree of strength (cf. Holmes 1984; Sbisà 2001: 1799).[[34]](#footnote-34)

The case is pretty straightforward. The psychological state which underlies the use of *áge*, *íthi* or *phére* is not just that the speaker wants the hearer to say or do something; that can be inferred from the use of the imperative, hortative subjunctive or question. What the pragmaticalized imperatives express is, simply put, that the speaker *really* wants his interlocutor to say or do something. [[35]](#footnote-35) In effect, the extent of the speaker’s desire for his interlocutor to say or do something is expressed by one of the pragmaticalized imperatives (cf. Thaler 2012: 913). The inclusion of, for example, *áge*,indicates that the speaker is more committed to his desire for the interlocutor to say or do something than if he had *not* added *áge*. Hence, its procedural function lies in ‘boosting’ the degree of strength of the illocutionary force of the utterance.[[36]](#footnote-36) *Áge* (or any of the markers under consideration)would, then, encode procedural information about the speaker’s propositional attitude, i.e. the speaker’s belief that the proposition marked by *áge* is very desirable. In that sense, they “do not modify the content of the sentence but instead characterize the act of uttering it”, but instead “comment on some aspect of the speech act being performed in the utterance of the matrix sentence” (Bach 1999: 328; see also Brinton (2008: 4-5)).[[37]](#footnote-37)

In a sense, then, these imperatives’ directivity has been pragmaticalized (cf. also Fedriani & Ghezzi 2014: 122). Yet their original conceptual meaning also leaves its traces. The semantic generality of these verbs (‘go’, ‘bring’, ‘lead’ can all be used in wide-ranging contexts) made them prime candidates for developing procedural and intersubjective meaning (Company Company 2006: 104; Fedriani & Ghezzi 2014: 117). Vestiges of this ‘movement’ sense can also be found in certain contexts in which these markers appear – they can occur in utterances where the speaker explicitly wants to change the topic of the conversation, i.e. when he wants to *proceed* to another part of the conversation. In these utterances, then, the speaker is asking the hearer to perform a metaphorical ‘discourse’ movement:[[38]](#footnote-38)

1. *Íthi dē kaí tóde episkepsōmetha.*

Come PART and this let-us-inspect

(Plato, *Gorgias* 454c7)

[Having given a defence of his methods, Socrates says that he often asks questions to which the answer is obvious in order to avoid misunderstandings. Gorgias agrees with him, after which Socrates continues:] “Come then, let us consider another point.”

Example (14) above, from Euripides, is quite similar – in both cases, the speaker explicitly makes a request for a transition to a new topic.

At the end of the day, it is important to underline that we are dealing with a dead language, and that the ‘booster’ view of these pragmaticalized imperatives could be tweaked, adapted or otherwise adjusted if we had access to native speaker intuition. I *do* hope to have shown, however, that this view is more plausible as a base line for further refinement and debate than the assumption that a 180-degree switch in function (from conceptual imperative to procedural mitigator) has occurred.

However, there is still one outstanding issue. Up until now, I have assumed that there are three expressions which encode the same procedural function. But is this truly the case? In other words, are *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* synonymous, or are there are subtle differences between them? This is what I discuss in the next section.

1. ***Áge*, *íthi* and *phére*: synonyms or not?**

The short answer to these questions is ‘Yes, but’. Let us take a look at distribution of the mood of the verbs with which these markers co-occur (both from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective). Additionally, this table will indicate whether a given author has a preference for a given marker:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Discourse marker* | Homer | Tragedy | Aristophanes | Plato |
| *Áge*  | 148x | 24x | 56x | 8x |
| Predominant mood of co-occurring V (as % of all instances in that author) | 103x w/ **imperative (69.59%)** | 11x w/ **imperative (45.83%)** | 34x w/ **imperative (60.71%)** | 5x w/ **imperative (62.5%)** |
| *Íthi* | 14x | 11x | 45x | 73x |
| Predominant mood of co-occurring V (as % of all instances in that author) | 13x w/ **imperative (92.86%)** | 11x w/ **imperative (100%)** | 41x w/ **imperative (91.11%)** | 55x w/ **imperative (75.34%)** |
| *Phére* | 0x | 41x | 83x | 108x |
| Predominant mood of co-occurring V (as % of all instances in that author) | ------ | 19x w/ **subjunctive (48.72%)**; 16x **w/ imperative (41.03%)** | 52x w/ **subjunctive (62.65%)** | 45x w/ **present indicative (41.67%)**; 29x **w/ subjunctive (26.85%)** |
| Preference for DM per author (as % of instances of DM / total # of DMs in that author) | *áge:* 91.36%*íthi:* 8.64%*phére*: 0% | *áge:* 31.58%*íthi:* 14.47%*phére*: 53.95% | *áge:* 30.43%*íthi:* 24.59%*phére*: 45.36% | *áge:* 4.23%*íthi:* 38.62%*phére*: 57.14% |

Table 1 – Distribution of co-occurring verbs according to mood

There are a few interesting observations to be made here. First of all, *phére*, as mentioned briefly in §2 above, does not occur in Homer. Yet it is the most popular marker of these three in Plato’s works – along with *íthi*, which appears seldom in Homer (and also in a more restricted sense, as we will see). By contrast, *áge* has almost disappeared in Plato, occurring only eight times. In the tragic playwrights and Aristophanes, *phére* has gained traction as well, but *áge* remains quite popular. There is also an increase in instances of *íthi*, especially in Aristophanes (sample size is limited for tragedy).

 Secondly, there is a shift in mood of the verb with which these markers co-occur asyndetically. *Áge* and *íthi* are clearly imperative-oriented in all four *corpora* (although sample size for Plato in particular is severely limited for *áge*) – they both appear most frequently with other imperatives. *Phére*, on the other hand, is *non*-imperative oriented – it occurs mostly with subjunctives and present indicatives, from tragedy onwards until Plato.

Table 1 can be correlated with Table 2, which provides an overview of the type of utterances which are marked by the pragmaticalized imperatives under consideration:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Discourse marker* | Homer | Tragedy | Aristophanes | Plato |
| *Áge*  | 148x | 24x | 56x | 8x |
| Breakdown into host utterance type | (a) Command: 103x [of which 10x + question](b) Hortative: 29x [ of which 2x + question] + 5x ‘pseudo-hortative’[[39]](#footnote-39)(c) 9x statement/promise(d) 2x question | (a) Command: 12x (of which 1x + question)(b) question: 5x(c) hortative: 4x(d) statement: 3x | (a) Command: 38x [of which 3x + question](b) question: 12x(c) hortative: 4x(d) statement/promise: 2x | (a) Command: 5x [of which 2x + question](b) hortative: 2x(c) statement: 1x |
| *Íthi* | 14x | 11x | 45x | 73x |
| Breakdown into host utterance type | (a) Command: 13x(b) Statement/promise: 1x | Command: 11x | (a) Command: 42x [of which 1x + question & 1x hortative as well[[40]](#footnote-40)(b) hortative: 3x | (a) Command: 55x [of which 17x + question](b) Hortative: 15x(c) question: 3x |
| *Phére* | 0x | 41x | 83x | 108x |
| Breakdown into host utterance type | ------ | (a) Hortative: 17x [of which 1x + question](b) Command: 18x [of which 9x + question](c) question: 6x | (a) Hortative: 53x [of which 21x + question; and of which 2x possibly statement[[41]](#footnote-41)] (b) Question: 24x(c) Command: 5x [of which 3x + question](d) 1x both hortative +command | (a) Question: 75x(b) Hortative: 27x [of which 14x + question](c) Command: 5x [of which 3x + question](d) Potentialis statement: 1x |
| Preference for host utterance type per DM per author | *áge:* 69.59% command*íthi:* 92.86% command*phére*: --- | *áge:* 50% command*íthi:* 100% command*phére*: 41.46% hortative; 41.46% command | *áge:* 69.1% command*íthi:* 93.33% command*phére*: 63.86% hortative | *áge:* 62.5% command*íthi:* 75.34% command*phére*: 69.44% question |

Table 2 – Distribution of utterance types marked by pragmaticalized imperatives

Imperatives introduce commands, while subjunctives usually introduce hortative utterances. Intriguingly, *phére* in Plato has a penchant for introducing questions; in the tragic playwrights and Aristophanes, it often marks a hortative utterance. However, many of these hortative utterances are actually indirect questions (21/53 in Aristophanes); conversely, imperatives can introduce indirect questions as well:

1. *Phér’ ídō tí ár’ énestin autóthi.*

Come let-me-see what PART it-is-inside there

(Aristophanes, *Knights* 119)

[Nicias has just returned with an oracle. Demosthenes is dying to see what’s inside:] “Let me see what there is in it.”

1. *Phére gár*

Come for-PART

*sēmain’ hó ti khrē soi sumprássein.*

show-IMP what it-is-necessary for-you to-join-in-doing

(Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 294-5)

[Oceanus has come to visit Prometheus, who is chained to a rock as part of his eternal punishment:] “Come, tell me; what aid can I render you?”

In (27), the subjunctive *ídō* is followed by the interrogative *tí*, which can introduce both direct and indirect questions in Ancient Greek.[[42]](#footnote-42) In (28), the indirect interrogative *hó ti* leaves no doubt as to whether this is an indirect question or not.

In the third and final table, I analyze the semantics of the verbs which co-occur with the different markers (only the most frequent types of verbs are given here):

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Discourse marker* | Homer | Tragedy | Aristophanes | Plato |
| *Áge*  | 148x | 24x | 56x | 8x |
| Semantics of co-occurring verb | (a) movement/action: 85x (57.43%)(b) (stop) saying/asking/telling/etc:50x (33.78%) | (a) movement/action: 12x (50%)(b) saying: 6x (25%) | (a) movement/action: 39x (69.64%)(b) (stop) saying: 12x (21.43%) | (a) saying: 3x  |
| *Íthi* | 14x | 11x | 45x | 73x |
| Semantics of co-occurring verb | (a) movement/action: 10x (71.43%)(b) saying: 3x (21.43%) | (a) movement/action: 10x (91%)(b) saying: 0x | (a) movement/action: 26x (57.78%)(b) saying: 11x (24.44%) | (a) movement/action: 18x (24.66%)(b) saying: 29x (39.73%)(c) perception (‘seeing’): 12x (16.44%)(d) trying/endeavouring: 6x (8.22%) |
| *Phére* | 0x | 41x | 83x | 108x |
| Semantics of co-occurring verb | ------ | (a) movement/action: 21x (51.22%)(b) saying: 11x (26.83%) | (a) movement/action: 33x (39.76%)(b) saying: 13x (15.66%)(c) perception: 24x (28.92%) | (a) movement/action: 25x (23.15%)(b) saying: 25x (23.15%)(c) perception: 10x (9.26%)(d) trying/endeavouring: 6x (5.56%)(e) thinking/knowing: 13x (12.04%) |

Table 3 – semantics of co-occurring verbs

According to this table, verbs of movement/action occur most often with these markers, both diachronically and synchronically. However, verbs of ‘saying’ occur relatively frequently with *áge* in Homer and *íthi* in Plato, and also with *phére* in tragedy, Aristophanes and Plato. Finally, verbs of perception (‘seeing’) occur with *íthi* in Plato and with *phére* in Plato and (especially) Aristophanes, while verbs of ‘knowing’ and ‘thinking’ appear with *phére* in Plato.

We can draw the following conclusions from these tables:

(i) There seems to be little evidence for Biraud’s claim (2010: 30) that *phére* is more connected to “incitations à la réflexion”, while *áge* and *íthi* amount to “incitations à l’action”. Table 3 indicates that, in her corpus (tragedy and Aristophanes), all three markers co-occur with the same type of verbs (movement/action). In Plato, *phére* seems to co-occur more frequently with verbs of perception and verbs of ‘knowing’ and ‘thinking’ (which could be linked to ‘réflexion’), but Biraud does not take Plato into account, and this distributional quirk could be due to text genre (philosophical dialogue in Plato versus more ‘everyday’ dialogues in Aristophanes and more narrative dialogue in the tragedies). In fact, there seems to be a relation of synonymity between the three markers, certainly from Aristophanes onwards:

1. *Áge nun,* ***íōmen***· *mēdén hēmâs iskhétō.*

Comenow let-us-go nothing us let-it-hold-IMP

(Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1264)

[Bdelycleon is ending his conversation with Philocleon:] “But come, [let us go,] no more delay!”

1. *All’ íthi, bádiz’,* ***íōmen***.

But come walk-IMP let-us-go

(Aristophanes, *Clouds* 860)

[Phidippides is chastising his father Strepsiades for losing his expensive clothes. He is unremorseful and changes the subject:] “Come, move, let us go.”

1. *Poû ‘sti? Phér’ ep’ autēn* ***íō****.*

Where she-is come to-PREP her let-me-go

(Aristophanes, *Frogs* 291)

[Dionysus and his slave Xanthias have traveled to the underworld. Xanthias notices a horrible beast which shapeshifts from an ox to a mule and finally into a beautiful woman. Dionysus reacts:] “Where is she? Come, let me go see her.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

The three different markers are all used with the same verb (*iénai*, ‘to go’) in the subjunctive. In (29) and (30), it is in the first person plural; in (31), it is in the first person singular. Utterances (29) and (30) are minimal, containing only *íōmen* in the main clause; (31) adds a PP, but is reasonably minimal as well. As such, there can be no doubt that these three contexts are highly similar, and that the three markers are used interchangeably.

(ii) There is an obvious correlation between a specific pragmaticalized marker and the mood of the verb with which it co-occurs. *Áge* and *íthi* prefer imperatives; *phére* prefers non-imperatives. This tendency can be attested across all four corpora. It can be hypothesized that *phére* is ‘more’ pragmaticalized than the other markers under consideration here – the latter are used exclusively or predominantly with verbs which share their mood, while *phére* is much less restricted in its use. In other words, the range of contexts (grammatical and otherwise) in which *phére* appears, is more expansive than the range in which *áge* or *íthi* appear. On a related note, there is a clear correlation between a specific pragmaticalized marker and the type of utterance which it marks: *áge* and *íthi* have a predilection for commands, while *phére* is more typical of questions and hortatives. There is no exclusivity here – *áge* also occurs with hortatives, and *phére* can introduce commands – but there *are* statistically prevalent patterns.

(iii) *Áge* is exceedingly popular in Homer; *phére* has not developed yet, and *íthi* only occurs in very restricted and formulaic contexts, where it retains its conceptual meaning (‘go!’):

1. *Básk’ íthi Îri takheîa, pálin trépe*

Go-IMP go Iris-VOC swift back turn-IMP

(Homer, *Iliad* VIII.399)

[Zeus has seen Hera leave in her chariot for battle against his express wish for the gods not to interfere in the war anymore. He calls for his messenger, Iris:] “Up, go, swift Iris; turn them back […]”

The expression *básk’ íthi*, which is a seemingly pleonastic repetition of ‘go!’,occurs six times (of 14 instances of *íthi* in total) in Homer, but not in any of the other authors considered here – as such, it should be considered a Homeric formula. In this formula, *íthi* is obviously still used in its original sense; at the same time, it co-occurs with another imperative which is identical from a semantic point of view. As such, there could be early traces of the pragmaticalization of *íthi* in Homer, in the sense that itis already losing some of its conceptual meaning.

In tragedy and Aristophanes, *íthi* occurs much more frequently, and is much less constrained in its use (although it still appears in in its ‘go!’ sense as well):

1. *Íth’ ō téknon moi speûde kaí khoás táphōi*

Go INT child-VOC for-me hurry-IMP and libations at-the-tomb

*doûs’ hōs tákhista tēs pálin mémnēs’ hodoû.*

 after-you-have-given like most-quickly ART back remember-IMP of-the-road

 (Euripides, *Orestes* 124-5)

[Helen is ordering Hermione to go to Clytaemnestra’s tomb:] “Now go, my child, and hurry; and soon as you have made the libations at the tomb, think of your return.”

1. *Íth’, ō gunaikōn misoporpakistátē,*

Come INT of-women most-hating-war-VOC

*eîen, akoúō.*

PART let-me-hear

(Aristophanes, *Peace* 662-3)

[Hermes is acting as an interpreter for the goddess Peace, and has just asked her a question:] “Come, you relentless foe of all bucklers, speak; I am listening to you.”

In (33), Helen is asking Hermione to leave for Clytaemnestra’s tomb; in (34), it makes no sense to regard *íthi* as a request for Peace to literally ‘move’ or ‘go’.

*Áge* is still used quite often in these authors, but it has lost some of its popularity to *íthi*, as the numbers in the tables above bear out. Moreover, in the time frame separating Homer from Aeschylus, *phére* has come on strong – it has undergone extensive pragmaticalization, and occurs most frequently with non-imperatives. As such, it cannot be said to have *replaced áge* or *íthi*; instead, it occurs predominantly in different, more wide-ranging contexts.

In Plato, finally, *áge* has almost completely disappeared, its function having been appropriated by *íthi*, which has become the preferred expression for use with imperatives/commands. By now, *íthi* is almost indistinguishable from *áge* as it occurs in Homer, tragedy or Aristophanes – it appears most frequently with verbs of ‘saying’ (not those of movement/action, which are more contiguous to its conceptual meaning), and can occur in almost identical contexts as *áge* did previously:

1. *Eíp’ áge moi kaí tónde phílon tékos hós tis hód’ estí.*

tell-IMP come for-me and this beloved child-VOC who-REL someone this he-is

(Homer, *Iliad* III.192)

[Priam is asking Helen to tell him about the Greek warriors they are scoping out from a distance:] “Come now, tell me also of yonder man, dear child, who he is.”

1. *Íthi dē, hoútōs eipé kaí tón toû sigma lógon.*

Come PART thus tell-IMP and ART ART sigma letter

(Plato, *Theaetetus* 203b1)

[Socrates has just asked Theaetetus to describe the first syllable of the name ‘Socrates’. Now he is asking him about the first letter:] “Come now, in the same manner give me the explanation of the S.”

In both cases, the pragmaticalized imperative is used asyndetically with the imperative *eipé* (although it is located clause-initially in (35) due to reasons outlined in §3.1); in both cases, the conjunction *kaí* is used as a focalizing adverb (‘also’), i.e. as a request for the hearer to talk about something else *as well*.

*Phére* remains the typical expression for use with non-imperative instances in Plato (mostly with questions due to the type of text, i.e. a philosophical dialogue where Socrates is asking questions).

In sum, we start out with only *áge* (and a very restricted use of *íthi*), and evolve towards a more fine-grained, developed situation with specialization and division of labour according to morphosyntactic criteria – *áge* (and later *íthi*) for imperatives/commands, and *phére* for non-imperative directives. Although this division of labour is not ‘clean’ in the sense that *áge* can also be used to introduce non-imperative directives, and *phére* can be found with imperatives, there is a clear statistical divergence between *áge* and *íthi* on the one hand, and *phére* on the other. The diachronic trajectory sketched here would point to some kind of onomasiological cycliticy (cf. Hansen & Rossari 2005: 179; also Hansen 2014a, b), where a new form (*íthi*)is recruited to express a function for which another form already exists (*áge*). Eventually, the older form is phased out in favour of the newer form (at least in Plato).

This diachronic hypothesis should, of course, be regarded in the requisite light – again, as a hypothesis about the evolution of a dead language, of which only a sliver of testimony remains. As a result, it is exceedingly difficult to determine whether the evolution outlined here is more widely applicable, or whether it is limited to these authors. Linguistic work on Ancient Greek is always subject to constraints of limited sample sizes and the specter of lost material. But that should not inhibit us from drawing the types of conclusions presented here, which are naturally subject to further refinement.

1. **Conclusions**

In this paper, I have looked at the Ancient Greek expressions *áge*, *íthi* and *phére*, which can all be translated as ‘come (on)!’. As pointed out in §2, others have already argued that these are pragmaticalized markers which allow the speaker to comment on his utterance in some way. First, I looked at the structural and semantic features of these imperatives from a grammaticalization perspective. I then proposed a new interpretation of its function – they have been analyzed as conversational mitigators, but, according to the available evidence, they can only be regarded as the opposite, i.e. conversational ‘boosters’. Diachronically and synchronically, there is a clear divergence between *áge* and *íthi* on the one hand, and *phére* on the other. *Áge* and *íthi* are used mostly with imperatives, while *phére* is used mostly with other moods and utterance types. In addition, *áge* seems to have lost much of its popularity after its high incidence in Homer; *íthi* starts to occur in the same contexts, and steadily gains traction as an alternative for *áge*. As a result, it could be postulated that there is onomasiological cyclicity going on in the shift from *áge* to *íthi* – a new linguistic form is recruited for a certain function in a certain morphosyntactic context.

This paper has certainly not taken all available evidence into account. Post-Classical Greek offers a wealth of data which should offer more clues as to the function and evolution of *áge*, *íthi* and *phére*; in addition, I have not given much attention to these markers’ collocations with particles (e.g. *dē*, as in example (36)). Both of these aspects need to be studied further, and any analysis of the further diachronic trajectory of these markers, or their synchronic functions and properties, would be a welcome addition to the increasingly numerous contributions on Ancient Greek pragmatic markers.

1. **References**

Allan, Rutger J. 2015. “Classifying Greek Particles: A Functional Discourse Grammar Approach.” Paper presented at the *International Colloquium on Ancient Greek Linguistics*. Rome, 23-27 March 2015.

Aijmer, Karine. 1997. “*I think* – an English Modal Particle.” In *Modality in Germanic Languages. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Torial Swan, and Olaf J. Westvik, 1-47. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bach, Kent. 1999. “The Myth of Conventional Implicature.” *Linguistics and Philosophy* 22 (4): 327-366.

Bach, Kent, and Robert M. Harnish. 1979. *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Bakker, Egbert J. 1993. “Boundaries, Topics, and the Structure of Discourse: An Investigation of the Ancient Greek Particle DÉ.” *Studies in Language* 17 (2): 275-311.

Bakker, Stéphanie J. 2009. “On the Curious Combination of the Particles γάρ and οὖν.” In Stéphanie Bakker & Gerry Wakker (eds.), 41-61.

Bakker, Stéphanie, and Gerry Wakker (eds.). 2009. *Discourse Cohesion in Ancient Greek*. Leiden: Brill.

Bazzanella, Carla, and Cristina Bosco, and Alessandro Garcea, and Barbara Gili Fivela, and Johanna Miecznikowski, and Francesca Tini Brunozzi. 2007. “Italian *allora*, French *alors*: Functions, convergences and divergences.” *Catalan Journal of Linguistics* 6: 9-30.

Beeching, Kate, and Ulrich Detges (eds.). 2014. *Functions at the left and right periphery: Crosslinguistic investigations of language use and language change*. Leiden: Brill.

Bellocchi, Margherita. 2015. “Comedy, Diction of.” In *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*. Consulted online on 26 August 2016.

Biraud, Michèle. 2010. *Les interjections du théâtre grec antique. Étude sémantique et pragmatique*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters.

Blakemore, Diane. 1987. *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Blakemore, Diane. 1988. “‘So’ as a constraint on relevance.” In *Mental Representations: The interface between language and reality*, ed. by Ruth M. Kempson, 183-195. Cambridge University Press.

Blakemore, Diane. 2002. *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers*. Cambridge University Press.

Bolly, Catherine, and Liesbeth Degand. 2013. “Have you seen what I mean? From verbal constructions to discourse markers.” *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 14 (2): 210-235.

Brinton, Laurel J. 2001. “From matrix clause to pragmatic marker: The history of *look*-forms.” *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 2 (2): 177-199.

Brinton, Laurel J. 2005. “Processes underlying the development of pragmatic markers: The case of *(I) say*.” In *Opening Windows on Texts and Discourses of the Past*, ed. by Janne Skaffari, and Matti Peikola, and Ruth Carroll, and Risto Hiltunen, and Brita Wårvik, 279-299. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Brinton, Laurel J. 2008. *The Comment Clause in English: Syntactic Origins and Pragmatic Development*. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Caffi, Claudia. 1999. “On mitigation.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 31: 881-909.

Clark, Billy. 2013. *Relevance Theory*. Cambridge University Press.

Company Company, Concepción. 2006. “Subjectification of Verbs into Discourse Markers: Semantic-pragmatic Change only?” *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 20: 97-121.

Cruse, D.A. 1986. *Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge University Press.

Culpeper, Jonathan. 2011. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge University Press.

Curcó, Carmen. 2011. “On the Status of Procedural Meaning in Natural Language.” In Victoria Escandell-Vidal et al. (eds.), 33-54.

Des Places, Édouard. 1929. *Études sur quelques particules de liaison chez Platon*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Diewald, Gabriele. 2011. “Pragmaticalization (defined) as grammaticalization of discourse functions.” *Linguistics* 49 (2): 365-390.

Eckardt, Regine. 2006. *Meaning Change in Grammaticalization: An Enquiry into Semantic Reanalysis*. Oxford University Press.

Escandell-Vidal, Victoria, and Manuel Leonetti, and Aoife Ahern (eds.). 2011. *Procedural Meaning: Problems and Perspectives*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.

Fedriani, Chiara, and Chiara Ghezzi, and Piera Molinelli. 2012. “Constraining pragmaticalization: Paths of development from lexicon to discourse.” Paper presented at the conference *New Reflections on Grammaticalization 5.* Edinburgh, 16-19 July 2012.

Fedriani, Chiara, and Chiara Ghezzi. 2014. “The pragmaticalization of verbs of movement and exchange in Latin and Italian: paths of development from lexicon to pragmatics.” In *Studia Linguistica et Philologica in honorem Prof. Univ. Dr. Michaela Livescu*, ed. by Ilona Badescu and Mihaela Popescu, M., 116-139. Craiova: Editura Universitaria.

Fischer, Kerstin (ed.). 2006. *Approaches to Discourse Particles*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Frank-Job, Barbara. 2006. “A dynamic-interactional approach to discourse markers”. In Kerstin Fischer (ed.), 359-374.

Fränkel, Eduard. 1964. *Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie, vol. 1*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.

Fraser, Bruce. 1980. “Conversational Mitigation.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 4: 341-350.

Ghezzi, Chiara, and Piera Molinelli. 2014. “Italian *guarda, prego, dai*. Pragmatic Markers and the Left and Right Periphery.” In Kate Beeching & Ulrich Detges (eds.), 117-150.

Giannakis, Georgios K. 2015. Giannakis, “Indo-European Linguistic Background.” In *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*. Consulted online on 26 August 2016.

Hansen, Maj-Britt Mosegaard. 2002. “Syntax in interaction: Form and function of yes/no interrogatives in spoken standard French.” *Studies in Language* 25 (3): 463-520.

Hansen, Maj-Britt Mosegaard. 2008. *Particles at the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface: Synchronic and Diachronic Issues*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Hansen, Maj-Britt Mosegaard. 2014a. “Cyclicity in semantic/pragmaticchange: The medieval particle *ja* between Latin iam and Modern French *déjà*.” In *Discourse and Pragmatic Markers from Latin to the Romance Languages*, ed. by Chiara Ghezzi and Piera Molinelli, 139-165. Oxford University Press.

Hansen, Maj-Britt Mosegaard. 2014b. “Phénomènes de cyclicité dans l’évolution des marqueurs pragmatiques.” Paper presented at the *Journée d’études sur les particules discursives*. Nancy, 18-19 December 2014.

Hansen, Maj-Britt Mosegaard, and Corinne Rossari. 2005. “The evolution of pragmatic markers.” *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 6 (2): 177-187.

Heine, Bernd. 2013. “On discourse markers: Grammaticalization, pragmaticalization, or something else?” *Linguistics* 51 (6): 1205-1247.

Holmes, Janet. 1984. “Modifying illocutionary force.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 8: 345-365.

Hopper, Paul J. 1991. “On Some Principles of Grammaticalization.” In *Approaches to Grammaticalization I*, ed. by Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Bernd Heine, 17–36. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Hopper, Paul J. and Elizabeth Closs Traugott. 2003². *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge University Press.

Ifantidou, Elly. 2001. *Evidentials and Relevance*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Janse, Mark. 1993. “The Prosodic Basis of Wackernagel's Law”. In *Actes du XVe Congrès international des linguistes, IV*, ed. byAndré Crochetière, and Jean-Claude Boulanger, and Conrad Ouellon, 19-22. Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval.

Janse, Mark. 2008. “Clitic doubling from Ancient to Asia Minor Greek.” *Clitic Doubling in the Balkan Languages,* ed. by Dalina Kallulli, and Liliane Tasmowski, 165-202. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Kaczko, Sara. 2015. “Tragedy, Diction of.” In *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*. Consulted online on 26 August 2016.

Kasher, Asa (ed.). 1998. *Pragmatics: Critical Concepts (Volume II: Speech Act Theory and Particular Speech Acts)*. London/New York: Routledge.

Klavans, Judith. 1985. “The Independence of Syntax and Phonology in Cliticization.” *Language* 61: 95-120.

Kotzia, Paraskevi, and Maria Chriti. 2015. “Ancient Philosophers on Language.” In *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*. Consulted online on 26 August 2016.

Lamiroy, Béatrice and Pierre Swiggers. 1991. “The status of imperatives as discourse signals.” In *Discourse-Pragmatics and the Verb: The Evidence from Romance*, ed. bySuzanne Fleischman, and Linda R. Waugh, 120-146. London/New York: Routledge.

Lehmann, Christian. 1985. “Grammaticalization: Synchronic variation and diachronic change.” *Lingua e Stile* 20: 303-318.

Létoublon, Françoise. 2015. “Formulaic Language.” In *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*. Consulted online on 26 August 2016.

Nicolle, Steve. 1997. “Conceptual and Procedural Encoding: Criteria for the Identification of Linguistically Encoded Procedural Information.” In *Proceedings of the University of Hertfordshire Relevance Theory Workshop*, ed. by Marjolein Groefsema, 47-56. Hatfield Peverel: Peter Thomas.

Nicolle, Steve. 1998. “A relevance theory perspective on grammaticalization.” *Cognitive Linguistics* 9 (1): 1-35.

Nicolle, Steve. 2011. “Pragmatic aspects of grammaticalization.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Grammaticalization*, ed. by Bernd Heine, and Heiko Narrog, 322-328. Oxford University Press.

Reece, Steve. 2015. “Formulas.” In *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*. Consulted online on 26 August 2016.

Saussure, Louis de. 2011. “On Some Methodological Issues in the Conceptual/Procedural Distinction.” In Victoria Escandell-Vidal et al. (eds.), 55-79.

Sbisà, Marina. 2001. “Illocutionary force and degrees of strength in language use.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 1791-1814.

Scheppers, Frank. 2011. *The Colon Hypothesis : Word Order, Discourse Segmentation and Discourse Coherence in Ancient Greek*. Brussels: VUBPRESS.

Schiffrin, Deborah. 1987. *Discourse markers*. Cambridge University Press.

Schourup, Lawrence. 1999. “Discourse markers.” *Lingua* 107: 227-265.

Schwyzer, Eduard. 1950. *Griechische Grammatik: Syntax und syntaktische Stilistik (Zweiter Band)*. München: C.H. Beck.

Searle, John R., and Daniel Vanderveken. 1985. *Foundations of illocutionary logic*. Cambridge University Press.

Sommerstein, Alan H. 2014.”Oratory and rhetoric.” In *Oaths and Swearing in Ancient Greece*, ed. by Alan H. Sommerstein, and Isabelle C. Torrance, 230-239. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter.

Spencer, Andrew and Ana R. Luís. 2012. *Clitics: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Sperber, Dan and Deirdre Wilson. 1995². *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stenström, Anna-Brita. 2012. “Spanish *Venga* and its English equivalents: A contrastive study of teenage talk.” *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* 6: 57-75.

Thaler, Verena. 2012. “Mitigation as modification of illocutionary force.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 44: 907-919.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 1988. “Pragmatic Strengthening and Grammaticalization.” *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*: 406-416.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 1995. “The Role of the Development of Discourse Markers in a Theory of Grammaticalization.” Paper presented at *ICHL XII*, Manchester 1995 (Version of 11/97).

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 2010. “(Inter)subjectivity and (inter)subjectification: A reassessment.” In *Subjectification, Intersubjectification and Grammaticalization*, ed. by Kristin Davidse, and Lieven Vandelanotte, and Hubert Cuyckens, 29-71. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, and Richard B. Dasher. 2005. *Regularity in Semantic Change*. Cambridge University Press.

Vanderveken, Daniel. 1998. “On the Logical Form of Illocutionary Acts”. In Asa Kasher (ed.), 170-194.

Verano, Rodrigo. 2015. *La reformulación discursiva en griego antiguo*. *Un estudio sobre La Républica de Pláton*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla [dissertation].

Wackernagel, Jakob. 1892. “Über ein Gesetz der indogermanischen Wortstellung.” *Indogermanische Forschungen* 1: 333-436.

Waltereit, Richard. 2006. “The rise of discourse markers in Italian: a specific type of language change.” In Kerstin Fischer (ed.), 61-76.

Wills, Jeffrey. 1993. “Homeric particle order.” *Historische Sprachforschung* 106 (1): 61-81.

Wilson, Deirdre and Dan Sperber. 1993. “Linguistic form and relevance.” *Lingua* 90: 1-25.

Wilson, Deirdre and Dan Sperber. 1998. “Mood and the Analysis of Non-declarative Sentences.” In Asa Kasher (ed.), 268-289.

Zakowski, Samuel. 2014. “εἰπέ μοι as a Parenthetical: A Structural and Functional Analysis, from Homer to Menander.” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 54 (2): 157–191.

1. Many thanks to Maj-Britt Mosegaard Hansen and David Langslow, whose comments helped improve this paper greatly. Thanks also to the two anonymous reviewers for this journal, who helped me trim the fat from this paper on the one hand and be more precise on the other. The work for this paper was funded by the Special Research Fund at Ghent University (BOF; grant number B/13790/01) and a travel grant by the Fund for Scientific Research-Flanders (FWO) for a research stay at the University of Manchester (February-May 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. All text editions are those found on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG), which can be accessed online at http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/. All full translation are taken from the Loeb library editions of the respective texts, unless indicated otherwise. All word-for-word translation are my own.

The most commonly used abbreviations are the following:

ART: article; IMP: imperative; INT: interjection; PART: particle; PREP: preposition; REL: relative; VOC: vocative. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In the Loeb edition, *íthi* is translated with ‘hah!’ – I have changed this to ‘come’ to make things clearer. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. I define a pragmatic marker with Brinton (2008: 1) as “a phonologically short item that is not syntactically connected to the rest of the clause (i.e., is parenthetical), and has little or no referential meaning but serves pragmatic or procedural purposes.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Lamiroy & Swiggers (1991) on similar developments for imperatives in Romance languages. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. I am not taking Post-Classical Greek into account for the purposes of this study.

There are many aspects of these authors’ language which have been topics of interest for scholars of all stripes – see the Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics’s (EAGLL) entry ‘Diction of Comedy’ (Bellocchi 2015) and ‘Diction of Tragedy’ (Kaczko 2015) for more on Aristophanes and the tragic playwrights, respectively. The linguistic scholarship on Homer, the earliest literary Greek available to us, is broad and diverse – see the EAGLL entries ‘Formulas’ and ‘Formulaic Language’ for more on Homeric formulas (Reece 2015; Létoublon 2015); Giannakis (2015) on Homer’s importance for Indo-European linguistics; Bakker (1993) on his importance for discourse analysis, and so on. Plato’s idiolect has been analyzed in various ways as well – see e.g. Verano (2015) on reformulations; Des Places (1929) on particles; Bakker (2009) on particle combinations; and Kotzia & Chriti (2015) on his contributions to the philosophy of language. To put it simply, almost all linguistic studies of Classical Greek (excluding papyrological ones) make mention, at the very least, of at minimum one of these authors. The studies collected in Bakker & Wakker (2009) exemplify this nicely. The majority of the papers in this volume concentrate on one of these authors – either Homer (chapter 1), Plato (chapter 3) or tragedy and comedy (chapters 6, 7, 9 and 11). See also Allan (2015), who, in his newfangled classification of Ancient Greek particles, focuses on examples from these authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. LSJ is short for ‘Liddell-Scott-Jones’, the editors of the dictionary. It is available online through http://archimedes.fas.harvard.edu/pollux/. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. LSJ, s.v. φέρω IX: “imper. φέρε like ἄγε, as Adv., come, now, well”; cf. also s.v. ἄγε and s.v. ἴθῐ. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Phére* also occurs with the third person plural in her corpus (Euripides, *Andromache 662*; and Aristophanes, *Clouds* 342), but Biraud must not have taken these examples into account. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. As Biraud puts it, use of *áge*/*íthi* amounts to “une incitation à l’action”, while use of *phére* amounts to “une incitation à la réflexion” (2010: 30). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. As in (2), I have adjusted the translation here (see footnote 3) – the Loeb edition translates *phére* as ‘now’. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. It occurs 0.8 times in every 100 words in Plato. By way of comparison, it appears 0.48 times in every 100 words in Homer; 0.31 times per 100 words in Aristophanes; and 0.27 times per 100 words in the tragic playwrights under consideration here. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Fedriani & Ghezzi (2014) only deals with Latin and Italian, but most of the insights there seem to be derived from Fedriani et al. (2012), which also discusses *áge* and *phére*. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. There is, of course, a large gap between Homer and the tragic playwrights under consideration here. The intervening authors have not been taken into consideration due to the fragmentary nature of many of their works and the (somewhat related) fact that these markers simply do not occur that often in the works we do have. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. In the original translation, *íthi* was rendered with *thanks* – I replaced it with *come*, to avoid any confusion. The rest of the translation is taken from the Loeb edition of the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This is an example of decategorialization following Brinton (2005: 293), according to whom this process involves verbs “los[ing] their verbal behavioural characteristics”. One of the examples she cites is the loss of their “ability to be modified by adverbials” – in the case of (11), the verb is modified by a participle which serves the same purpose as an adverb. *Íthi* in its non-grammaticalized form can also take complements which the grammaticalized form cannot, *viz*. directional complements. For examples, see e.g. Sophocles, *Oedipus King* 1515 (*íthi stégēs ésō,* ‘go inside the house’) and Euripides, *Alcestis* 541 (*íthi es dómous*, ‘go to the house’ – that is, ‘go home’)). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See e.g. Beeching & Detges (2014: 14) on *well*, which, on its pragmatic marker use, is “found exclusively at the left periphery” of the clause (cf. also Ghezzi & Molinelli 2014: 124). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Matters are much more complicated than this, but I do not have the space to get into them. See Janse (1993; 2008) and Scheppers (2011) for a more detailed overview of the consequences of Wackernagel’s Law for enclitics in Ancient Greek. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Eduard Schwyzer, in his *Griechische Grammatik*, regards *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* as tantamount to particles (1950: 583). As most particles in Ancient Greek have a proclivity for second position, his observation would tie in with examples like (13). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Iliad* III.192 and X.544; *Odyssey* XV.347 and XXIII.261.

As to the rest of the pragmatic markers and authors under consideration here, their predilection for clause-initial position shines through clearly as well. *Áge* occurs in a non-initial position once in Aristophanes, in a repetition of *áge* (*Peace* 512); *íthi* occurs non-initially once as well in Aristophanes (*Acharnians* 488-489); and *phére* occurs once clause-finally in Aristophanes (*Clouds* 664) – although it also occurs after left-topic dislocations (*Clouds* 366, *Frogs* 993 and *Knights* 1365) and vocatives (*Lysis* 890, *Wealth* 374). In those latter cases, *phére* occurs, if not clause-initially, at least segment-initially – oral discourse is divided into segments which are separated prosodically, and left-topic dislocations and vocatives usually amount to separate segments in Ancient Greek (see Fränkel 1964; Scheppers 2011). In tragedy, both *áge* and *íthi* do not occur non-clause-initially; *phére* occurs non-clause-initially three times – once as a repetition of another *phére* (Euripides, *Cyclops* 510), once after the particle *kaítoi* (‘nevertheless’; Euripides, *Andromache* 662), and once after the subordinating conjunction *epeí* (Sophocles, *Oedipus King* 390).

In Homer, *íthi* appears non-clause-initially only with the imperative *báske*, which, like *íthi* originally, means ‘go!’ – see (33) *infra* for more discussion. In Plato, finally, *áge* only occurs clause-initially, while *íthi* appears non-clause-initially only twice – once after a left-topic dislocation (*Apology* 24d6), once in *Lysis* 204e10. *Phére* occurs once with a left-topic dislocation (*Laws* 633c9); four times after *epeí* (*Alcibiades ii* 138b1 and 139c6; *Hippias Major* 286d1 and *Minos* 315b2);and twice more in *Sophist* 231d1 and *Statesman* 296d1. All in all, these examples are clearly the exception, and many of them can be explained away as instances where the pragmatic markers are located segment-initially. Still, they are non-clause-initial instances, and should be regarded as such. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See also the discussion in Heine (2013: 1217-1220). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. I will henceforth use ‘pragmaticalization’ to refer to the diachronic process these imperatives have undergone, without thereby subscribing to the view that it is entirely distinct from grammaticalization. The purpose of this paper is not to contribute to the pragmaticalization/grammaticalization debate – indeed, I think studies on this topic should be cross-linguistic in scope –, but to take the most relevant elements from both sides of the divide so as to provide the best account possible of the imperatives under consideration here. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Aijmer’s (1997: 3; cf. also Brinton 2008: 61) observation that pragmaticalized elements are defined by their evolution towards non-truth-conditionality and syntactic optionality is relevant here. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The Loeb edition does not translate *phére* here – ‘come’, then, is my addition. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. There is widespread agreement on this point, but there are some dissenting voices as well – Bolly & Degand (2013) argue that grammaticalization and proceduralization are separate processes which may overlap. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. This view can be taken to be relevance theory’s way to deal with divergence (cf. §3.1.). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. There are a few instances where *áge*, *íthi* and *phére* occur with non-directive utterances, but these are few and far between. Homer, for instance, uses *áge* with future indicatives 1sg in promises (e.g. *Odyssey* XIV.393 and *Iliad* XX.351). However, as pointed out to me by David Langslow, these instances could be examples of the short-vowel aorist subjunctive, which would mean that they *are* directive as subjunctive hortatives (cf. also footnote 38).

Some of the examples considered non-directive by their respective editors could be considered directive as well, e.g. Plato, *Minos* 321c4. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This would be in line with the grammaticalization criterion of persistence – most grammaticalized elements retain traces of the meaning of the lexeme from which they are derived (Hopper 1991: 22; Brinton 2008: 51; Traugott & Dasher 2005: 11-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. On Traugott’s (2010: 33) view, politeness can be correlated with intersubjectivity – intersubjectivity has to do with the speaker’s resources to express “his or her awareness of the addressee’s attitudes and beliefs, most especially their “face” or “self-image””. As such, the assumption that these markers are somehow related to (im)politeness means that they have to do with intersubjectivity as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. For other examples, see e.g. Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 1120; *Nubes* 494 and 903; also Euripides, *Ion* 984. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Other examples from Plato can be found at *Alcibiades ii*, 138b1, 139c6, 147e5; *Lysis* 214e3; *Laws* 662c5; *Phaedo* 93b8; *Philebus* 60a4. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Íthi* has probably been translated here in the repetition of ‘mercy’, which, to my mind, increases the urgency of the utterance. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For other examples of ‘inferior-to-superior’ use of these markers, see e.g. *Iliad* V.249, where the charioteer Sthenelus is talking to his king Diomedes; also Aristophanes, *Peace* 826 and *Wasps* 211, where (in both cases) a servant is talking to his master. For examples of ‘superior-to-inferior’ use, see e.g. *Iliad* IV.418, where Diomedes is talking to Sthenelus; Euripides, *Hercules* 240, where a king is talking to his servants; and Aristophanes, *Wasps* 843, where a master (Bdelycleon) is talking to his slave (Sosias). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. One of the reviewers for this paper pointed out that politeness markers may, in some cases, “point more in the direction of an impoliteness interpretation”, as Culpeper (2011: 176) puts it in his analysis of English ‘with respect’, and that this may be relevant for the markers discussed here. In the reviewers’ words, “pragmatic values are often modulated and re-negotiable depending on specific contexts”. Put differently, *áge*/*phére*/*íthi* may be politeness markers except in certain contexts, some of which I would have quoted in the preceding discussion. While I do think there is something to this remark, I also think (and hope to have shown) that the evidence is stacked against a politeness interpretation of these markers. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. In this case, the psychological state underlying the utterance would harmonize with the degree of strength of the illocutionary force of the utterance. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. In Vanderveken’s framework, the addition of *áge* would result in a +1 degree of strength of the illocutionary force in an Abelian additive group of integers (1998: 183). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. There is another pragmatic marker with a similar function in Ancient Greek, *eipé moi* (‘tell me’). See Zakowski (2014) for an analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See also Stenström (2012: 66) on Spanish *venga*, which has the same function. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. ‘Pseudo-hortative’ are those cases where a future indicative 1pl *erússomen* (3x) (‘we shall drag’) or *geusómetha* (1x) (‘we shall give a taste’) is used, or the present indicative 1pl *íomen* (1x) (‘we go’). As in footnote 27, David Langslow has suggested that these could be examples of short-vowel subjunctives – in that case, they would be full-fledged hortatives. See *Iliad* I.141 and XX.257; *Odyssey* VIII.34; XVI.348; and XVII.190. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. This example contains an imperative *and* a hortative subjunctive; it is example (32) below. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. This ambiguity is due to a morphological idiosyncracy of Ancient Greek – in these two cases (*Frogs* 120 and *Clouds* 731), there is morphological overlap between a future indicative and an aorist subjunctive. If they are future indicatives, they could be regarded as statements (or promises). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The editor of the Greek text chose to interpret it as a direct question; I have chosen for an indirect question interpretation (as did the translator). There is no conclusive evidence either way. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. This translation is my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)