

Body part classifiers in Ancient Egyptian

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All data:

Ramses online (Uliege)

<http://ramses.ulg.ac.be>

Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae (BBAW, Berlin)

<https://aew.bbaw.de/tla/index.html>

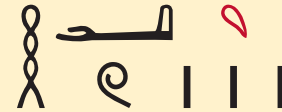
Quick facts about body part classifiers in Egyptian...

- few of them actually have to do only with the body itself, but rather with **what the body does**
- **human** and **animal** body parts
- choice based on **prototype theory**: the item displaying the **most salient features** to express a category is chosen → in some cases, it is a human body part, in others an animal one
- body parts can be used **alone** or with **instruments**, they can also **be pointed at on the body**
- can be combined with other classifiers in some cases (representing body parts or not)
- some **logograms** (sound + meaning) representing body parts too (mark the **root** of the lexeme)

The concept of BODY

3 terms that refer to the living body in general

- *h.t*: body as a whole, inner body, chest
- *h'.w*: collection of limbs, flesh (.w marks the plural or collective)
- *jnm*: envelop, skin, hair (external part of the body)



Generic classifiers for BODY:




piece of flesh : body, body parts



hair + skin: outside envelope, appearance of the body




pustule : body fluids, rottenness, strong smell, negativity related to the body

<i>my</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>=tn</i>	<i>hpr.w</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>h^c.w =j</i>
come:IMP	as_for	=2PL	become:PTCP	from	limb-PL=1SG
					
					BODY PART

Come, you who are born from my flesh
(oQueen's College 1116, r^o 3)

piece of flesh : body, body parts

<i>jr</i>	<i>=k</i>	<i>sn</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>h3.wt</i>
do:IPFV=2SG.M		3PL	in	corpse-PL
				
				NEG-BODY

You turn them into dead bodies

**pustule : body fluids, rottenness,
strong smell, negativity related to the
body**



**hair + skin : hair or skin related, physical appearance, external par of the bo
mourning, black**

bw *rh* = *tw* *jwn=f*
NEG know =IMPRS appearance=3SG.M


EXTERNAL ASPECT

One cannot know his appearance

Other body parts classifiers: from head to toes

RQ: **Not all body parts**, the ones that can **also** be used as classifier for **something else than the body part** itself (= more than a **repeater**)



human face from profile with nose : nose, breathing, kissing, expressing joy

jw =*j* (*r*) *sn* =*s* *m-b3h wn* *bw-nb*
FUT =1SG FUT smell =3SG.F in-front exist everyone



BREATH + ABSTRACT

I will kiss her in front of everyone



man pointing toward his mouth: generic classifier for ingestion, speech, emotion, cognition

nsbj *jn* *z*
lick:INF by man



TONGUE ACTION (root)
INGEST/SPEECH/EMO/COGN
(and) lick (them) by the man



human eye with eyelid : vision/cognition

ζm	=w	$p^3y=j$	<i>mrw.t</i>
understand	=3PL	POSS:M.SG=1SG	love



VISION/COGNITION

So that they shall know about our love



head of hippopotamus/panther : force + by extension, acme of something



+ time classifier: moment of power of someone

hm = *f*
 person = 3SG.M

m *3.t* = *f*
 in moment-F = 3SG.M



FORCE + TIME

His Majesty was in his moment (i.e. slaughtering enemies)



**cow ear : hear, listen
as classifier or logogram (root)**

s_{dm} 3*h* *n* *s_{dm}*
listen:INF useful for listen:PTCP



HEAR (root)

ABSTRACT

to listen is useful to the one who listens



cow tongue : tongue activities and metaphorical extensions as classifier or logogram (root)



tongue activities (root) + speech

<i>nsbj</i>	<i>jn</i>	<i>z</i>
lick:INF	by	man



TONGUE ACTION (root)
 INGEST/SPEECH/EMO/COGN
 (and) lick (them) by the man



elephant tusk : outreach, loud



loud + speech

<i>ᵛw</i>	= <i>w</i>	<i>ᵛ.w</i>	(<i>ᵛr</i>)	<i>ttt</i>		<i>ᵛr</i>	<i>w^c</i>	<i>ᵛd</i>
SUB	=3PL	stand:STAT	(upon)	argue:INF		upon	one	silver



LOUD/OUTREACH + SPEECH

While they were arguing about a loot (pMayer A, v^o 9,19 = KRI 6, 821, 14)



bull head + neck : actions involving the throat



actions involving the throat + ingestion/speech/emotion/cognition

dj=s

give=3SG.F

sbš

spit:SBJV

njk

enemy

ᶜm.n=f

swallow:PFV=3SG.M



She caused the enemy to spit what he had swallowed
(pBoulaq17, IV, 1)



arm with stick : (violent) action



variant: man holding a stick: action

+ (combination with) other classifiers for the kind of action (for ex. antagonistic, with a knife, etc)



antagonism + action

and also:



to grasp (ad-hoc classification)



not really used as classifier (except as repeater for “hand”) but rather



jnk *sd* *sw*
1SG break 3SG.M



I am the one who broke him
(Urk 4, 895, 1)



antagonism + action



finger (or stick) : accuracy, measure, norm



accuracy + speech/cognition

mty

accuracy

h3y.t

go_down:INF

r

toward

s.t

place-F=3SG.M

=*f*



The norm is back in place

(lit: has come back to its place)



intestine : going around, containing, in the middle of
+ logogram (root) with same idea

phrw *m* *sbt* *wr*
go_around:PTCP in wall great



root: AROUND

MOTION

Surrounded by a great wall

(Urk. 4)



heart: though it has a central place in emotion and cognition
expression, not really used as classifier (occasionally as repeater)



phallus, male, sexual activity

In a **euphemism**:



instead of just



sexual activity +
abstract

ḵw =*f* (*ḥr*) *rḥ* =*s* *m* *rḥ* *n* *ḥ3wty*

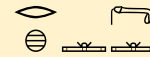
PTCL 3SG.M on know:INF 3SG.F in knowledge GEN man



CLF: ABSTRACT/N-C

+

SEXUAL ACTIVITY



CLF: ABSTRACT/N-C

+

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

(‘He slept with her that night) and he knew her in knowledge of man’

(P. BM 10682, r^o 4, 5 = LES 32, 5)



one leg : fast motion, transgressing motion

leg + knife : transgression (physical i.e. “attack” or social transgression)



transgression + action

<i>jrj</i>	<i>njm</i>	<i>thj</i>	= <i>tn</i>
FUT	Q	transgress	=2PL



TRANSGRESSION +
ACTION

Who will disobey you?

(pTurin 2022, v°5)



two legs onward : motion

two legs backward : backward or inverted motion, non-straightforward motion, metaphor marker (= non-straightforward speech, rerouted words!)

<i>jr</i>	<i>ptr</i>	= <i>k</i>	<i>ky</i>	<i>jw</i>	= <i>f</i>	(<i>hr</i>)	<i>sh3</i>
PTCL	see:SBJV	2SG.M	other	PTCL	3SG.M	on	CAUS-go_down:INF



CLF: REROUTED MOTION/
METAPHOR MARKER

‘If you see another one committing fraud,

<i>j.jr</i>	= <i>k</i>	<i>sw3</i>	<i>n</i>	= <i>f</i>	<i>m-w3w</i>
THMZ	2SG.M	pass: INF	for	3SG.M	away

You should go away from him’ (*Amenemope*, P. BM 10474, 18, 6-7)



horse leg + foot: repetition of action (idea of the horse hitting repetitively the soil with its foot)
logogram (root)

ᵚw =*s* *ᵚr* *wᵚm* *r* *ᵚrj.t* *ᵚnh*
 SEQ =3SG.F SEQ repeat:INF to do:INF oath



root: REPETITION


ABSTRACT

And she repeated the oath
 (oAshmolean 189, 6)



hide and tail: quadruped, any animal that does not live in water, sky and is not a reptile or amphibian

mntk p3
2SG.M ART:M.SG

m3j
lion

QUADRUPED

It is you, the lion
(Urk 4)

Thank you!

