Ignorance and forgetfulness in Late Egyptian and Classical Egyptian from the

New Kingdom until the 26th dynasty.
A lexical study.

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Abstract

The conceptual domain of cognition in Ancient Egyptian is realized linguistically through numerous lexemes and expressions. Following Fortescue[2], these lexical units can be organized around five pivot-concepts that appear to consistently emerge cross-linguistically and define subdomains within cognition. These subdomains are: knowing, understanding, intending, remembering and thinking, to which a sixth notion attention[3] has here been added. The present study focuses on three verbs with negative meanings in relation to the subdomains knowing and remembering: *ḫm* "ignore", *smḫ* "forget" and *mhj* "be forgetful, forget", as well as the negative constructions neg. + *rḫ* "not know". The aim of this article is to show that the semantics of these lexical units are interconnected with contextual para-synonymy and complementarity relations.

1 Introduction

1.1 The cognition domain and its subdivisions

The main goal of the present article is to present as case study a para-synonymic network made of three negative verbs in Ancient Egyptian related to the semantic domain COGNITION: *ḫm* (to ignore), *smḫ* (to forget), and *mhj* (to be forgetful, to forget). They have been selected for their behaving in some contexts as para-synonyms, which reveals the semantic proximity of some of their respective senses. They also function as para-

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2 Fortescue 2001.
3 Lindsay 2020.

antonyms to one or several cognition verbs. As the scope of this article is limited to the aforementioned case studies, I will not here give an exhaustive overview of the COGNITION domain as conceptually and linguistically realized in Egyptian. This will be the topic of a forthcoming publication[4]. However, a few theoretical notions and a glimpse at the "big picture" are needed to fully grasp the pertinence of the case studies.

Cognition is a vast and abstract conceptual domain which includes states of (non-) knowledge (*knowing*, *ignoring*) as well as cognitive processes (broadly, *thinking*). While everyone has a more or less precise understanding of what cognition means, at least in terms of KNOWING and THINKING, defining the exact extent and subdivisions of this domain is no easy task since they may differ from one culture and language to another. Furthermore, the extent of the domain COGNITION and what are considered cognition verbs have been defined in the scientific literature according to different theoretical frames and in relation with different subfields of linguistics and pragmatics.

Indeed, they have for example attracted a lot of attention for their subjectivizing and inter-subjectivizing functions in formal and functional linguistics[5]. Semantically, they have well-known applications in expressing epistemic modality and, pragmatically, they express a subjective standpoint ("I think that…")[6]. Cognition verbs have also been studied in recent years from cross-linguistic and pragmaticalisation perspectives[7].

Another point of view, adopted here, is the one of semantics and semantic typology[8]. Indeed, a precise description of the inner organization of the semantic domain of COGNITION as well as of the relations between the different lexemes pertaining to that domain for ancient Egyptian allows for comparison with other world languages. More specifically, the domain of cognition, due to the highly abstract nature of the notions it encompasses, is the seat of numerous inter-field extensions from other semantic domains such as perception, action, motion, volition, etc. Indeed, many lexemes expressing cognition are a result of metaphor or metonymy induced polysemy. Egyptian data thus allow for comparison with previous works on trans-field extension with cognition as target domain, its link with the hierarchy of senses[9] as well as embodied cognition in a more general way[10].

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4 The present article is part of my ongoing research project about Cognition and cognition related verbs in Late Egyptian (funded by the F.R.S.-FNRS).
5 Fetzer, A. & Johansson (2010), Brington (2001), Givón (1993).
6 Fetzer, A. & Johansson (2010); Andersen (1996:313–314).
7 Dostie 2004; Schneider (2007).
8 Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2015).
9 Sweetser (1990); Evans & Wilkins (2010); Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2008); Vanhove (2008); Vanhove & Hamid (2019).
10 Sharifian & al. (2008), Zwaan (2021).

Besides the numerous verbs that have acquired a cognitive sense by extension from the realm of actions and experiences perceivable by the senses, many languages have a set of opaque words referring exclusively to core meanings of thinking. They are not definable in terms of specific behaviours or interactions nor in terms of any physically anchored manifestation.

As mentioned earlier, in some languages, the domain of cognition is defined more finely than others (see the parallel established by Fortescue with Rosch's taxonomic categorization[11]). All of them though appear to have at least one lexical unit referring to mental activity unavailable to external observation[12].

In the current research project from which this article is part, the basic subdivisions proposed by Fortescue (2001) are used as the main frame of reference as this framework has been tested on a large corpus of 73 languages. On the basis of these data, according to Fortescue, five subdomains linked to five pivot-concepts appear to consistently emerge cross-linguistically. This means that they all have at least one lexical unit expressing this pivot-concept[13]. These subdomains are KNOWING, UNDERSTANDING, INTENDING, REMEMBERING, and THINKING. Instead of MEANING used by Fortescue, INTENDING has been preferred here because MEANING implies a polysemy ("cognitive process oriented toward the future" and "signification of a word"), which does not as consistently emerge from the data and can therefore lead to ambiguity if chosen as pivot-notion. This issue was already pointed out by Fortescue himself[14],without providing any alternative to MEANING. These five subdomains of COGNITION can of course in turn be further subdivided and their boundaries are permeable to different extents in different languages (one can *think* in terms of *remembering,* of *anticipating* etc.)

KNOWING corresponds to the resulting state of knowledge, UNDERSTANDING is the *active* component of knowledge acquisition, REMEMBERING is a past-oriented cognitive process and refers to the storage and retrieving of previously acquired knowledge, INTENDING is an active future-oriented cognitive process and THINKING applies to any active cognitive process, oriented or not. The reason why "active" is not specified in the definition of REMEMBERING is that REMEMBERING implies different levels of agency depending on the context (storage vs. retrieving of information).

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11 Fortescue (2001); Rosch (1975:197).

12 Fortescue (2001:15).

13 On the term pivot-notion/concept, see François 2008. The term was initially used in the context of semantic map realization but I propose here its general application for the expression of lexical meaning organisation within a conceptual domain.

14 Fortescue (2001:26).

Fortescue's five categories can be further subdivided in more specific types of knowledge and thinking processes. For that purpose, the theory for teaching and learning developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (A&K)[15] and based on a former categorization by Bloom[16] provides a more refined model whose main categories can be equated with Fortescue's: KNOW, REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND and INTEND respectively match KNOW, REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND and CREATE found in A&K's model. The detail of their subcategories for KNOWING and THINKING (in the broad sense of "conceptual process") is given in Tables 1 and 2. The notion of THINKING in Fortescue (thinking process without projection into the past or the future) can be equated to the categories APPLY, ANALYSE and EVALUATE in A&K. These subcategories are very useful for a more precise classification of (Egyptian) cognition verbs. However, some of the the distinctions made between ANALYZE and EVALUATE are not always very clear and therefore some minor amendments might be useful there. Finally, it is also important to note that the core of A&K categorization is based on the opposition KNOWING (as state) vs THINKING (as process). THINKING in A&K is thus also superordinate to THINKING in Fortescue.

As for the realm of knowledge, it is divided in A&K into four types: factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive. A fifth type of knowledge is personal knowledge (acquaintance to someone), which is absent from A&K's categorization because they focused exclusively on educational objectives.

In complement to these categories and subcategories, it is proposed here to retain a sixth one, ATTENTION. The notion of ATTENTION has been the object of many definition in cognitive psychology, neuroscience and even, more recently, machine learning. One of the first scholars to take on this task was William James, pioneer of early experimental psychology and author of the famous quote: "Everyone knows what attention is. It is the taking possession by the mind, in clear, and vivid form, of one out of what seems several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought"[17]. Since then, many attempts have been made at defining more precisely the notion of attention but also at quantifying it and at understanding the mental and neural patterns that underlie it. Yet, despite the plurality and vagueness of definitions[18], at least one core quality of attention seems to have reached a consensus: "attention is the flexible control of limited computational resources"[19]. Attention is a pre-requirement to learning and knowing, and this translates in its important

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[15] Anderson & Krathwohl (2001).
[16] Bloom & al. (1964).
[17] James (1890, XI).
[18] Hommel & al. (2019).
[19] Lindsay (2020).

representation in the Egyptian lexical data, mainly through trans-field metaphorical extension.

Concrete knowledge → abstract knowledge			
factual	conceptual	procedural	metacognitive
knowledge of terminology knowledge of specific details and elements	knowledge of classifications and categories knowledge of principles and generalizations knowledge of theories, models, and structures	knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures	strategic knowledge knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge self-knowledge

Table 1: Categories of knowledge (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001:46)

"lower order" thinking skills → "higher order" thinking skills					
REMEMBER	UNDERSTAND	APPLY	ANALYZE	EVALUATE	CREATE
recognizing identifying **recalling** retrieving	**interpreting** clarifying paraphrasing representing translating **exemplifying** illustrating instantiating **classifying** categorizing subsuming **summarizing** abstracting generalizing **inferring** concluding extrapolating interpolating predicting **comparing** contrasting mapping matching **explaining** constructing models	**executing** carrying out implementing using	**differentiating** discriminating distinguishing focusing selecting **organizing** finding coherence integrating outlining parsing structuring **attributing** deconstructing	**checking** coordinating detecting monitoring testing **critiquing** judging	**generating** hypothesizing **planning** designing **producing** constructing

Table 2: Cognitive process (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001: 67–68).

1.2 Corpus

The core corpus investigated is made of texts in Late Egyptian and classical Egyptian from the New Kingdom (NK), the Third Intermediate Period (TIP) and the 26th dynasty in the early Late Period (LP). Most of the examples have been gathered from the *Ramses*

database[20]. The core corpus was completed with the data for *ḫm*, *smḫ* and *mhj* from the *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (*TLA*)[21], which includes texts from previous and following periods. Examples prior and posterior to the NK-LP timeframe have been considered in a diachronic comparison perspective but have not been treated systematically. In the tables, the numbers of attestations provided corresponds to the total number of attestations currently encoded in *Ramses* and in the *TLA*, all periods and pre-Coptic language stages included.

For the cognition domain, 42 verbs[22] have been identified so far in Classical Egyptian and Late Egyptian, including 4 verbs carrying a negative meaning[23]. To these must be added a set of compound expressions whose exact number has not been established yet. Table 3 below gives an overview of the 38 verbs with a positive meaning[24], organised according to Fortescue's five categories to which was added the category ATTENTION. The adequation with the categories of A&K for THINKING are also mentioned. This categorization, applied with all due caution to Egyptian data because of the considerable temporal and cultural gap with our own frames or reference in a modern western society, seems to be actualized quite accurately in the Egyptian lexicon.

	ATTENTION	KNOW	REMEMBER	UNDERSTAND	THINK (APPLY, ANALYSE, EVALUATE)	INTEND
1		*ꜥm* "swallow, learn"				
2			*ꜥn* "come back, remember"			
3		*ꜥrḵ* "tie together, understand, be wise"		*ꜥrḵ* "tie together, understand, be wise"		
4					*jb* "think"	*jb* "wish"

5						*w3w3* "plot"
6					*wpj* "judge"	
7				*wḥʿ* "untie, understand"		
8					*wḥ3* "search, want"	
9					*wdʿ* "judge"	
10	*ptr* "see, look, pay attention"					
11	*m33* "see, look, pay attention"					
12					*nḫb* "assign, decide on"	
13					*nk3* "think, reflect on"	
14						*ngmgm* "plot"
15		*rḫ* "know"				
16	*rs* "be awake, watch"					
17					*ḥn* "equip, organize"	
18					*ḥḥj* "seek, analyze, look for"	
19					*ḥsb* "calculate, identify"	
20					*ḫ3j* "measure, evaluate"	
21					*ḫmt*: intend, plan, hope	
22		*gmj* "find"				
23					*k3j* "think, intend"	*k3j* "think, intend"

24		*s33* "understand, be wise"		*s33* "understand, be wise"		
25					*sj3* "recognize, discern"	
26					*sjp* "inspect, examine, consider"	
27		*sbk* "be wise, thoughtful"				
28				*spd* "be sharp, insightful"	*spd* "be sharp, insightful"	
29					*smtr* "examine, question"	*smtr* "examine, question" (?)
30						*sr* "predict, foresee"
31			*sḫ3* "remember"			
32						*sš* "write, compose, create"
33				*stp* "choose, select"	*stp* "choose, select"	
34	*sḏm* "ear, listen, pay attention, understand"		*sḏm* "ear, listen, pay attention, understand"			
35					*š3* "elect, assign"	*š3* "elect, assign"
36		*šs3* "be instructed, wise"				
37	*dgj* "see, watch, notice"				*dgj* "see, watch, notice" ?	
38		*ḏˁr* "seek, scrutinize, create"			*ḏˁr* "seek, scrutinize, create"	*ḏˁr* "seek, scrutinize, create"

Table 3: Overview of the 38 verbs with a positive meaning for the domain cognition in Late Egyptian.

The present study focuses on the para-synonymic relations between three verbs with negative meanings related to the subdomains of KNOWING and REMEMBERING: *ḫm* "to ignore", *smḫ* "to forget" and *mhj* "to be forgetful, to forget" and the constructions involving *rḫ* "to know" in a negative pattern (neg + *rḫ*). These verbs have been chosen because they constitute a system and their semantics show points of contacts for some of their senses. As a consequence, they function in some contexts as para-synonymic lexemes. They also function as asymmetrical antonyms to one or several cognition verbs from the aforementioned subdomains. "Asymmetrical" here means that, for none of them, their semantics seem to match perfectly the semantics of their closest positive counterpart. In a perspective of exhaustivity, one should here mention that a fourth verb with negative meaning has been identified so far, 𓇋𓍿𓅱�e�?𓏲𓀀 *swgꜣ* "to be stupid" (Wb 4, 76.8). It will not be treated here as it is not part of the same system of semantic complementary oppositions as *ḫm*, *smḫ*, *mhj* and neg + *rḫ* but completes the list of identified verbs with negative meanings pertaining to the COGNITION domain. An overview of basic information regarding *ḫm*, *smḫ*, *mhj* and neg + *rḫ* is provided in Table 4. One should note that the number of attestations given for Ramses and the TLA is the total of attestations for the given lexemes currently encoded in each database, which implies: 1) that there are a few overlaps; some examples are present in Ramses and the TLA sides and 2) that the attestations mentioned are not restricted to the core corpus of the present study as regards the TLA.

	Verb	Standard translation	Total number of attestations		Most common classifier(s)	Classifier category	Subdomain of COGNITION
			Ramses	TLA			
1	*mhj*	forget	7	9	G37	SMALL/ NEGATIVE	NOT REMEMBER
2	*smḫ*	forget	45	52	G37 D35 A2 F18-A2	SMALL/ NEGATIVE NEGATIVE ACTION INGESTION/ SPEECH/ COGNITION (+) EXTERIORISE/ EXPRESS	NOT REMEMBER
3	*ḫm*	ignore	105	319[25]	D35 D35:Y1 D35:G37	NEGATIVE ACTION NEGATIVE ACTION + ABSTRACT NEGATIVE ACTION + SMALL/NEGATIVE	NOT KNOW
4	Neg + *rḫ*	Not know	ca. 338[26]	ca. 389	Y1	ABSTRACT	NOT KNOW

Table 4: Basic information on *mhj*, *smḫ*, *ḫm* and neg + *rḫ*.

A list of the most common pairs of para-antonyms involving *ḫm*, *smḫ* and *mhj* on basis of cotextual associations recurrency is provided in Table 5. Further para-antonymic relations are obviously at work within the cognition domain but will not be treated here.

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[25] The number of attestations for *ḫm* appears very high compared to the other two lexemes. However, it must be noted that many attestations are very formulaic, and therefore repetitive.

[26] The number of attestations for the negative constructions with *rḫ* is approximative. It was obtained by a search on collocations through the databases, which is not as precise as a simple search on single lexemes. Minor inaccuracies may thus have occurred. The total number of attestations for *rḫ* (with and without negation) is 1643 in the *TLA* and 1094 in *Ramses*.

Verbs with a positive meaning	Verbs a with negative meaning
ꜥm (learn, know)	ḫm (ignore)
rḫ (know)	ḫm (ignore) smḫ (forget) mhj (be forgetful, forget)
sḫꜣ (remember)	smḫ (forget) mhj (be forgetful, forget) ḫm (ignore)
šsꜣ (be wise, knowledgeable)	ḫm (ignore) smḫ (forget) mhj (be forgetful, forget)
rdj m jb/ḥꜣty (place in the heart = memorize)	smḫ (forget)
rdj ḥr r (turn the face toward = dedicate oneself to)	smḫ (forget)

Table 5: List of verbs with positive meaning related to COGNITION in para-antonymic relation with *ḫm*, *smḫ* and *mhj*.

1.3 State of the art: *ḫm*, *smḫ* and *mhj* in the current lexicography tools

Before moving on to the data analysis, the following section provides a short introduction to each verb with a summary of the existing dictionary entries in the Wörterbuch, the Hannig, the Ramses database and the TLA. The entries denominations provided in the dictionaries and databases are left in their original language to avoid loss of information in translation.

ḫmj/ḫm: to ignore

Standard spelling (as provided in dictionaries):
Verb category: 3ae inf, later 2-rad
Distribution in diachrony and by genres:
The verb *ḫm* is attested from the Old Kingdom until the Greco-Roman period. From the NK, it is found both in Late Egyptian and in Classical Egyptian (or better Egyptien de tradition), in all literary genres. Based on Vycichl's list[27], it does not seem to have survived in Coptic. The distribution of attestations in *Ramses* and the *TLA* is as shown in Table 4, as well as the main classifiers and their corresponding conceptual categories.

The entries listed in existing dictionaries and databases for *ḫm* are the following ones:
Wörterbuch (Wb 3, 278.5-280.5): *nicht wissen*

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[27] Vycichl (1983).

- o   with object
- o   with infinitive
- o   negated, with preposition: *ḥr* "not to forget someone" ("jemanden nicht vergessen")
- o   with preposition *r* "nicht wissen"

Hannig (2006: 643, 23414-23440):

- o   nicht kennengelernt, nicht erfahren haben, nicht kennen
- o   nicht wissen, verkennen
- o   vernachlässigen, vergesslich sein
- o   *ḥm jb*: unwissend
- o   nicht wissen, dass (+ clause)
- o   nicht tun können
- o   sich nicht kennen, ohnmächtig werden (*ḥm ḏ.t*)
- o   *ḥm ḥr* + neg: nicht vergessen (jds.)
- o   *ḥm r*: nicht wissen wie (etwas tun)
- o   nicht mächtig sein (*ḥm ꜥ.wj.fj rd.wj.fj*)

ḥm is also signalled in Hannig as antonym of *rḫ*.

Ramses: ignorer
lemma number: *ḥm*_1006_30218

TLA: nicht wissen, negieren (Engl: to not know, to be ignorant of)
lemma number: 116910

smḫ: to forget

Standard spelling (as provided in dictionaries): 𓇋𓅓𓐍𓂡
Verb category: caus. 2-rad. (causative of *ḥm* "ignore")
Distribution in diachrony and by genre:
The verb *smḫ* is attested from the Old Kingdom until the Greco-Roman period. From the NK, it is found both in Late Egyptian and in Classical Egyptian (Égyptien de Tradition). It seems mostly attested in literary texts and it also present in letters. It does not seem to be attested in administrative documents. The verb *smḫ* did not survive in Demotic[28] nor Coptic[29].The distribution of attestations in *Ramses* and the *TLA* is as shown in Table 4, as well as the main classifiers and their corresponding conceptual categories. The entries listed in existing dictionaries and databases for *smḫ* are the following ones:

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28 Does not appear in CDD. However, *sḫm* is attested (CDD: 377).
29 Does not appear in Vycichl (1983).

Wörterbuch (Wb 4, 140.16-141.10): *vergessen*

- o   vergessen = nicht mehr wissen
- o   jemanden vergessen
- o   jemanden (etwas) vergessen = vernachlässigen
- o   vergessen = nicht an etwas unangehnemes denken
- o   etwas zu tun vergessen (+ infinitive)

Also listed as antonym of *sḫꜣ* "to remember".

Hannig (2006: 767, 28156-28162):

- o   vergessen, nicht mehr wissen; vergessen wollen
- o   vergessen zu tun (+ inf)
- o   vernachlässigen

Ramses (lemma number: *smḫ*_100_1880): *oublier*
TLA (lemma number: 135600): *vergessen* (English translation provided: to forget, to ignore)

mhj: be forgetful, to forget

Standard spelling (as provided in dictionaries):

Verb category: 3ae inf.

Distribution in diachrony and by genre:

The verb *mhj* is attested from the First Intermediate Period until the Late period. From the NK, it is found in Late Egyptian and in Classical Egyptian (Égyptien de Tradition). The verb *mhj* is relatively rare and its use seems to be restricted to texts of the tradition: royal texts, hymns, teachings. Vycichl[30] suggests a possible link with the Coptic word ⲘⲞⲈⲒϨⲈ (S), ⲘⲀⲈⲒϨⲈ (AL), ⲘⲀϨⲈⲒⲈ (L) "miracle" and ⲡ-ⲘⲞⲈⲒϨⲈ "to be astonished". The distribution of attestations in Ramses and the TLA is as shown in Table 4, as well as the main classifiers and their corresponding conceptual categories. The entries listed in existing dictionaries and databases for *mhj* are the following ones:

Wörterbuch (Wb 2, 113.7-11)

- o   *mhj jb/ḥꜣty* = vergesslich sein
- o   *mhj ḥr* = etwas vergessen, eine Person vergessen

Hannig:

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30 Vycichl (1983:110).

- o vergessen
- o vergesslich sein (+ *jb/ḥȝty*)

Ramses: oublier
lemma number: *mhi_100_6805*
TLA: vergessen, vergesslich sein
lemma number: 73070

As can be easily seen, the current lexical tools at disposal agree on the standard translations. However, a closer look at the data shows that the semantics of these three lexemes gain in being more thoroughly described and their similarities and differences highlighted.

1.4 Ignorance and forgetfulness: two interconnected subdomains

The notions of IGNORING and FORGETTING share in several languages one important feature which shapes the relations between the two subdomains. Indeed, they both imply the non-retrieving and/or non-application of information. From a KNOWLEDGE perspective, it means that the information has never been stored, that it has not been learnt. From a MEMORY perspective, in means that the information, even though it has been stored and learnt at some point, cannot be accessed, retrieved anymore. This accounts for the basic, non-agentive, senses of both IGNORING and FORGETTING: the impossibility to access information experienced by the subject, who has no control on it and has a role of experiencer.

IGNORING and FORGETTING, however, are also attested cross-linguistically as active processes implying a high degree of control by the subject on the action, and therefore moving the subject from a role of experiencer to one of agent. This active component consists in the fact of 1) purposely pretending no to have knowledge or awareness of something/someone in the case of IGNORING and 2) refusing or avoiding retrieving and using an information previously stored in the memory in the case of FORGETTING. In both cases, the antagonistic behaviour consists in denying/not acknowledging the detention of information and the capability of retrieving it.

The verbs *ḫm*, *smḫ* and *mhj* share the property of expressing both experienced incapability, inaptitude and active refusal or avoidance of retrieving information. Their semantics overlap in some of their contextual uses and diverge in others. This contextualised description and comparison are the topic of this section. As announced, the negative construction neg + *rḫ* will be added to the picture, for it functions in a complementary pattern with *ḫm*.

2 Uses and senses of *ḥm*, *smḫ* and *mhj* in context

2.1 Case 1: *ḥm* vs neg + *rḫ*

Knowledge is usually divided in 3 subdomains[31]: factual knowledge (know what), procedural knowledge (know how) and personal acquaintance (know someone). Their negative counterparts are expressed by *ḥm* and neg + *rḫ*, according to a different yet complementary pattern. Each scenario encountered in the corpus is listed and the uses of *ḥm* and neg + *rḫ* contrasted below.

2.1.1 Experienced ignorance

2.1.1.1 Ignoring/not knowing a fact

The examples that follow refer to a statement of non-detention of information. This non-detention, and the resulting incapacity to retrieve it, is not controlled by the subject. It is the basic sense of ignorance as not knowing (not having learnt) a fact or not mastering a skill.

The semantics of *ḥm* and neg + *rḫ* partially overlap for the expression of "not knowing", "not having acquired knowledge". The knowledge conveyed here is factual: not knowing something, a fact. However, the nuances conveyed by *ḥm* and neg + *rḫ* respectively are not identical. The pattern neg + *rḫ* is rather used to negate knowledge of specific facts or events and related to specific circumstances, to a given conjecture. By contrast, *ḥm* refers to a statement of ignorance with a general validity: in ex. 1, the future is ignored, under any circumstance. In the opposition neg + *rḫ* vs *ḥm*, the latter appears to be the marked term of the pair: it can be used only for statements with a general lasting validity and contextually independent.

> ex1
>
> *p3*   *z*   *ḥm(.w)*   *dw3w*   *mj* *jḫ*
> ART:SG.M man ignore:STAT   tomorrow like Q
> The man ignores how tomorrow will be
> Amenemope, P. BM 10474, 19, 13
>
> ex2
>
> *ḥy-r-ꜥ* *bw*   *rḫ=k*   *sḫr.w*   *n*   *ntr*
> since   NEG   know:PFV=2SG.M plan-PL of   god
> Since you do not know the plans of god

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31 Fortescue (2001) and previous bibliography.

Amenemope, P. BM 10474, 23, 8

ex3

rmṯ.w   jw   wn   bw   rḫ   =w   sy   ḥr=j
people-PL SBRD was(AUX) NEG know:PFV =3PL 3SG.F on =1SG
The people who did not know this about me
Inscription of Taharqa, c. 4[32]

ex4

jw   bw   rḫ<=j>   p3   nty   p3   3ḥ-ḥw.t
MCM NEG know:PFV=1SG ART:SG.M REL-M.SG ART:SG.M shaft-F.PL
n   t3y=j   mꜥḥꜥ.t   jm
of POSS: F.SG =1SG tomb-F here:ADV
For I did not know where was the shaft of my tomb
O. BM EA 5624, r° 6

In the following example, neg + *rḫ* expresses a form of hesitation in a situation, thus referring to contextual application of evaluation skills. The whole passage constitutes also a metaphor for hesitation (through back and forth motion and not knowing where to step). This sense does not seem to be attested for *ḥm*.

ex5

y3   twn   (ḥr)   dj.t   šmj.t
indeed PRS-1PL on give:INF go:INF
jw=n   (ḥr)   ḫtḫt
SBRD=1PL on go-backward:INF
jw   bw   rḫ=n   s.t   rd.wj=n
SBRD NEG know:PFV=1PL place-F leg-M.DU=1PL
Indeed, we push ourselves to go forward; while we also go backward; for we do not know where to step
P. BM 10375, v° 13

neg + *rḫ*, as non-marked term, can also be used for more general statements. However, here as well, there are some differences in the sense conveyed in context, with respect to *ḥm*. In the following example, the difference with *ḥm* is that *bw rḫ.tw* expresses the *impossibility* to know something specific, rather than ignorance in general.

---

[32] Voir Winand 1992: ex. 558.

ex6

mw	mḏ	bw	rḫ=tw	pḥr.w	s.t-ḥm.t	wȝtw	<r>
water	deep	NEG	know:PFV=3SG	border-PL	woman-F	be-away:STAT	to

hȝy=s
husband=3SG.F

A woman away from her husband, it is a deep water, one cannot know its borders
Ani, P. Boulaq 4, 16, 14

A recurrent case: not knowing someone's name

The two examples below appear very similar, as they both refer to not knowing the name of someone. The difference is again in the nuance expressed. The first example uses xm and expresses ignorance as an inherent quality of the subject, through the use of a participle. The second example expresses an impossibility of knowing, which is contingent upon external circumstances (similarly to ex. 6, pBoulaq 4, 16, 14).

ex7

pȝ	ḫm	rn=f	jmw.w	n =f	rˁ
ART:M.SG	ignore:PTCP	name =3SG.M	lamentation-PL	for =3SG.M	day

nb
every

The one who ignores his name (= Amun-Râ), lamentations for him every day
O. BM EA 29559, r° 13

ex8

n{n}	rḫ.n	nṯr.w	rn=f
NEG	know:PFV	god-PL	name=3SG.M

The gods cannot know his name
P. Turin 1993, l. 9

2.1.1.2 Ignoring and not knowing something unspecified: stating a general lack of knowledge

In the first example below, *ḫm* is used without a direct object to refer to a general state of ignorance, which is considered part of someone's qualities or condition on behavioural basis. This nuance of usual condition is reinforced by the use of the participle[33].

---

[33] One cannot exactly talk about inalienable quality here because it would apply only to a nominal predicate.

ex9

bn	twk	m	jȝw	ḥm	bn	twk		m	ꜥdd
NEG	2SG.M	in	old man	ignore:PTCP	NEG	PRS-2SG.M	in	young_man	

swgȝ
stupid

You are not an ignorant old man; you are not a stupid young man

O. Gardiner 320, r° 3

In the satirical letter of Hori, the alternation of *ḥm* and neg + *rḫ* runs as a read thread through the text, which plays recurrently and ironically with the concepts of knowledge and ignorance. In all cases, the object of knowledge is unspecified. Different strategies are used for that purpose: a predication of non-existence in the first example, the non-expression of the object in the second example and the use of *nkt* "something", undefined by essence, in the third example. The opposition between *ḥm* and neg + *rḫ* is also interesting here in the context of hierarchical relations between Hori and his interlocutor Amenemope. Indeed, while Hori points out – ironically – that there is nothing that Amenemope ignores (*ḥm*), the reported speech of Amenemope about Hori uses neg + *rḫ*. This implies that, even if some of the flaws pointed out by Hori's interlocutor against him were true, they are contingent and confined to specific facts. On the contrary, Amenemope's ignorance is phrased as being inherent, which is thus a more offensive statement.

ex10

sš	stp	ḥȝty	wȝḥ	ndw.t-rȝ	ḥꜥj		tw	n
scribe	chose:PTCP	heart	place:PTCP	advice	rejoice:IPVF	3SG	of	

ḥn.t=f
speech-F=3SG.M

ḫft	sdm=w	ḥmw	n	mdw-ntr
against	hear:IPFV=3PL	artisan	of	word-god

nn	ḥm=f
not-existant	ignore:REL =3SG.M

The scribe perspicacious of judgement, the one who delivers advices, one rejoices when hearing his speeches, expert in divine words, there is nothing that he ignores

Hori, P. Anastasi 1,1,1

ex11

jry=k	sḫrj-ꜥ=j	m	sš	dd=k
do:PFV=2SG.M	underestimate:INF=1SG	in	scribe	say:PFV=2SG.M

bw   rḫ[*=f*][34]
NEG   know:PFV=3SG
You underestimated me as a scribe when you said "he does not know anything"
Hori, P. Anastasi 1,8,8

ex12

m-jrj   dj.t   ḏd   tw   <n/r> =k
PROH-do   give:INF say:SBJV 3sg to=2SG.M
wn   {m}nkt   ḫm=k
existant   something ignore:REL =2SG.M
Do not allow that one would say about you "there is here something that you ignore"
Hori, pAnastasi 1,14,7

2.1.1.3 Being unaware

a) Being unaware of the existence/nature of something

Both *ḫm* and neg. + *rḫ* can express the unawareness of the existence and/or the nature of something.

ex13

ḏdm.n   wj ḥ.wt   nn   rḫ.n=j   sw
sting:PFV 1SG thing-F.COLL NEG   know:PFV=1SG 3SG.M
Something that I do not know stung me, (it is no fire, it is no water; my heart is burning)
O. Queen's College 1116, r° 12

The second example is lacunary and could possibly be interpreted in two ways: being unaware of the existence/power of Egypt or purposely neglecting to give allegiance to it. However, the second option is more likely in context and this example appears again in ex. 27, under the section "active ignorance".

ex14

ḫ3s.wt   ḫm.w   km.t
hilland-F.PL ignore:PTCP   Egypt-F
dj=j   ḫnd   sn   ḫm=k   mj swḏ-ḥr   mj
give=1SG threaten 3PL Majesty=2SG.M   like recreation like
s3b
jackal

---

[34] Other versions of the text have *rḫ=k*.

The foreign countries who were ignorant of Egypt, I cause your Majesty to threaten them as recreation like a jackal

Karnak, Northern War Scenes of Seti I, KRI I, 30,15

b) Being unaware of a situation

The first two examples below appear very similar at first sight. Once again, though, there is a nuance between the one with *ḥm* expressing unawareness toward a situation going on in general, repetitively, and neg + *rḫ* expressing it regarding a one-off situation in a given context.

ex15

y3	*jḫ*	*p3y=s*		*wsṯn*	*<m>*	*p3*		*wḏ3*	*n*
indeed	Q	POSS:M.SG=3SG.F		walk:INF	in	ART:SG.M		granary	of

pr-ʿ3	*ʿ.w.s*		*m*	*ḥm=sn*
pharaoh	life, prosperity, health		in	ignore:INF=3PL

Indeed, why is she walking freely in the granaries of pharaoh l.p.h. without them knowing it (lit: in their ignorance)

O. Ashmolean 1945.37+1945.33+O. Michaelides 90, r° 19

ex16

ʿḥʿ.n=sn	*ʿḳ*	*m-ẖnw*	*p3*		*mšʿ*	*n*	*ḥm=f*
CJVB:ANT=3PL	enter:STAT	inside	ART:SG.M		army	of	Majesty=3SG.M

jw=sn	*ḥr*	*mšʿ*	*jw*	*bw*	*rḫ=sn*
SBRD=3PL	on	walk:INF	SBRD	NEG	know:PFV=3PL

They entered the army of His Majesty while they were walking, them being unaware

Qadesh, Bulletin (L2), §80

The third example below, featuring *ḥm*, may appear somewhat borderline at first glance, since it expresses unawareness of a specific situation (eating one's abomination). Given that, one would rather expect *ḫm*. However, the statement made about this specific situation has a general validity: it is bad every time it occurs.

ex17

ḏw	*wnm*	*z*	*bw.t=f*		*m*	*ḥm=f*
bad	eat:SUBJ	man	abomination-F=3SG.M		in	ignore:INF=3SG.M

Bad: if a man eats his abomination while ignoring (= in his ignorance)

P. Chester Beatty 3, r° 1-11

2.1.1.4 Not being able to: *ḥm*/neg + *rḫ* + infinitive

The inability to perform a task can be expressed both by means of the verb *ḥm* and the construction neg + *rḫ*. The first one, *ḥm*, is already in use in the Old Kingdom and enters very early in the composition of lexicalised compound words such as *jḫmw-wrḏ* (Wb 1, 125.15-16) "the untiring ones" and *jḫmw sk* (Wb 1, 125.14) and "the ones who do not perish", both referring to circumpolar stars. The second one gathers negative constructions based on *rḫ* used a modal auxiliary in Late Egyptian. In both cases, the direct complement of the verb is an infinitive. Here as well, the same opposition between inherent and contextual situations applies. Neg + *rḫ* expresses an inability that is tied to specific circumstances, while *ḥm* expresses an inability with a general validity, as part of someone's qualities.

In the first example below, the inability is tied to a specific context and limited in time: a worker is not able to work *on a specific day*. In the second example, *ḥm* describes a quality inherent to the god Amun.

ex18

> *bw   rḫ=f   b3k*
> NEG   know:PFV=3SG.M work:INF
> He was not able to work (on a specific day)
> O. Caire CG 25785, r° 8 (list of workers on duty)

ex19

> *ḥm   rdj.t   s3   ḥr   jr.n=k*
> ignore:PTCP give:INF back   on   do:REL=2SG.M
> Unable to turn the back to what you accomplished
> Hymn to Amun, P. Berlin P 3049, 5, 9

The last example is a bit difficult to classify, for it could possibly fit into several categories: ignoring evil as 1) being unaware of it; 2) being unable or untriggered to perform it; 3) actively dismissing it. The lacunary context does not unfortunately provide enough information to decide on the issue. It can only be noted that, in the case of option 3, one would rather expect an oblique construction with *r* (*ḥm=k r jsft*). However, the oblique construction does not seem to ever become mandatory so it is not a decisive argument.

ex20

> *ḥm=k   jsft*
> ignore:SBJV=2SG.M   evil
> So that you ignore evil

O. BM 29549, r° 1

While the aforementioned uses of *ḥm* and neg + *rḫ* appear as complementary in Late Egyptian, some others clearly diverge. Indeed, neg + *rḫ* has a more diverse range of uses, reflecting the wide polysemy of *rḫ*. The scenarios presented in the following sections seem to be found only with neg + *rḫ* and not *ḥm*.

2.1.2 Active ignorance

As mentioned above, "active ignorance" is the fact of purposely not accessing and using previously stored information that is part of the individual's knowledge. This sense is mostly realized in two ways: 1) not caring for/paying attention to someone; 2) neglecting/denying something, usually abstract (advice, teaching, speech, etc.)

This sense of *ḥm* is sometimes associated with an oblique expression of the object.[35] The oblique construction is not systematic and it is attested *only* when *ḥm* bears the sense of "active ignorance". The verb can then be followed with: 1) the preposition *ḥr* when the object is an animate (a person) and 2) the preposition *r* when the object is an inanimate.

2.1.2.1 Actively ignore something

ḥm r "ignore toward/against"

When the direct object complement of the verb is an inanimate, it may be expressed obliquely by means of the preposition *r*. The oblique construction *ḥm r* always means to purposely neglect something and always implies an agentive subject. It is not found in the primary sense of *ḥm* "not knowing".

ex21

ḥnꜥ-ḏd	*twk*	*ꜥš3*		*m*	*ꜥḳ*	*prj*
COMP	PRS-2SG.M	be_numerous:STAT		in	enter:INF	go_out:INF

jw	*ḥm=k*	*r sš*
MCM	ignore=2SG.M	to write:INF

jtḥ=k	*<tw>*	*m-dj=j*	*r*	*sḏm*
pull=2SG.M	2SG.M	with=1SG	to	hear:INF

You are restless, while you neglect the writing; you pull off from me regarding listening

pLansing, 3, 4

---

35 On the oblique expression of the object in Egyptian, mainly focusing on the use of *m*, with some typological considerations, see Winand (2015).

ex22

> *m-jrj*   *ḥm*   *r* *mw.t*
> PROH-do ignore:INF to death-F
> Do not ignore death
> oDeM 01730, r° x+2

2.1.2.2 Actively ignore someone, denying attention to a person

ḥm ḥr "ignore upon"

The following passage is about a man who became powerful and who is advised to remain humble and not look down on/deny attention to his acquaintances who shared his former social status. The use of the vetitive reinforces the feature [+ control] of the subject on the action; it becomes fully agentive.

ex23

> *m-jrj*   *ḥm*   *ḥr* *rmṯ* *rḫ=k*
> PROH-do ignore on man know:REL=2SG.M
> (if you are powerful and have become mighty), do not ignore a man that you know
> pChester Beatty 4, v° 2,1

The idea expressed by this second passage is again the one of not denying attention to someone one is acquainted with when they are in need. The duty of solidarity is repetitively stressed in wisdom texts in terms of "not ignoring" someone close.

ex24

> *jmy=k*   *ḥm*   *ḥr* *s3ḥ.w=k*   *hrw.w* *gbw=sn*
> not-be:IMP=2SG.M ignore:INF on neighbour-PL=2SG.M day-PL be-weak:IPFV=3PL
> May you not ignore your neighbours/close relatives when they are in misery
> oPetrie 11 – Prohibitions, v° 6

The last example below is in the same line: on the battle field, Ramses appeals to Amun and reproaches him to leave him alone and without help despite being aware of his distressed situation.

ex25

> *js* *p3*   *n* *jt* *ḥm*   *ḥr* *s3=f*
> Q ART:SG.M of father ignore:INF on son=3SG.M
> Is it the deed of a father, to be neglecting his son?
> Qadesh, poem (L1), 26

From the available data, the construction *ḫm ḥr* has always the sense of "purposely ignoring someone", never of "not knowing" and the subject is always agentive. It seems that the use of *ḫm ḥr* is restricted to ignoring someone of lower rank, or at most equivalent. For individuals of higher rank (king, god), no preposition is used, except in one attestation of *ḫm r + nṯr* (ex. 26) in which the object is preceded by the preposition *r* (and not *ḥr* as could be expected since the object is an animate). The use of *r* is here likely a scribal mistake since this construction does not seem to have any parallel with an animate object. Another option would be that the use of *r* would emphasize the antagonistic nuance of *ḫm* in this passage.

>   ex26
>
> | *bn* | *mntk* | *jȝw* | *ḫm=f* | | *r* | *nṯr* |
> |------|--------|-------|--------|--|-----|-------|
> | NEG | 2SG.M | old man | ignore:REL=3SG.M | | to | god |
>
> | *bn* | *mntk* | *ꜥḏd* | *swgȝ* | *ḫm=f* | | *ꜥnḫ* |
> |------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--|-------|
> | NEG | 2SG.M | young man | stupid | ignore:REL=3SG.M | | life |
>
>   (It is death in which I find myself with you/because of you!) You are not an old man who ignores the god; you are not a young man who ignores life
>   pTurin A, v° 4, 10

In ex. 27, the element purposely ignored is Egypt and its power:

>   ex27
>
> | *ḫȝs.wt* | *ḫm* | *km.t* |
> |----------|------|--------|
> | hilland-F.PL | ignore:PTCP | Egypt-F |
>
> | *dj=j* | *ḫnd* | *sn* | *ḥm=k* |
> |--------|-------|------|--------|
> | give:IPFV=1SG | threaten:SBJV | 3PL | Majesty=2SG.M |
>
> | *mj* | *swḏ-ḥr* | *mj* | *sȝb* |
> |------|----------|------|-------|
> | like | recreation | like | jackal |
>
>   The foreign countries who were ignorant of Egypt (= who had never heard of Egypt before), I cause your Majesty to threaten them as recreation like a jackal
>   Karnak, Northern War Scenes of Seti I, KRI I, 30, 15

Comparison of *ḫm* and neg + *rḫ*: not knowing/being acquainted to someone vs actively ignoring someone

ḫm and neg + *rḫ* can both have a person as object, but their meanings are not identical. NEG + *rḫ* refers to not knowing as not being acquainted with/not having met a specific

person, while *ḥm* rather refers to actively ignoring or not paying attention to someone (at least in Late Egyptian and Egyptien de tradition[36]).

ex28

jw	*bw*	*rḫ=j*	*rwḏw*	*ḫꜥy*
MCM	NEG	know:PFV=1SG	administrator	person name

As I do not know the administrator Khai
Inscription of Mes, N7

ex29

m-mjtt	*jr*	*wꜥr*	*wꜥ*	*rmṯ*	*r-pw*	*rmṯ*	*2*
likewise	if	flee:SBJV	one	man	or	man	2

jw	*bw*	*rḫ.tw=w*
SBRD	NEG	know:PASS=3PL

Likewise, if one man flees, or two, who are not known
Hittite peace treaty (Ramses II and Hattusil III), KRI II, 229, 10

In the example below, the verb *rḫ* is used in the vetitive. As seen earlier, the use of the vetitive empowers the subject with control on the action.[37] The negative action though does not refer to the fact of retrieving/applying previously acquired knowledge, as is the case when *ḥm* is used, but to the process of knowledge acquisition (i.e. purposely pretending that you do not know/recognize someone (*ḥm*) *vs* purposely avoiding to become acquainted with someone (neg. + *rḫ*)).

ex30

m	*mḥ*	*jb=k*	*m*	*[sn]*	*m*	*rḫ*	*ḫnms*
PROH	trust:INF	heart=2SG.M	in	brother	PROH	know:INF	friend

Do not trust a brother, do not acquaint a friend
Teaching of Amenemhat, oBM EA 05623, r° 6

neg + *rḫ* does not seem to be attested in the sense of "actively ignoring/neglecting" acquired knowledge or "not paying attention" to someone. It is specific to the semantics of *ḥm* only.

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[36] cf. infra, B.
[37] On the use of some grammatical patterns to reinforce the subject's agentivity, see Winand (2021: fn. 77, 6.2.2, exs. 76-77).

2.2 Case 2: *smḫ* "to forget", "to forgive", "to actively turn the attention away from"

The primary sense of *smḫ* is "to forget" as failing to remember, experience an incapacity to memorize or to retrieve a previously stored/learnt information. Etymologically, *smḫ* is a causative built on *ḫm* "ignore"[38] and went through an evolution from *s-ḫm* to *s-mḫ*. It thus initially means "cause to ignore", which developed into "forget". In addition to that, *smḫ* can contextually take other senses. As it is the case for *ḫm*, a distinction can be made between *experienced* forgetfulness and *active* forgetfulness. In the second case, the subject becomes agent instead of experiencer and gains control over the action. The sense expressed by *smḫ* in such cases is the one of *purposely* avoiding/refusing to retrieve an information stored in memory. It can have a negative connotation (neglecting, dismissing), similarly to *ḫm*, but also a positive one (forgiving).

2.2.1 Experienced forgetfulness

2.2.1.1 Forgetting something

In Late Egyptian, *smḫ* in its primary sense of "experienced forgetfulness" relatively rarely refers to simply forgetting a material object (i.a. leaving it somewhere) or to losing the memory of a fact. Yet, even if recessive, it remains in use. The exs. 31 and 32 below illustrate some of those cases.

> ex31
>
> *smḫ*   =f   *n3*   *ḏd=f*
> forget :PFV   =3SG.M   ART.PL   say:REL=3SG.M
> He forgot what he said
> oBM EA 29551, r° 2

> ex32
>
> *smw*   *nb*   *m-ꜥ*   *ẖrd.w=f*   *smḫ.n*   *sw*   *wnm.w*
> greens   every   in-hand   child-PL=3SG.M   forget:PFV 3SG.M eat:PTCP
> All the greens remain in possession of his children, after the eaters have forgotten them[39]
> Hymn to the Nile, pAnastasi 7, 11, 5

In the realm of factual memory/forgetfulness, *smḫ* most often conveys the sense of 1) forgetting to do something; 2) not thinking about someone (who is dead, out of sight, etc.)

---

[38] Hannig (2006: 767); Wb 4, 243.
[39] *smw* is a collective in Egyptian.

any longer. As regards procedural memory/forgetfulness, the sense "forgetting how", "losing a capability, an aptitude" is also attested. In example 33, *smḫ* is used as a participle and translates as "the things that have been forgotten". In the present context, it might refer to actions that should have been performed rather than to something concrete, material.

ex33

ḥr	*m-dj*	*nꜣ*	*smḫ=w*	*ḥr*	*m-dj*	*nꜣ*	*nty*
CORD	with	ART.PL	forget:REL=3PL	CORD	with	ART.PL	REL-M.SG

bwpw=w	*jrj*	*=w*
NEG=3PL	do	=3PL

ḥr	*m-dj*	*nꜣ*	*nty*	*st*	(*ḥr*)	*šd=sn*
CORD	with	ART.PL	REL-M.SG	3PL	on	recite:INF=3PL

(We will do for *ms-ḥr*, whose mother is *ns-tꜣ-ꜥꜣ* , the one said to be the child of *pn-imn*, everything that is in this oracle) with all the things that have been forgotten and all the things that have not been done and all the things that are usually recited.
pTurin 1985, 116

2.2.1.2 Forgetting to do sth.

smḫ r + inf

When *smḫ* takes as object an infinitive, it is usually followed with the preposition r for the expression "forgetting to" + ACTION. This construction is frequent in amuletic decrees from the TIP, as in examples 34 and 35 below.

ex34

ḥr	*m-dj*	*nꜣ*	*smḫ=w*	*r*	*ḏd*	*=w*	*m-bꜣḥ*	*=j*
CORD	with	ART:PL	forget:REL=3PL	to	say:INF	=3PL	in-front	=1SG

jw	*=w*	(*r*)	*nfr*
FUT=3PL		FUT	be_good:INF

(as for everything that has been reported in my presence while saying "do them for her") and (all things) that one has forgotten to report in my presence; they will be good
Neskhonsu, pCaire CGC 58032, 96

ex35

jr	*md.t*	*nb.t*	*j.jr=w*	*ḥr*	*pꜣy*	*ḫrtw*
TOPZ	speech-F	every-F	do:REL=3PL	on	DEM:SG.M	oracle

ḥnꜥ	*nꜣ*	*smḫ=w*	*r*	*jr.t=w*	*ḥr=f*
with	ART:PL	forget :REL=3PL	to	do:INF=3PL	on=3SG.M

As for every word that they included in this oracle as well as all the things that they forgot to include in it (I will make them good for *t3-b3k.t-n-ḥr*, the daughter of *tyty-šrj*)
Oracular amuletic decree, pOIM 25622, 96

2.2.1.3 Not entertaining (collective) memory (regarding a person or an event)

In the next two examples, *smḫ* expresses forgetfulness as someone's fading away from collective memory, due to the passing of time. It is thus not a conscious decision nor an individual's failure at remembering, but the community's failure at maintaining the memory of someone as part of the cultural memory.

ex36

smḫ.w   *h3w =sn*   *nb*
forget:PASS   relatives =3PL   every
bw   *jr =w*   *n=sn*   *mḥr.w*   *m*   *ḥmty*   *wḏ.w*   *jrm*   *bj3-n-p.t*
NEG   do:PFV=3PL   for=3PL   pyramid-pl   in   cupper   stela-PL   with   iron-of-sky
All their relatives have been forgotten, they did[40] not make for them cupper pyramids and celestial iron stelae
pChester Beatty 4, v° 2, 7

ex37

st   *šm*   *smḫ.w*   *rn=sn*
3PL.C go:STAT forget:PASS   name =3PL
m   *sš.w*   *j.djdj*   *sḫ3.tw =w*
in   writing-PL   give:PTCP   remember:PASS =3PL
They are gone; their names have been forgotten; it is the writings that make remember them
pChester Beatty 4, v° 3, 10

The example below from P. Bankes conveys the idea of not forgetting as being grateful, as acknowledging what one is in debt for.

ex38

ḫr   *twk*   *rḫ.tw*   *n3*   *nfr.w*   *ḳnw*
CORD PRS-2SG.M know:STAT   ART.PL   good-PL numerous
j.jr =j   *n=k*

---

[40] A perfective makes more sense in the present context, but an imperfective translated as a present would also be possible based on the morphology of the form, which is ambiguous in that period.

do=1SG for=2SG.M

m -jrj   *smḫ =w*

PROH-do   forget:INF=3PL

Because you know the many good deeds that I did for you; do not forget them

pBankes I, v° 5

2.2.1.4 Being distracted from something, not paying attention anymore

In the following example, *smḫ* has the sense of "being distracted from something". The subject is experiencing a shift in attention, caused by an external trigger. It is different from the active forgetfulness, in which the subject purposely chooses not to direct their attention toward a specific situation/person. The latter is illustrated *infra* in section 2.2.2. This usage of *smḫ* is very similar to some of the attestations of *mhj* (cf. *infra* 2.3). Worth is also noting the oblique construction of the object complement by means of the preposition *n*.

ex39

jw=s   *ḥr   dj.t*   *smḫ =j*   *n mḫr*

SBRD=3SG.F on   give:INF forget :SBJV=1SG of sickness

wn   *m   jb=j*

exist:PTCP in   heart=1SG

(She returns to me as the benevolent one), while she causes that I forget the

pain/sickness that existed in my heart

Stele Turin N. 50058, col. 14

The example below also belongs to this category as it shares the same idea of switching focus of attention. The verb *smḫ* is used in the idiomatic expression *smḫ ḏ.t ḏs=f*, which literally translates as "neglecting one's own body" and means "neglecting oneself", "lacking self-care".

The expression appears in situations that are emotionally driven and do not pertain to a rational decision of the subject. The status of experiencer of the subject clearly appears from the cotext, through metaphorical expressions describing the despair of the lovesick woman in terms of experienced physical symptoms of sickness. One shall also note the use of the stative *ḫpr.kwj*, which has been commented both by Mathieu[41] and Meltzer before him. Meltzer suggests a stative in dependant use to express a resultative clause,

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[41] Mathieu (2009: 30 and 43, n. 94).

which is quoted by Mathieu but the relation of causality between both clauses does not appear clearly in his translation.[42]

ex40

ꜥk̲ꜥk̲.n {=j}   *ẖꜣy.t*   *jm=j*
penetrate:PFV=1SG sickness-F within=1SG
ẖpr.kwj   *ḥꜥ=j*   *wdn*
become:STAT   body=1SG heavy:STAT
smẖ<=j>   *d̲.t=j*   *d̲s=j*
forget:PFV=1SG   body-F=1SG own=1SG
Sickness insinuated itself inside me, so that my body has become weary; I forgot my own person
pChester Beatty 1, Love Songs, v° C 4,7

2.2.1.5 Forget how, not to be able anymore

A first point of contact between the semantics of *ẖm* and *smẖ* is the sense "not know how", "not being able". This sense is rare for both *ẖm* and *smẖ* and is attested in two variants of the same passage of the Teaching of Ani in examples 41 and 42 below. They were thus likely considered in this specific context as having (quasi-)synonymic meanings. The two verbs indeed express the same outcome, being unable to fight. They both express an inability of retrieving information (not remembering and not knowing anymore). In both cases, the information had been previously learnt and knowledge had been acquired. These two examples show clearly the reminiscence of the etymological link between *ẖm* and *s-mẖ*.

ex41

p3   *k3*   *ꜥẖ3*   *sm3.w*   *<m>*   *t3*   *md̲.t*
ART:M.SG bull fight:PTCP   kill:PTCP   in   ART.SG.F   stable-F
ẖm=f   *ḥ3ꜥ*   *s3t̲w*
ignore:IPFV=3SG.M throw:INF soil
The wild bull who was fighting and killing in the stable, he does not know how to throw away the soil (anymore)
Ani, pBoulaq 4, 23, 1

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[42] "(…) La maladie s'est insinuée en moi. Mon corps est devenu lourd et j'ai perdu toute conscience" (Mathieu 2009: 30).

ex42

p3	*k3*	*ꜥḥ3*	*sm3*	*\<m\>*	*t3*	*md̠.t*
ART:M.SG	bull	fight:PTCP	kill:PTCP	in	ART.SG.F	stable-F

smḫ=f	*ḫ3ꜥ*	*s3t̠w*
forget:PFV=3SG.M	throw:INF	soil

The wild bull who was fighting and killing in the stable, he forgot how to throw around the soil

Ani, pGuimet 16959, 5, 3

2.2.2 Active forgetfulness

In the examples below, *smḫ* expresses an "active forgetfulness", a conscious decision of the agent to shift their attention away from a concrete item (e.g. beer), a situation (e.g. injustice), peoples or a land. It does not necessarily imply an antagonistic attitude of the agent, but a purposed shift in focus away from the object.

2.2.2.1 Turning away from someone or sth. *concrete*, disavow, lack respect

The following two examples express the idea of turning away from, disavowing someone or something one was emotionally close to.

ex43

ḫ3ꜥ=w	*ḥ3=w*	*r*	*n3y=w*	*ntr.w*
turn:PFV=3PL	back=PL	to	POSS:PL=3PL	god-PL

smḫ=w	*r3.w-pr.w*
forget:PFV=3PL	temple-PL

(the ships *mnš*, the ones that are on the sea (*ym*), the first of *w3d̠-wr*); they have turned away from their gods; they have forgotten their temples

P. Turin 1893, r° 88, 10

The feature [+ control] is stressed here by the imperative, whose use implies a higher agentivity of the subject.

ex44

smḫ	*\<wj\>*	*m -jrj*	*wḫ3*	*=j*
forget:IMP	1SG	PROH-do	search:INF	=1SG

Forget me! Do not come search for me

gr. DeB 8, 2

In the next example, *smḫ* refers to being dismissive of social conventions; in this specific case, lacking respect to someone. The subject is here fully agentive and consciously acts in an antagonistic way.

ex45

jw=f   *smḫ(.w)*   *tȝy=f*   *snḏ.t*
SBRD=3SG.M   forget:STAT   POSS.F.SG=3SG.M respect-F
When he forgets the respect toward him (= the master)
P. Brooklyn 47.218.135, 4, 8

2.2.2.2 Neglect, overlook (actively), being dismissive of sth. *abstract*

In the first example, *smḫ* expresses the fact of not taking responsibility for a situation, of not getting involved.

ex46

mkḫȝ   *smḫ*   *(r)* *jry*   *mȝˁ.t*
ignorant   forget:PTCP   to   do:INF justice-F
(while) the ignorant turns away from doing justice
Khâkheperrêseneb, T. Cairo JE 43261 B, inv. l.2

In the next two examples, *smḫ* takes the sense of purposely neglecting, overlooking advices and examples coming from the past. It is in contextual association with *ḫm*, which is used in the sense of "actively" ignoring, denying attention[43]. The *sḏm=f* form *rḫ=f* expresses here concomitant action in a circumstantial clause and is thus neutral regarding the aspect.

ex47

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[43] Vernus (2001:220 and n. 32) translates as "Une arène qui ignore hier" and interprets it as "without precedent", in other words, as not knowing sth. because it never happened, thus, as *experienced* ignorance. This translation raises issues: he translates *smḫ* as "ignore" instead or "forget", which would be acceptable in the case of active ignorance/forgetfulness. Indeed, *ḫm* and *smḫ* are para-synonymous in this sense of *active* ignorance/forgetfulness. However, *ḫm* and *smḫ* in the respective senses of *experienced* ignorance (as he translates it) or *experienced* forgetfulness do not appear as interchangeable since the first implies that a fact never happened and the second implies that a fact happened/may have happened but has been forgotten.

> *bn   twk   m   ʿdd   swg3*
> NEG   PRS-2SG.M in   young man   stupid
> *smḫ=k   md.wt   tp-ʿ   ts   {ḥ3ty.kwj} <ḥ3.t-ʿ>/<ḫry-ḥ3.t>*
> forget:PFV=2SG.M   word-F.PL before sentence before
> *ḥm=k   jb=k   r   ʿnḫ*
> ignore=2SG.M heart=2SG.M to   swear
> You are not a stupid young man; but you neglected the words of before, the advices
> of the past; you ignored your heart at the moment of swearing
> O. Gardiner 320, HO 97,2, r° 4

ex48

> *[bw-]ʿ3   n   ʿh3   n   m33.n.tw=f*
> place-great of   fight   of   see-PASS=3SG.F
> *jst   ʿh3   tw   ḥr   mtwn smḫ   sf*
> SBRD fight:IPFV 3SG on   arena forget:PTCP yesterday
> *nn   km.n   [bw-nfr]   n   ḥm   rḫ=f*
> NEG   complete place-good of   ignore:PTCP know:IPFV=3SG.M
> The importance of a fight is not possible to be seen when one fights in an arena that
> forgets yesterday: the good deed cannot suffice to the one who pretends to ignore
> while he knows.
> Amenemhat, O. BM EA 05623, 12

2.2.2.3 Giving up, growing out of sth

This use of *smḫ* applies to giving up/growing out of a negative habit/behaviour. The first
example below is rich in verbs and expressions belonging to the semantic field of
cognition. In the first clause, *ḥm* is used in the sense of actively ignoring someone. The
rest of the passage is about thinking critically and acknowledging the soundness of the
master's advice.

ex49

> *ptr pnʿ=k   tw   r sjp   md.wt=j*
> see turn_over:SBJV =2M.SG 2SG.M to inspect:INF speech-PL=1SG
> *gm =k   sḫr.w=j   mnḫ.w*
> find:SBJV=2SG.M advice-PL=1SG excellent-PL
> *jmy   ḥr=k   r sḏm   sb3y.t=j*
> give   face=2SG.M   to hear:INF teaching-F=1SG
> *r   jr.t   sḫr.w=j   nb.w*
> to   do:INF advice-PL=1SG every-PL

dj=j　　　　*smḫ=k*　　　　*sn*　*r-drw*
give:SBJV=1SG　forget:SBJV=2SG.M　3PL　entirely
(Other weaknesses grew after your deed of ignoring me); see, may you retract
yourself to inspect my words; and you will find my advices excellent; dedicate
yourself at listening to my teaching and to apply all my advices; I will cause that you
forget them all (= the weaknesses, etc)
Teaching of Menna, O. Chicago OIC 12074, v° 12

In the following passage from P. Anastasi 4, *sḫm* has the sense of forgetting for
"renouncing", "freeing oneself from". The object of *sḫm* is *tnrk* "beer" and the whole
passage is nicely built around the idea of breaking free from alcoholic habits, which are
depicted as an abomination (*bw.t*), something one should be untied from (ʿ*rḳ*) and
something one should remove from their memory (*smḫ*). Regarding the latter, one will
note the parasynonymic relation between *smḫ* "forget" and neg + *rdj m ḥꜣty* ("to place in
the heart"). The expression *rdj m ḥꜣty* is the most common way of expressing the idea of
memorizing, of storing information (vs. *sḫꜣ* which implies an active application of the
retrieved information).

　ex50

　　hn　*twk*　　　*rḫ.tw*　　　*jw*　　*bw.t*　　　　*jrp*
　　if　PRS:2SG.M　know:STAT　MCM　abomination-F　wine
　　mtw=k　　　　　ʿ*rḳ=k*　　　　　*ḥr*　*sdḥ*
　　CORD.MOD=2SG.M　untie:INF=2SG.M　on　pomegranate wine
　　mtw=k　　　　　*tm*　*dj.t*　　*tbw*　*m*　*ḥꜣty=k*
　　CORD.MOD=2SG.M　NEG　give:INF　cup　in　heart=2SG.M
　　mtw=k　　　　　*smḫ*　　　*tnrk*
　　CORD.MOD=2SG.M　forget:INF　beer
　　If you knew that wine is an abomination; you would renounce to pomegranate wine;
　　you would not have cups in mind anymore; and you would forget beer
　　pAnastasi 4, 12, 1

2.2.2.4 Forgive

The colexification of forgetting and forgiving is well-attested cross-linguistically[44].
Egyptian makes no exception to that and *smḫ* realizes this sense.

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[44] This colexification is also listed in CLICS (https://clics.clld.org). Note that the list of
colexifications in the database is far from exhaustive but gives an idea of the most cross-
linguistically attested ones.

ex51

> *smḫ=j*   *sn   mj-ḳd p3y=j*   *smḫ*
> forget:SBJV=1SG 3PL like   POSS:M.SG=1SG   forget:INF
> *n3y*   *nty*   *jm=j*
> DEM:PL REL-M.PL   inside=1SG
> (Even if you commit against me a million faults); I will forget/forgive them like I
> forget/forgive mines
> pMond 2, 6

ex52

> *jr*   *jry=j*   *ḥḥ.w*   *n   bt3*
> COND do:SBJV=1SG million-PL of   fault
> *bw   jr {=j}*   *wˁ   nfr   dj.t   smḫ*   *=w*
> NEG   do:PFV=1SG one good   give:INF forget:INF =3PL
> Even if I had committed a million sins, would not one good deed make forget them?
> pLeiden I 369, 8

2.3 Case 3: *mhj*: to be forgetful

2.3.1 Experienced forgetfulness

2.3.1.1 State of being forgetful

The verb *mhj* in its primary sense refers to experienced forgetfulness, to the fact of being forgetful (for example because of old age), as is the case in this well-known passage from Ptahhotep[45].

ex53

> *jb   mhw.w*
> heart forget:STAT
> The mind has become forgetful
> *n   sḫ3.n=f   sf*
> NEG   remember:PFV=3SG.M   yesterday
> It cannot remember yesterday
> (Ptahhotep, P. BM EA 10509, 1, 5 (§D16)

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[45] Note that this Middle Egyptian text is not part of the core corpus but has been added for comparison in diachrony.

However, in the New Kingdom, the primary sense "forgetting", "being forgetful" about facts, without any specific connotation relating to interpersonal relationship seems to have gone out of usage and only derived senses are still attested. They are developed in the upcoming section.

mhj is relatively scarcely attested from the NK and seems to have been of recessive use even in earlier stages of the language. In its derived senses, it refers to a lack of attention, due to 1) an external trigger or 2) a lack of care.

It thus diverges from *ḫm* and *smḫ* for it does not express a strong active refusal or denial of previously acquired knowledge. It rather bears the sense of a passive lack of acknowledgement, a passive neglecting attitude. The subject of *mhj* never seems to acquire a full agentivity, contrary to the one of *ḫm* and *smḫ*. As appears from the examples below, the semantics of *mhj* partially overlaps with the one of *smḫ*. However, it seems to never express "active forgetfulness"

2.3.1.2 Losing focus because of an external trigger (emotionally charged situation)

This use of *mhj* as being forgetful in the sense of "losing focus" is due to an external trigger, "being troubled and not thinking rationally anymore" for being in the grip of emotion. As a correlate to this, the expression *sgnn ḏr.wt* "to weaken hands" refers to agentivity loss. This use of *mhj* does not seem to have an equivalent in the nuances of meaning expressed by *smḫ*. The closest seems to be the expression *smḫ ḏ.t ḏs=f*, which, as seen before[46], also conveys the idea of losing rationality over an emotional behaviour.

ex54

ḳm3=k		*nfr*	*ḥr*	*s-gnn*		*ḏr.wt*
aspect=2SG.M		beautiful	on	CAUS-weak:INF		hand-F.PL
ḥ3ty.w	*mh.w*		*n*	*m33*	*n=k*	
heart-PL	forget:STAT		because	see:INF	to=2SG.M	

Your beautiful aspect weakens hands; hearts are forgetful at your sight

P. Boulaq 17, VI, 2

In the following example, the verb *ḫm* is used in the sense of "being forgetful" and is associated with *sḫ3* "remember" as antonym. The verb *sḫ3* has here the sense "remembering" but also carries an emotional connotation of appreciation (in the present case, being in loving admiration of the god).

ex55

imn	*sḫ3=j*		*mrw.t=k*

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[46] cf. supra ex. 40.

Amun   remember:IPVF=1SG   love-F=2SG.M

twj   mh.kwj   m   ptr=k   twj   m   pr=k
PRS-1SG   forget:STAT   in   see:INF=2SG.M   PRS-1SG   in   house=2SG.M

Amun, I remember your love; I was forgetful at your sight; I am in your house

Hymn to Amun-Râ, O. BM EA 41543, r° 1

2.3.1.3 Not entertaining the memory of sth.

Finally, a declination of the sense "neglecting" expressed by *mhj* seems to be "being ungrateful" and thus, "grateful" when negated.

ex56

ꜥk̲.kwj   ḥr   bs=f   n   zp-tpy
enter:STAT   on   hidden-form=3SG.M   of   first-time

šs3.kwj   m   b3.w=f   mnẖ.w
be_wise   in   power-PL=3SG.M   excellent-PL

n   mh=j   ḥr   zp   n   š3.n=f   <wj>
NEG   forget=1SG   on   time   of   designate:REL=3SG.M   1SG

I am initiated in his hidden form of the First Time; I am learned in his excellent power; I am not oblivious about the time of (my) designation (when he designated (me))

Northern obelisk of Hatshepsut, 363, 5

2.3.1.4 Passively neglecting, being careless

The next examples illustrate cases of *mhj* with the sense of "forgetting" for "neglecting", "not paying attention". The nuance expressed is not an active, antagonistic negligence, rather a lack of care and/or of motivation that leads to a neglecting attitude. The subject is less agentive than it is in some uses of *ḫm* or *smḫ* (see sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.2.). In sum, *mhj* used in this sense does not refer to actively forgetting but rather not caring enough to remember. In the present examples, *mhj* conveys a sense very similar to *smḫ* in section 2.2.1.3. It is also to note that the object of *mhj* in this sense is expressed obliquely, introduced by the preposition *ḥr* or the preposition *m*.

ex57

m   st̲nj   jb=k   ḥr   nt̲r (…) *mh   ḥr=f*
PROH   divert:INF   heart=2SG.M   on   god   forget:PTCP   on=3SG

r   šw   m   mnj
FUT   be_free:INF   in   anchor

Do not divert your attention from the god (…) the one who forgets him will be unanchored
Teaching of a man to his son, leather roll BM 10258, 1, 7

ex58

nn   *ft.n=j*
NEG   be_disgut:PFV=1SG
n{n} *mḥ.n=j*   *m*   *ḫn.wt*   *ḥr* *mw* *ḥr* *tꜣ*
NEG   forget:PFV=1SG   in   duty-F.PL   on   water on   land
I will not get bored, I will not forget/neglect my duties at sea and on land
Nauri Decree, 28

3 Conclusions

As appears from the data and the different examples that illustrate this study, the semantics of *ḫm*, *smḫ* and mhj overlap in some aspects and diverge in others. To these three verbs, one shall add the construction neg + *rḫ*, which is complementary to *ḫm* in the expression of "ignoring", "not knowing" and "not being unable". Here are the conclusions that can be drawn from the present study.

ḫm and neg + *rḫ* are in a complementary distribution: *ḫm* preferably refers to general statements of non-knowledge or non-awareness and presents the state of non-knowledge as being inherent to the subject.

Neg + *rḫ* on the contrary presents the state of non-knowledge or non-awareness as being transient, tied to specific circumstances and thus context-driven. The same observation applies for neg + *rḫ* used in function of modal auxiliary (not being able to do sth.), which is a recent development of the language[47].

The pattern neg + *rḫ* does not seem to be attested in the sense of *actively ignoring/neglecting* acquired knowledge or *not paying attention* to someone. It is specific to the semantics of *ḫm* only. When the subject of neg + *rḫ* is highly agentive (for ex., with the vetitive), it refers to the process of knowledge acquisition (not getting to know, not acquainting), and not to the one of knowledge restitution.

The inability to perform a task (*not know how*) can be expressed both by *ḫm* and neg + *rḫ*, at least in later development of the language, when *rḫ* becomes used as a modal auxiliary. The system is well established in Late Egyptian and, here again, the opposition between inherent and contextual applies: neg + *rḫ* expresses a non-ability that is tied to

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[47] The negation of the epistemic modality is usually expressed in Earlier Egyptian by grammatical means, the most common being the pattern *n sḏm.n.f* "he cannot hear": see Malaise-Winand 1999, §903, 923; Winand 2021: 6.1.6 and fn. 143.

specific circumstances (e.g. not being able to work on a given day), while *ḥm* appears to have a general validity and depicts the non-ability as being inherently part of someone's qualities. The latter was already attested in Old Egyptian and even became lexicalized in some cases, for example in the compound words *jḫmw-wrḏ* "the ones who ignore tiredness" (Wb 1, 125.15-16) and *jḫmw-sk* "the ones who do not perish" (both refer to the circumpolar stars).

It has been observed that *ḥm* and *smḫ* may function as quasi synonyms in the expression of what has been named here active ignorance and active forgetfulness. These terms cover 1) the conscious and purposed refusal or denial of retrieving and applying previously acquired knowledge and 2) the conscious and purposed fact of not giving attention to someone.

The semantics of *smḫ* and *mhj* overlap for some of their uses. They can both express the incapacity of retrieving memorized information in their basic meanings. However, *mhj* primarily refers to a state of forgetfulness while *smḫ* rather describes an active process. *mhj* is also of recessive use and by far less attested than *smḫ*. Its usage is restricted to texts that are part of the tradition and early New Kingdom wisdom texts and pertain mostly to the classical language (Égyptien de Tradition). Its primary sense seems to have fallen out of usage in the New Kingdom and *mhj* is rarely attested in Late Egyptian, even in its derived senses. It does not seem to be attested in Coptic anymore. However, Vycichl[48] pointed out a possible link with the Coptic words ⲙⲟⲉⲓ𝟉ⲉ (S), ⲙⲁⲉⲓ𝟉ⲉ (AL), ⲙⲁ𝟉ⲉⲓⲉ (L) meaning "miracle" and the verb ⲣⲙⲟⲉⲓ𝟉ⲉ (S) "to be astonished".

Contrarily to *ḥm* and *smḫ*, the subject of *mhj* can never be fully agentive. It thus does not seem to ever express a real "active forgetfulness" as a conscious decision of the subject, but can express a neglecting attitude due to lack of care. *smḫ* and *mhj* also share two of their derived senses: not entertaining the memory (of someone, of an event) and being distracted (from the initial focus, by an outside trigger).

Syntactically, some uses of the verbs are recognizable because marked by an oblique expression of the object. The way the oblique construction is used does not follow any consistent pattern as shown in the following summary list:

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[48] Vycichl (1983:110).

- o *ḫm ḥr* + noun (animate): actively ignoring someone of lower or equal status
- o *ḫm r* + noun (inanimate): actively ignoring something (inanimate)
- o *smḫ r* + infinitive: forgetting to do something
- o *mhj n/m* + noun (inanimate): to neglect something

Finally, the relations of the three verbs and neg + *rḫ* can be schematically described as resumed in the graph below. One can see that *ḫm* and neg + *rḫ* are in complementary distribution for the expression of the sense *not know* based on the nature of the lack of knowledge: generally true/inherent (*ḫm*) or contingent/contextual (neg + *rḫ*). They both express the sense of "not being able", also shared with *smḫ*. The semantics of *ḫm* and *smḫ* partially overlap for the active component of their secondary sense *dismissing actively*; the semantics of *smḫ* and *mhj* partially overlap for the primary sense *to forget* and for the derived senses of *not entertaining memory* and *being distracted* (from sth., by an external cause). The verb *smḫ* also colexifies the senses of "forgiving" and "growing out of sth" (e.g. bad habit, addiction, etc). As for *mhj*, it also lexifies the meaning "neglecting, being careless". As can be seen from the graph below, the semantics of *ḫm* and *mhj* do not seem to overlap since *mhj* does not actualize the sense of *dismissing actively*, and "not being able" shared by *ḫm* and *smḫ*. It is thus the verb *smḫ* that "builds the bridge" between *ḫm* and *mhj*.

Fig1

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