The Linguistic Characterisation of Oedipus in *OT*: A Pragmatics-Based Approach to ‘Mind Style’

Evert van Emde Boas

1 Introduction: Mind Style and Linguistic Characterisation in Greek Tragedy

[I]f a character talks with the power of the Deception Speech in *Ajax* or *Electra*’s opening anapaests [...] we are forced to recognize the reality of the person portrayed. *I am not of course suggesting that Sophocles consistently gives each character a style of his own.* There are habits of style that any character will use in certain circumstances [...] in response to what Miss Dale called ‘the rhetoric of the situation’ [...] However, *one can detect some degree of characterization by style*, for example in contrasts between noble and lower characters ...¹

So writes Easterling, in a characteristically lucid and insightful discussion of Sophoclean characterisation. The ‘of course’ in ‘I am not of course suggesting’ is revealing of an entrenched view, relevant not just to Sophocles but to all Greek tragedy, which appears to have gone largely unchallenged in the 40-plus years since Easterling’s article. The consensus remains that while *some* stylistic variation occurs, mostly on the margins and mostly used to delineate relatively minor characters, the language of the characters of Greek tragedy is still for the most part evened out by the weight of tragedy’s all-levelling stylisation (of dialect, register, tone, and indeed situational rhetoric). In the words of another scholar, ‘the conventional tragic *Kunstsprache* serves to disguise individual mannerism.’² What remains difficult to see, however, is how this notion of linguistic uniformity can coexist with the ‘power’ of characters’ language which forces us ‘to recognize the reality of the person portrayed’. What kind of ‘reality’ could there be if every character speaks the same way, if no one is lifted out somehow from the homogeneous mass of tragic style?

¹ Easterling (1977: 127–128); my italics.

² Griffith (1977: 170). Griffith himself, to be fair, has since offered nuanced discussions of difference between the linguistic habits of some tragic figures, particularly those of *Antigone* (1999: 36–37, 2001).

I have argued in previous publications (van Emde Boas 2017b, 2018) that a great deal more stylistic variation may be detected in the language of different characters in Greek tragedy, so long as one allows for a suitably broad conception of what falls under the header ‘style’.³ It is true, of course, that tragic diction is circumscribed in various respects—a character will not stand out for his or her use of obscenities or foreign-language words and constructions, as such things simply do not occur in tragedy—but within these constraints the range with which tragic playwrights could operate was still significant. Modern linguistic approaches, not least pragmatics, furnish a wealth of methodological techniques that can help us to isolate and identify such stylistic variations, in ways that more traditional approaches to style do not always permit.⁴

A broad conception of style, informed by modern linguistics, is in fact entirely in line with the overall approach of stylistics (a well-established field of research, conspicuously underused on the whole by classicists).⁵ My aim in this chapter is to bring to bear on Greek tragic characterisation the methodology and findings of a particular subfield of that discipline, namely work concerned with so-called ‘mind style’. This is in itself a fairly broad field, at least in terms of methodological inclusiveness (as we shall see), but my main focus, in line with that of the volume, will be on its use of different areas of linguistic pragmatics as a key to getting at the distinguishing features of any individual character’s style, and through that style, at the workings of the underlying represented mind.⁶ The particular mind I have in mind is that of Oedipus in Sophocles’ *Oed-*

3 For an excellent recent book-length approach to Greek tragic style, see Rutherford (2012). It is noticeable that after a good discussion of definitional issues and previous approaches to style (2012: 4–27), the word ‘style’ is in fact not much used throughout the rest of that book, which includes chapters on such not obviously stylistic topics as ‘The characters of Greek tragedy’, ‘The irony of Greek tragedy’, and ‘The wisdom of Greek tragedy’. This demonstrates a suitably loose and inclusive (if perhaps slightly undertheorised) approach as to what counts as tragic style.

4 For an example of such a ‘traditional’ approach to style, see Earp (1944) (still a useful book, even if not for my present purposes).

5 For good introductions and general overviews of the field, see e.g. Toolan (1998); Simpson (2004); Leech and Short (2007); Nørgaard et al. (2010); Sotirova (2016).

6 This presupposes, as do notions such as Easterling’s ‘reality’, that audiences approach characters on stage as if endowed with minds that can be read. For this presupposition as a necessary corollary of pragmatic approaches, see the Introduction to this volume; for mindreading in Greek tragedy see also Budelmann and Easterling (2010). I have discussed the notions of realism and mind-reading in tragic characterisation myself at greater length in van Emde Boas (2018, forthcoming b). A recent general treatment of characterisation in Sophocles (with further references, and including some discussion of characterisation by style) is Lloyd (2018).

ipus Tyrannus, a character that, as we will see, has long challenged notions of tragic stylistic uniformity.

Although the tradition appears to be entirely untapped by classicists, ‘mind style’ as a term and concept has had considerable currency within stylistics since the late 1970s, and particularly since Leech and Short devoted a chapter to it in their *Style in Fiction*—a key text in the field.⁷ The term was originally coined by Fowler in his work *Linguistics and the Novel* (1977), as follows:

Cumulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a ‘mind style’.

We may coin the term ‘mind style’ to refer to any distinctive linguistic representation of an individual mental self.⁸

As these definitions make clear, mind style refers to the way that linguistic patterns can reveal the mind of a writer or speaker (mind style research has investigated, variously, such patterns of authors, narrators, and characters). At the heart of mind style research lies a two-pronged methodological approach, neatly summarised by Semino:

The application of the notion of mind style requires two interrelated analytical steps, namely, the identification in a text (or part of a text) of linguistic patterns that are distinctive and systematic, and the interpretation of these patterns as the reflection of the characteristic, often idiosyncratic, workings of an individual’s mind.⁹

Neither of these steps is straightforward. The identification of linguistic patterns is a difficult proposition for at least two reasons: first—and this is where the broad conception of style comes in—there is no obvious limit to the number of aspects of language use that might be relevant. Indeed, mind style research has focused on a great variety of linguistic phenomena, including not merely pragmatic aspects (such as adherence or non-adherence to Gricean

7 Leech and Short (1981, second edition 2007). For general discussions of mind style and overviews of the relevant literature, see Semino (2006, 2007); Shen (2010); Hoover (2016). The latter piece by Hoover argues for a restrictive application of mind style research which focuses mainly on ‘narrators or characters with relatively abnormal minds’ (2016: 338). This has, indeed, been the main focus of mind style research; to be clear, I do not mean to suggest anything about the (ab)normality of the mind of any individual Greek character.

8 Fowler (1977: 76 and 103 respectively).

9 Semino (2006: 143).

maxims, marked use of deixis, marked conversational patterns),¹⁰ but also grammatical structure (sentence length and complexity, transitivity patterns, etc.),¹¹ lexis ('key words' and semantic fields, over- and underlexicalisation, etc.),¹² 'cognitive stylistic' approaches (blending theory, conceptual metaphor theory, schema theory, cognitive grammar, etc.),¹³ and other aspects such as formal logic, narrative focalisation, and second-language use and code-switching.¹⁴

The second challenge on the identification side is getting the label 'distinctive and systematic' to stick to any individual pattern: quantitative analysis serves a key function here (as it will in my discussion below), but is not the whole story, particularly as it cannot be used for all of the areas of interest just listed.

As for the *interpretation* of linguistic patterns as reflective of an individual mind, this is no less tricky an enterprise, and necessarily dependent on a critic's subjective take—particularly, of course, when dealing with works from a culturally and historically remote society.¹⁵ As my own analysis of Oedipus' language may demonstrate, such interpretations have a greater chance at being plausible if several features point in the same direction—and, of course, if the interpretation arrived at is compatible with interpretations previously derived otherwise.

10 E.g. Culpeper (2001); Semino (2002, 2014).

11 E.g. Halliday (1971); Bockting (1994); Hoover (1999); Leech and Short (2007: ch. 6); McIntyre and Archer (2010); Glotova (2014); MacMahon (2014).

12 E.g. Fowler (1986); Black (1993); Bockting (1994); Culpeper (2001, 2009a); Semino (2002); Leech and Short (2007: ch. 6); McIntyre and Archer (2010).

13 The advent of cognitive stylistics has been the most significant recent driver of mind style research. Under this (itself very broad) header fall such approaches which 'combin[e] the kind of explicit, rigorous and detailed linguistic analysis of literary texts that is typical of the stylistics tradition with a systematic and theoretically informed consideration of the cognitive structures and processes that underlie the production and reception of language' (Semino and Culpeper 2002: ix). Relevant publications include Semino and Swindlehurst (1996); Culpeper (2002, 2009b); Semino (2002, 2014); Glotova (2014); Nuttall (2018). Given this volume's focus on pragmatics, my own will not lie narrowly on cognitive approaches, although one of the branches of pragmatics with which I will deal briefly, Relevance Theory, could easily be ranged under that header. For a cognitive perspective on pragmatics more generally see e.g. Bara (2017), with references.

14 E.g. Nischik (1993); McIntyre (2005); Lugea (2016).

15 In the case of present-day speakers, a more 'objective' method is becoming a possibility, as a speaker's language can be compared to large databases that correlate linguistic features with independently measured personality traits (cf. e.g. the tool developed by The Psychometrics Centre at the University of Cambridge, <https://applymagicsauce.com/> [accessed 1/07/2019]).

2 Character by Numbers

When it comes to previous interpretations of Oedipus (in *OT*), a memorable and hugely influential one is that of Bernard Knox, expounded first in his *Oedipus at Thebes* (1957)¹⁶ and later in the broader context of his *The Heroic Temper* (1964). Knox sums up his version of Oedipus, who he thinks was modelled by Sophocles on 'Athens itself, its heroic energy',¹⁷ by way of the following character vignette:

Such is the character of Oedipus: he is a great man, a man of experience and swift courageous action, who yet acts only after careful deliberation, illuminated by an analytic and demanding intelligence. His action by its consistent success generates a great self-confidence, but it is always directed to the common good. He is an absolute ruler who loves and is loved by his people, but is conscious of the jealousy his success arouses and suspicious of conspiracy in high places. He is capable of terrible, apparently ungovernable anger, but only under great provocation, and he can, though grudgingly and with difficulty, subdue his anger when he sees himself isolated from his people.¹⁸

Individual scholars and critics will agree or disagree to a greater or lesser extent with the terms of this sketch (and/or the very nature of it, depending on one's views about tragic characterisation): I myself am highly sympathetic to it.¹⁹ What I am more interested in, however, is the particular way in which Knox arrives at his description: his approach is relatively unusual in that it involves, in fact, a good amount of stylistic research. In a demonstration of what modern stylisticians might call 'key words' analysis,²⁰ Knox runs through a number of specific Greek terms and semantic fields which, he thinks, are used especially by Oedipus or about him, and are revealing of his character:²¹

16 The book was republished, with a new preface by Knox, in 1998.

17 Knox (1964: 60); the full argument for this reading is presented in Knox (21998: ch. 2).

18 Knox (21998: 29).

19 It may be worth noting that Knox's sketch is not dissimilar from how Oedipus is described in the tragic scholia, e.g. schol. *ad* Soph. *OT* 1 φιλόδημον καὶ προνοητικόν τοῦ κοινῇ συμφέροντος τὸ τοῦ Οἰδίποδος ἦθος καὶ εὐνοϊαν ἔχων ἀπὸ τοῦ πλήθους δι' ὧν αὐτοὺς εὐηργέτησεν ('The *êthos* of Oedipus is patriotic and shows forethought for the public good, and the people favour him on account of the good he has done for them.')

20 For key words analysis as an approach to characterisation in drama, see Culpeper (2001, 2009a).

21 Such an approach is inexplicably infrequent in tragic scholarship, even if not in Knox's

- ‘The words which express action (*dran*, *prassein*) are typical of his own speech and of the opinions of him expressed by others.’ (Knox ²1998: 14)
- ‘“Swift”, *tachys*, is his word.’ (Knox ²1998: 15)
- ‘“I” (*egô*) is a word that is often on his lips: in the first 150 lines Oedipus speaks there are fourteen lines ending with some form of “I” or “my”, and fifteen beginning in the same way.’ (Knox ²1998: 21)

Such features of Oedipus’ diction could be taken, then, as the ‘distinctive and systematic’ indicators of a particular mind style, one geared towards swift action and self-confidence. But how distinctive are these features, really? In other words, how likely is it that such terms as caught Knox’s eye and ear would have also jumped out at a fifth-century audience member sitting in the theatre?

We have, of course, no hope of deriving any conclusive proof about such questions, but some (rudimentary) statistics may at least help us get a sense.²² A good place to start may be to compare the features that Knox identifies—words relating to action, relating to speed, and first-person pronouns—in the language of Oedipus himself and that of the other characters of *Oedipus Tyrannus*.²³ The relevant figures are given in Table 1 (the percentages indicate frequencies relative to the total number of words uttered by each speaker).

What these figures seem to suggest, at first glance, is that Oedipus does not use the relevant terms much more frequently than the other characters in the play, with the possible exception of first-person pronominal forms.²⁴ There is, of course, more to Knox’s claims, and such statistics in themselves cannot capture their full extent: thus Knox is interested not just in things ‘typical of [Oed-

own further work (not merely in *The Heroic Temper* [ch. 1], but also e.g. in his analysis of *Medea* in Euripides’ play [Knox 1977]).

22 Almost all the figures presented below are based on searches using *Perseus under PhiloLogic* (<http://perseus.uchicago.edu/> [1/07/2019]), maintained at the University of Chicago. This search tool permits, at least for the Greek tragic and comic corpus, searches by speaker (as well as by word class, morphological features, lemma, etc.). One minor drawback is that searches are necessarily based on Perseus’ somewhat antiquated text editions, in the case of Sophocles those of Jebb. Variations between editions of Sophocles are largely insignificant, however, for the data presented below; for *OT*, I have checked relevant passages against the edition of Finglass (superior, in my view, to those of Dawe and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson).

23 I have excluded the chorus from these figures, on the grounds that they do not offer a fully suitable comparison to any individual character, and that their lyric passages (which are not easily excluded from automatic searches) would unhelpfully skew any data about them.

24 This should be seen against the backdrop, however, of the very high frequency of first-person pronouns in *OT* and Sophocles’ oeuvre more generally. The singular possessive ἐμός is, in fact, the most frequent lemma both in *OT* and in all of Sophocles (see e.g. Rigo 1996, or the new ‘Statistics’ feature of the online TLG).

TABLE 1 Word counts and frequencies in OT

	Oedipus	Priest	Creon	Tiresias	Iocasta	Corinthian	Servant	Messenger
<i>Total number of words</i>	4208	318	879	520	793	379	189	432
Action words								
πραγ- ((ἐκ)πράσσω, πράγμα, etc.)	10 0.2 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.1 %	1 0.2 %	2 0.3 %	2 0.5 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.2 %
δρα- (δράω, etc.)	12 0.3 %	0 0.0 %	9 1.0 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.1 %	1 0.3 %	1 0.5 %	1 0.2 %
ἐργ- (ἐργον, ἐργάζομαι, etc.)	12 0.3 %	0 0.0 %	2 0.2 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.2 %
total	34 0.8 %	0 0.0 %	12 1.4 %	1 0.2 %	3 0.4 %	3 0.8 %	1 0.5 %	3 0.7 %
Speed words								
ταχ- (ταχύς, τάχος, ταχύνω, etc.)	12 0.3 %	0 0.0 %	2 0.2 %	2 0.4 %	2 0.3 %	1 0.3 %	1 0.5 %	2 0.5 %
σπουδ- (σπουδή, σπουδάζω, etc.)	1 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %
total	13 0.3 %	0 0.0 %	2 0.2 %	2 0.4 %	2 0.3 %	1 0.3 %	1 0.5 %	2 0.5 %
First-person pronouns								
personal (ἐγώ, ἡμεῖς)	165 3.9 %	8 2.5 %	30 3.4 %	20 3.8 %	15 1.9 %	10 2.6 %	3 1.6 %	3 0.7 %
possessive (ἐμός, ἡμέτερος)	42 1.0 %	1 0.3 %	4 0.5 %	3 0.6 %	1 0.1 %	2 0.5 %	1 0.5 %	0 0.0 %
reflexive (ἐμυαυτοῦ)	12 0.3 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.2 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.3 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %
total	219 5.2 %	9 2.8 %	34 3.9 %	24 4.6 %	16 2.0 %	13 3.4 %	4 2.1 %	3 0.7 %

ipus'] own speech' but also of 'the opinions of him expressed by others'; and his discussion of first-person pronouns is attentive to local clustering (in the first 150 lines) and to word placement,²⁵ not just to raw frequencies. Even such amendments leave a mixed picture, however: for instance, none of the twelve

25 But for helpful correctives to the notion that line-initial or line-final placement in itself means very much in Greek tragedy in general (and Sophocles in particular), see Dik (2007).

action words uttered by the most frequent user of such vocabulary, Creon (we may wonder how applicable the label ‘man of swift courageous action’ is to him), refers unambiguously to action by Oedipus alone. Similarly, while there are numerous stretches of Oedipus’ language that contain interesting clustering of first-person pronouns, none of them approaches the density of Tiresias’ first few turns, where the priest uses such forms at a rate of once per line.²⁶

I do not wish to minimise the relevance of the semantic fields identified by Knox, all of which are indeed of some significance in the play. It is more difficult to maintain, however, that these areas of the lexicon are specifically characteristic of the language of any individual speaker, Oedipus or anyone else. Nor, as it turns out, does Oedipus stand out in this respect in a very noticeable way from speakers in other Sophoclean plays. We may compare him, for instance, to all other Sophoclean males with major speaking roles: see Table 2.²⁷

Again, Oedipus scores high on the use of first-person pronouns, but again he is not exceptional even on this front (and indeed outperformed by Heracles and Philoctetes). Even if, then, these lexical items are thought to be significant, that significance is not easily mapped onto the distinctive nature of the language of an individual speaker or, by extension, the underlying working of his mind.

It may be in part for this reason that many of the traits and characteristics that Knox originally (in *Oedipus at Thebes*, 1957) presented as peculiar to Oedipus became, by the time of his Sather lectures (*The Heroic Temper*, 1964), features more generally of the ‘Sophoclean hero’ (male or female, incidentally). To be clear, I am not arguing that all Sophoclean heroes are exactly alike in their language—in fact over-generalisation is one of the criticisms sometimes levelled at Knox’s work: rather, I argue that meaningful variation is best sought elsewhere—and this is precisely where pragmatics can come in.²⁸

26 Possibly significant clusters of first-person pronouns in Oedipus’ language may be found (in addition to the first 150 lines identified by Knox) at 774–834, 964–972, 1076–1085, 1369–1415, 1446–1475. Tiresias uses 14 of his 24 first-person pronouns in his first 14 lines (107 words, with a frequency of 13.1%, i.e. roughly once every eight words).

27 I have set the benchmark for ‘major role’, entirely arbitrarily, at 1000 spoken words or more (in the complete plays only).

28 As regards key words and semantic fields, some other aspects identified by Knox as relevant for the Sophoclean hero in general do show unusual distributions in *OT*, if not always weighted towards Oedipus himself. Knox observes: ‘The use of the verbal adjective, a form expressing necessity, of the future tenses, above all of the tone which brooks no argument—all this is characteristic of the hero’s resolve to act’ (1964: 10). In *OT*, forms of $\chi\rho\eta$ are used *only* by Oedipus (10×) and, once, by Jocasta (the verbal adjective and $\delta\epsilon\iota$ are somewhat more regularly distributed). Tiresias is a significant outlier with respect to the future stem (using it roughly twice as often as other speakers in the play). For other semantic fields, see Knox (1964: 11–26).

TABLE 2 Word counts and frequencies for male speakers in Sophocles

	Ajax (<i>Aj.</i>)	Teucer (<i>Aj.</i>)	Orestes (<i>El.</i>)	Oedipus (<i>OT</i>)	Creon (<i>Ant.</i>)	Heracles (<i>Tr.</i>)	Hyllus (<i>Tr.</i>)	Odysseus (<i>Ph.</i>)	Neoptolemus (<i>Ph.</i>)	Philoctetes (<i>Ph.</i>)	Oedipus (<i>OC</i>)	Theseus (<i>OC</i>)
<i>Total number of words</i>	1625	1317	1006	4208	2088	1182	1063	1058	2423	3769	3849	1218
Action words												
πραγ-	2 0.1 %	1 0.1 %	1 0.1 %	10 0.2 %	4 0.2 %	1 0.1 %	4 0.4 %	2 0.2 %	4 0.2 %	4 0.1 %	6 0.2 %	6 0.5 %
δρα-	3 0.2 %	4 0.3 %	2 0.2 %	12 0.3 %	8 0.4 %	5 0.4 %	4 0.4 %	5 0.5 %	14 0.6 %	12 0.3 %	7 0.2 %	6 0.5 %
ἐργ-	5 0.3 %	4 0.3 %	4 0.4 %	12 0.3 %	4 0.2 %	4 0.3 %	4 0.4 %	4 0.4 %	3 0.1 %	6 0.2 %	7 0.2 %	0 0.0 %
<i>total</i>	10 0.6 %	9 0.7 %	7 0.7 %	34 0.8 %	16 0.8 %	10 0.8 %	12 1.1 %	11 1.0 %	21 0.9 %	22 0.6 %	20 0.5 %	12 1.0 %
Speed words												
ταχ-	9 0.6 %	3 0.2 %	3 0.3 %	12 0.3 %	3 0.1 %	2 0.2 %	2 0.2 %	3 0.3 %	4 0.2 %	5 0.1 %	6 0.2 %	3 0.2 %
σπουδ-	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.1 %	0 0.0 %	1 0.0 %	1 0.0 %	1 0.1 %
<i>total</i>	9 0.6 %	3 0.2 %	3 0.3 %	13 0.3 %	3 0.1 %	2 0.2 %	2 0.2 %	4 0.4 %	4 0.2 %	6 0.2 %	7 0.2 %	4 0.3 %
First-person pronouns												
personal	55 3.4 %	32 2.4 %	28 2.8 %	165 3.9 %	52 2.5 %	53 4.5 %	28 2.6 %	38 3.6 %	74 3.1 %	183 4.9 %	164 4.3 %	44 3.6 %
possessive	22 1.4 %	6 0.5 %	5 0.5 %	42 1.0 %	10 0.5 %	14 1.2 %	7 0.7 %	2 0.2 %	12 0.5 %	19 0.2 %	21 0.5 %	8 0.7 %
reflexive	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	12 0.3 %	2 0.1 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	0 0.0 %	3 0.1 %	0 0.0 %
<i>total</i>	77 4.7 %	38 2.9 %	33 3.3 %	219 5.2 %	64 3.1 %	67 5.7 %	35 3.3 %	40 3.8 %	86 3.5 %	202 5.4 %	188 4.9 %	52 4.3 %

TABLE 3 Sentence-ending punctuation in OT

	Oedipus	Priest	Creon	Tiresias	Iocasta	Corinthian	Servant	Messenger
Sentence-ending punctuation	430	22	97	57	86	49	31	32
frequency (every # words)	9.8	14.5	9.1	9.1	9.2	7.7	6.1	13.5
Full stop	200	10	64	33	44	32	20	25
proportion (of all sentence-enders)	46.5 %	45.5 %	66.0 %	57.9 %	51.2 %	65.3 %	64.5 %	78.1 %
frequency	21.0	31.8	13.7	15.8	18.0	11.8	9.5	17.3
High dot	101	12	16	16	19	6	2	7
proportion (of all sentence-enders)	23.5 %	54.5 %	16.5 %	28.1 %	22.1 %	12.2 %	6.5 %	21.9 %
frequency	41.7	26.5	54.9	32.5	41.7	63.2	9.5	61.7
Question mark	129	0	17	8	23	11	9	0
proportion (of all sentence-enders)	30.0 %	0.0 %	17.5 %	14.0 %	26.7 %	22.4 %	29.0 %	0.0 %
frequency	32.6	n/a	51.7	65.0	34.5	34.5	94.5	n/a

Bare statistics may still serve as a useful starting point for isolating distinctive aspects, however. In Table 3 and Table 4, I have done no more than count every instance of sentence-ending punctuation—i.e. full stops, high dots, and question marks—in digitally available editions. Here, Oedipus *does* stand out, both with respect to the other characters of *Oedipus Tyrannus* and those of Sophocles’ work more widely.

Some of the more notable figures in these tables are in fact fully expected: that the messenger of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for instance, does not use questions (and overwhelmingly favours full stops) is fully in line with his role: he is on stage to relate a series of narrative facts.²⁹ But the finding that I am interested in here, of course, pertains to Oedipus’ use of questions. No other character, either in his play or in the rest of the Sophoclean oeuvre, can match the frequency with which he utters them. There are, of course, plot reasons for this:

29 It is significant here that the messenger’s speech does not include quoted direct speech.

TABLE 4 Sentence-ending punctuation of male speakers in Sophocles

	Ajax (Aj.)	Teucer (Aj.)	Orestes (El.)	Oedipus (or)	Creon (Ant.)	Heracles (Tr.)	Hyllus (Tr.)	Odysseus (Ph.)	Neoptolemus (Ph.)	Philoctetes (Ph.)	Oedipus (oc)	Theseus (oc)
Sentence-enders	152	157	128	430	207	111	110	116	286	386	372	115
frequency	10.7	8.4	7.9	9.8	10.1	10.6	9.7	9.1	8.5	9.8	10.3	10.6
Full stop	85	94	72	200	121	67	61	61	153	194	194	60
<i>proportion</i>	55.9 %	59.9 %	56.3 %	46.5 %	58.5 %	60.4 %	55.5 %	52.6 %	53.5 %	50.3 %	52.2 %	52.2 %
frequency	19.1	14.0	14.0	21.0	17.3	17.6	17.4	17.3	15.8	19.4	19.8	20.3
High dot	43	30	31	101	36	27	32	31	75	96	76	26
<i>proportion</i>	28.3 %	19.1 %	24.2 %	23.5 %	17.4 %	24.3 %	29.1 %	26.7 %	26.2 %	24.9 %	20.4 %	22.6 %
frequency	37.8	43.9	32.5	41.7	58.0	43.8	33.2	34.1	32.3	39.3	50.6	46.8
Question mark	24	33	25	129	50	17	17	24	58	96	102	29
<i>Proportion</i>	15.8 %	21.0 %	19.5 %	30.0 %	24.2 %	15.3 %	15.5 %	20.7 %	20.3 %	24.9 %	27.4 %	25.2 %
frequency	67.7	39.9	40.2	32.6	41.8	69.5	62.5	44.1	41.8	39.3	37.7	42.0

the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is in many ways a detective story, with Oedipus as the lead investigator asking the questions. But it is difficult not to broaden such interpretations to include notions of characterisation: what Knox described as Oedipus' 'analytic and demanding intelligence' makes him into a particularly *persistent* asker of questions. His investigative performance stands out, not merely within his own play but within Sophocles' oeuvre. This becomes all the more clear when we examine (in the next section) his style of questioning in more detail, as a pragmatics-based approach will allow us to do.

3 Pragmatics and Oedipus' Mind Style

3.1 'Oh Really?': Oedipus the King of Post-expansions

Looking at Oedipus' questions more closely reveals some interesting and pertinent pragmatic aspects of his language. First, it is notable how few of Oedipus' interrogatives are *not* genuine information-seeking questions: overwhelmingly, Oedipus asks questions in order to get answers.³⁰ More striking still, though, is Oedipus' use of a particular kind of follow-up question, one that we see very frequently repeated in his investigations.

This questioning technique may well be captured in the terms of Conversation Analysis (CA), particularly insofar as that field (a subdiscipline of pragmatics, on some accounts) is concerned with 'sequence organisation'.³¹ CA has well established that the most basic organisational resource of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction is the 'adjacency pair', a sequence of two related turns by two speakers, with a 'first pair part' (FPP) which projects its own completion by a particular kind of 'second pair part' (SPP). Common action sequences performed by adjacency pairs include greeting–greeting, request–acceptance/refusal, assessment–agreement/disagreement, and indeed question–answer. A further crucial notion is that of 'expansion': adjacency pairs may be preceded, interrupted, or followed by expansion sequences (themselves typically adjacency pairs), which are oriented to the most efficient resolution of the 'base pair' to which they belong. The basic schema is set out in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 Expansions in CA

The following (fictional) English example contains each of the three kinds of expansion, organised around a question–answer base pair:

30 For different uses of questions in tragedy, see Mastronarde (1979: ch. 1); for a linguistic account of non-information-seeking questions more generally see Ilie (1994). Exceptions among Oedipus' questions include 334–336, 339–340, 429–431, 1489–1490.

31 For CA as applied to Greek tragedy, see Schuren (2015); Drummen in Bonifazi et al. (2016); van Emde Boas (2017a, 2017b, forthcoming a). Of these, Drummen and van Emde Boas (2017a) have fuller introductions to the discipline. Good surveys of the field are Sidnell (2010); Sidnell and Stivers (2012). The best work specifically on sequence organisation is Schegloff (2007).

- A: Could you help me? *FPP1* (pre-expansion)
 B: Of course. *SPP1*
 A: How much does that phone cost? *FPP2* (base pair first part)
 B: Pounds or euros? *FPP3* (insert-expansion)
 A: Pounds, please. *SPP3*
 B: It's three-nine-nine, then. *SPP2* (base pair second part)
 A: Sorry, how much? *FPP4* (post-expansion;
 other-initiated repair)
 B: Three-nine-nine. *SPP4*

This passage also exemplifies another significant notion in CA, that of 'repair'. This term refers to 'overt efforts to deal with trouble sources or repairables', that is, with any troubles or problems 'in speaking, hearing, or understanding' (Scheffloff 2007: 100–101). The primary locus of repair, particularly 'other-initiated repair', tends to be in insert- or (as in the example above) post-expansions specifically initiated for the purpose.

Something quite like this kind of post-expansion is a noticeable staple of Oedipus' language in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. A first highly pertinent example will set the stage here:

[1] Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 356–362³²

- Τε. πέφευγα· τάληθές γάρ ἰσχύον τρέφω.
 Οἰ. πρὸς τοῦ διδαχθεῖς; οὐ γὰρ ἔκ γε τῆς τέχνης. *question*
 Τε. πρὸς σοῦ· σὺ γάρ μ' ἄκοντα προὔτρέψω λέγειν. *answer*
 Οἰ. ποῖον λόγον; λέγ' αὖθις, ὥς μάλλον μάθω. *question*
 —post-exp. (repair)
 Τε. οὐχὶ ξυνήκας πρόσθεν; ἦ 'κπειράει †λέγειν†; *question*
 —insert-exp.
 Οἰ. οὐχ ὥστε γ' εἰπεῖν γνωτόν· ἀλλ' αὖθις φράσσον. *answer*
 Τε. φονέα σέ φημι τάνδρὸς οὗ ζητεῖς κυρεῖν. *answer*
- Ti. I have escaped it; for I nourish the strength of truth.
 Oe. Taught by whom? Not by your art, at any rate.
 Ti. By you. For you made me speak although I was unwilling.
 Oe. Speak what? Tell me again, so I can learn once more.
 Ti. Did you not understand before? Or are you trying ... ?

32 All texts and translations are taken from Finglass (2018), unless otherwise indicated.

Oe. Not so that I could say that I knew; come, say it again.

Ti. I say that you are the killer of the man whose killer you are seeking.

In the context of the (at this point very angry) conversation between Oedipus and Tiresias, and more generally given the conventions of tragic dialogue, it seems unlikely that we are dealing here with a genuine mishearing, nor is this, presumably, a 'normal' kind of misunderstanding: Oedipus (mis)understood Tiresias full well the first time (350–353), in the same way that he will (mis)understand him throughout the rest of scene.³³ Rather, Oedipus here uses the resources of repair-sequences (particularly marked as such by his λέγ' αὖθις, ὥς μάλλον μάθω) to initiate a further sequence of questioning.³⁴ This particular type of post-expansion, which looks like a repair-sequence but is in fact geared towards eliciting further talk on a topic mentioned in the second pair part of the base pair, has been well investigated within CA under the header of 'topic-alisation':

Several of the turn types which can be used for other-initiation of repair can also be used to mark some utterance or utterance part as of special interest, and worthy of further on-topic talk. [... This] type of post-expansion [...] is the topicalization of something done or mentioned in the base second pair part. Such expansions then become subject to the organizational contingencies of topic-talk.³⁵

In English such topicalisation sequences are regularly marked by (partial) repeats or 'pro-repeats' ('he is?') or by '(oh) really'.³⁶ In Greek tragedy, an apparently fairly conventional marker of this kind of sequence is the use of the interrogative adjective ποῖος 'what kind of ...?', as in [1] above.³⁷ Oedipus, I contend, is a uniquely fervent user of this type of post-expansion, especially with ποῖος. He repeatedly puts it in to play to pick up a particular point of information from a preceding second pair part as a topic for more precise

33 See Battezzato in this volume.

34 Cf. Dawe (2007: ad 359): 'More than once in tragedy one character asks another to repeat what he has said, so that the audience may fully grasp some important point ... Here Sophocles puts new life into an old convention by making the very request for repetition the material for generating further ill-will between the two parties.' On this passage, see also Battezzato's paper in this volume.

35 Schegloff (2007: 155–158).

36 See Heritage (1984: 339–344); Schegloff (2007: 155).

37 The device is also frequently used in post-expansions in comedy, but there is no need to assume a coarse or colloquial tone: see Bond (1981) on Eur. *Her.* 518, Collard (2018: 87–89).

questioning. He is, I should add, not the only character to use the technique in the play, but he uses it much more frequently than anyone else, and the device could easily be described as a ‘distinctive and systematic’ Oedipodeanism.³⁸

Most of the relevant examples, like [1], are ‘follow-ups’, in which Oedipus attaches a post-expansion to a question–answer sequence which he himself has initiated, when he is not satisfied that the answer provided has told him all he needs to know:

[2] Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 116–121

- Oι. οὐδ’ ἄγγελός τις οὐδὲ συμπράκτωρ ὁδοῦ *question*
κατεῖδ’, ὅτου τις ἐκμαθὼν ἐχρήσατ’ ἄν;
Κρ. θνήσκουσι γάρ, πλὴν εἷς τις, ὃς φόβῳι φυγὼν *answer*
ῶν εἶδε πλὴν ἐν οὐδὲν εἶχ’ εἰδὼς φράσαι.
Οι. τὸ ποῖον; ἐν γὰρ πόλλ’ ἂν ἐξεύροι μαθεῖν, *question—post-exp.*
ἀρχὴν βραχείαν εἰ λάβοις ἐλπίδος.

- Oe. Didn’t either some messenger or fellow-traveller see anything, from whom one would have learned something, putting him to use?
Cr. No, because they are dead—apart from one, who fled in fear and was not able to state anything reliably about what he had seen, except for one thing.
Oe. What is that? One thing might lead to the discovery of many for us to learn, if we could grasp some brief beginning of hope.

38 Oedipus’ examples with ποῖος are 89, 99, 120, 291, 359, 437, 1176; he also has similar post-expansions without ποῖος, e.g. at 1017, 1041. He uses ποῖος also in new sequences that are not obviously post-expansions, at 102, 128, 1124, 1164 (the distinction between new sequences and post-expansions in extended talk-in-interaction is often slight). Different again are 1489 and 1490, rhetorical ποῖος-questions addressed to his children (1371, lastly, is similar, but in an indirect question). Other characters use ποῖος-post-expansions at 935 (Jocasta), 989 (Corinthian) and 1129 (Servant). Creon’s two instances of ποῖος are interestingly different: at 559 and 571 he uses ποῖος questions in interruptions, anticipating (syntactically as well as in terms of content) Oedipus’ own questions. As this survey shows, raw frequencies of ποῖος-usage are only partly indicative: Oedipus scores high on this front (14×), but is matched or outstripped by Tiresias (2 instances, not post-expansions), Jocasta (2×, including the case at 935 mentioned above), and the Servant (1×, 1129). Elsewhere in Sophocles only Theseus in *OC* approaches Oedipus’ level of usage (5× ποῖος, three of which are comparable post-expansions).

This restive style of questioning is, of course, dramatically important, in that it causes Oedipus to pick at all the threads which, for his own sake, he had better left unpicked. In this way, as so often in tragedy, characterisation and plot design are inextricably intertwined: as Oedipus is relentless in his pursuit of every last detail of fact, so the plot drives relentlessly, through every new revelation, towards the final discovery of the truth. Example [2] indeed thematises this point explicitly early on in the play: one discovery will lead to many.³⁹

We see the same impulse to pick at threads, at similar points of dramatic significance, demonstrated in a few other cases where Oedipus attaches a post-expansion to second parts which do not form part of an ongoing question-answer sequence. Oedipus' interlocutors in these cases seem to want to close off an ongoing sequence, but Oedipus refuses to let things lie and immediately 'reactivates' the sequence with a post-expansion to further interrogate an element that has come up in his interlocutor's turn:

[3] Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 284–291

- Χο. ἄνακτ' ἄνακτι ταῦθ' ὁρῶντ' ἐπίσταμαι
 μάλιστα Φοίβωι Τειρεσίαν, παρ' οὗ τις ἂν
 σκοπῶν τάδ', ὦναξ, ἐκμάθοι σαφέστατα.
- Οι. ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐν ἀργοῖς οὐδὲ τοῦτ' ἐπραξάμην.
 ἔπεμψα γὰρ Κρέοντος εἰπόντος διπλοῦς
 πομπούς· πάλαι δὲ μὴ παρῶν θαυμάζεται.
- Χο. καὶ μὴν τά γ' ἄλλα κωφὰ καὶ παλαί' ἔπη. *telling/assessment*
(sequence-closer?)
- Οι. τὰ ποῖα ταῦτα; πάντα γὰρ σκοπῶ λόγον. *question—post-exp.*
- Cho. I know that lord Tiresias sees the same things as does lord Phoebus, and from him, my lord, one might learn these things most truly in the course of investigation.
- Oe. Well, I saw to it that not even this act should be among things neglected. For at Creon's request, I have sent two messengers, and for some time it has been a source of wonder that he is not here.
- Cho. Yes, and as for the rest, they are mute, ancient tales.
- Oe. What is that rumour? I am examining the whole question.⁴⁰

39 As Finglass points out (2018: ad loc.), '[t]he sententious remark is more relevant than Oedipus realises, since the information provided by the witness is centred on the distinction between singular and plural' (i.e. the question of how many robbers there were).

40 The translation of the last line is mine.

[4] Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 432–437

- Τε. οὐδ' ἰκόμην ἔγωγ' ἄν, εἰ σὺ μὴ 'κάλεις.
 Οἰ. οὐ γάρ τί σ' ἤϊδη μῶρα φωνήσont', ἐπεὶ
 σχολῇ σ' ἂν οἴκους τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἐστειλάμην.
 Τε. ἡμεῖς τοιοῖδ' ἔφουμεν, ὥς μὲν σοὶ δοκεῖ,
 μῶροι, γονεῦσι δ', οἳ σ' ἔφυσαν, ἔμφρονες.
 Οἰ. ποίοισι; μείνον. τίς δέ μ' ἐκφύει βροτῶν; *question—post-expansion*
- Τε. I would not have come, if you had not called me.
 Οε. Yes, because I had no idea that you would speak words of foolishness, since otherwise I would scarcely have had you summoned to my house.
 Τε. That is what I am, as it seems to you—foolish; but to your parents, who begot you, I seemed wise.
 Οε. What parents? Stay! Who among mortals was my parent?

Commentators' observations on these moments are revealing: on [4], Finglass (2018: ad loc.) notes that 'for the first time in nearly a hundred lines, Oedipus suddenly becomes desperately eager to hear what the prophet has to say [...] the staccato language expresses agitation'; on [3], Dawe (2007: ad loc.) notes that the chorus' 'casual throwaway remark instantly excites Oedipus' detective instincts'. Such remarks show how natural it is to interpret Oedipus' style of questioning in terms of his frame of mind, and indeed (as Dawe does) as an indication of his more permanent 'instincts'.

Dawe is more reluctant, however, to adopt a similar explanation for a further instance in the final sleuthing scene of the play, in which Oedipus at last discovers the truth:

[5] Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 1173–1176

- Οἰ. ἦ γὰρ δίδωσιν ἥδε σοι; *question*
 Θε. μάλιστ', ἄναξ. *answer*
 Οἰ. ὥς πρὸς τί χρείας; *question—post-expansion (?)*
 Θε. ὥς ἀναλῶσαιμί νιν. *answer*
 Οἰ. τεκοῦσα τλήμων; *question—post-expansion (?)*
 Θε. θεσφάτων γ' ὄκνωι κακῶν. *answer*
 Οἰ. ποίων; *question—post-expansion*
 Θε. κτενεῖν νιν τοὺς τεκόντας ἦν λόγος. *answer*

- Oe. So it was she who gave it to you?
 Shep. Yes, my lord.
 Oe. For what purpose?
 Shep. So that I would kill it.
 Oe. She brought herself to do that, after giving birth to the child?
 Shep. Yes, through fear of dire prophecies.
 Oe. What prophecies?
 Shep. The story was that it would kill its parents.

Dawe comments:

In real life no one would ever ask these supplementary questions after facts of incomparably greater importance had been revealed, not even a man as remorseless in the pursuit of the truth as Oedipus. It is for the audience's benefit that Sophocles is giving the final clarification here.⁴¹

Yet given what we have seen from Oedipus 'remorseless [...] pursuit of the truth' previously in the play, I would argue that Oedipus' style of questioning in this scene is entirely in character. It is, in fact, in the build-up to this scene that we have had the most explicit statement by Oedipus of his own investigative approach, a self-assertion which may well be taken as emblematic for his behaviour throughout the play:

[6] Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 1064–1065⁴²

- Io. ὅμως πιθοῦ μοι, λίσσομαι, μὴ δρᾷ τάδε.
 Oi. οὐκ ἂν πιθοίμην μὴ οὐ τάδ' ἐκμαθεῖν σαφῶς.

- Jo. All the same do as I wish, I beg you! Do not do this!
 Oe. You will never persuade me not to find out the truth!

3.2 *Maximising Relevance: Oedipus the King of Implicatures*

Oedipus in *Oedipus the King* is the conscientious ruler of a city gripped by plague, confident in his ability to solve problems through energy and

⁴¹ Dawe (2007: ad 1176).

⁴² The translation in this case is taken from Lloyd-Jones (1994).

intelligence. [...] As the play continues, this energy turns out to have a darker side. Oedipus is impatient, hot-tempered, prone to jump to conclusions.⁴³

Scodel's character sketch, which of course shares many features with Knox's (cited above) and those of others,⁴⁴ explicitly draws the link between on the one hand the 'energy and intelligence' that we have seen come through in Oedipus' uncompromising style of questioning, and on the other his overly suspicious nature, which he demonstrates particularly in the scene with Tiresias and in the subsequent exchange with Creon.

A pragmatics-based reading, too, invites us to see these two traits—intelligence and distrust verging on paranoia—as two sides of the same coin. What appears to drive Oedipus, in all parts of the play, is primarily an overdeveloped desire for 'relevance', meant in the technical sense that that term has in Relevance Theory. In Relevance Theory, Sperber and Wilson's cognitively inflected update of Grice's foundational model of conversational maxims and conversational implicatures,⁴⁵ communication operates as a constant balancing exercise. On the one hand an individual confronted with any given input will attempt to extract as much useful information as possible from that input, but on the other hand he or she will attempt to exert as little cognitive processing effort as possible in order to do so. In the formal terms used by Wilson and Sperber, these two competing 'principles of relevance' are formulated as follows:

Other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.

Other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended, the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.⁴⁶

43 Scodel (2005: 240–241).

44 So, Gould (2002 [1988]: 257) writes of the 'quickness of rationality' of Oedipus' mind, and of the 'swiftness with which one inference follows on another': 'it is [...] the habit of his mind to leap ahead in making connections, in picking on the link in the chain of reasoning that must be tested.'

45 A good introduction to Relevance Theory (RT) is Wilson and Sperber (2004) (but it is worth going straight for the fuller discussions in Sperber and Wilson²1995). For RT and mind style see Semino (2014). Some rudimentary attempts to apply RT to tragedy may be found in van Emde Boas (2017b).

46 Wilson and Sperber (2004: § 2).

Grice's notion of conversational implicature—that is, meaning that is implied and inferred rather than 'literal'—is recast on this model as the continued processing of an input (beyond a literal surface reading) until sufficient relevance is extracted: we keep deriving implicatures until (but only until) the information we have derived is worth the effort.

What we may observe in Oedipus is that the balance of this calculation is off: the 'positive cognitive effects' that Oedipus achieves in his interactions are never enough for him. As we have seen in his style of questioning, he is always hungry for more inputs, always probing his interlocutors for any bit of information that can still his hunger for relevance. The other direction that he can swing in, however, is to extract unreasonable amounts of relevance from minimal (and as such deficient) inputs: where 'normal' people might stop deriving implicatures from such deficient information, Oedipus just never stops processing, and jumps to entirely unfounded conclusions about what it means when (particularly) Tiresias and Creon tell him (or do not tell him) things. Again, we are given, fairly early on in the play, an almost programmatic statement of this feature of Oedipus' behaviour, in his own words:

[7] Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 342–349

- Oι. οὐκ οὖν ἄ γ' ἤξει καὶ σὲ χρὴ λέγειν ἐμοί;
 Τε. οὐκ ἂν πέρα φράσαιμι. πρὸς τὰδ', εἰ θέλεις,
 θυμοῦ δι' ὀργῆς ἥτις ἀγριωτάτη.
 Οἱ. καὶ μὴν παρήσω γ' οὐδέν, ὡς ὀργῆς ἔχω,
 ἅπερ ξυνίημι. ἴσθι γὰρ δοκῶν ἐμοὶ
 καὶ ξυμφυτεῦσαι τοῦργον εἰργάσθαι θ', ὅσον
 μὴ χερσὶ καίνων· εἰ δ' ἐτύγχανες βλέπων,
 καὶ τοῦργον ἂν σοῦ τοῦτ' ἔφην εἶναι μόνου.

- Oe. Ought you not actually to tell me what is going to come?
 Ti. I will speak no further. In the face of that, if you want to, rage with the anger that is fiercest.
 Oe. Well, I will leave out nothing—such is my anger—of what I understand. Know that you seem to me to have actually plotted the deed and carried it out, except that you did not commit the actual murder; and if you happened to have sight, I would have said that this deed too was yours alone.

'I will leave out nothing [...] of what I understand', indeed: Oedipus understands much. In some cases, though, what he understands is far too much, and

horribly misguided. This, then, is the ‘darker side’ of Oedipus’ probing intelligence and his relentless commitment to uncovering the truth, the same traits which propel him to ask ever more searching questions and to never be satisfied with the answers.

4 Conclusion

It is hugely telling that Oedipus himself would connect, in [7], his communicative behaviour to his own mental and emotional state—his *ὀργή* (344). In a play in which, as Lloyd has well noted, ‘there is relatively little direct characterisation of Oedipus [...] either by himself or by others’,⁴⁷ there is added significance to such moments, in which the characters themselves draw connections between certain kinds of behaviour and certain mental and emotional frames.

The particular contribution that pragmatics can make to the analysis of such moments is first of all to bring into clearer focus that the ‘kinds of behaviour’ that we may be interested in go well beyond the outward and physical (such as striking down a driver in an altercation on crossroads: *παίω δὲ ὀργῆς*, 807) but include verbal and communicative behaviour: it is in the ways in which Oedipus engages *conversationally* with everyone with whom he shares the stage that we see the workings of his mind most clearly. Those interactions vary in tone—as can only be expected, seeing that the king is confronted variously with a co-operative interviewee, an enigmatic priest, an aggrieved brother-in-law(/uncle), a concerned wife(/mother), and an unforthcoming servant. For all their variety, however, there is remarkable consistency in what Oedipus’ interactions reveal about him.

What pragmatics can offer us above all is the detailed tools to make sense of the precise nuances of communicative behaviour. It is through some of these details, as we have seen, that playwrights are able to draw fine-grained distinctions between individual characters. As long as we are happy to class these aspects of language use under the header ‘style’, it turns out that it is precisely in them that we can find the kinds of stylistic variation that the Greek tragedians used, even within the superficially homogeneous tragic *Kunstsprache*, to achieve remarkably subtle characterisation.

47 Lloyd (2018: 344). ‘Direct characterisation’ refers to the explicit and direct verbal ascription of (relatively stable) traits to a character (in drama always by the character him/herself or another character, in narrative also by the narrator).

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