Everyday Communication in Antiquity: Frames and Framings
edited by Klaas Bentein

Exploring Frame-Based Approaches to Everyday Communication in Antiquity

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Abstract This chapter introduces and develops a frame-based approach to understanding communicative practices in antiquity, outlining its definition, significance, and application across the contributions in this volume. It begins by exploring the core concept of 'social meaning making', drawing on key theoretical advancements from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and social semiotics. Additionally, the chapter addresses the formulation of a 'semiotic grammar' as a central research objective, highlighting the analytical challenges inherent in this endeavour.

Keywords Everyday communication. Social meaning. Papyri. Framing. Semiotic grammar.

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1 Introduction

The present volume showcases some of the research that was conducted in the context of the European-funded project *Everyday Writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. A Socio-Semiotic Study of Communicative Variation* (2018-24),[1] featuring contributions from scholars directly involved in the project as well as those associated with it more broadly.[2] The primary objective of this project has been to analyse the communicative choices made by writers in their papyrus documents and to explore how these choices relate to the wider context of communication, facilitated by the development of innovative digital tools.

While our team has had the pleasure of organising a multitude of project-related events,[3] two such events stand out for the way they chronologically and thematically 'frame' our project: the 2019 conference *Novel Perspectives on Communication Practices in Antiquity. Towards a Historical Social-Semiotic Approach*,[4] where we first made a case for a more holistic, interdisciplinary approach towards social meaning making practices,[5] and the smaller-scale 2023 workshop *Everyday Communication in Antiquity: Frames and Framings*,[6] in which we explored one specific approach to the interpretation of social meaning making practices, conceptualised as a 'frame-based' approach. The contributions in this volume originate from that workshop, each significantly elaborated upon.

In this introductory chapter, I will explore in greater detail the concept of a frame-based approach, elaborating on its definition and significance (§ 4), and its application across the contributions in this volume (§ 5). Before doing so, however, I will introduce the essential concept of 'social meaning making' and review some important theoretical developments in related fields such as sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and social semiotics (§ 2). Following this, I will examine the formulation of a 'semiotic grammar' as a key research objective and discuss the analytical challenges associated with this task (§ 3).

1 See further www.evwrit.ugent.be.

2 Work for this chapter was undertaken in the context of the ERC Starting Grant project EVWRIT (*Everyday Writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. A Socio-Semiotic Study of Communicative Variation*), a project which has received funding from the European Research Council under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 756487).

3 See https://www.evwrit.ugent.be/events/ for an overview.

4 Ghent, October 3-5, 2019.

5 For which, see further Bentein, Amory 2023b.

6 Ghent, June 12-13, 2023.

2 The Dynamics of Social Meaning Making

2.1 The Foundations: Michael Halliday

At the outset of the Everyday Writing project, there were some reservations about integrating the traditional field of papyrology with the contemporary theoretical framework of social semiotics, which focuses on modern communication practices. Despite these early concerns, social semiotics and the closely related concept of multimodality, which I will introduce shortly, are increasingly being recognised and accepted in the fields of papyrology and epigraphy.[7]

The concept of 'social semiotics' was introduced at an early stage in the field of linguistics by M.A.K. Halliday, who emphasised the social dimension of language and meaning making already in a 1978 book of his, entitled *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*.[8] Although it might appear rather straightforward, emphasising the social dimension of language was quite revolutionary in the 1970s: as one scholar has observed,

> context was a notion remarkable by its absence from the discourse of dominant linguistics: to express concern with context was to banish oneself to the outer periphery of the legitimate boundaries of that discipline.[9]

While previous approaches – in particular Noam Chomsky's Generative Grammar – took an *intra-organism* perspective towards language, focusing heavily on cognitive aspects – Michael Halliday and other pioneers started to develop an *inter-organism* perspective instead, investigating how individuals interact with each other through language, which ultimately led to the development of sociolinguistics as a discipline.[10] Michael Halliday's exploration specifically resulted in a *systemic* theory of the functionalities of language, which recognises three main functions ('representational', 'textual', and crucially also 'interpersonal'), to which not only linguistic systems but also contextual parameters are systematically related.[11]

7 At the last *International Colloquium of Ancient Greek Linguistics* (Madrid, June 16-18, 2022), for example, there was a presentation by Mariarosaria Zinzi, "A Social-semiotic Analysis of Greek Defixiones from South Italy".

8 Halliday 1978.

9 Hasan 2001, 2.

10 Bentein 2019, 145-6.

11 What the interactants are communicating about (the 'field' of the text) is related to the 'representational' function, how interactants come into contact (the 'mode' of

Because of its emphasis on language as a functional system with realisational relationships between the strata of *context*, *content* and *expression*, Halliday's theory of language leaves little room for the study of linguistic features which express aspects of social meaning in a more indirect way, such as the features which we traditionally associate with dialects (different types of pronunciation, alternative lexical forms, etc.).[12] Hence Halliday's theory is also known as *functional sociolinguistics*,[13] and can be contrasted with the approach developed by pioneers such as William Labov, which is known as *variationist sociolinguistics*; the latter type of approach is less interested in capturing the intracacies of language as a system, but more so in quantitatively investigating the interrelationship between specific linguistic features and macro-sociological, demographic variables such as *age*, *gender*, *socio-economic status*, and, from a diachronic point of view, how linguistic change spreads through social space.[14]

2.2 Developing a 'Third-wave' (Historical) Sociolinguistic Approach

One point of criticism which has affected functional and variationist sociolinguists alike is the relatively unidimensional and inflexible way in which they approach the concept of social-meaning making. Penelope Eckert, for example, notes that in the field of variationist sociolinguistics, "common practice views variables as directly indexing social categories",[15] with social categories acting as 'constraints' on variation and little to no social agency attributed to speakers and writers;[16] she considers such an approach to be based on a static, non-dialectal, view of language.[17]

Whereas in mainstream sociolinguistics, social considerations have been subordinated to linguistic theory, they have been more central to linguistic anthropology. Of particular importance in this regard has been the elaboration of the notion 'linguistic indexicality'

the text) is related to the 'textual' function, and what the social relationship between the interacts looks like (the 'tenor' of the text) is related to the 'interpersonal' function.

12 Halliday 1968 justifies leaving aside such features by distinguishing between 'uses' and 'users' of language, his main interest being in the former.

13 On which see further Martin and Williams 2008.

14 Labov 1994; 2001; 2010.

15 Eckert 2003, 47.

16 Eckert 2012, 89.

17 Eckert 2008, 464. Van Dijk 2009, 4 similarly refers to a 'determinist fallacy' in sociolinguistics.

by Michael Silverstein,[18] a concept that goes back to the distinction made by the philosopher Charles Peirce between three types of signs – *symbols*, *icons* and *indexes* – to be distinguished on the basis of the relationship between signifier and signified.[19] In the realm of language, one can think of indexes as features that point to aspects of the social context, such as the personal pronoun 'I' pointing to the speaker, or the temporal adverb 'now' pointing to the current time of speaking, both belonging to the broader category of 'deictic' elements.

Whereas older – structural and formalist approaches – heavily emphasised the denotational function of language by viewing it as an autonomous, purely symbolic system, Michael Silverstein put indexicality back at the centre of the study of language.[20] Indexicality is, indeed, a key concept in the study of language from what I referred to earlier as an 'inter-organism' perspective: given their function as social 'pointers', linguistic indexes are central to how social meaning is conveyed in interaction – they are part of the 'indexical pragmatics' of a text. An important distinction that can be made in this regard is that between *referential* and *non-referential* indexes:[21] referential indexes are linguistic forms that are inherently indexical, principally deictic forms such as 'I' and 'now'; non-referential indexes, on the other hand, index social meaning in a more subtle, indirect way:[22] one can think, for example, of copula omission as a marker of *African American Vernacular English*, or more broadly of the use of a dialect or linguistic register indexing elements of the speaker's/writer's social background.[23]

Apart from different types of indexicality, one can also recognise different 'orders' of indexicality, a so-called 'layering' of indexicalities.[24] Whereas first-order indexicality consists in the simple association by social actors of some linguistic structure with some meaningful

18 For a collection of Michael Silverstein's writings, see now Silverstein 2023.

19 Arbitrary vs. motivated (resembling in the case of icons, contiguous in the case of indices).

20 Nakassis 2018, 285-6.

21 To these two types of indexical signs correspond larger types of indexicality: Ochs 1992; 1996 opposes 'direct' to 'indirect' indexicality; Silverstein 2023 refers to 'denotational' vs. 'social' indexicality.

22 Lyons 1977, 108 proposes a further subclassification of indexical signs – non-referential ones in particular – into 'individual-identifying' and 'group-identifying', subdividing the latter group into 'region-identifying', 'status-identifying', 'occupation-identifying', etc.

23 Nakassis 2018 discusses this 'ambivalent ground' of indexicality, that is, the tension between immediacy and mediation. He also points to some important differences between types of indexicals in terms of (i) *presupposition* vs. *entailment* of aspects of the context and (ii) *localizability* vs. *globality* of the indexical act (293-4).

24 Silverstein 2003.

social category such as *age*, *class*, *gender*, etc., second-order indexicality "is a metapragmatic concept, describing the noticing, discussion, and rationalisation of first-order indexicality".[25] For example, a second-person plural pronoun (referentially) indexes a plural addressee, but may in specific interactive contexts also index honorification of a singular addressee. Through a further process of conventionalisation ('enregisterment'), use of this same pronoun may come to function to index qualities of the speaker – as being polite, old-fashioned, etc.[26] – and in time, higher-order levels of indexicality may transform or even completely replace lower-order levels of indexicality.[27] Central to any *n + 1st order-indexicality*[28] is ideology: as Penelope Eckert notes, reconstruals of existing indexical values "take place within a fluid and ever-changing ideological field".[29]

Sociolinguists have started to embed Silverstein's insights within a new, so-called 'third wave' of sociolinguistic study,[30] which views the relationship between social meaning and variation as dialectical, with variation not only *reflecting* but also *constructing* social meaning, and therefore acting as a force in social change. Penelope Eckert refers to this new wave of variation study in terms of a *stylistic* approach,[31] whereby linguistic variation is considered an essential feature of language, constituting as it does "a social semiotic system capable of expressing the full range of a community's social concerns".[32] Given that such social concerns continually change, the social meaning of variables cannot be fixed, but must be, rather, mutable. This mutability is achieved, Eckert argues, through stylistic practice, with speakers making social-semiotic moves by "reinterpreting variables and combining and recombing them in a continual process of verbal bricolage".[33] Fundamental to indexical mutability, and the reinterpretation of indexical values, is Silverstein's concept of indexical order,[34] as outlined in the following hypothetical case:

25 Milroy 2004, 167. One can compare Silverstein's orders of indexicality to the distinction made by Labov and others between *indicators*, *markers*, and *stereotypes*, though the latter distinction is more static in nature (Eckert 2008, 463-4).

26 I borrow the example from Nakassis 2018, 296-7.

27 Nakassis 2018, 298.

28 That is, second-order, third-order, etc. indexicality.

29 Eckert 2008, 464.

30 For an outline of three waves of analytic practice in sociolinguistic study, see Eckert 2012. For an application in the field of historical sociolinguistics, see Conde-Silvestre 2016.

31 The two earlier approaches that are identified are referred to as 'macro-sociological' and 'ethnographic' respectively (Eckert 2012).

32 Eckert 2012, 94.

33 Eckert 2012, 94.

34 As Eckert 2008, 463 notes, "[indexical order] gives a foothold on the relation between the macrosociological facts and linguistic practice by providing a theoretical

> At some initial stage, a population may become salient, and a distinguishing feature of that population's speech may attract attention. Once recognized, that feature can be extracted from its linguistic surroundings and come, on its own, to index membership in that population. It can then be called up in ideological moves with respect to the population, invoking ways of belonging to, or characteristics or stances associated with, that population. Such an index can be used by outsiders to call up stereotypes associated with the population [...] repeated indexical acts of this sort conventionalize the new sign, at which point it becomes available for further indexical moves. (Eckert 2012, 94)

Eckert argues that the situation described above is not accidental, but rather a continuous process in which linguistic features of all sorts are continually involved. She conceives of indexical order not as a linear process, but as something that can progress simultaneously and over time in multiple directions, creating a set of related meanings. This set of related meanings is described in terms of an 'indexical field'[35] – "a constellation of ideologically linked meanings, any region of which can be invoked in context".[36]

In the case of Greek, one can think of the use of archaic ('atticistic') linguistic features by the social elite to signal education, but also distinction from the masses, Hellenicity, etc.[37] In specific contexts, the use of archaic features in communicative contexts may be used stylistically: John Lee, for example, has shown that in the New Testament linguistic structures which are associated with formality, such as vocative ὦ, the particle οὖν, the future tense, etc. are found specifically in the words of Jesus.[38] The social qualities the gospel writers were expressing (indexing) through this usage may have been various, such as Jesus' importance, his leadership, moral qualities, etc.[39] One can compare this to the research done by Christian Gastgeber on a corpus from a much later date, the fourteenth-century documents

account of the role of construal in context in the process of indexical change".

35 See further Eckert 2008.

36 Eckert 2012, 94. This resembles an earlier – less speaker-focused – proposal by Elinor Ochs, who suggested that we think of situational dimensions as linked to other situational dimensions, through "socially and culturally constructed valences", of which members in all societies have knowledge. Ochs argues that such a system of linguistic forms conveying multiple social meanings has multiple advantages: (a) it is highly efficient from the perspective of linguistic processing and acquisition, and (b) it allows speakers to exploit structural ambiguities in social meaning for strategic ends (Ochs 1996).

37 E.g. Kim 2010.

38 Lee 1985.

39 As suggested by Bentein 2019a, 157.

from the chancellery of the patriarch of Constantinople:[40] this scholar argues that the presence of lower-level (non-archaising) linguistic features in some of the letters should not be interpreted in terms of scribal incompetence or a declining cultural level, but rather in terms of 'audience design' from the part of the scribes: a lower register is reserved for documents addressed to non-Greeks, 'barbarians', in order to improve understandability, but also to index that the addressee does not reach a certain cultural level.[41]

Based on sociolinguistic research, Penelope Eckert provides a – speculative – illustration of an indexical field for the English variable */t/ release*,[42] which includes three types of social categories – *social types* (indicated in boxes), *permanent qualities* (indicated in black) and *stances* (indicated in gray) – one or more of which may be activated in specific communicative contexts.

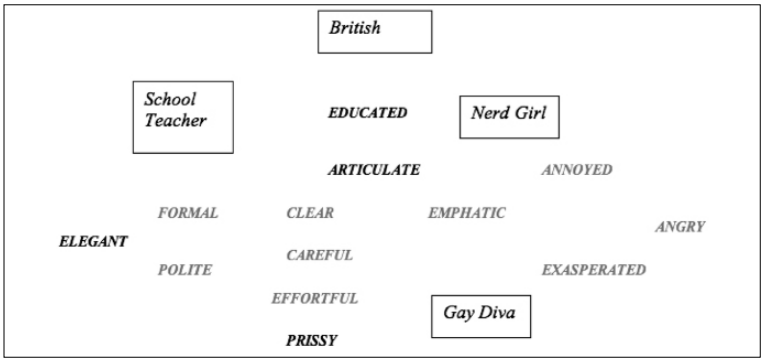

Figure 1 Indexical field of /t/ release (from Eckert 2008, 469)

As Eckert notes, moving from the first to the third wave of analysis in sociolinguistic study, the relationship between language and society has been reversed, language no longer passively reflecting social categories, but rather constituting them: "the emphasis on stylistic practice in the third wave places speakers not as passive and stable carriers of dialect, but as stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-construction and differentiation".[43]

40 Gastgeber 2017.

41 Gastgeber 2017, 352.

42 The full articulation (hyperarticulation) of a /t/ where one would not normally expect it.

43 Eckert 2012, 97-8.

2.3 Beyond Language: Multimodality[44]

While focusing on language, Michael Halliday – who I mentioned as one of the founding fathers of (functional) sociolinguistics – at an early stage recognised that the creation of social meaning is not limited to language; indeed, he noted that "language may be, in some rather vague, undefined sense, the most important, the most comprehensive, the most all-embracing; it is hard to say exactly how. But there are many other modes of meaning, in any culture, which are outside the realm of language [...] these are all bearers of meaning in the culture. Indeed, we can define a culture as a set of semiotic systems, a set of systems of meaning, all of which interrelate".[45] The insight that other semiotic 'modes' can be used to create meaning together with – or even independently from – language has come to be known under the heading of 'multimodality'.[46]

The birth of multimodality research is usually situated in the 1990s,[47] with Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's groundbreaking *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*,[48] a book that intended to set out a 'grammar' of the meaning-making possibilities available in visual-based communicative artefacts. Kress and van Leeuwen do so by extending the three main functions of language[49] identified by Michael Halliday to other modes as well, discussing the systems of choice available for expressing each of these (meta)functions.[50] Subsequent scholarship in the area of multimodality has built upon the foundations laid by Kress and van Leeuwen's social-semiotic approach, scholars working in the Systemic Functional framework in particular.[51] Kress and van Leeuwen's pioneering approach did not go

44 This section draws from Bentein, Amory 2023a, 2-4 and Bentein, Kootstra 2024.

45 Halliday, Hasan 1989, 4.

46 Halliday, Hasan 1989, 4 mention as other semiotic modes both art forms (painting, sculpture, music, dance, etc.) and modes of cultural behaviour that do not constitute forms of art (modes of exchange, dress, etc.). Bateman, Wildfeuer, Hiippala 2017 provide an updated discussion which incorporates five 'use case areas' (temporal and unscripted; temporal and scripted; spatial and static; spatial and dynamic; spatiotemporal and interactive).

47 One should keep in mind though that considerations of the semiotic potential of different media can already be found at a much earlier date: Kaltenbacher 2004 refers to Lessing's famous 1766 essay *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* as "one of the first multimodal studies in the European humanities" (192), and in fact ideas about the interrelationship between text and image can already be found in antiquity.

48 Kress, Van Leeuwen 1996.

49 Representational, textual and interpersonal, see fn. 11.

50 So, for example, Kress and van Leeuwen distinguish between the systems of 'information value', 'salience', and 'framing' for the textual metafunction.

51 Leading to the development of a new subdiscipline, Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SFMDA), on which see e.g. O'Halloran 2008.

uncriticised, though: criticism was voiced, among others, about the difficulty of empirically verifying some of the claims that were made, the extension of a conceptual framework that was designed for language to other areas of communication, and the fluidity of fundamental concepts such as mode, defined rather abstractly as "a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning".[52]

More recent scholarship has therefore elaborated a new approach that is oriented towards building a descriptive model[53] that can be used for the corpus-based study of multimodal artefacts, the so-called 'Genre and Multimodality' (GeM)-model.[54] An essential characteristic of the Genre and Multimodality-model is that it starts from a *layered* annotation structure: Bateman and his associates view page-based documents as 'multi-layered semiotic artefacts' and describe such artefacts in terms of four layers, known as the *base layer* (the basic elements that are physically present on a page), the *layout layer* (the lay-out properties and structure of the multimodal artefact), the *rhetorical layer* (the rhetorical relationship between content elements on the page), and the *navigation layer* (the navigation units that help the reader to navigate the page).

The multi-user database that we have created in the context of the *Everyday Writing* project to study processes of meaning making in non-literary sources from an inter-disciplinary (multi-modal) point of view, takes inspiration from the GeM model – for example when it comes to the base layer – though at the same time it elaborates certain aspects, such as socio-pragmatic and text-structural annotation. Before providing a brief outline of the project database,[55] I should specify its contents: the focus corpus[56] consists of some five thousand documents from the Roman and Late Antique period (I-VIII AD), belonging to three main text types (*letters*, *petitions*, and *contracts*). Most of these documents are written in Greek, but the database also contains a fair amount of multilingual documents, as well as documents written in another language (Latin/Coptic/Arabic). Structurally speaking, the Everyday Writing database consists of five main areas:

- *Metadata* is the only area that is shared by all team members, and is used for annotating documents socio-pragmatically, with regard to the place and time of writing, the text type, the

52 Kress 2010, 79.

53 Simultaneously attempting to offer a more precise definition of core concepts like 'mode'. Bateman 2011, for example, argues that semiotic modes consist out of three strata, called 'material substrate', 'semiotic resources', and 'discourse semantics'.

54 Bateman 2008; Hiippala 2016.

55 For a much more extensive outline, see now Bentein 2024.

56 Some individual team members have defined their own corpora, which partially overlap with the focus corpus. I will not go further into this here.

characteristics of the people that are involved in the communicative act (such as their occupation, social status, age, gender, family relations, etc.), as well as their communicative goals, interpersonal relationship, etc.

- *Materiality* is similar to metadata in the sense that it involves information at the level of the entire document, such as its dimensions (height and width), margins, number of lines, writing direction, etc.
- *Text structure*, on the other hand, goes below the level of the document in its entirety, and looks at how the text is internally organised, in terms of *generic structure* (e.g. is there an opening, body, and closing?), *lay-out structure* (e.g. is the opening visually set apart?), *handwriting* (e.g. are there multiple hands at work?), and *levels* (e.g. is one text embedded in another?).
- *Base annotations* are made at the lowest level, usually words or combinations of words. These annotations can be linguistic or typographic[57] in nature, concerning for example the use of subordinating or coordinating conjunctions, or that of insertions, corrections, abbreviations, etc.
- The database also has a *languages* section, which is relevant to both the macro-level of the text and lower levels. Whereas many texts are written in a single language/script, often one can find switches in one and the same text between languages and/or scripts, ranging from individual letters to larger passages.

Within each of the annotation areas, we have significantly advanced the state of the art by adopting novel digital approaches – some of which have become tools in their own right, like the *Measurement Tool* developed in the context of Serena Causo's PhD research, as well as the *Character Recognition Tool* developed in the context of Antonia Apostolakou's PhD research – as well as by significantly extending and defining annotation domains within each of the areas. Thanks to a new website that is in the making,[58] it will become possible to connect each of the annotation domains to each other: so, for example, a user will be able to search for all instances of a given subordinating conjunction encountered in professional handwritings, further specifying for text type, place of writing, etc. The same is true for different types of text structure: a user can search for all hand shifts that occur in a single lay-out block. This, we hope, will allow users to conceive of and answer research questions that were hitherto not on the table.

57 Whereas the term 'typography' is sometimes associated with printed text, it is now increasingly being used "to refer to the visual organisation of written language however it is produced" (Walker 2001, 2).

58 Now accessible at `dev.evwrit.ugent.be` (though still password-protected).

3 Pragmatic Paradigms and Indexical Fields: Engaging In Semiotic Grammar

Although each of us has been focused on their individual research projects, we have collectively made significant progress in developing our digital environment over the past few years – or, more precisely, set of interrelated digital environments – and the annotation and exploration of the focus corpus consisting of nearly five thousand documents. This should allow us to start looking at non-literary sources in a more holistic fashion, and to compile a 'semiotic grammar',[59] that is, a descriptive inventory of indexical features in non-literary sources.

Essential to that broader goal – and to the Everyday Writing project's methodology – are the concepts of 'pragmatic paradigm' (on the formal side) and 'indexical field' (on the social meaning-making side). As I have already discussed the concept of indexical field as a set of ideologically linked social meanings in § 2, I will focus here on the concept of pragmatic paradigm, which was introduced by Michael Silverstein with reference to the fact that during communication speakers can often choose one of a set of variant forms ('formal alternants'), each of which carries specific social indexicalities, being linked to a social situation of a particular kind.[60] For example, the terms of address one opts for will differ radically depending on whether we are writing to a student, a colleague, a friend, or a superior – though in our own times such social practices are changing rapidly, too.[61] In sociolinguistic research, such pragmatic paradigms have traditionally been studied under the heading of a 'linguistic variable' consisting of a set of 'variants' that are semantically/functionally equivalent but socially distinct – though scholarship has questioned the extent to which *complete* semantic equivalence is a reality.[62] I do not want to engage with that debate here: rather, the important point to stress is that in other semiotic domains, such variables (or, as I prefer, pragmatic paradigms) exist, too: in the field of materiality, for example, one can think of the different writing materials, writing directions, formats, forms, etc. that our sources testify to as forming a pragmatic paradigm of their own. From this point of view, the annotation fields in our project database can be conceived of as making up pragmatic paradigms within different 'modes' of

59 I borrow the term 'semiotic grammar' from McGregor 1997, who works in the paradigm of *Systemic Functional Linguistics*.

60 E.g. Silverstein 2023, 72. Silverstein alternatively speaks of an 'indexical' paradigm.

61 The classic reference is Brown, Ford 1961, now outdated. For address in Ancient Greek, see in particular the work of Eleanor Dickey (e.g. Dickey 1996; 2004).

62 E.g. Lavandera 1978, 181, who proposes to relax the condition of semantic *equivalence*, and suggests to replace it with a condition of functional *comparability* instead.

meaning-making (*linguistic*, *visual*, *material*, etc.). That we can inventory such variation does not mean that each and every ancient writer had internalised the range of communicative options, to the contrary: surely not every ancient writer had the knowledge or means to stylise his communicative act to achieve a maximal rhetorical effect.

Recent papyrological scholarship has not failed to notice the variability that is inherent in our ancient sources, and to explore its social properties: an important point of reference is the approach towards the visual and material characteristics of non-literary sources spearheaded by Jean-Luc Fournet under the heading of "paléographie signifiante".[63] In observing that "l'analyse matérielle d'un document peut être porteuse de sens",[64] not only when it comes to text type, but also with regard to the socio-cultural context of writing and the provenance of the document, Fournet has argued that palaeography[65] should go beyond the purely descriptive analysis of documents, and should pay much more attention to the interrelationship between material features and context. Fournet himself has particularly explored this approach with regard to document format: distinguishing between two types of format – horizontal and vertical – Fournet argues that a connection exists with text types, which may have made this feature socially meaningful:

> c'est peut-être pour le rédacteur d'une pétition une façon de distinguer la pétition des autres genres documentaires, de faire sentir la différence entre un texte destiné directement à l'autorité et des documents contractuels passés entre partis par la médiation d'un notaire.[66]

Linguistically-oriented scholarship, even more so, has analysed the relationship between linguistic features – both generic elements and more specific linguistic features – and social parameters. Felicia Logozzo, for example, has mapped variation in opening greetings, request formulae and closing formulae in the letters from the Zenon archive on the basis of two parameters,[67] the communicative relationship between the sender and addressee ('higher to lower', 'inter pares', 'lower to higher') and what she calls the 'contents' of the document ("orders/matters of 'business as usual'" vs. "favours,

63 See most recently Fournet 2023.

64 Fournet 2007, 353.

65 Fournet takes 'paleography' in a broad sense, including the study of scripts, writing supports, formats and layouts.

66 Fournet 2004, 73.

67 Logozzo 2015.

recommendation and entreaties").[68] Whereas Logozzo's is a relatively limited dataset (confined as it is to the Zenon archive), others scholars have taken into account much larger amounts of data: Joanne Stolk, for example, has related non-standard orthography in a dataset of some 35,000 Greek papyri to three situational variables – *setting* ('private' vs. 'official'), *participants* ('private people', 'officials', 'private to official', etc.) and *genre*[69] –arguing that especially the participants involved and the genre of the document act as 'predictors' for orthographic variation.[70]

In his PhD thesis on complement structures in the papyrological corpus,[71] Alek Keersmaekers similarly takes into account large part of the papyri, though excluding what he calls 'highly, formulaic, administrative texts' such as *contracts*, *lists*, *receipts*, *accounts*, etc.[72] In order to explain the 'extra-linguistic factors driving language variation', Keersmaekers turns to a large number of social parameters deriving from the Trismegistos project, including *writing material*, *language*, *genre*, *period*, *region*, *place*, *place type*, *archive*, *writer's gender*, and *writer's ethnicity*. Using the exploratory statistical technique of correspondence analysis, Keersmaekers is able to situate both social and linguistic values on a two-dimensional plot, arguing that two dimensions (*register* ('formal' vs. 'informal') and *diachrony*) capture most of the variation in the dataset, which is in line with previous, smaller-scale studies. I reproduce a visualisation of Keersmaeker's findings here in figure 2 – which plots the twenty-five most contributing social factors to complementiser choice – as it bears some resemblance to Eckert's notion of an indexical field (our figure 1), though being based on a more static, macro-sociological perspective **[fig. 2]**.

68 For an overview of the results, see Logozzo 2015, 241.

69 Stolk 2020.

70 For an overview of the results, see Stolk 2020, 311.

71 Keersmaekers 2020.

72 I could not find an indication of the precise number of texts taken into account; Keersmaekers does specify that his subcorpus contains 1.4 million tokens.

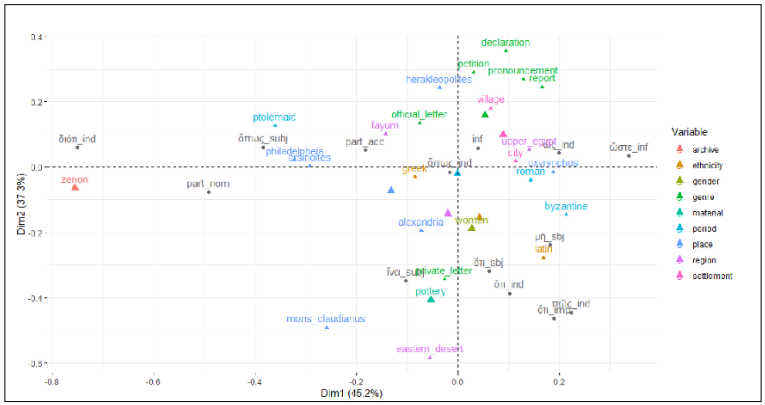

Figure 2 Correspondence analysis of complementisers and extra-linguistic factors (from Keersmaekers 2020, 182)

Clearly scholarship is growing more attentive to issues of social indexicality, and major advances are being made thanks to newly developed (and developing) digital technologies. At the same time, there seems to be room for improvement and follow-up studies. I want to focus here on four aspects where current research can contribute to advancing the state of the art:[73]

1. Scholarship has so far concentrated either on gathering detailed social information for smaller corpora, or using/inferring already existing social information for larger corpora. In trying to specify the indexical fields that are related to specific features, aspects of both 'absolute' and 'relative' social identity[74] – pertaining to the identity of the participants and their participant roles and relations in specific communicative acts – deserve to be further explored, such as *ethnicity*, *gender*, *social class*, *emotional state*, *occupation*, etc. Ideally, this is done at a textual/ pragmatic level that is as fine-grained as possible: a distinction needs to be made between main texts and their attachments, but it would be worth going further and relating formal features to specific generic parts (opening/body/closing) and even speech acts. There is also a need to better understand how certain metadata values are interconnected, and which ideological factors underlie these connections (see point 4 below on ideology).

73 There certainly is much more that deserves scholarly attention: see e.g. the list of 'ten challenges for future research' outlined by Bentein, Amory 2023a, 7-11.

74 See Levinson 1983, 90 for this distinction.

2. Most scholarship so far has focused on very specific linguistic or paralinguistic[75] features.[76] Scholarship has argued, however, that in the case of non-referential indices such as signs of deference, social entailments are "less the effect of the particular 'salient' or 'overt' sign in question (e.g., a pronoun) than the total effect of a textual configuration of indexical signs (e.g., the pronoun, previous/subsequent address practices, bodily hexis, etc.)",[77] that is, the indexical act is a *global*, rather than a *local* phenomenon, taking shape through the *co-occurrence* of indexical signs (unlike referential indices such as deictics). As such, there is a need to better understand the inter-semiotic complementarity[78] of pragmatic paradigmatic material – both linguistic and paralinguistic – and to uncover to what extent it makes up what one could call a 'multi-modal' register. It stands to reason that within each register certain features will be more salient, acting as 'contextual anchors' or so-called 'register shibboleths',[79] whereas others may be less salient; similarly, the indexical nuances that a feature can take on – the types of social meaning that it generates, its indexical fluidity – may depend on its longevity (how long it has been around),[80] as well as its precise nature (linguistic or paralinguistic), but this needs to be further looked into.
3. There is a need to complement[81] a macro-sociological perspective with a micro-level, discourse-analytical perspective,[82] so as to better understand how expressive possibilities that are available more globally are locally appropriated.[83] Penelope Eckert refers to such local appropriation in terms of 'stylistic practice', with writers acting as 'stylistic agents' manipulating the indexical potential of features, breaking fixed conventions, tropically using existing elements from another

75 I use paralinguistic here as a cover term for the material and visual features that give shape to written language (compare the use of 'typography' or 'paleography' in a broad sense).

76 But see now the *Grammateus* project led by Paul Schubert, which brings together a broader set of features related to text typology (`https://grammateus.unige.ch/`).

77 Nakassis 2018, 294.

78 Royce 2007.

79 See Silverstein 2023. It would be worth relating cognitive salience to what Bateman 2011 calls the 'discourse semantics' of modes: language is processed linearly, unlike for example layout.

80 As suggested by Eckert 2008, 471.

81 The need to combine these two types of approaches is also stressed by Stolk 2020.

82 What one could call, after Silverstein 2023, "semiotic discourse analysis".

83 Eckert 2008, 458.

register (like genre markers), etc.[84] Some papyrological scholarship has engaged with this question from the perspective of 'idiolect',[85] but it would be worth looking at this from a less static perspective,[86] too, analysing how coherently/systematically individuals select formal alternants from a pragmatic paradigm within and across texts;[87] how writers segment, chunk, or – to borrow Michael Silverstein's term – 'metricalise' the social moves that they make in their written interactions;[88] how communicative practices spread within and across social networks;[89] and, from a diachronic point of view, how changes in the semiotic landscape (in terms of the inscription of new categories and social meanings) come about. It stands to reason that certain text types will be more prone to stylistic creativity than others,[90] with private letters occupying a privileged position in this regard – though one should not underestimate the extent to which particular communicative choices were made unconsciously,[91] through lack of understanding of one or more pragmatic paradigms.

4. We need to better understand the ideological factors that drive specific communicative choices, and, from a diachronic point of view, semiotic change. The impact that the transition to Late Antiquity had on non-literary stylistic practices – typically framed in terms of a 'literarisation' and 'rhetoricisation' – has been studied in the work of Henrik Zilliacus,[92] but as Jean-Luc Fournet has more recently shown, the impact of this transition also extended to the domain of macro-generic conventions (such as the loss of the epistolary frame) and, in close relation to it, the visual/material presentation of texts.[93]

84 See Bentein 2023a for innovations in the epistolary frame.

85 E.g. Evans 2010; Vierros 2020. Compare Eckert 2008, 456-7 for the notion of 'persona style'.

86 Compare e.g. Koroli 2020 for a good example of close reading of a small set of ecclesiastical texts.

87 Analysing, in other words, which linguistic and paralinguistic features carry particular semiotic significance for individual writers.

88 E.g. Silverstein 2023, 33-4.

89 See e.g. Sarri 2016, 814-18, who discusses the custom of undersigning private letters, and notes that in the early second century AD this custom is particularly attested in the archive of the strategos Apollonius.

90 See e.g. Bhatia 1993, 14 on 'genre manipulation' and different generic constraints in this regard.

91 E.g. Bruno 2022, 48-9, who relates 'unconventional' requests to "imperfect language mastery of a non-native Greek speaker".

92 E.g. Zilliacus 1967.

93 E.g. Fournet 2009.

> It would be worth trying to pinpoint the impact of ideological change in a more fine-grained fashion, going beyond the transition from one era to the other.[94] Given the multi-cultural environment that Egypt represented, it would also be worth extending the study of ideology to cultural interactions, for example when it comes to language policies,[95] or more subtle cases of cultural borrowing and interaction.[96] In studying ideological positions in ancient societies, it is worth taking into account a broad range of sources, such as scribal corrections, metaphrastic practices, grammatical and literary texts, visual representations,[97] etc., which vary in the degree to which they are explicitly metalinguistic or metagraphic.[98]

In trying to provide an answer to these and other questions, we have created, besides the Everyday Writing database and website, a new digital application, called the "Everyday writing data exploration tool",[99] which allows to draw up visualisations (bar charts and heatmaps in particular) of all of the data contained in the project database. The new app consists of two main areas: a 'corpus overview' which allows to generate visualisations of metadata information, and a 'feature overview' which allows to generate visualisations of specific linguistic, visual, material, etc. features. For each of these, one can engage either in univariate analysis (involving a single variable) or bivariate analysis (relating two variables to each other). In a more distant future, we intend to develop a 'reports functionality', which will allow the user to bring together visualisations by 'pinning' them, and thus to create a larger overview of the typical communicative characteristics of categories such as genres, writers, periods, archives, etc., or conversely of specific features such as a subordinating construction, a type of code switch, the use of word splits, etc.

94 E.g. Connolly 2010 on a grammarian's sensitivity to changes in imperial titulature.

95 See e.g. Sijpesteijn 2022 for the question of political, linguistic and socio-cultural continuity accompanying the transition from Byzantine to Arab rule in Egypt.

96 E.g. Crellin 2020 for identity building through (lack of) morphological adaptation of personal names.

97 E.g. Kruschwitz, Campbell 2009 for representations of document types in Pompeian drawings and paintings.

98 For a comparison of different types of sources, see e.g. Bentein 2020.

99 Further described in Bentein 2024.

4 Developing a Frame-based Approach

Michael Silverstein identifies two processes that are central to ongoing communication, namely *entextualisation* ("the process of coming to textual formedness")[100] and *contextualisation* ("the process of how discourse points to (indexes) the context which seems to frame it"),[101] which correspond to two types of organisation in discursive events, namely *denotational text(uality)* (referring to the emergent coherence of what has been and what will be said)[102] and *interactional text(uality)* (the emergent coherence of what has been and will be done in terms of social action). These two kinds of meaningfulness are intimately related to each other, standing as they do in a dialectical relationship:

> *how* you say what-you-say about whatever or whomever you're communicating about, comes to count interactionally as what-you-do in the way of creating the social organisation of an ongoing interaction with a communicating other.[103]

Silverstein himself thinks of contextualisation as a cumulative process whereby interactants gradually and indirectly[104] construct a social landscape during communication, positioning themselves and others in culturally comprehensible social and attitudinal dimensions through indexical forms.[105] Silverstein refers to this process as 'dynamic figuration', making an analogy between full-blown public ritual and 'interactional ritual':[106] similarly to ritual forms figurating a certain cultural framework (bread and wine for example figurating Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist), linguistic (and other) forms create a projected cultural framework in the interactional here-and-now, with communicative participants figuratively

100 Silverstein 2019, 56. Some researchers prefer textualisation to entextualisation, reserving the latter term for the re-use of existing text in another text. I will not go further into this here.

101 Silverstein 2019, 56.

102 Denotational textuality should not be equated with the 'literal' meaning of words and phrases in sentences. Rather, Silverstein considers it as a meta-structure that emerges from the interplay of grammar and the lexicon in the narrow sense on the one hand, and deictic projection, social indexicality, and poetic organisation ('metricalisation') on the other (Silverstein 2014, 488-91).

103 Silverstein 2014, 499 (italics in the original).

104 One can refer to this self-positioning as 'tropic', in the sense that it is done indirectly through non-referential indexical signs.

105 Compare Goffman's conceptualisation of social space as the 'interaction order' (Goffman 1983).

106 For the notion of interaction ritual, see Goffman 1967.

performing identity-moves in social space.[107] An influential way in which sociolinguistic scholarship has tried to capture the intricacies of emergent interactional textuality – how we construct a cumulatively coherent story about our communicative participants – is through the concept of '(interactional) frame',[108] which is what I will be focusing on in the remainder of this section.

References to 'frames' can be found in studies dating back to the early twentieth and even nineteenth century, but work on frames developed in the cognitive sciences especially in the 1970s, together with that of related concepts like 'schema', 'idealised cognitive model', and 'script', all of which referring to "the many organised packages of knowledge, beliefs, and patterns of practice that shape and allow humans to make sense of their experiences".[109] Widely cited for his work on framing ('frame theory') is the sociologist Ervin Goffman, who viewed frames as a situational and social phenomenon that is indispensable to understand the workings of everyday activities.[110] People experience a real-time murder differently from a theatrically performed murder, for example, because the frame is different: in the second case, a so-called 'primary framework' is transformed or 'laminated'. Goffman's insights have received particular attention in sociolinguistic disciplines such as *Interactional Sociolinguistics* and *Conversation Analysis*, where they have been further elaborated.[111]

A concept that was developed in later work by Goffman, and that has been central to these studies, is *footing*:[112] for Goffman, as participants create particular frames, they also construct footings, that is, "alignments between participants as well as between participants and topics of talk".[113] Goffman argued against a purely dyadic view of communication, and decomposed the traditional labels of 'speaker' and 'hearer' by means of an innovative set of interactional roles, making a distinction between production roles (the 'production format') and reception roles (the 'participant framework'). As Cynthia Gordon notes, one way to think of the relationship between framing and footing is to view the latter as "the way in which framing is

107 Silverstein 2014, 513.

108 Silverstein himself makes reference to frames in his discussion, for example when defining contextualisation as "coming to intepretative clarity as the state of context that frames or makes indexical sense of the text" (Silverstein 2023, 29).

109 Fillmore, Baker 2010, 314.

110 Goffman 1974.

111 See Gordon 2015 for an overview. As Gordon notes, the work of John Gumperz on so-called 'contextualisation cues' has been particularly foundational in these disciplines.

112 Goffman 1981.

113 Goffman 1981, 12.

accomplished in verbal interaction".[114] As interlocutors create alignments vis-à-vis each other (e.g. 'playful', 'combative'), they define the nature of social situations or frames (e.g. 'this is play', 'this is combat'). Scholarship has also come to recognise that footings exist on a number of different levels simultaneously, with speakers balancing multiple roles, including interpersonal roles (e.g. 'friend', 'family', etc.), institutional roles (e.g. 'CEO', 'doctor', etc.), and socio-cultural ones (e.g. 'male native-American').[115]

Recent studies have shifted the terms of the debate from conversational analysis to textual artefacts and their genres,[116] which is of course of major importance to corpus languages such as Ancient Greek. Whereas frames and footings are constructed moment-by-moment in interaction through a variety of verbal resources, literary scholarship has drawn particular attention to textual openings and closings (and what precedes these openings and closings), which are referred to as 'framing borders'.[117] Apart from extending frame theory to textual artefacts, literary scholarship has also made a significant contribution to bringing about terminological clarification concerning the application of frame theory. For example, a clear distinction has been made between 'frames' on the one hand, defined as abstract cognitive metaconcepts that guide and enable the interpretation, and 'framings' on the other, defined as the concrete codings of those abstract cognitive frames.[118]

To close this section, let me point out some of the advantages of approaching the process of contextualisation – and by extension entextualisation – through frame theory. First, the notion of a 'frame' captures the complex nature of social meaning making in an intuitive and flexible way, arguably providing a more concrete handle on 'social indexicality'; through the associated notion of footing, frames bring together both social activities, those who participate in them, and their social and affective characteristics. Second, frame theory provides a set of concepts, such as *frame lamination*, *frame embedding*, *frame blending*, etc., [119] which are able to capture the multiple and complex ways in which frames can be combined with each other. Third, the distinction between frame and framing allows to clearly distinguish between formal and conceptual aspects of meaning making; while the notion of 'frame' suggests that meaning-making

114 Gordon 2009, 12.

115 Kiesling, Schilling-Estes 1998.

116 E.g. MacLachlan and Reid 1994; Bernhart and Wolf 2006.

117 Wolf 2006, 21-32. Framing borders bear an obvious resemblance to so-called 'paratexts' (Genette 1997).

118 Wolf 2006, 6-7.

119 See e.g. Goffman 1974; Gordon 2009.

is done by co-occurring signs, it does not give preference to one semiotic mode over the other to create this meaning-making. Fourth, while scholarship on corpus languages may want to focus on particular types of framings that are central to the establishment of frames, such as openings and closings, frames are entirely compatible with an interactional, 'line-by-line' perspective, leaving open, for example, the possibility of *reframing*[120] or *frame breaking*[121] (along with the other frame interactions mentioned above). Fifth and finally, scholarship beyond interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis has started to engage with frame theory: reference to frames is now becoming more and more common in disciplines such as politeness theory and historical sociolinguistics, which leaves open the possibility for interdisciplinary dialogue and enrichment.

5 Overview of the Volume

In her book *Making Meanings, Creating Family: Intertextuality and Framing in Family Interaction*,[122] Cynthia Gordon provides an excellent illustration and discussion of the types of frames that one encounters in everyday (family) communication: these include *child-centred frames*, *knowledge display frames*, *narrative frames*, *parental frames*, *play frames*, *religious frames*, *story world frames*, etc. While, due to the dynamic nature of meaning making, it may not be possible to create a fixed typology of frames beyond some very general level,[123] scholarship has made an attempt to categorise framings. Werner Wolf,[124] for example, has proposed a typology of framings based on seven 'criteria of differentiation':

- *Framing agency*: one can distinguish between several potential framing agencies, which include (i) the sender (author, painter, composer), (ii) the recipient (reader/ viewer/listener), (iii) the message (the work/communication in question), and (iv) the cultural context. Whereas sender- and recipient-based framings are interpretive *activities* (*cognitive processes*), text- and context-based framings are 'givens', that is, they constitute

120 E.g. Gordon 2008.

121 E.g. Goffman 1974, 345-77.

122 Gordon 2009.

123 Tannen, Wallat 1987 argue that a broad distinction can be made between two types of 'frames', that is as an anthropological and sociological category on the one hand (also 'frames of interpretation'), and as a psychological/cognitive category on the other hand (also '(knowledge) schemas'). I will not go further into this here.

124 See Wolf 2006, 15.

interpretive signals (*physical results*).[125] Wolf argues that "(con-) textual framings are the legitimate core of research dealing with medial framings";[126] indeed, most if not all of the criteria listed below are narrowly related to (con)textual framings.

- *Extension of framing*: one can distinguish between framings that are relevant to an entire work ('total framings') and those that are relevant only to a part of a work ('partial framings').[127]
- *Framing medium in relation to framed*: framings can employ one or more media ('modes' in our terminology); in the former case they are 'homomedial', in the latter they are 'heteromedial' (or, as we would say, 'multi-modal').
- *Authorisation of framing*: one can distinguish between framings that were originally intended, and are therefore authorised ('intracompositional'), and those that were added independently of the original design, in which case they are unauthorised ('extracompositional').
- *Saliency of framing*: one can distinguish between framings that are non-salient ('covert', 'implicit') and those that are more salient ('overt', 'explicit'). Wolf defines the former type of framing as "a discrete physical unit marking a frame in an easily identifiable way inside or outside the framed (part of a) work";[128] covert framings, on the other hand, are less easily discernible.
- *Location of framing with reference to actual message/text*: a distinction can be made between framings that are inside the main text (and are therefore 'intratextual') and those that are outside of it (and are therefore 'paratextual'). As an example of paratextual framings, Wolf mentions elements that are presented in printed literature such as titles, epigraphs, footnotes, postscripts, etc.
- *Location in process of reception*: a final distinction can be made with regard to the location of framings in the reception process, with a distinction between 'initial', 'internal', and 'terminal' framings. This, to some extent, overlaps with the previous criterion, though not entirely. Literary end framings, for example, can be either intratextual (a standard closing formula) or paratextual (an afterword).

125 Contextual framings occur in the cultural space outside the work in question: for example, an author's comment on his writings.

126 Wolf 2006, 17.

127 In a recent publication, I propose a three-fold typology of textual framings (both linguistic and typographic) in non-literary sources, distinguishing between *micro*-, *meso*-, and *macro*-framings (Bentein 2023b, 92-3).

128 Wolf 2006, 19.

The present volume consists of four parts which, to some extent at least, can be distinguished on the basis of the above criteria of differentiation.

The volume starts with the overt, total, material and visual framings of ancient documents, making those documents easily recognizable to their ancient audiences. Serena Causo (ch. 2) discusses how the physical aspects of documents, like the materials and formats used, affect their creation and function within historical and cultural contexts. She proposes a tripartite analytical framework for understanding the materiality of ancient documents, that recognises, besides 'material' frames, also 'processual' and 'relational' frames. She further explores each frame through specific examples and case studies, discussing how different aspects of materiality (like document height, margin sizes, and the physical layout) affected document design and use in administrative contexts, focusing on a corpus of 2,500 administrative documents.

The second part of the volume engages with partial, rather than total framings, paying particular attention to the ways in which discursive acts within texts are framed. Ezra la Roi (ch. 3) examines the ways in which wishes as a type of 'speech act' reveal aspects of epistemic and social intersubjectivity. Paying attention to both wish optatives and performative wishes, he demonstrates the importance of wishes in historical social interactions and polite communication, also paying attention to the evolution of these expressions. Speech acts are also central to the contribution by Klaas Bentein and Marta Capano (ch. 4), which outlines a conceptual and digital framework that these scholars have designed to systematically annotate the ways in which speech acts are framed in a test corpus of private letters. These scholars adopt a multi-modal (heteromedial) perspective, paying attention to the ways in which linguistic framings are complemented through a variety of visual cues. Klaas Bentein and Marianna Thoma (ch. 5) engage with paratextual, rather than intratextual framings: they explore the communicative functions of postscripts, arguing that these extended beyond the mere expression of afterthoughts. They focus in particular on the corpus of women's letters, where postscripts occur noticeably frequently.

The third part of the volume broadens the discussion, investigating how aspects of the socio-cultural context are reflected in and through the texts that we study through intratextual and paratextual framings. Chiara Monaco (ch. 6) explores the impact of Atticism on non-literary texts such as private communications, where we would not necessarily expect to find high purist features. She describes how this purist movement was not just confined to literature but extended to everyday communication, serving as a marker of education and elite status. Through a case study, she highlights the use of Atticising elements as deliberate stylistic choices that helped define social

identities. Antonia Apostolakou (ch. 7) explores variation in language and script choice, viewing such variation through the lens of framing theory to elucidate meaning-making on two levels, namely the framing of specific communicative acts and registers, as well as wider socio-cultural frames. While bilingual and biscriptal phenomena have been explored as framing strategies to some extent for administrative and legal texts, Apostolakou argues that it is worth extending framing theory to include (private) letters. She develops an innovative comparative approach, which takes into account the effect of text type and register (formality) on the occurrence of bilingual and biscriptal phenomena. Her analysis explicitly compares intratextual to paratextual framings, and takes into account the complementarity of linguistic with visual framings. Fokelien Kootstra and Klaas Bentein (ch. 8) delve further into the issue of multiculturalism by contrastively comparing Arabic and Greek bureaucratic letters from the early eight-century Qurrah dossier. They explore how requests are linguistically and pragmatically constructed in each language, highlighting the influence of cultural interactions between Greek and Arabic traditions. The analysis focuses on the rhetorical structures of the letters and the use of supportive acts like mitigations and aggravations, in an attempt to shed light on the cross-cultural pragmatics of requests in a historical context.

The fourth part of the volume discusses how writers could strategically employ linguistic variants to socially position themselves towards their addressees and other involved parties, such variants serving as relatively covert intratextual framings of the concrete interaction. Focusing on Greek petitions from the Roman and Late Antique period, Eleonora Cattafi (ch. 9) explores how wrongdoers and their actions are described through the use of continuative relative clauses, which are syntactically and semantically situated within the broader group of appositive clauses. The study highlights how the use of continuative relatives in petitions served not only to describe but also to characterise the actions and personalities of the alleged wrongdoers in a negative light, enhancing the rhetorical effectiveness of the petitions, while at the same time increasing the formality of the document. Carla Bruno (ch. 10) investigates variations in the phrasing of complement clauses within private papyri from Ptolemaic Egypt, focusing on how authorial corrections and textual revisions provide insights into shifts in linguistic norms, particularly in grammar and syntax. The chapter explores the ways in which these textual modifications not only reflect changes in the language but also influence the interactional frames, or the communicative contexts, that authors create through their linguistic choices, going beyond the generic framing that is largely achieved through formulaic phraseology.

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