

# εἰπέ μοι as a Parenthetical: A Structural and Functional Analysis, from Homer to Menander

*Samuel Zakowski*

IN RECENT YEARS a number of important papers have appeared on the grammaticalized Ancient Greek imperatives φέρε, ἄγε, and ἴθι.<sup>1</sup> ‘Grammaticalized’ in this sense usually refers mainly to the fact that these expressions have become fixed in form and that their original meaning has been bleached in favor of another, more abstract meaning. There are, however, similar expressions which have not received the same kind of attention. In this article I analyze the expression εἰπέ μοι, which, we shall see, checks the same boxes as, for example, ἄγε as a grammaticalized imperative. Although εἰπέ μοι appears far less frequently than these other grammaticalized imperatives in the corpus under consideration, there is still enough material to provide an intriguing window on its structural and functional characteristics. This corpus consists of a representative sample of Classical Greek, both prose and poetry: the extant works of Plato, Demosthenes, Aristophanes, and Menander. Homer will be referred to as well, as a starting point for the development of εἰπέ μοι.

In the first section, I introduce the problem, somewhat pre-theoretically, by indicating why εἰπέ μοι could be considered a

<sup>1</sup> E.g. M. Biraud, *Les interjections du théâtre grec antique: Etude sémantique et pragmatique* (Louvain 2010) 25–42, on φέρε, ἄγε, and ἴθι; C. Fedriani, C. Ghezzi, and C. Molinelli, “Constraining Pragmaticalization: Paths of Development from Lexicon to Discourse,” paper presented at the conference *New Reflections on Grammaticalization 5* (Edinburgh, 16–19 July 2012), on ἄγε.

grammaticalized expression. In section two, these features are treated more in detail: εἰπέ μοι's structural and syntactic traits are analyzed, and I propose, tentatively, a possible diachronic path of how εἰπέ μοι came to function as it does in the authors under consideration. The third section focuses on the semantics and pragmatics of εἰπέ μοι, i.e. on what εἰπέ μοι actually contributes to the discourse. In the fourth section I present my conclusions.

### 1. Outline of the issue

Consider the following example:

- (1) Dicaeopolis is threatening to 'kill' his 'hostages', which are actually lumps of charcoal; the chorus reacts (*Ar. Ach.* 328–329):

εἰπέ μοι, τί τοῦτ' ἀπειλεῖ τοῦπος, ἄνδρες δημόται,  
τοῖς Ἀχαρνικοῖσιν ἡμῖν;

Tell me, what does this threat mean, citizens, to us Acharnians?

There is obviously something strange going on here. While εἰπέ is a second person singular imperative, the leader of the chorus is talking to multiple persons (ἄνδρες δημόται): we would have expected to see εἶπετέ μοι. Like φέρε, ἄγε, and ἴθι, then, εἰπέ seems to occur almost by default in the second person singular.

This is only one of a number of ostensibly anomalous characteristics of εἰπέ μοι:

- (2) Glycera has fled from Polemon's house. Polemon's slave, Sosias, is accusing the neighbours of having taken her (*Men. Peric.* 387–388):

πρὸς τίν' οἴεσθ', εἰπέ μοι,  
παίζειν;

Who do you think, tell me, you're trifling with?

As in (1), the speaker is again talking to multiple persons (οἴεσθε) using the second person singular εἰπέ. Yet there is an additional wrinkle here: εἰπέ μοι is located clause-internally without being a syntactic part of that clause. This is odd, to say the least: under normal circumstances, separate (non-embedded) clauses occur consecutively and do not violate each

other's linear order.<sup>2</sup>

If this were not peculiar enough, there is one more aspect which immediately catches the eye in some instances:

(3) Demosthenes is presenting his fellow Athenians with a stark choice between taking up arms against Philip and the following (4.10):

ἢ βούλεσθ', εἰπέ μοι, περιιόντες αὐτῶν πυνθάνεσθαι, “λέγεται τι καινόν;”

Or are you happy, tell me, while you are running around, to inquire from each other, “What news is there?”

In this case, the speaker is addressing more than one hearer (βούλεσθε); in addition, εἰπέ μοι is located clause-internally. Moreover, there is no interrogative present, as there is in both (1) and (2). In (1), one could make the argument that εἰπέ μοι should be considered the main clause which introduces an indirect question starting with τί. In (2), this is also a possible analysis, although εἰπέ μοι's clause-internal position seems to render this view extremely unlikely. In (3), however, there is no doubt about εἰπέ μοι's position in the syntax of the sentence: there is no interrogative, which means that it is entirely separate from the clause in whose linear order it intervenes.

These three examples raise many questions. What are the implications of εἰπέ μοι occurring exclusively in the second person singular? Is there a functional difference between its appearance in clause-initial, clause-internal, and clause-final (which occurs as well) position? What are we to make of this positional alternation? What are the ramifications of its being able to appear asyndetically with clauses from which it is syntactically detached? These considerations form the basis of the following inquiry.

## 2. A structural-syntactic analysis of εἰπέ μοι

In this section, εἰπέ μοι will be analyzed from a structural-syntactic point of view. I will focus on the structural gram-

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Dik, *The Theory of Functional Grammar I The Structure of the Clause* (Berlin 1997) 402.

maticalization criteria it complies with; how it came to be a syntactically independent expression; and its positional mobility in the corpus under consideration. Since the latter two aspects are closely intertwined, they will be grouped together.

### 2.1 Grammaticalization and εἰπέ μοι: the structural criteria

We have seen that εἰπέ μοι only occurs in the second person singular, even when the speaker is addressing multiple persons. This is a common tendency for grammaticalized elements, and is known more technically as ossification of form.<sup>3</sup> This raises the question, which other grammaticalization criteria may εἰπέ μοι adhere to. The following seem to be indisputably applicable:

#### 2.1.1 Decategorialization

Grammaticalized items lose their ability to take complements or to be modified by other elements.<sup>4</sup> Contrast (4) with (5):

- (4) Crito is urging Socrates to flee his prison and not take into account the risks involved (Pl. *Crt.* 44E2):

τάδε δέ, ὦ Σώκρατες, εἰπέ μοι. ἄρα γε μὴ ἐμοῦ προμηθῆ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ...

This, Socrates, you have to tell me. You are not considering me and the others, are you ...?

- (5) Socrates is questioning Euthydemus and Dionysodorus on knowing and not-knowing (Pl. *Euthyd.* 293E5–6):

<sup>3</sup> See L. J. Brinton, “Processes Underlying the Development of Pragmatic Markers: The Case of (*I*) say,” in J. Skaffari et al. (eds.), *Opening Windows on Texts and Discourse of the Past* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2005) 279–299, at 291; E. C. Traugott, “The Role of the Development of Discourse Markers in a Theory of Grammaticalization,” paper presented at ICHL XII, Manchester 1995 (updated version of 1997: [www.wata.cc/forums/uploaded/136\\_1165014660.pdf](http://www.wata.cc/forums/uploaded/136_1165014660.pdf)) 2. Cf. also Biraud, *Les interjections* 27; and Fedriani et al., “Constraining Pragmaticalization,” on ossification with other verbal expressions in Ancient Greek.

<sup>4</sup> Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 291, and *The Comment Clause in English: Syntactic Origins and Pragmatic Development* (Cambridge 2008) 51; C. Company Company, “Subjectification of Verbs into Discourse Markers: Semantic-pragmatic Change Only?” *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 20 (2006) 97–121, at 100.

εἰπέ μοι, σφὸ οὐχὶ τὰ μὲν ἐπίστασθον τῶν ὄντων, τὰ δὲ οὐκ ἐπίστασθον;

Tell me, do you not both know some things of reality, and others things you do not?

In (4), τὰδε is a direct object to εἰπέ—as opposed to (5), where εἰπέ (μοι) is syntactically detached from the rest of the clause and does not take a direct object. The contrast between (4) and (5) also applies to the following criterion.

### 2.1.2 Divergence

Grammaticalized items coexist with non-grammaticalized forms of the expression.<sup>5</sup> In (5), εἰπέ μοι is syntactically detached from the clause proper and pertains to multiple persons as a singular form (i.e., is ossified). In (4), by contrast, εἰπέ μοι takes a direct object and pertains to one person (Socrates). In other words, εἰπέ μοι functions as a proper main verb of the clause in (4), whereas in (5) it is an extra-clausal, syntactically optional item which is asyndetically connected to the main verb of the clause. Both examples are from Plato, which points to their coexistence.

There are other grammaticalization criteria which pertain to εἰπέ μοι, but they are more semantic than structural in nature. Hence they will be treated in §3, where the semantics of εἰπέ μοι are discussed.

In this sense, then, εἰπέ μοι can be regarded as grammaticalized: its form is ossified, it is decategorialized, and it coexists with other, non-grammaticalized variants. However, this does not explain how εἰπέ μοι came to be syntactically independent from the clause with which it occurs; nor does it shine any light on the reasons behind its positional mobility. These two features are closely connected,<sup>6</sup> and so are considered jointly in 2.2.

<sup>5</sup> P. J. Hopper, “On Some Principles of Grammaticalization,” in E. C. Traugott and B. Heine (eds.), *Approaches to Grammaticalization* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia 1991) I 17–36, at 22; Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 292.

<sup>6</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 8.

## 2.2 Syntactic independence and positional mobility: the matrix clause hypothesis

In (3), εἰπέ μοι was unquestionably syntactically independent of the rest of the clause. In (1) and (2), however, matters were not so clear-cut: it could be argued (especially for (1)) that εἰπέ μοι was a matrix clause to which the question introduced by τί formed a complement. The difference between (1), (2), and (3) forms the basis for the diachronic development of grammaticalized εἰπέ μοι which is traced in this section. This ties in nicely with the question of its positional mobility, as we shall see: its position can furnish hints as to whether or not εἰπέ μοι is a matrix clause in a given situation.

Describing diachronic developments for Ancient Greek is risky at best, and often downright impossible. A host of material is unavailable to us that could either offer support to or completely invalidate many claims. The only route available to us is to work with the evidence we do have and attempt to sketch—tentatively—trajectories of linguistic evolution. We can see, synchronically, that εἰπέ μοι had come to be grammaticalized by Aristophanes' time. Information about its diachronic development *into* a grammaticalized element, however, is highly obscure. The same goes for the syntactic detachability<sup>7</sup> of εἰπέ μοι—there is simply not enough data to form any justifiable conclusions about its evolution. That said, there is some interesting information to be gleaned from the data which *is* available to us.<sup>8</sup>

As pointed out above, εἰπέ μοι is syntactically non-obligatory, or, more specifically, optional. Consider (3) again, repeated here as (6):

(6) Demosthenes is presenting his fellow Athenians with a stark choice between taking up arms against Philip and the following

<sup>7</sup> I use 'syntactic independence' and 'syntactic detachability' as synonyms.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. S. A. Thompson and A. Mulac, "A Quantitative Perspective on the Grammaticalization of Epistemic Parentheticals in English," in *Approaches to Grammaticalization II* 313–329, at 324, for similar problems with the analysis of, for instance, syntactically detached *I think*.

(Dem. 4.10):

ἢ βούλεσθ', εἰπέ μοι, περιόντες αὐτῶν πυνθάνεσθαι, “λέγεταιί τι καινόν;”

Or are you happy, tell me, while you are running around, to inquire from each other, “What news is there?”

The sentence in (6) would be syntactically complete without εἰπέ μοι; more specifically, εἰπέ μοι is syntactically *detached* from the rest of the sentence. It is an example of what Kaltenböck calls the syntactic “dilemma” presented by these types of expressions, which “do not enter into any syntactic hierarchical relation with their host clause but intervene in its linear order.”<sup>9</sup> The question now becomes: how did εἰπέ μοι become syntactically ‘stranded’, as it is in (6)? There are no definitive diachronic conclusions to be drawn, but both earlier stages of Ancient Greek (i.e. Homer) and synchronically alternating constructions with εἰπέ μοι afford some clues.

In Homer, εἰπέ μοι appears 8 times (all in the *Odyssey*). In some cases (5 of the 8), it functions as the matrix clause for embedded clauses:

- (7) Penelope is questioning a man who claims to have seen Odysseus twenty years earlier—of course, the man is himself the disguised Odysseus (*Od.* 19.218):

εἰπέ μοι ὅπποῖ' ἄσσα περὶ χροῖ εἵματα ἔστο

Tell me what sort the clothes were which he wore around his skin

In (7), ὅπποῖα introduces an indirect question dependent on εἰπέ μοι: it would be ποῖα if it introduced a direct question.

In the other 3 instances, μοι is not decategorialized, and hence cannot be considered grammaticalized: it takes a participle, as in (8):

- (8) Athena is asking Zeus if the bloodshed on Ithaca will stop after Odysseus' massacre (*Od.* 24.474):

εἰπέ μοι εἰρομένη· τί νύ τοι νόος ἔνδοθι κεύθει;

<sup>9</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 10, paraphrasing G. Kaltenböck, “Charting the Boundaries of Syntax: A Taxonomy of Spoken Parenthetical Clauses,” *View[z]: Vienna Working Papers* 14.1 (2005) 21–53, at 22.

Tell me, who am asking, what lies hidden within your mind.

This last example is particularly interesting, as it marks the transition to the next point of interest: the narrow line between matrix clause and syntactically detached clause in the case of embedded questions introduced by an interrogative. Indeed, the editor's punctuation in (8) implies that s/he assumed that the question was direct, and not indirect: it would then be translated as "Tell me, who am asking: what lies hidden within your mind?" The sentence in (8) does not furnish any hints as to which possibility is preferable—both direct question and indirect are entirely legitimate interpretations.<sup>10</sup> Whereas *εἶπέ μοι* was undeniably a matrix clause in (7), then, matters are not quite so clear-cut for (8).

The same ambiguity arises with many instances in the other authors of our corpus:

(9) Apollodorus is recounting how Glaucon asked him to tell the story about the party at Agathon's (Pl. *Symp.* 173A3–5):

καὶ ὅς, “μὴ σκῶπτ’,” ἔφη, “ἀλλ’ εἶπέ μοι πότε ἐγένετο ἡ συνουσία αὕτη.”

And he [Glaucon] said, “Don't jest, but tell me when this party took place.”

(10) Demosthenes has asked that a law be read that states that acts and judgments from the time of the Thirty have no legal force (Dem. 24.57):

ἐπίσχες. εἶπέ μοι, τί δεινότατον πάντες ἂν ἀκούσαντες φήσαιτε, καὶ τί μάλιστ' ἂν ἀπεύξαισθε;

Stop. Tell me, what would you all say is most frightening, after having heard this [law being read], and what would you reject above all?

(11) Sostratos has just encountered his slave Getas (Men. *Dysc.* 553):

(Σω) τί ποιεῖτ' ἐνθάδ', εἶπέ μοι;

(Γε) τί γάρ;

<sup>10</sup> Although the question, if indirect, could have been introduced by ὅτι in (8), τί is an equally valid option.



(So.) What are you doing here? Tell me.

(Ge.) What I'm doing here?

In all these examples, εἰπέ μοι either introduces (9–10) or finishes (11) an interrogative clause which starts with an interrogative. The question here is, again, whether those interrogative clauses are embedded clauses dependent on εἰπέ μοι as its matrix clause, or are syntactically main clauses, with εἰπέ μοι a syntactically detached addition. To judge from the punctuation of the several editors, εἰπέ μοι is regarded as syntactically detached in (10) and (11), and as a matrix clause in (9): the translations reflect this distinction, as only the clause in (9) does not end with a question mark.

However, these choices seem to be somewhat random: what is the fundamental difference between (9) and (10), for instance? Both have εἰπέ μοι at the beginning of the sentence, followed by an interrogative and an interrogative clause. In (10), εἰπέ μοι is certainly grammaticalized (the verb φήσατε is plural); in (9), it is employed to address one person. However, that does not have any bearing on the interrogative clause, which is structurally near-identical in both cases.

We have now encountered three possible syntactic roles for εἰπέ μοι. It can be an unambiguous matrix clause (example 7); somewhere between matrix clause and syntactically independent (9–11); and unambiguously syntactically detached (5–6). It is certainly not impossible to infer a path of development for εἰπέ μοι on the basis of extension: the inherent ambiguity between matrix clause and syntactically detached expression in clauses with an embedded interrogative clause introduced by an interrogative (9–11) would then instigate the innovation of phrasing in syntactically detached εἰπέ μοι with interrogative clauses which are *not* introduced by an interrogative (5–6). Schematically, the extension would work as follows:

(12)

(a) No ambiguity (as in (7)):

[εἰπέ μοι]<sub>matrix clause</sub> + [indirect interrogative + indirect question]<sub>embedded clause</sub>

- (b) Ambiguity between (as in (9–11))
- i. [εἰπέ μοι]<sub>matrix clause</sub> + [interrogative + interrogative clause]<sub>embedded clause</sub>
  - ii. [εἰπέ μοι]<sub>syntactically detached</sub> + [interrogative + interrogative clause]<sub>main clause</sub>
- (c) Extension of (b.ii) (as in (5–6))
- [εἰπέ μοι]<sub>syntactically detached</sub> + [direct question]<sub>main clause</sub>

What happens here is that the ambiguity of instances with an interrogative clause introduced by an interrogative, like (9–11), where εἰπέ μοι can be processed as a syntactically detached item, ‘spill over’ into instances where it could not otherwise have been used. Through this extension, εἰπέ μοι can now be used asyndetically, i.e. as a syntactically detached expression, with direct questions which are not introduced by an interrogative—there is no longer any need to mark these questions as indirect (as in (12a)) since εἰπέ μοι is no longer felt to be a main clause. Instead, it can be considered syntactically independent. Conversely, syntactic roles are switched: the question becomes the main clause, and εἰπέ μοι becomes a syntactically stranded, optional addition.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, εἰπέ μοι, as a syntactically detached item, gains in positional mobility: it can be implemented clause-initially, clause-internally, or clause-finally.

As stated above, we lack the necessary diachronic underpinnings for the hypothesis that the three syntactic roles of εἰπέ μοι are consecutive steps in its development. It is clear that εἰπέ μοι does not function as an unambiguously syntactically detached expression in Homer, but that it does function as such in Aristophanes. Obviously, some innovation must have taken hold in the intervening time. It is also clear that the three roles appear in tandem synchronically in Aristophanes:<sup>12</sup> this is an

<sup>11</sup> See Thompson and Mulac, in *Approaches* II 313 and 323, and Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 35–36, for comments on the similar development of *I think*; cf. J. R. Ross, “Where to Do Things with Words,” in P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics III Speech Acts* (New York 1975) 233–256, on ‘slifting’.

<sup>12</sup> For εἰπέ μοι as an unambiguous matrix clause in Aristophanes, see e.g. *Nub.* 759 and *Thesm.* 628.

example of divergence (cf. §2.1.2), which strengthens the argument that εἰπέ μοι had become grammaticalized by Classical times. But this is as far as we can go from a diachronic perspective.

There is one factor which can help us gauge whether εἰπέ μοι is a matrix clause or a syntactically detached expression in the ambiguous cases. That factor is based on its positional mobility. Contrast the following examples:

(13 = 1) Dicaeopolis is threatening to ‘kill’ his ‘hostages’, which are actually lumps of charcoal; the chorus reacts (Ar. *Ach.* 328–329):

εἰπέ μοι, τί τοῦτ’ ἀπειλεῖ τοῦπος, ἄνδρες δημόται,

τοῖς Ἀχαρνικοῖσιν ἡμῖν;

Tell me, what does this threat mean, citizens, to us Acharnians?

(14) Cnemon has found his slave Simice, who had dropped a bucket into a well; she is fearful of her punishment (Men. *Dysc.* 590):

τί ποιεῖν δ’, εἰπέ μοι, μέλλεις;

What, tell me, are you going to do?

(15) Strepsiades has just discovered some mathematical instruments (Ar. *Nub.* 200):

πρὸς τῶν θεῶν, τί γὰρ τάδ’ ἐστίν; εἰπέ μοι.

By the gods, what are these things then? Tell me.

All these instances involve an ambiguous εἰπέ μοι: it can be considered either a matrix clause or syntactically detached *vis-à-vis* the interrogative clause introduced by τί. However, if εἰπέ μοι’s position can be statistically correlated with the nature of the interrogative clause, this could aid in establishing the distinction between εἰπέ μοι as a matrix clause and εἰπέ μοι as a syntactically detached expression in examples such as (13–15). Say that there is a significant correspondence between clause-initial εἰπέ μοι and interrogative clauses introduced by an interrogative on the one hand, and between non-clause-initial εἰπέ μοι and interrogative clauses without an interrogative on the other. In the latter case, εἰπέ μοι is unequivocally syntactically detached. If εἰπέ μοι then appeared in non-clause-initial position with interrogative clauses introduced by an interrogative (as in e.g. (14) and (15)), this would provide evidence for the

hypothesis that it is syntactically detached in these instances. If εἰπέ μοι occurs in clause-initial position with interrogative clauses introduced by an interrogative (as in e.g. (13)), this would point towards a matrix clause interpretation.

Author	+ INTERROGATIVE				- INTERROGATIVE			
	Initial	Internal	Final	Total	Initial	Internal	Final	Total
Hom.	1 (100%)	∅	∅	1	∅	∅	∅	∅
Ar.	21* (70%)	∅	9 (30%)	30	6 (75%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	8
Pl.	4 (100%)	∅	∅	4	12 (92.31%)	1** (7.69%)	∅	13
Dem.	5 (100%)	∅	∅	5	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	∅	4
Men.	∅	5 (55.56%)	4 (44.44%)	9	1*** (8.33%)	9 (75%)	2 (16.67%)	12

Table 1: Instances of syntactically ambiguous and detached εἰπέ μοι with interrogative clauses

\*There is one example in Aristophanes (*Lys.* 830) which is inconclusive: τί δ' ἐστίν; εἰπέ μοι, τίς ἢ βοή; "What is this? Tell me, what is this yelling?" The question here is whether εἰπέ μοι is located clause-final (following the first question) or clause-initial (preceding the second question). I have chosen the latter option here simply because it is statistically more prevalent (and is in accordance with the editor's punctuation), although I realize that this amounts to somewhat circular reasoning.

\*\*This instance is quite interesting (Pl. *Spuria* 395E7; cf. 174 below): σὺ γὰρ εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Ἐρυξία, ἀγαθὸν ἢ γῆ τὸ πλουτεῖν; "You tell me, Eruxia, do you think it's good to be rich?" The only item preceding εἰπέ μοι is the topicalized subject σὺ (γάρ); both elements are separated from the question proper by the vocative. Although εἰπέ μοι is, then, located in clause-internal position, strictly speaking, this should be qualified: both σὺ (as a topic which is not located in the clause proper) and εἰπέ μοι (as a syntactically detached expression) can be regarded as extraclausal, preceding the clause itself (cf. D. Matic, "Topic, Focus, and Discourse Structure," *Studies in Language* 27 [2003] 573–633, at 580). Hence, εἰπέ μοι could be regarded as clause-initial in this case as well. The same could be true for the only internal –INT instance in Aristophanes (*Plut.* 1100).

\*\*\* It is possible that this (unique) example of initial position in Menander is due to the meter (*Asp.* 310): μέλλει γαμεῖν γὰρ αὐτός. {Δα} εἰπέ μοι, γαμεῖν; The quantity of the relevant vowel and syllable (short -ᾶ- in γαμεῖν; diphthong ει- in εἰπέ) necessitates placing εἰπέ μοι in initial position here. If this is correct, *Asp.* 310 cannot be regarded as a representative example for this discussion.

With the caveat that sample sizes are fairly limited, Table 1 provides an overview of the relevant numbers.<sup>13</sup> The table should be read as follows: in Demosthenes, there are 5 instances of εἰπέ μοι with an interrogative clause introduced by an interrogative (+INT). In all 5 instances, εἰπέ μοι precedes the question. There are also 4 examples of εἰπέ μοι with interrogative clauses which are not introduced by an interrogative (–INT) in Demosthenes: in 3 instances, it precedes the question; in 1 instance, it is located question-internally.

Drawing conclusions from this table is, as stated, problematic because of inadequate sample sizes. However, there are some interesting tendencies to consider. Before comparing the individual authors, I will first focus on the different possible constructions. Let us begin by looking at +INT initial position (the interrogative is in bold type):

(16) Dicaeopolis is defending the Spartans against the chorus' protestations—things are getting violent (*Ar. Ach.* 319):

**εἰπέ μοι, τί** φειδόμεσθα τῶν λίθων, ᾧ δημόται ...;  
**Tell me**, why are we sparing our rocks, fellow citizens?

Although the editor has opted to regard εἰπέ μοι as syntactically detached in this case (as indicated by the comma and the question mark) and, therefore, the question as direct, it is more reasonable to assume that εἰπέ μοι here is instead a matrix clause. As Houben, Fraser, and Allan argue, complement clauses usually follow main clauses.<sup>14</sup> The question can be regarded as a complement here (it takes the place of the direct object) if it is considered an indirect question.

It is more plausible to regard εἰπέ μοι as syntactically de-

<sup>13</sup> Percentages apply to the +INT or –INT totals, not to both combined. The fragments attributed to Menander have not been taken into account here as they are often unclear.

<sup>14</sup> J. L. Houben, "Word-order Change and Subordination in Homeric Greek," *JIES* 5 (1977) 1–8, at 5; B. L. Fraser, *Word Order, Focus, and Clause Linking in Tragic Greek Poetry* (diss. Cambridge 1999) 253; R. J. Allan, "Clause Intertwining and Word Order in Ancient Greek," *JGL* 12 (2012) 5–28, at 6.

tached in +INT instances if it is located in final position:

(17) Chremylus reacts to the story of an old woman about a man who is no longer friendly to her (Ar. *Plut.* 998):

τί σ' ἔδρασ'; εἰπέ μοι.

What did he do to you? Tell me.

Preposing complement clauses can be pragmatically motivated—the complement clause is highlighted *vis-à-vis* the main clause.<sup>15</sup> On this view, εἰπέ μοι would seem to lose its value as a matrix clause in (17) and, instead, move towards a semantically and syntactically less important function. Note that the elision suggests that εἰπέ μοι is phonologically integrated with the question—in other words, that it is not a fully separate phonological sequence.<sup>16</sup>

Internal position indicates full-on parenthetical εἰπέ μοι, even in +INT examples. Example (14) is repeated as (18) here:

(18) Cnemon has found his slave Simice, who had dropped a bucket into a well; she is fearful of her punishment (Men. *Dysc.* 590):

τί ποιεῖν δ', εἰπέ μοι, μέλλεις;

What, tell me, are you going to do?

Elision occurs here as well: just as in the clause-final instances, εἰπέ μοι is phonologically incorporated into the question.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it now violates the principle of domain integrity, which states that “[c]onstituents prefer to remain within their proper domain; domains prefer not to be interrupted by constituents from other domains.”<sup>18</sup> It is a clear instance of an expression which intervenes in the linear order of a clause of

<sup>15</sup> Fraser, *Word Order* 253; Allan, *JGL* 12 (2012) 6.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, in this regard, all final +INT instances of εἰπέ μοι in both Aristophanes and Menander contain elision wherever it is possible (Ar. *Thesm.* 89; Men. *Dysc.* 553, *Sam.* 453).

<sup>17</sup> The other internal +INT instances in Menander contain elision as well, wherever it is possible: *Dysc.* 466, *Peric.* 387.

<sup>18</sup> Dik, *Functional Grammar* 402 (cited in Allan, *JGL* 12 [2012] 6).

which it does not form a syntactic part.<sup>19</sup> In other words, it is syntactically detached from the clause in which it occurs.

The –INT instances of εἰπέ μοι pose less of a problem. While the positional mobility evident in the +INT examples comes to the fore here as well, –INT εἰπέ μοι is unambiguously syntactically detached from the question: it does not form a syntactic part of the question, yet it is asyndetically attached to the question all the same ((3) repeated as (19)):

(19) Demosthenes is presenting his fellow Athenians with a stark choice between taking up arms against Philip and the following (4.10):

ἢ βούλεσθ', εἰπέ μοι, περιιόντες αὐτῶν πυνθάνεσθαι, “λέγεται τι καινόν;”

Or are you happy, tell me, while you are running around, to inquire from each other, “What news is there?”

It should not surprise us that εἰπέ μοι demonstrates positional movability in –INT instances. In fact, this mobility can be regarded as “a consequence” of its “syntactic independence.”<sup>20</sup> As it does not belong to the clause from a syntactic point of view, it does not occupy a set position in that clause. Conversely, it is not *a priori* liable to appear in clause-internal position—it occurs clause-initially and clause-finally as well.<sup>21</sup>

What has become clear is that εἰπέ μοι is characterized by a high degree of positional mobility across different authors. In measuring those same authors against one another, however, that positional mobility should be qualified: there are conspicuous discrepancies, especially between Menander and the other authors. Initial position occurs only once in Menander, and then probably *metri causa* (see 168 above); for the other, earlier, writers, it is the most common pattern. Although the

<sup>19</sup> Kaltenböck, *View[z]: Vienna Working Papers* 14.1 (2005) 22; cf. Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 12.

<sup>20</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 8.

<sup>21</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 12. See e.g. Pl. *Euthyd.* 302B4–5 for initial position, Ar. *Plut.* 172 for final position.

limited sample sizes do not allow for any sweeping generalizations, the numbers do bear out that something must have happened to εἰπέ μοι somewhere between Aristophanes and Menander. In post-Menander Greek, the tendency to avoid clause-initial position seems to have become even more pronounced. In John Chrysostom's homilies *Contra Anomoeos*, *Adv. Iudaeos*, and *Ad populum Antiochenum*, for example, where εἰπέ μοι occurs 114 times in all, it does not appear clause-initially even once.

The preceding discussion indicates that a clear distinction has to be made between +INT and -INT instances of εἰπέ μοι. The -INT instances are relatively unproblematic: in these cases, εἰπέ μοι is syntactically detached from yet asyndetically connected to a direct question. In +INT instances, however, there is a certain ambiguity: because of a linguistic idiosyncrasy of Ancient Greek, interrogatives can introduce both direct and indirect questions. What was needed was a yardstick against which these occurrences could be measured; εἰπέ μοι's positional mobility was considered the basis for such a yardstick. For +INT instances, I took initial position to designate unambiguous matrix clause status; final position to designate ambiguous status between matrix clause and syntactically detached item; and internal position to designate unambiguous syntactically detached status. This distinction also ties in nicely with Biraud's observation that the 'interjective', i.e. syntactically detached, forms of φέρε, ἄγε, and ἴθι occur clause-internally ("en incise"), and the non-interjective forms clause-initially.<sup>22</sup>

In keeping with this division, the numbers bear out that εἰπέ μοι is simply more syntactically detached in Menander than it is in the other writers under consideration. The positional mobility and increasing syntactic detachability of εἰπέ μοι suggests that it belongs to a functional class of words commonly described as 'parentheticals'.<sup>23</sup> As will become clear in the fol-

<sup>22</sup> Biraud, *Les interjections* 27.

<sup>23</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 18.



lowing section, εἰπέ μοι is parenthetical in a semantic, truth-conditional sense as well.

### 3. εἰπέ μοι as a parenthetical: non-truth conditionality

Following Brinton,<sup>24</sup> we can say that a parenthetical is characterized by at least three different aspects:

- It is syntactically detached from the rest of the clause.
- It is positionally mobile.
- It lacks referential meaning; instead, it functions at the pragmatic plane of discourse.

The first two features were discussed in the preceding section; the third will provide a springboard for the semantic analysis of εἰπέ μοι. At that point, we can also finally consider what εἰπέ μοι contributes to the utterance specifically. First, however, some preliminary remarks are in order on the term ‘parenthetical’.

‘Parenthetical’ in the technical sense employed here refers to those expressions which are, in Kaltenböck’s words, “a clausal category, i.e., contain a verb.”<sup>25</sup> As opposed to Déhé and Kavalova’s more inclusive notion of the concept,<sup>26</sup> then, and with Brinton and Urmson, who first coined the term, a parenthetical as it is understood in this paper consists of, minimally, a verb in some shape or form.<sup>27</sup> Examples in English include *I suppose*, as in “Your house is, I suppose, very old”;<sup>28</sup> *I think*, as in “John came, I think, later than Sue”;<sup>29</sup> *say*, as in “Say, you pro-

<sup>24</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause*.

<sup>25</sup> G. Kaltenböck, “Spoken Parenthetical Clauses in English: A Taxonomy,” in N. Déhé and Y. Kavalova (eds.), *Parentheticals* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2007) 25–52, at 47.

<sup>26</sup> They also regard *what* and *like* as possible parentheticals, for instance: N. Déhé and Y. Kavalova, “Parentheticals: An Introduction,” in *Parentheticals* 1–22, at 1–2.

<sup>27</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause*; J. O. Urmson, “Parenthetical Verbs,” *Mind* 61 (1952) 480–496.

<sup>28</sup> Urmson, *Mind* 61 (1952) 481.

<sup>29</sup> N. Déhé and A. Wichmann, “The Multifunctionality of Epistemic

nounce Kenya funny”;<sup>30</sup> and *if you will*, as in “But it was kind of an issue that was brushed under the carpet if you will.”<sup>31</sup>

I now turn to one of the three defining aspects of parentheticals which still requires some explanation: their lack of referential meaning. Consider the following example (Pl. *Spuria* 395E7):

(20) σὺ γὰρ εἶπέ μοι, ὦ Ἐρυξία, ἀγαθὸν ἡγή τὸ πλουτεῖν;  
 You tell me, Eruxia, do you think it’s good being rich?

This is a straightforward question, one which can be answered with a simple yes or no. Let us say that Eruxia answers no. This implies that she will answer yes to (21), unless she refrains from making a moral judgment on the matter:

(21) σὺ γὰρ εἶπέ μοι, ὦ Ἐρυξία, κακὸν ἡγή τὸ πλουτεῖν;  
 You tell me, Eruxia, do you think it’s bad being rich?

This means that ἀγαθόν is truth-conditional in (20): it bears on the answer of the hearer. If ἀγαθόν is replaced by a non-synonymous word, the hearer will adjust his or her response accordingly. More importantly, if ἀγαθόν is left out, we simply do not have a complete question—we do not have a complete proposition to which truth conditions can apply. If εἶπέ μοι is deleted, however, the truth conditions of the question are not altered:

(22) σὺ γὰρ, ὦ Ἐρυξία, ἀγαθὸν ἡγή τὸ πλουτεῖν;  
 You, Eruxia, do you think it’s good being rich?

We are left with a complete proposition to which Eruxia will reply with the same answer she provided for (20). As such, εἶπέ μοι is non-truth-conditional.

The question of truth-conditionality is often bound up with that of procedurality. Procedural items are opposed to conceptual items: while the latter map onto concepts which form the backbone of the content of the utterance, the former can be

Parenteticals in Discourse: Prosodic Cues to the Semantic-pragmatic Boundary,” *Functions of Language* 17 (2010) 1–28, at 2.

<sup>30</sup> Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 283.

<sup>31</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 165.

regarded as ‘signal posts’ which “guide the process of recovering various aspects” of the utterance.<sup>32</sup> Words such as *cat*, *think*, and *maliciously* are conceptual; words such as *therefore*, *wow*, and *but* are procedural. Procedural items, then, help the hearer in decoding the message while not being part of the message itself; in Carston’s words, they are “effort-saving devices” which are geared towards facilitating hearer comprehension of the utterance.<sup>33</sup> *But*, for instance, can encode a contrast between two different clauses: it is not part of the message, but indicates how the two clauses should be interpreted *vis-à-vis* each other, and, hence, how the message should be construed as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

Although procedural items are often non-truth-conditional (*wow* and *but* do not influence whether a proposition is parsed as true or false), and conceptual items are often truth-conditional, there are some notable exceptions: there is no *a priori* overlap, and both categories (truth-conditionality and nature of semantic contribution) cross-cut each other.<sup>35</sup> But since most non-truth-conditional linguistic items are procedural as well, the case for a conceptual analysis must be quite strong: if it cannot be decisively proved that εἰπέ μοι is conceptual, it should be regarded as procedural.<sup>36</sup>

It is unclear what εἰπέ μοι would contribute to the proposition conceptually. Obviously, it is semantically superfluous: asking a question entails an expectation that the hearer will provide some answer to that question. A deletion test brings

<sup>32</sup> A. Hall, “Do Discourse Connectives Encode Concepts or Procedures?” *Lingua* 117 (2007) 149–174, at 158.

<sup>33</sup> R. Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication* (Oxford 2002) 162.

<sup>34</sup> Hall, *Lingua* 117 (2007) 154.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. B. Clark, *Relevance Theory* (Cambridge 2013) 318–322, giving examples.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. e.g. Clark, *Relevance Theory* 326; D. Wilson and Dan Sperber, “Linguistic Form and Relevance,” *Lingua* 90 (1993) 1–25, at 11; D. Blake-more, *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers* (Cambridge 2002).

this out most plainly:<sup>37</sup> altering the clause in (20) by leaving out εἰπέ μοι in (22) had no discernible influence on Eruxia's answer. Thus εἰπέ μοι cannot be said to contribute to the semantic content of the utterance. The same is true of (23):

(23) The cook Sicon has asked Cnemon for a pot, to which Cnemon replied that he does not have one (Men. *Dysc.* 510–511):

οὐδ' ὀπόθεν ἄν τις, εἰπέ μοι, ἐλθὼν λάβοι φράσαις ἄν;

Could you not even say, tell me, where someone could go find [a pot]?

In this example, εἰπέ μοι is clearly unnecessary from a semantic point of view—not only is Sicon asking a question, but he has also added φράσαις ἄν, which already encodes the idea of 'saying' or 'telling'. How, then, can the inclusion of εἰπέ μοι be explained?

As Brinton has pointed out for *say* (very similar, of course, to εἰπέ μοι), seemingly superfluous additions to the utterance can encode meanings which are based on, but go beyond, their original, conceptual sense. Put differently, if a speaker adds εἰπέ μοι to a question, which already entails that the speaker expects an answer from the hearer, the speaker invites the inference that "something more is intended" than the basic, conceptual meaning of εἰπέ μοι.<sup>38</sup> Cognitive resources are valuable, and tying them up with unnecessary prolixity amounts to poor judgment on the part of the speaker.<sup>39</sup> The question now, of course, becomes what exactly that something more would be. Traugott and Dasher argue that semantic change can be cross-linguistically correlated with (a) a change from semantic to procedural meaning, and (b) non-subjectivity to

<sup>37</sup> B. Frank-Job, "A Dynamic-interactional Approach to Discourse Markers," in K. Fischer (ed.), *Approaches to Discourse Particles* (Amsterdam 2006) 359–374, at 366.

<sup>38</sup> Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 293.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. Ifantidou, "Parentheticals and Relevance," *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 5 (1993) 193–210, at 207; Clark, *Relevance Theory* 108.

(inter)subjectivity.<sup>40</sup> These two facets will form a stepping stone for the subsequent discussion of the function of εἰπέ μοι.

### 3.1 Semantic > procedural

Many studies of parentheticals have demonstrated that they serve procedural functions. Urmson refers to a pre-theoretical notion of procedurality by stating that they “function as signals guiding the hearer to a proper appreciation of the statement in its context” and “help the understanding and assessment of what is said rather than being a part of what is said.”<sup>41</sup> Brinton, too, argues that parentheticals serve “procedural functions,” as does Rouchota;<sup>42</sup> Fedriani et al. conclude that parenthetical ἄγε functions procedurally as well.<sup>43</sup>

Some examples will bring out how procedurality is understood. Brinton’s analysis of *say* emphasizes the desemantization of the original meaning in favour of more abstract, procedural meanings: it gradually comes to express an “emotional response” on the part of the speaker, or is used to “evoke the hearer’s attention.”<sup>44</sup> Frank-Job argues that Italian *dimmi* (which is obviously almost identical to εἰπέ μοι) functions as a turn-yielding device for the speaker.<sup>45</sup> Fedriani et al. make the same case for some instances of ἄγε; other occurrences can be regarded as having transitioned from an exhortation to proceed “across space” to an exhortation to proceed “in doing something,” the latter being more abstract and procedural.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>40</sup> E. C. Traugott and R. B. Dasher, *Regularity in Semantic Change* (Oxford 2005) 40.

<sup>41</sup> Urmson, *Mind* 61 (1952) 495 and 496.

<sup>42</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 241; V. Rouchota, “Procedural Meaning and Parenthetical Discourse Markers,” in A. H. Jucker and Y. Ziv (eds.), *Discourse Markers: Descriptions and Theory* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia 1998) 97–126.

<sup>43</sup> Fedriani et al., “Constraining Pragmaticalization.”

<sup>44</sup> Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 284, also *The Comment Clause* 73–110.

<sup>45</sup> Frank-Job, in *Discourse Particles* 369.

<sup>46</sup> Fedriani et al., “Constraining Pragmaticalization.”

Italian *guarda*, finally, transitions from conceptual (“look!”) to procedural meaning (the speaker has something important to say).<sup>47</sup>

### 3.2 Non-subjective > (inter)subjective

Subjective expressions encode the speaker’s perspective and point of view; intersubjective expressions encode the relationship between speaker and hearer.<sup>48</sup> Among the functions noted for subjective parentheticals are the ability to express “responses, reactions, attitudes, understanding, tentativeness, or continued attention”; intersubjective parentheticals can, for instance, express “intimacy, cooperation, shared knowledge, deference, or face-saving (politeness).”<sup>49</sup> Examples of subjective parentheticals are *I mean*, which “is used when the speaker focuses attention on him/herself”;<sup>50</sup> and *say*, as in “‘Say, that’s our City’, bubbles Dolores,” which can “express a (rather weak) emotional response, such as surprise, regret, anger, disbelief, delight, etc., to what is (about to be) said.”<sup>51</sup> Examples of intersubjective parentheticals are *you know*, which can mark information “shared by the speaker and his addressee”;<sup>52</sup> and *dimmi*, which facilitates the transition from speaker to hearer and vice versa.<sup>53</sup> Parenthetical *ἄγε* is intersubjective as well.

In sum, then, there is cross-linguistic evidence that paren-

<sup>47</sup> R. Waltereit, “Imperatives, Interruption in Discourse, and the Rise of Discourse Markers: A Study of Italian *guarda*,” *Linguistics* 40 (2002) 987–1010.

<sup>48</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 70; Traugott and Dasher, *Regularity* 6; Company Company, *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 20 (2006) 98.

<sup>49</sup> Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 18.

<sup>50</sup> D. Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers* (Cambridge 1987) 299.

<sup>51</sup> Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 283–284.

<sup>52</sup> S. Vincent, S. Darbaky, and A. Mattouchi, “The Grammaticalization of *you know*: From Shared Knowledge to Control over the Co-speaker,” *English Text Construction* 2 (2009) 209–227, at 214.

<sup>53</sup> Frank-Job, in *Discourse Particles* 359–374; see also C. Bazzanella, “Discourse Markers in Italian: Towards a ‘Compositional’ Meaning,” in *Discourse Particles* 449–464, at 457.

theticals are (a) desemanticized, procedural elements, and (b) subjective or intersubjective elements of the discourse. Not coincidentally, desemanticization and (inter)subjectification are also two of the semantic features of grammaticalized expressions.<sup>54</sup> In what follows I turn to εἰπέ μοι itself, to analyze whether it fits this pattern and what it contributes to the discourse.

### 3.3. εἰπέ μοι's semantics

εἰπέ μοι's exact function will be discussed by first analyzing its core meaning and then the contexts in which it usually occurs.

#### 3.3.1. Directness

Consider the following example:

(24) Socrates has just denounced sophists as being immoral. Callicles reacts to Chaerephon (Pl. *Grg.* 481B6–7):

εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Χαίρεφῶν, σπουδάξει ταῦτα Σωκράτης ἢ παίζει;

Tell me, Chaerephon, is Socrates being serious about these things or joking?

This is a standard disjunctive question. The text proceeds with Chaerephon admitting that he is not sure about the correct

<sup>54</sup> Cf. S. Nicolle, "Conceptual and Procedural Encoding: Criteria for the Identification of Linguistically Encoded Procedural Information," in M. Groefsema (ed.), *Proceedings of the University of Hertfordshire Relevance Theory Workshop* (Chelmsford 1997) 47–56, at 54–55, who postulates a link between procedurality and grammaticalization. For desemanticization see Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 292, and *The Comment Clause* 91. For intersubjectification see Traugott and Dasher, *Regularity* 6; Company Company, *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 20 (2006) 98; Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 70. It should be noted that 'desemanticization' does not amount to 'deterioration'. As Sweetser notes, the latter is burdened with a "rather pejorative connotation": E. Sweetser, "Grammaticalization and Semantic Bleaching," *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (1988) 389–405, at 401. What actually happens is that the original conceptual source of an expression provides the basis for a related yet distinct meaning. Cf. Biraud, *Les interjections* 247, and Fedriani et al., "Constraining Pragmaticalization," on desemanticization with other parentheticals in Ancient Greek.

answer and that they had better ask Socrates himself. At first blush, nothing too strange seems to be going on here. Callicles is asking a clear question prefaced by εἰπέ μοι, which is clearly parenthetical (syntactically detached yet asyndetically connected to the main clause; non-truth-conditional). As argued above, εἰπέ μοι does not add to the semantic content of the utterance. However, its inclusion does affect how the hearer interprets the utterance. Let us say, for argument's sake, that there was no εἰπέ μοι in (24). In that case, we could paraphrase Callicles' words:

(25) Callicles is asking Chaerephon if Socrates was being serious or joking.

Yet now we have left out a part of Callicles' message. With the addition of εἰπέ μοι, his words could be paraphrased:

(26) Callicles is ordering Chaerephon to tell him if Socrates was being serious or joking.

The paraphrase in (26) is still only an approximation of Callicles' message. It is more accurate to state that he utters a proposition (ὦ Χαιρεφῶν, σπουδάζει ταῦτα Σωκράτης ἢ παίζει) in the form of a question; by including εἰπέ μοι, the strength of the proposition is enhanced, without that proposition being altered as such: Chaerephon's answer ('he is being serious' or 'he is joking') is not influenced by the addition of εἰπέ μοι. The point is that εἰπέ μοι "fine tunes the interpretation" of the proposition without adding to it.<sup>55</sup> A more comprehensive paraphrase of Callicles' utterance in (24), then, would combine both (25) and (26). By this I mean that Callicles has uttered two separate speech acts with the same illocution: he has uttered a question (ὦ Χαιρεφῶν, σπουδάζει ταῦτα Σωκράτης ἢ παίζει;), which is a directive speech act;<sup>56</sup> he has also

<sup>55</sup> D. Blakemore, "Divisions of Labour: The Analysis of Parentheticals," *Lingua* 116 (2006) 1670–1687, at 1683; cf. Ifantidou, *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 5 (1993) 206; Urmson, *Mind* 61 (1952) 495–496.

<sup>56</sup> J. R. Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society* 5 (1976) 1–23, at 11.



uttered a speech act with imperative εἰπέ μοι, which attempts to “get the hearer to do something” and hence is directive as well.<sup>57</sup> The two can be distinguished in that the question constitutes a perfectly well-formed message on its own, but the imperative does not. In other words, the speech act εἰπέ μοι needs another speech act to which it can apply. Moreover, ὃ Χαίρεφῶν, σπουδάζει ταῦτα Σωκράτης ἢ παίζει is truth-conditional, while εἰπέ μοι is not. εἰπέ μοι, then, only operates (non-truth-conditionally) in function of another, semantically ‘main’ speech act. This leads to the question what exactly εἰπέ μοι contributes to the speaker’s message.

It is somewhat peculiar for speakers to employ imperatives in regular “face-to-face interaction”: under normal circumstances, interlocutors “will take into account each other’s desire for freedom of action” and avoid ordering each other around, and while interlocutors will usually hide their intention to get the other to perform some task, imperatives entail the exact opposite of that goal—they involve the speaker plainly commanding the hearer to do something, and hence they fall “on the lowest end of the politeness scale.”<sup>58</sup> Put differently, imperatives increase the ‘directness’ of the interaction between speaker and hearer:<sup>59</sup> they usually result in “face-threatening acts,” where the speaker attempts to impose his will on his interlocutor, and, more importantly, does not go to any trouble to disguise this fact.<sup>60</sup> In this sense, they can be considered the opposite of

<sup>57</sup> J. R. Searle, “A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts,” in J. R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Oxford 1979) 1–29, at 13. See also Biraud, *Les interjections* 220, who argues that φέρε, ἄγε, and ἴθι “conservernt une valeur illocutoire directive” (cf. Fedriani et al., “Constraining Pragmaticalization,” on ἄγε).

<sup>58</sup> K. Pelsmaekers, “Directness and (im)politeness: The Use of Imperatives in Business Letters,” in G. Tops et al. (eds.), *Thinking English Grammar* (Louvain 1999) 263–279, at 263.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. A. Mehrabian, “Immediacy: An Indicator of Attitudes in Linguistic Communication,” *Journal of Personality* 34 (1966) 26–34, at 28.

<sup>60</sup> H. Haverkate, “Politeness Strategies in Verbal Interaction: An Analy-

conversational mitigators such as *please, will you?, if you wouldn't mind*, and so on:<sup>61</sup> broadly, a speaker who adjoins imperatives to his (direct or indirect) requests is less concerned about saving face and being polite. In (24), this seems to be a plausible interpretation of εἰπέ μοι's contribution: the question gains in directness by the addition of εἰπέ μοι, but nothing else besides seems particularly distinctive about the utterance. Put differently, we are dealing with an entirely 'neutral' context here: Callicles is asking a sincere question to which he desires an informative answer, without any emotional overtones.

### 3.3.2. Affectivity

It seems intuitively appealing that εἰπέ μοι increases the directness of the main speech act (the question) and functions as an urgent imploration that the hearer provide an answer. However, on delving deeper into the instances where it occurs, it seems that it operates in certain specific contexts. Directness is an attractive starting point from which we can proceed to a more nuanced view for these examples. Take the following instances:

(27) Trygaeus is trying to stop wedding guests from singing songs of war (Ar. *Pax* 1300):

εἰπέ μοι, ὦ πόσθων, εἰς τὸν σαυτοῦ πατέρ' ᾄδεις;  
Tell me, little boy, are you singing this for your own father?

(28) Geton has been banging on Cnemon's door; Cnemon's reaction (Men. *Dysc.* 466–467):

τί τῆς θύρας ᾄπτει, τρισάθλι', εἰπέ μοι,  
 ἄνθρωπε;

Why are you hanging on to the door, tell me, you triply wretched man?

In (27), Trygaeus has been infuriated by (sons of) wedding guests who have been singing war songs for a time; at 1271–

sis of Directness and Indirectness in Speech Acts," *Semiotica* 71 (1988) 59–71, at 65.

<sup>61</sup> Pelsmaekers, in *Thinking English Grammar* 264; B. Fraser, "Conversational Mitigation," *Journal of Pragmatics* 4 (1980) 341–350.

1272, he had insulted one of them by calling him τρισκακόδαϊμον (“thrice-possessed”), ἀμαθής (“foolish”), and κατάρατον (“accursed”). Accordingly, the use of εἰπέ μοι fits into a pattern of extremely ‘direct’ messages in which the speaker does not take his own ‘face’ or conversational politeness into account. (28) is very similar: Cnemon has just been forced to open his door because there was so much noise, which means that he is not in the best of moods. He does not take his hearer’s feelings or his own ‘face’ into account, but immediately insults Geton. In both cases, the presence of the insult (πόσθων and τρισ-άθλιε) as well indicates that these two are very direct, face-threatening utterances.<sup>62</sup> The use of εἰπέ μοι here is certainly warranted from the ‘directness’ point of view.

εἰπέ μοι has a penchant for appearing in these types of affective contexts. In the next example, the speaker is expressing surprise:

(29) Chaireas is informing Daos that Smicrines is planning to marry the girl he himself loves (*Men. Asp.* 310–311):

(Χα) μέλλει γαμεῖν γὰρ αὐτός.

(Δα) εἰπέ μοι, γαμεῖν;

δυνήσεται δέ;

(Cha.) because he himself is about to marry.

(Da.) Tell me, to marry? And will he be able to do that?

Daos is taken aback by this new information Chaireas has provided—so much so, in fact, that he echoes Chaireas (γαμεῖν). He then asks if Smicrines’ plans are even possible, which illustrates that this turn of events is completely unexpected to him.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Ar. Nub.* 847, where Strepsiades has just called Phidippides ἀμαθής and παχύς (“thick”); *Men. Sam.* 677, where Moschion is rebuking his servant Parmenon for a perceived slight, using the insult ἱερόσυλε (“temple robber”).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Ar. Nub.* 200 (πρὸς τῶν θεῶν, τί γὰρ τάδ’ ἐστίν; εἰπέ μοι, “By the gods, what is this? Tell me,” which is treated as (15) above), where Strepsiades is utterly confounded by the esoteric mathematical instruments he has discovered.

In (30), which expands on (14) and (18), the speaker is caught by a sudden panic:

(30) Simice has dropped her master Cnemon's bucket into a well; he has just barged in, looking for what he assumes is the thief who stole this bucket (Men. *Dysc.* 589–590):

(Σιμ) ἄκουσα, δέσποτ', ἐνέβαλον.

(Κν) βιάδιζε δὴ  
εἴσω.

(Σιμ) τί ποιεῖν δ', εἰπέ μοι, μέλλεις;

(Sim.) Listen, master, I dropped it in [a well].

(Cn.) Come, step inside.

(Sim.) What, tell me, are you going to do?

Simice is fearful of what she presumes is going to be a severe punishment; as a consequence, she forgets all sense of hierarchy and decorum, and demands to know from her master what is going to happen. This is quite unusual—a slave does not order his or her master around, telling him what he must or must not say or do. In this sense, (30) is affective as well: Simice's fear trumps any considerations of deference and propriety, which results in a very direct utterance.

Affectivity forms an important part of the answer to what εἰπέ μοι's function is. As a very direct expression, it is liable to occur in contexts where the speaker is less concerned with politeness and propriety. As such, εἰπέ μοι seems to have a subjective function: it subtly focuses attention on the speaker by combining with affective, direct utterances, where the speaker expresses irritation, anger, surprise, and fear.<sup>64</sup>

Of course, this subjective dimension does not preclude an intersubjective component from being present as well. In the previous examples (25–30), the speaker was asking a question of the hearer to which he expected an informative answer; an exception is (29), where the speaker's echoing of his interlocutor's words indicates his surprise.<sup>65</sup> The speaker, in the

<sup>64</sup> Cf. also Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 284, on *say*.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. D. Wilson and D. Sperber, "Mood and the Analysis of Non-declarative Sentences," in J. Dancy et al. (eds.), *Human Agency: Language, Duty*

majority of these instances, is soliciting a response from the hearer—in other words, trying to catch the hearer’s attention and get him to invest in the conversation.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.3.2 Rhetorical questions

εἰπέ μοι also occurs in non-affective contexts. As a marker of affective utterances, it is more frequent in comedy than it is in the prose authors under consideration (i.e. Plato and Demosthenes). Take the following instance:

(31) By Socrates’ request, Chaerephon is asking questions of Gorgias (Pl. *Grg.* 447D6–8):

εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Γοργία, ἀληθῆ λέγει Καλλικλῆς ὅδε ὅτι ἐπαγγέλλη ἀποκρίνεσθαι ὅτι ἄν τις σε ἐρωτῶ;

Tell me, Gorgias, is it true what Callicles here says, that you proclaim to answer whatever someone asks of you?

There is no affective component to this utterance—it appears to be a straight-up question. The answer, however, is entirely straightforward: yes, Gorgias will answer any and all questions. This is information which was already provided to Chaerephon by Callicles: why would Callicles lie about it? In a sense, then, the answer to the speaker’s question is embedded into the question itself. Put differently, the way in which the question is posed implies that the speaker already knows what the hearer will reply.<sup>67</sup>

Example (31) is contiguous to rhetorical questions. Yet it cannot quite be considered such. Even though the speaker provides the bulk of the answer to the hearer, he is still asking for

*and Value* (Stanford 1988) 77–101.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Brinton, in *Opening Windows* 284 and *The Comment Clause* 89, both on *say*; also Bazzanella, in *Discourse Particles* 457. Interestingly, Maeschler notes that the Hebrew expression *tagidi li*, which, like εἰπέ μοι, translates as ‘tell me’, functions intersubjectively as well: Y. Maeschler, “Metalanguaging and Discourse Markers in Bilingual Conversation,” *Language in Society* 23 (1994) 325–366, at 350.

<sup>67</sup> See e.g. *Euthyd.* 293E5–6, *Phdr.* 229B4, and *Hp. Mai.* 292C5 for other examples of these types of questions with εἰπέ μοι in Plato.

confirmation or denial. However, (31) is entirely self-evident, i.e. it includes a “particular answer” which the speaker imposes on the hearer—this is one of the main characteristics of a rhetorical question.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, I will label instances like these ‘pseudo-rhetorical questions’. In the corpus under consideration, εἰπέ μοι does in fact occur with genuine rhetorical questions. Compare (31) to the following, by now familiar, example:

(32) Demosthenes is presenting his fellow Athenians with a stark choice between taking up arms against Philip and the following (4.10):

ἢ βούλεσθ', εἰπέ μοι, περιιόντες αὐτῶν πυνθάνεσθαι, “λέγεται τι καινόν;”

Or are you happy, tell me, while you are running around, to inquire from each other, “What news is there?”

Of course, the implied answer to Demosthenes' question is a resounding no. More importantly, while (31) elicited a confirmation or denial from the hearer(s), and hence was not completely superfluous, (32) is not actually a request for information. Instead, it amounts to a rebuke on Demosthenes' part, an admonition for the Athenians to smell the proverbial coffee and take the threat posed by Philip seriously. Demosthenes' implicit message can be paraphrased as follows:

(33) You should not be happy to run around and inquire from each other, “What news is there?”

The speaker, then, is not asking for confirmation or denial, i.e. is not asking for information, but simply performing an indirect directive speech act, couched in a question.

I give one other example of a rhetorical question from Demosthenes:

<sup>68</sup> C. Ilie, *What else can I tell you? A Pragmatic Study of English Rhetorical Questions as Discursive and Argumentative Acts* (Stockholm 1994) 3. As pointed out to me by a reviewer for *GRBS*, these ‘pseudo-rhetorical’ instances of εἰπέ μοι “occur always at the beginning of an elenchus or conversation, or introduce a new stage or topic.”

(34) Demosthenes is making his case against Philip (19.312):

εἰπέ μοι, τῆς νῦν οὔσης Ἑλλάδος ταυτησὶ καὶ οἰκουμένης ἔσθ' ὅτι ταύτην ἂν τὴν προσηγορίαν εἶχεν ἢ ᾠκειῖθ' ὑπὸ τῶν νῦν ἐχόντων Ἑλλήνων, εἰ μὴ τὰς ἀρετὰς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐκείνας οἱ Μαραθῶνι καὶ Σαλαμῖνι παρέσχοντο, οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι;

Tell me, of this Greece which now exists and is inhabited, is there a part which would have this name or would be inhabited by the Greeks who do so now, if they, in their defence, had not applied this courage to Marathon and Salamis—I mean our forefathers.

Again, Demosthenes' (paraphrased) message departs significantly from what he is saying:

(35) There is no part of contemporary Greece which would bear that name or would be inhabited by Greeks if our forefathers had not shown their courage at Marathon and Salamis.

In this case, Demosthenes is stating an (indirect) assertion instead of a true question. As he himself points out after posing his question in (34), no other answer except no is plausible (19.312):

(36) οὐδ' ἂν εἷς εἶ οἶδ' ὅτι φήσειεν, ἀλλὰ πάντα ταῦθ' ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων ἂν ἐαλωκέναι.

I know for certain that not even one person would say 'Yes', but [he would say] that all these areas would have been taken by the barbarians.

Demosthenes, in (36), makes explicit what most rhetorical questions do implicitly: they “emphasize one particular answer by excluding all the other alternative answers.”<sup>69</sup> He is not asking for information from his audience in (34), but, instead, makes an assertion which he assumes his audience will share.

At first blush, it might seem slightly bizarre that a rhetorical question (to which the speaker does not expect an actual answer) is punctuated by εἰπέ μοι, which, by its imperative nature, presses the interlocutor for an answer. However, the idea that the hearer does not answer because the speaker did not ask an actual question is not entirely right. Not all answers

<sup>69</sup> Ilie, *What else can I tell you?* 3.

manifest themselves in actuality, i.e. as a spoken or written string of words. In the case of rhetorical questions, the audience answers the question *mentally*. More to the point, the speaker's goal is "to elicit the addressee's mental agreement with the implication of the rhetorical question."<sup>70</sup> In this sense, then, rhetorical questions are intersubjective.

Adding εἰπέ μοι to a rhetorical question increases the question's directness and presses the audience either to find fault with the speaker's argument or to agree with it. The rhetorical questions are constructed so that accepting Demosthenes' point of view is the only reasonable conclusion: if the hearer is happy to run around in (32), he leaves himself open to the charge of cowardice; if the hearer does not acknowledge the important role of his forebears in protecting Greece in (34), he could be considered unpatriotic and even treasonous. Thus, the rhetorical question, made more direct by εἰπέ μοι, involves the audience in Demosthenes' oration by inviting agreement with his arguments.

εἰπέ μοι's basic contribution to the utterance, then, seems to concern conversational directness. It amounts to a secondary speech act, a directive 'utterance modifier'<sup>71</sup> which combines with a primary speech act (the rest of the sentence) that is directive as well. With εἰπέ μοι, the speaker manifestly imposes his/her will on the hearer to tell him/her something. In itself, εἰπέ μοι is not part of the proposition: it is more appropriate to say that εἰπέ μοι encodes an instruction for the hearer on how to interpret the proposition (viz., as a more direct, explicit directive), without contributing to the truth-conditional content of the utterance. As such, εἰπέ μοι should be considered procedural in nature: procedural expressions provide instructions for computations about propositions.<sup>72</sup> In this sense, εἰπέ μοι

<sup>70</sup> Ilie, *What else can I tell you?* 38.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. K. Bach, "The Myth of Conventional Implicature," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 22 (1999) 327–366.

<sup>72</sup> D. Blakemore, "Performatives and Parentheticals," *PAS* 91 (1990) 197–213, at 211–212; K. Aijmer, *English Discourse Particles: Evidence from a*



does “not contribute to the expression of a thought [i.e., to the proposition] but characterize[s] the expression of it” by increasing its directness.<sup>73</sup>

This directness can manifest itself in different ways, as we have seen. At the most basic level, εἰπέ μοι operates (intersubjectively) as an attention-getting, response-eliciting device.<sup>74</sup> This is, of course, also a function of its non-parenthetical counterpart. Accordingly, the semantic grammaticalization criterion of ‘persistence’ pertains to εἰπέ μοι: traces of the meaning of the original lexeme are retained in the grammaticalized form.<sup>75</sup> With rhetorical questions, εἰπέ μοι is used to press the audience for mental agreement with the point the speaker is making. Subjectively, εἰπέ μοι often combines with affective utterances, where conversational propriety and politeness are less of an issue—accordingly, they harmonize perfectly with εἰπέ μοι. One instance can function both subjectively and intersubjectively: εἰπέ μοι can point to the speaker’s anger and also elicit a response from the hearer, for example.

A word of caution to end this section. There are some instances (especially in Menander) which seem to be parenthetical from a structural-syntactic point of view (cf. §2 above) and have been counted as such in the previous section. Yet these utterances, or the surrounding context, are incomplete, which means that there is very little to be said about their function (e.g. *Sam.* 170, *Dysc.* 691). These examples were not included in this section on εἰπέ μοι’s function, since any interpretation would be founded on mere speculation. Thus, this account has been predominantly qualitatively-based.

---

*Corpus* (Philadelphia 2002) 11; Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances* 162.

<sup>73</sup> Bach, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 22 (1999) 341, cf. 328.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Fedriani et al., “Constraining Pragmaticalization,” for a similar view on ἄγε.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Hopper, in *Approaches to Grammaticalization* I 22; Brinton, *The Comment Clause* 51; Traugott and Dasher, *Regularity* 11–12; cf. also Biraud, *Les interjections* 220, and Fedriani et al., *Constraining Pragmaticalization*, on persistence with other parentheticals in Ancient Greek.

#### 4. Conclusions

Research into Ancient Greek parentheticals has come a long way since Schwyzer's (very valuable) pre-theoretical remarks.<sup>76</sup> Modern linguistic insights and frameworks have been successfully applied to these expressions; this paper should be regarded as a contribution to this growing body of work. Although much about parenthetical εἰπέ μοι remains unclear and further (diachronic and synchronic) research is certainly required, some tendencies can be pointed out.

Semantically, εἰπέ μοι can be regarded as a parenthetical, a non-truth-conditional item which makes a procedural contribution to the utterance. This contribution is connected to illocution. εἰπέ μοι, which is itself directive, always occurs with other directive speech acts (i.e., questions): it increases the directness of these speech acts, i.e., makes the speaker's desire to impose his/her will on the interlocutor more explicit. Thus it can be regarded as an 'utterance modifier' in Bach's sense in that it does not contribute to the proposition, but instead modifies how the proposition's expression should be interpreted.<sup>77</sup>

From a diachronic syntactic perspective, it seems that the most plausible evolution from matrix clause to parenthetical is based on the ambiguity when εἰπέ μοι is followed by an interrogative. As interrogatives can indicate both direct and indirect questions, two readings are possible in these cases. On the direct question reading, εἰπέ μοι becomes a syntactically detached part of the sentence, with the question becoming the main clause; on the indirect question reading, εἰπέ μοι is a matrix clause of which the question forms a complement. This ambiguity could then have spread to instances where the question was *not* introduced by an interrogative. εἰπέ μοι would then be syntactically detached from the question, which was now unambiguously direct and the main clause of the sentence.

<sup>76</sup> E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammat II Syntax und syntaktische Stilistik* (Munich 1950) 583.

<sup>77</sup> Bach, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 22 (1999) 327–366.

Synchronically, εἰπέ μοι occurred clause-initially, clause-internally, and clause-finally. This positional mobility was correlated with its syntactic independence, which is, as pointed out above, ambiguous if εἰπέ μοι appears with interrogative-introduced questions. If εἰπέ μοι occurred clause-initially, it was regarded as a matrix clause; clause-internally, a parenthetical; and clause-finally, still ambiguous but more likely to be parenthetical.

In comparing Aristophanes, Menander, Plato, and Demosthenes, it became obvious that Menander could be distinguished from the other three. In his plays, εἰπέ μοι has a clear predilection for clause-internal and hence unambiguously parenthetical status.

There are still gaps in this account. A quick search of John Chrysostom's works, for instance, seems to indicate that εἰπέ μοι does not occur clause-initially in his sermons even once (cf. 172 above). Does this mean that it could only be used parenthetically in the fourth century? What about its semantics? Can it still be considered an utterance modifier, or has its range branched out into other distinctive functions? These and other questions remain.<sup>78</sup>

*January, 2014*

Ghent University  
Blandijnberg 2  
9000 Ghent, Belgium  
Samuel.Zakowski@ugent.be

<sup>78</sup> This work was funded by the Fund for Scientific Research (FWO; grant number B/10040/02) and the Special Research Fund (BOF; grant number B/13790/01). I am very much indebted to Mark Janse, whose remarks improved an early draft of this paper tremendously. Many thanks to the anonymous *GRBS* referee for his/her valuable remarks.