

Manuscript for consideration  
Interdisciplinary Egyptology

**Title: Linguistic consciousness and “non-straightforward words”: talking about (figurative) language in ancient Egyptian**

**Section submitted to:** Research Article:

**Highlights:**

- Ancient Egyptians had a conscious look on their own language.
- They were consciously using figurative language.
- They had a classifier working as graphemic metaphor marker.

**Keywords/phrases:** 3 minimum, 5 maximum.

- *linguistic consciousness*
- *figurative language*
- *classifier*
- *metaphor marker*
- *Late Egyptian hieratic*

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to further investigate the linguistic consciousness of the ancient Egyptians as regards figurative language and the specific use of the  $\wedge$  (D55) classifier as metaphor marker. In other words, the following questions will be addressed here: What are common figurative expressions used to refer to the language and the art of speech? What was “figurative language” for the ancient Egyptians? How did they identify and conceptualize the conceptual process behind it? How did they refer to it in the language and/or script, if they did at all?

**1. Introduction**

Adding to Borghouts (2001) and Uljas (2013), who gave an overview of testimonies regarding the linguistic consciousness of ancient Egyptians through the prism of grammar and lexicon organisation, the present contribution investigates the relation of the ancient Egyptians to figurative language. The topic will be approached in two ways: 1) the *use* of figurative language to refer to grammatical correctness and the art of speech, 2) the *conceptualisation* of what figurative language actually is.

The art of speech was as an important skill to acquire in Ancient Egypt, being a sign of instruction and wisdom. This point, repetitively highlighted in teachings and glorified in autobiographies, was part of the education of the young scribes. Expressing oneself clearly, in written and oral forms, having a good elocution and a good mastery of the grammar, speaking with a real purpose and pondered words, were all considered highly valuable qualities, as will be exemplified in the next section.

The art of speech, and associated concepts, were expressed through a variety of metaphorical expressions of which I will give a short overview in the next section.

The collected data on which the present study is based comprise Late Egyptian texts from the *Ramses*<sup>1</sup> database dating from the New Kingdom until the Late Period as well the *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*<sup>2</sup> corpus. The examples presented in the finding section come essentially from the *Ramses* corpus but lexical attestations from the previous periods were taken into consideration for the diachronic comparison. The data have been cross-checked with usual dictionaries: *Wörterbuch der ägyptisches*

<sup>1</sup> Link to the beta version: <http://ramses.ulg.ac.be> (Uliège). I hereby sincerely thank the project’s directors for allowing me to access the entire dataset.

<sup>2</sup> <https://aew.bbaw.de/tla/> .

47 *Sprache* (Wb, Erman & Grapow, 1925), *Hannig's Großes Handwörterbuch* (Hannig 2006), *Chicago*  
 48 *Demotic Dictionary* (CDD)<sup>3</sup>, *Crum's Coptic Dictionary* (Crum 1939).

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## 50 2. Discussion

### 51 2.1 Speech quality as position of the tongue and direction of the word flow

52 How did Egyptians talk about their language and its mastery? Several conceptual paths were  
 53 repeatedly used in order to describe language qualities. A first one consisted in describing language  
 54 quality in terms of word order, word utterance direction and tongue position with respect to a straight  
 55 line. In other words, high-quality spoken or written utterances were conceptualized in terms of an  
 56 oriented straight line, a vector, going from the speaker in onward direction. Spoken – or written –  
 57 utterances were thus considered of good quality when understandable in a linear, clear and smooth  
 58 way.

59 As an illustration, teaching a good and moderate speech is conceptualized in terms of “steering the  
 60 tongue” (Ex. 1). One finds here the cross-culturally well attested conceptual path GOOD IS  
 61 STRAIGHT/RECTILINEAR (François 2008: 173), as well as a metonymic relation between speech and tongue.  
 62 This expression is complemented by another one referring to a clean mouth, free from any hurting  
 63 word. In sum, a moderate and impeccable speech.

64

65

(1)

Khnum fashioned me as one effective  
 An adviser of excellent counsel  
 He made my character superior to others  
 ḥmw.n =f šsr =j r bw-mnh



steer:PFV 3SG.M tongue 1SG.M to excellence

**He steered my tongue to excellence**

He kept my mouth clean from harming who harmed me

My patience turned my foes into my friends

I ruled my mouth, was skilled in answer

Yet I did not acquiesce/indulge in evil doing

(Statue of Djedkhonsefankh, l. 3-5)<sup>4</sup> – Dyn. 22

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67 By contrast, in a well-known passage from the *Satirical Letter of Hori* (Ex. 2), reproach is made for the  
 68 poor quality and intelligibility of the interlocutor's epistolary writing. The grammar is not correctly  
 69 used, which is alluded to in two consecutive sentences. The first one reads: *n3y=k ts.w (hr) šbn nn hr*  
 70 *nf3* “your words mix ‘this’ and ‘that’”, where *nn* and *nf3* are purposely used as examples from two  
 71 different series of demonstrative pronouns belonging to two different language stages and registers.  
 72 In the next sentence, the words are also qualified as being upside down (*pn<sup>c</sup>*) and not tied, that is, not  
 73 coherently arranged in a sentence.<sup>5</sup> This latter expression might refer to both the sentence being  
 74 grammatically wrong and the argument being unclear.

75

76

(2)

I went inside my stables to look at your letter

*n3y* =k *ts.w* (*hr*) *šbn* *nn* *hr* *nf3*  
 POSS:PL 2sg.m speech on mix:INF DEM:C ON DEM.DIST:C

Your words mix “this” and “that”

*md.wt* =k *nb(.t)* *pn<sup>c</sup>*

word-F.PL 2SG.M all(-F) reverse:STAT-3PL

**All your words are upside down**

<sup>3</sup> <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/chicago-demotic-dictionary-cdd-0>

<sup>4</sup> Lichtheim (2006 : 13-14).

<sup>5</sup> Uljas (2013) points out that *md.t tz* refers to the sentence.

*bn*      *st*      *ts(.w)*  
  
 NEG      3PL      tie:STAT  
 They are not **coherent**

(P.Anastasi 1, 4, 7-8 – Satirical letter of Hori)<sup>6</sup> – Dyn. 19

77

78 A bit further in the text (Ex. 3a), unintelligible speech is described in terms of words being gathered  
 79 on the tongue and stuck on the lips, which refers to the lack of clarity and fluidity of the flow of ideas  
 80 and speech<sup>7</sup>. The enunciation's difficulty of interpretation is also compared to the one of a foreign  
 81 language (*bn* 3<sup>cc</sup> *wh<sup>c</sup>=f.sn*) and also to the complexity of interaction between people from the North  
 82 and the South of Egypt, thus speaking different dialects (Winand 2015, 229-269). Similar comparisons  
 83 exist in our modern cultures and languages: one shall think for example of idioms such as “C'est du  
 84 chinois” in French, “It is all Greek to me” in English or “Das kommt mir spanisch vor.” in German. They  
 85 all refer to something difficult to understand and one shall note that in addition the first two contain  
 86 a reference to a different writing system, which adds to the complexity.

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(3a)  
*n3y=k*      *sdd.w*      *sh.w*      *hr*      *ns.t*      =j  
 POSS.PL=2SG.M      word-PL      gather:STAT      on      tongue      =1SG  
 -F



Your words are gathered/congregated (i.e. not in order, as a mess) on my tongue, they are fixed  
 on my lip

*mn*      *hr-tp*      *sp.t*      =j  
 stay:STAT      on top      lip-F      =1SG  
*jw*      =w      *thth*      *m*      *sdm*  
 PTCL      3PL      mix:STAT      in      hear:  
 INF



They are **confused** at hearing

*bn*      3<sup>cc</sup>      *wh<sup>c</sup>*      =f      *sn*  
  
 neg      foreigner      untie      3sg.m      3pl  
 There is no stranger/interpret<sup>8</sup> who could understand them

*st*      *mj*      *md.wt*      *n*      *z*      *jdhw*      *hn<sup>c</sup>*      *z*      *n*      *3bdw*  
 3PL      like      word:F.PL      of      man      marsh      wit      ma      o      Abyos  
 land      h      n      f

They are like the words exchanged between a man from the Delta and a man from Abydos  
 (P. Anastasi 1, 28, 5 – Satirical letter of Hori) – Dyn. 19

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90 As an additional example referring to the intelligibility of speech described in term of word order, one  
 91 may also quote the following passage from *Ptahhotep*:

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(3b)  
*m*      *jt*      *md.t*      *m*      *jn*      *sj*  
 PROH      take      word-F      PROH      bring      3SG.F  
 Do not take away one word, do not add one word  
*m*      *rdj*      *k.t*      *m*      *s.t*      *k.t*  
 PROH      give      other-f      in      place-f      other-f

<sup>6</sup> Fischer-Elfert (1983).

<sup>7</sup> One shall think of a similar expression in French: “avoir un mot sur le bout de la langue” (lit : “have a word on the tip of the tongue”), which means not remembering a word that one should know”.

<sup>8</sup> The lexeme 3<sup>cc</sup> designates both someone speaking a foreign language – the origin is probably onomatopoeic, as first pointed out by Bell (1976) – and also someone able to understand it, an interpreter. About this term, see Uljas (2013: 2), with useful references to Žába (1974: 121-123) and Bell (1976:74-75). See also Espinel (2014) and Cooper (2020).

Do not place one instead of the other (pPrisse, §608-609)

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Continuing with the thematic of mutual understanding between speakers and intelligibility of speech, one must signal here as an introduction to the next examples that language was considered by the Egyptians as one of the constitutive elements of cultural identity, a strong marker of “egyptianity”. Indeed, an opposition is clearly expressed between Egyptians and foreigners in terms of “those speaking Egyptian” vs “those speaking other languages”. In the next example (Ex. 4), the difference is marked on several levels: speech, “character” (the term *ḳd* probably refers here to an ensemble of culturally specific behavioural features) and skin colour. One must note that the differences listed here do not mention any hierarchy between peoples, only observes their different characteristics.

(4)

The lands of Khor and Kush, and the land of Egypt: you have set every man in his place (...)

<i>ns.w</i>	<i>wp.w</i> 	<i>m</i>	<i>md.t</i>	<i>ḳd</i>	= <i>sn</i>	<i>m-mjtt</i>
tongue-M.PL	to_open:PTCP	in	speech-F	character-M	3PL.M	like

Tongues are **separate in speech**, and their characters as well

Their skins are different, for you have differentiated the foreigners  
(Great Hymn to Aten, tomb of Ay, 8-9)<sup>9</sup> – Dyn. 18

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In the same line, homesickness of the Egyptians in foreign country – or even just away from their hometown<sup>10</sup> – is a well-known leitmotiv of the Egyptian literature. In such context, the opportunity of hearing and speaking their own language is presented as an important element of comfort and home-feeling for the Egyptian staying abroad and a treatment of favour toward them provided by their hosts. It appears clearly in the following passages from the tales of *Sinuhe* and *Wenamun* respectively. In the first one (Ex. 5), the local ruler, Amunenshi, tells Sinuhe that he will feel “at home” in his land, because he will have the opportunity to hear (and speak) Egyptian. In the passage from Wenamun (Ex. 5bis), after doubting his sincerity in absence of rescript and letter testifying of the veracity and legitimacy of his mission, Tjekerbaal finally recognizes to Wenamun the ambassador’s status that he has been claiming since his arrival. As a treatment of favour, he has him brought an Egyptian singer to lift his spirits in a moment of homesickness.

(5)

<i>dd</i>	= <i>f</i>	<i>n</i>	= <i>j</i>	<i>nfr</i>	<i>tw</i>	<i>ḥnꜥ</i>	= <i>j</i>
say:PFV	3SG.M	to	1SG.M	good	2SG.M	with	1SG.M
he told me: you will be well with me							
<i>sdm</i>	= <i>k</i>	<i>r(ʒ)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>km.t</i>			
hear:SBVJ	2SG.M	speech	of	Egypt-			F

you will hear the **language of Egypt**  
(Sinuhe, B32)<sup>11</sup> – Dyn. 12

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In the same line, denying to someone the right of speaking their own language was a mean of forcedly integrating the inhabitants of the conquered regions within the Egyptian cultural and political frame and annihilating their own cultural identity and sense of community. It was part of the Egyptian’s colonialist strategy. A flagrant testimony of such measures is described in (Ex. 6) below, which evokes the repressive measures of Ramses III. After his victory, the king forbade the defeated enemies to speak their own language and imposed on them to learn Egyptian. To force/make someone learning another language is here conceptualized and expressed in terms of “flipping the tongue upside down”. By extension, speaking Egyptian is thus to have the tongue in the right position, in order to allow for

<sup>9</sup> Davies (1903: pl. XXVII).

<sup>10</sup> Ragazzoli (2008). See for example *Longing for Memphis*, P. Anastasi 4, 4, 11 – 5, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Koch (1990).

128 uttering understandable words<sup>12</sup>. Similarly to (Ex. 1), the metonymic relation between tongue and  
 129 speech is thus used to refer to speech quality and intelligibility, from an Egyptian centred perspective.  
 130 As was noted by Uljas (2013), speaking an elevated form of Egyptian was considered as a sign of culture  
 131 much more than the fact of learning to speak a foreign language. Indeed, when polyglossia is  
 132 mentioned in Egyptian texts, it is usually to stress the fact that people outside Egypt are able to speak  
 133 Egyptian, and not that an Egyptian learned a foreign language. In the traditional discourse, it was a  
 134 thorough mastery of the Egyptian language and not polyglossia that was advertised as a sign of high  
 135 education. This of course does not preclude the fact that, in practice, there were interpreters in Egypt  
 136 for the needs of diplomatic and trade exchanges<sup>13</sup>.

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(6)

<i>jry</i>	=f	<i>swth</i>	<i>md.t</i>	=sn
do:PFV	3SG.M	destroy:INF	speech-F	3PL
He abolished their language				
<i>pn<sup>c</sup></i>	=f	<i>ns.wt</i>	=w	
				
reverse:PFV	3SG.M	tongue-F.PL	3PL	
<b>He flipped their tongues upside down</b>				
(KRI V, 91, 7 – Rhetorical Stela of DeM, Chapel C (Ramses III) – Dyn. 20				

139

140 In the preceding line of the same text, the king says about the inhabitants of the conquered lands that  
 141 “they heard the language of the people (*rmṯ*)”. The use of *rmṯ* is of primary importance here since it  
 142 also highlights another dimension of the Egyptian identity: only the Egyptians or assimilated as such  
 143 are called *rmṯ* and are thus granted the status of people. For the other populations, this term was not  
 144 used<sup>14</sup>.

145

## 146 2.2 A conscious conceptualization of “figurative language”?

147 It is of common knowledge that ancient Egyptians resorted to figurative language abundantly. Indeed,  
 148 many abstract concepts such as emotion, mental activity<sup>15</sup>, or even the art of speech itself as we have  
 149 seen are expressed through metaphor- and metonymy-based polysemies as well as compound  
 150 expressions. Besides their linguistic realization, these trans-field extensions are also actualized on the  
 151 visual level through classifiers whose choice was motivated by various relations of semantic contiguity  
 152 toward the sense(s) of the categorized lexeme. In the case of metaphor/metonymy induced polysemy,  
 153 the classifier(s) may reflect, depending on the cases, the source and/or the target domain of the trans-  
 154 field meaning extension<sup>16</sup>. In a culture in which the use of figurative language is so central, one may  
 155 legitimately wonder: 1) if the ancient Egyptians had developed a certain awareness of it and 2) if the  
 156 very notion of figurative language was somehow conceptualized and lexified.

157 The answer seems to be “yes” to the first question and “no” to the second one. From the investigation  
 158 of the available data, there is no term or expression that would match our concept of “metaphor” or  
 159 “figurative language”. However, there is something else, equally interesting. Indeed, a specific  
 160 classifier,  $\Delta$  (D55), appears to mark explicitly the presence of a metaphor in some delimited contexts  
 161 whose criteria will be developed in the next sections. The metaphoricality can realize in two ways: 1)

<sup>12</sup> This passage was previously mentioned by Borghouts (2001: 11), who translates *pn<sup>c</sup>* simply by “changing”. However, it is purposely chosen here to keep the explicit reference to an inverted, upside-down, position.

<sup>13</sup> One of the meanings of  $\beta^{\text{cc}}$  discussed above illustrates this fact. According to Bell (1976), the term  $\beta^{\text{cc}}$  designates “Egyptianized” Nubians and later interpreters, when referring to Egyptians.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Chantraine (2019: 49–72). for this perspective on the notion of *rmṯ* and its role in the “hierarchy” established by the ancient Egyptians between themselves and other populations.

<sup>15</sup> Metaphorical extensions from a concrete domain to emotion or cognition are well-attested and often fall under the general path of MIND AS BODY (Sweetser 1990).

<sup>16</sup> For example, the verb *wḥḥ* keeps the classifier  $\Delta$  (D54) throughout the development of its polysemy, while  $\zeta_m$  marks the distinction between swallow ( $\text{𓂏}$  F10 and/or  $\text{𓂏}$  A2) and understand ( $\text{𓂏}$  D6) with different classifiers.

162 lexemes used in a derived metaphorical sense (the most common case) or 2) lexemes used in their  
 163 primary sense, but within a metaphorical text passage.

164 Chantrain & Di Biase-Dyson (2017) already pointed out the likely existence of a correlation between  
 165 metaphor marking and the use of this specific classifier in *Amenemope's* L manuscript (pBM 10474)<sup>17</sup>.

166 However, the reason for the use of  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) in this function as well as the motivation behind the  
 167 classifier's choice remained unclear. So was determining whether this function was an isolated case  
 168 or a broader phenomenon. Based on the collected data, it appears that the use of  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) as  
 169 metaphor marker in *Amenemope* L is in fact not an exception, but is part of a clear and well-established  
 170 tendency, tied to a specific time period and to specific genres. Indeed,  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) in this function is  
 171 consistently found in Late Egyptian hieratic texts between the second half of the New Kingdom and  
 172 the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty. The literary genres in which the  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) metaphor marker is used are wisdom texts,  
 173 satire, poetry, oracular amuletic decrees, legal texts. They have in common to be 1) written in a higher  
 174 linguistic register, 2) to have socially informative and/or normative purposes.

### 176 2.3 Metaphor: non-straightforward expression as non-straightforward motion?

177 The classifier  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) represents a pair of legs going backwards and, consequently, is primarily used  
 178 to categorize lexemes expressing BACKWARD MOTION. The sign  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) specializes in the categorization  
 179 of any kind of motion implying a *non-straightforward direction*. The most common alternative<sup>18</sup> way  
 180 of classifying such motion is usually the superordinate level classifier  $\curvearrowleft$  (D54), expressing MOTION in  
 181 general, without any specific nuance. The use of  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) is found for the following kinds of motion:

- 183 • inverted/reversed motion
- 184 • upside-down motion/state
- 185 • rerouted motion
- 186 • counteracted motion
- 187 • centrifugal motion
- 188 • antagonistic motion (in rare cases)

190 The main proposal of this paper is that the classifier  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) is not only used for *non-straightforward*  
 191 *motion* but also, by metaphorical extension, for "*non-straightforward expression*". In other words,  
 192 lexemes whose primary sense has been "rerouted" to express another concept through analogical  
 193 substitution. Following this interpretation, the choice of  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) **for lexemes used metaphorically**  
 194 would not be primarily motivated by the sense of the lexeme in context, but by the conceptualization  
 195 of the metaphor process itself as *non-straightforward expression*.

197 In the list of verbs that take  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) as classifiers, one can identify several cases, which are important  
 198 to distinguish since not all occurrences of  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) are metaphor markers:

- 200 • Case 1: verbs that have  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) as regular/mainly attested classifier for expressing any kind  
 201 of non-straightforward physical motion as primary sense of the lexeme. In this case,  $\curvearrowright$  (D55)  
 202 *does not mark a metaphor*; its choice is simply motivated by the primary sense of the lexeme.
- 203 • Case 2: verbs that have  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) as *alternative* classifier for expressing any kind of *non-*  
 204 *straightforward physical motion* as derived meaning of the lexeme. In this case,  $\curvearrowright$  (D55) *does*

<sup>17</sup> pBM 10474. Estimated date of the document: 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty (Laisney 2007).

<sup>18</sup> The term "alternating classification" was first introduced by Goldwasser (2006). She uses it for any kind a classifier variation for a same lexeme (including polysemy cases). However, I use it only in the case in which different classifiers are used for a *same lexeme in a same sense*. The different classifiers chosen highlight different semantic features that enter the composition of the lexeme's semantics. In the case of classifier variation due to polysemy, I proposed the terminology "distinctive classification" (author, under review).

205 not necessarily mark a metaphor either; its choice is motivated by the secondary sense of the  
 206 lexeme.

207  
 208 The two aforementioned cases must be distinguished from the following cases 3 and 4:  
 209

- 210 • Case 3: verbs that have  $\wedge$  (D55) as *alternative classifier* for marking a contextual metaphorical  
 211 use or a metaphor induced polysemy. In that configuration, *all attestations written with  $\wedge$*   
 212 *(D55) for this given lexeme are metaphorical*. This does not mean that there cannot be  
 213 metaphorical attestations with the regular classifier of this lexeme, but that  $\wedge$  (D55) is the  
 214 *marked* term of the opposition. In other words: in a system  $\wedge$  (D55) vs classifier X,  $\wedge$  (D55)  
 215 conveys the feature [+ METAPHOR] and X is neutral [+/- METAPHOR]. The use of  $\wedge$  (D55) is thus  
 216 never compulsory but also non-ambiguously a metaphor marker **when used in this context**.
- 217 • Case 4: an initial metaphor-induced polysemy [cf. case 3] evolved into semantic change and  
 218  $\wedge$  (D55) became the regular/mainly attested classifier for the new sense of the lexeme. In this  
 219 last scenario,  $\wedge$  (D55) is a vestige of the initial metaphor marker (e.g. infra shAj).  
 220

221 The function of  $\wedge$  (D55) as metaphor marker for verbs appears to be linked to specific conditions:  
 222

- 223 • It is tied to a specific language stage and writing system: Late Egyptian hieratic texts;
- 224 • It is tied to a precise time frame: it appears during the Ramesside period (end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>  
 225 dynasty) and spreads in the Third Intermediate Period and possibly the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty;
- 226 • It is tied to specific genres: mostly wisdom texts and satires, which both have in common to  
 227 have a teaching purpose, as well as oracular/amuletic decrees, poetry and legal texts<sup>19</sup>;
- 228 • It is attested in a very consistent way, at a time in which Egyptians experiment novel and  
 229 elaborate classification strategies, which allows for postulating a conscious phenomenon.  
 230

231 The tables below list the different verbs that take  $\wedge$  (D55) as classifier:

- 232 • Table 1 lists the verbs for which  $\wedge$  (D55) is the regular/main classifier (i.e. not a metaphor  
 233 marker in this case)
- 234 • Table 2 lists the verbs for which  $\wedge$  (D55) is just a more ad-hoc way to categorize a non-  
 235 straightforward motion (i.e. not a metaphor marker in this case either, just a regular case of  
 236 alternating classification)
- 237 • Table 3 lists the verbs for which  $\wedge$  (D55) is used as metaphor marker, by contrast with the  
 238 verb's regular classifier(s) (i.e. the regular classifier(s) is/are thus the non-marked term of the  
 239 opposition).  
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Table 1: Distribution of verbs with  $\wedge$  (D55) as main classifier. Source: *Ramses corpus*, last access on July 19, 2022.

Verb	Translation	regular/main classifier(s), if any	Other classifiers attested for the verb	Total of attestations	Total of attestations with $\wedge$ (D55)
$\epsilon md$	to repel, to expel	$\wedge$ D55	$\wedge$ D54	4	3
$\epsilon n$	to come back	$\wedge$ D55		98	66
$jntnt$	to hold back	$\wedge$ D55		1	1
$jntj$	to hold back	$\wedge$ D55		3	3
$bh3$	to fly away, escape	$\wedge$ D55			5

<sup>19</sup> They both show similarities with oracular and amuletic texts in the lexicon and classifier use.

<i>nwj</i>	to return, reverse	∧ D55		1	1
<i>hm</i>	to go backwards	∧ D55		12	12
<i>htj</i>	to back off	∧ D55	∧ D54	14	11
<i>htht</i>	to back off	∧ D55	∧ D54	12	8
<i>hb</i>	to bow, to surrender	∧ D55	A16	3	2
<i>shm</i>	to repel, break	∧ D55		3	3
<i>stnm</i>	to mislead		T14-G41:Y1	2	1
<i>shtht</i>	to reconduct	∧ D55	∧ D54	4	3
<i>shh</i>	to pull, to drag	∧ D55		1	1
<i>tmh/tmh</i>	to turn away	∧ D55		3	3
<i>tbh/tmbh</i>	to swerve	∧ D55	∧ D54	7	5
<i>tnm</i>	to wander	∧ D55	A2 Y1 ∧ D54	13	5

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Table 2: Distribution of verbs with ∧ (D55) as ad-hoc classifier to categorize a non-straightforward motion. Source: *Ramses corpus*, last access on July 19, 2022.

Verb	Translation	regular/main classifier(s), if any	Other classifiers attested for the verb	Total of attestations	Total of attestations with ∧ (D55)
<i>ʕnʕn</i>	to reject		∧ D54	3	1
<i>jsk</i>	to be slow in doing sth	∧ D54	D56	33	1
<i>jsknkn</i>	to retreat		∧ D54	2	1
<i>jtn/jdn</i>	to oppose		A24	2	1
<i>msnh</i>	to turn, twist		Y1-A31 Y1-A24 D40	9	3
<i>ʕnʕ</i>	to send away, to prevent	∧ D54	N4	18	2

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The next table shows the distribution of the classifier ∧ (D55) as metaphor marker, according to literary genre and date.

Table 4: Distribution of the metaphorical attestations of ∧ (D55) according to genre and date. Source: *Ramses corpus*, last access on July 19, 2022.

Verbs	Text/document	Reference	Date (dyn + king)	Genre
<i>jnk</i>	P. BM 10474 – Teaching of Amenemope	26, 8	26	wisdom
<i>wnj</i>	Henuttauy, Karnak temple	21	21 (Pinedjem I)	oracular
	Djehutymose, Karnak temple	16	21 (Pinedjem II)	oracular
	Djehutymose, Karnak temple	17	21 (Pinedjem II)	oracular
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	3,12	26	wisdom
<i>wsf</i>	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	5, 7	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	5, 11	26	wisdom
	Oracular Amuletic Decree L.6	89	22	oracular
	Oracular Amuletic Decree T.1	28	22	oracular
	Oracular Amuletic Decree T.1	30	22	oracular
	Oracular Amuletic Decree T.3	23	22	oracular

<i>pn<sup>c</sup></i>	O. Ashmolean Museum 0250	r° 2	19-20	letter?
	P. DeM 01 – Teaching of Ani	3, 7	End 19	wisdom
	Hori, O. DeM 1405	3	19-20	satirical
	Will of Naunakhte, P. Gardiner 1	r° 5, 12	20 (Ramses V)	legal
<i>pšn</i>	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	13, 17	26	wisdom
<i>h3j</i>	Love Song, P. Chester Beatty 1	v°3, C3	20	poetry
<i>hwš</i>	P. Louvre E 3228 E	1, 4	25 (Shabaka)	legal
	P. Louvre E 3228 E	1, 16	25 (Shabaka)	oracular
	P. Louvre E 3228 E	1, 19	25 (Shabaka)	oracular
	P. Louvre E 3228 E	2, 3	25 (Shabaka)	oracular
	P. Louvre E 3228 E	2, 6	25 (Shabaka)	oracular
	P. Louvre E 3228 E	2, 11	25 (Shabaka)	oracular
	P. Louvre E 3228 E	2, 16	25 (Shabaka)	oracular
<i>hsf</i>	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	1, 5	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	14, 15	26	wisdom
	Tale of Woe, P. Pushkin 127	col. 5, 5	TIP	satirical
	Oracular Amuletic Decree L.6	95	22	oracular
	Oracular Amuletic Decree L.6	96	22	oracular
<i>sh3j</i>	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	14, 1	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	15, 2	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	17, 11	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	17, 13	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	18, 6	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	18, 11	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	19, 2	26	wisdom
	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	20, 21	26	wisdom
	P. Turin 1882 r°	2,10	20 (Ramses IV)	legal
<i>shn</i>	Hori, P. BM 10247	22, 2	19-20	satirical
<i>th3</i>	P. Boulaq 4 – Teaching of Ani	20, 11	21	wisdom
<i>twh3</i>	Amenemope, P. BM 10474	5, 15	26	wisdom
<i>tj3j</i>	P. Berlin P. 3059	51	22	amuletic
<i>gwš</i>	Nesikhonsu, T. CGC 46891		21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular
	Nesikhonsu, T. CGC 46891		21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular
	Nesikhonsu, T. CGC 46891		21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular
	Nesikhonsu, T. CGC 46891		21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular
	Ani, P. Boulaq 4	22,18	21	wisdom
	Ani, P. Boulaq 4	23,13	21	wisdom
	Nesikhonsu, P. Caire CGC 58032	76	21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular
	Nesikhonsu, P. Caire CGC 58032	76	21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular
	Nesikhonsu, P. Caire CGC 58032	76	21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular
	Nesikhonsu, P. Caire CGC 58032	77	21 (Pinedjem 1)	oracular

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## 2.4 Case studies

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### 2.4.1 *pn<sup>c</sup>*: “to be upside down”, “to turn toward/away from something/someone” → “to turn away from” (metaphorically), “to change one’s mind”

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The verb *pn<sup>c</sup>* is continuously (Wb 1, 508.11-509.9; CDD 52) attested from the Old Kingdom until Coptic, where it survives as πΩΩΝΕ (S), ΦΩΝ (B) (Vycichl 1983:160). It primarily means “to be upside down” and “to turn toward/away from something/someone”. It thus implies 1) a *physical* change of position or 2) a change in motion direction from a source and/or toward a (new) goal. By metaphorical extension, *pn<sup>c</sup>* also has the derived sense of “turning the attention away from” or “changing one’s mind”, which thus imply a change in the focus, in the direction of attention.

The regular classifier for *pn<sup>c</sup>* is  (P1A), which can be augmented with  (A24) or  (Y1). These are the usual spellings, used for both the literal (primary) and metaphorical (derived) senses of *pn<sup>c</sup>*. In

260 addition to this,  $pn^c$  is sometimes written with the classifier  $\wedge$  (D55), a spelling found only when the  
 261 sense of  $pn^c$  is metaphorical. The distribution is thus as follows:  
 262

$\text{𓂏}$ (P1a) + $\text{𓂏}$ (A24) or $\text{𓂏}$ (Y1)	Literal and metaphorical meaning(s)
$\wedge$ (D55)	Metaphorical meaning(s) only

263  
 264 The verb  $pn^c$  is presented as first case study in this article on purpose, for two interrelated reasons.  
 265 The first one is that, compared to the other case studies included in this section, the distribution of  
 266 the occurrences of the lexemes written with  $\wedge$  (D55) is the least clear as regards genre and date. This  
 267 might be explained by the fact that the verb  $pn^c$  constitutes an intermediary case on the path toward  
 268 metaphor marking. Indeed, the choice of the classifier  $\wedge$  (D55) can be motivated both by the  
 269 semantics of the verb itself (non-straightforward motion) and by the wish of marking a metaphor (non-  
 270 straightforward expression).  
 271

272 The next examples feature  $pn^c$  written with the classifier  $\wedge$  (D55) and bearing a metaphorical sense.  
 273 In (Ex. 7),  $pn^c r md.t$  is used in the sense of “turning away to contest”<sup>20</sup>.  
 274  
 275

(7)  
 $m-dd$   $mtw$   $=j$   $pn^c$   $r$   $md.t$   $jm$   $=f$   $^cn$   
 COMP CORD.MOD 1SG. reverse: INF to speak:INF in 3SG.M again  
 If I turn away to contest  
 He will receive 100 blows of stick and will be deprived of his goods  
 (pAshmolean 1945.97, r° 5, 12 = KRI VI, 239, 14) - Dyn. 20 (Ramses V)

276  
 277 In (Ex. 8), the transfer is made from “turning over” physically to “turning over” mentally which is  
 278 actualized with the sense “changing one’s mind”. The latter derived sense actualises the cross-  
 279 culturally attested conceptual metaphor MIND AS BODY (Sweetser 1990). One shall note that the  
 280 pBoulaq 4 version of the same text has the regular spelling with  $\text{𓂏}$  (P1) instead of the metaphor  
 281 marker  $\wedge$  (D55), which shows that the use of  $\wedge$  (D55) was never mandatory but a deliberate precision  
 282 added by the scribe in some contexts.  
 283  
 284

(8)  
 Do not say anything bad against a relative/friend on a day you argue  
 $pn^c$   $=k$   $tw$   
 Reverse:SUBJ 2SG.M 2SG.M  
**you will change your mind** (lit: you will turn over)  
 [and you will find him useful in the moment of your fraternizing]  
 (Ani, pDeM 1, 3,7)<sup>21</sup> - Dyn. 19 (end)

285  
 286 By contrast, in example 9,  $pn^c$  is used non-metaphorically. Accordingly, it is also not written with  $\wedge$   
 287 (D55), but with the regular  $\text{𓂏}$  (P1), augmented with  $\text{𓂏}$  (Z9:D40). The combination of the three signs  
 288 is unusual, especially for the early Ramesside period. Indeed, such group would be rather expected by  
 289 the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty, which is characterized by complex composed classification<sup>22</sup>. It however  
 290 fits well in the general sign economy of the Doomed Prince whose spellings regularly add ad-hoc

<sup>20</sup> On the sense of the expression  $pn^c r md.t$ , see Théodoridès (1967).

<sup>21</sup> Quack (1994).

<sup>22</sup> Chantraine (2014) already mentions a phenomenon of “increased play on the system” for this phase of the classifier system evolution; which interestingly coincides with the phase III of Late Egyptian evolution (Winand 1992). The term “composed classification” is a suggestion of the author as an alternative to the term “multiple classification” proposed by Goldwasser (2006) for it reflects the idea of decomposition of the lexeme’s meaning into semantic features.

291 contextual information on the visual level. My suggestion is that the addition of this group  
 292 corresponding to the categories [OPPOSITION/DIVISION/ALTERATION + (VIOLENT) ACTION] might indicate that  
 293 the reaction of the snake is due to the influence of alcohol, and is thus an *imposed modification of the*  
 294 *physical state* (literally: an antagonistic action upon it, hence the group  $\overline{\text{X}}$ ).

295  
 296

(9)

He (the snake) drank

He became drunk

*wn.jn* =f *hr sdr* *hr pn<sup>c</sup>*  
  
 CjVB:CNSV 3SG.M on sleep:INF on reverse:INF

He started rolling over

(Doomed Prince, pHarris 500, v° 8, 3 = LES 8, 1) - Dyn. 19

297

#### 298 2.4.2 *gws/g3w3s*: “to be curved”, “to turn away from”

299 The verb *gws/g3w3s* (Wb 5, 160.12-161.3.) is attested from the New Kingdom until the Third  
 300 Intermediate period and is possibly a loanword of Semitic origin (Hoch: 1991, n° 509; Meeks 1997:  
 301 53)<sup>23</sup>. It primarily means “to be curved, twisted” [as quality of something material] and “to be deviant”  
 302 or “turning away from something” [physical movement] (Winand 2017: §2.7, ex. 31). This latter sense  
 303 is first attested in the available data for medical texts, as a quality of the eyes that squint. The verb is  
 304 here written with the classifier of the eye  $\overline{\text{A}}$  (D4).

305

306 (10a)

*jw jr.t* =f *gws.t(j)* *hr* =s *m gs* =f  
  
 MCM eye-F =3SG.M be\_curved:STAT under =3SG.F in side =3SG.M  
 His eye squints because of this on his side (pSmith 4, 6)

307

308 This sense can reasonably be postulated as source of one of the abstract metaphorical senses of  
 309 *gws/g3w3s*. Indeed, the verb further developed two metaphorical extensions toward the field of social  
 310 behaviours: 1) “being wrong” in terms of “being twisted” (mentally); 2) “turning away from” and  
 311 “separate oneself from” (mentally). Both meanings are obtained through cross-linguistically well  
 312 attested conceptual metaphors, respectively NEGATIVE/WRONG IS NOT STRAIGHT (VS RIGHT/JUST IS STRAIGHT)  
 313 and MIND AS BODY as well as THE SOCIAL WORLD IS THE PHYSICAL WORLD, which is largely represented in  
 314 Ancient Egyptian (Di Biase-Dyson & Chantrain 2022).

315 All the attestations of *g3w3s* in the corpus pertain to figurative language, but on two different levels.  
 316 In the first scenario (a majority of cases), the metaphor applies to the lexical level: *g3w3s* is used in one  
 317 of its derived metaphorical senses “to be twisted/wrong” or “to turn away from”. In the second  
 318 scenario, the metaphor applies to the textual level: *g3w3s* bears its primary sense “to be  
 319 curved/twisted”, but in a metaphorical text passage. For all the attestations written with  $\overline{\text{A}}$  (D55), the  
 320 classifier has the function of metaphor marker. However, this spelling appears relatively late, in the  
 321 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty. Before that, *g3w3s* is written with other classifiers:  $\overline{\text{X}}$  (Z9-D40);  $\overline{\text{S}}$  (Z9:G37) or  $\overline{\text{A}}$  (Y1-  
 322 A24). The use of  $\overline{\text{A}}$  (D55) for *g3w3s* is also tied to specific genres: it appears only in wisdom texts and  
 323 oracular texts, which is a general tendency for  $\overline{\text{A}}$  (D55) in the function of metaphor marker, as was  
 324 mentioned in the introduction.

325 Examples 10b and 11 both contain a lexical level metaphor: in the first one, *g3w3s* has the metaphorical  
 326 sense of being “wrong” as “twisted”; and in the second one, means “turning away from”.

327

328 (10b)

Don't fill your heart with these failures

<sup>23</sup> See Winand (2017: §2.7), for a discussion of the term and its possible cognates. He suggests a connection with the verb *gs3*, attested in the Middle Kingdom.



borderline, intermediary, as it implies in context a more physically-grounded division (i.e. the dispatching of the members of a group, Ex. 14) than the abstract concept of dichotomy (Ex. 13) but also is a more abstract sense compared with the true physical integrity breaking implied by the first meaning of “dividing”. In demotic, its meaning has evolved into “to invade, penetrate”<sup>27</sup>. Unlike  $p(s)s$ <sup>28</sup>, which keeps the primary meaning of dividing,  $pšn$  does not seem to survive in Coptic.

Only 1 out of 7 attestations of  $pšn$  is written with the classifier  $\wedge$  (D55), associated with the classifier  $\text{𓂏}$  (A31). The latter is rarely attested and regroups lexemes expressing the idea of TURNING and, by extension, TURNING AWAY FROM, SEPARATING. This attestation of  $pšn$  (Ex. 13) is used in a clearly metaphorical sense referring to a hiatus/dichotomy between thoughts and speech. All the other attestations of  $pšn$  in the corpus are written with the group  $\text{𓂏}^x$ , whether they are metaphorical or not. In the second example below (Ex. 14),  $pšn$  has the meaning of “sharing”, “dispatching” the members of a group of people and is written with the group of classifiers  $\text{𓂏}^x$  (Z9:Y1) [OPPOSITION/DIVISION/ALTERATION + ABSTRACT].

361 (13)

$m.jrj$   $pšn$   $h3ty$   $=k$   $r$   $ns.t$   $=k$   
  
 PROH divide:INF heart 2SG.M from tongue-F 2SG.M

**Do not separate your heart from your tongue**  
 (Amenemope, pBM 10474, 13, 17)<sup>29</sup> – Dyn. 26

362

(14)

You will summon the captain  $ʕ3-n-hr$  and his companions in presence of  $p3-n-p3-jh3y$   
 $hr$   $p3y$   $pšn$   $n3$   $b3k.w$   $nty$   $st$   $hr$   $md.t$   $hr$   $=w$   
  
 on DEM:M.SG divide:INF ART:PL servant.PL REL-M.SG 3PL on speech-F on 3PL

About this **sharing** of the servants that they contest  
 (pLouvre E 25359)<sup>30</sup> – Dyn. 21

363

#### 2.4.4 $wnj$ : “to hurry” → “to neglect”, “to override”

The verb  $wnj$  is attested with certainty from the Old Kingdom until the Third Intermediate Period. In fact, the last attestations found in the present corpus are from the manuscript pBM 10474 of *Amenemope*, dated from the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty. However, the composition of the text is estimated to the end of the Ramesside Period<sup>31</sup>, which means that the lexicon and spellings are also likely to be from that period, at least to a great extent. The verb  $wnj$  is also attested in several oracular/amuletic texts from the Third Intermediate Period, which share common orthography features with pBM 10474, including the use of  $\wedge$  (D55)<sup>32</sup>.

The verb  $wnj$  primarily means “to hurry” and is a motion verb. By extension, it also came to express “hurrying to do something” and hence it took the metaphor-induced sense “to neglect”, “to override”, which likely comes from the idea of “passing quickly over something”.

Only 4 out of 23 attestations of  $wnj$  are written with  $\wedge$  (D55), all the other ones are with  $\wedge$  (D54) [MOTION]. Most of the attestations of  $wnj$  in the present corpus have the metaphorical meaning of “neglecting”. However, the spelling with  $\wedge$  (D55) is confined to oracular texts of the Third Intermediate Period and to *Amenemope* (L).

<sup>27</sup> CDD 167.

<sup>28</sup> Wb 1, 553.6-554.1

<sup>29</sup> Laisney (1997).

<sup>30</sup> *Ramses*, text ID 701. Credits Dominique Lefèvre.

<sup>31</sup> Laisney (1997).

<sup>32</sup> Chantraine & Di Biase-Dyson (2017).

379 Example 15 is from the latter and refers to the importance of not neglecting the wise words. This  
 380 passage is a clear reminiscence of *Ptahhotep* (pPrisse, 5, 8) and highlights the semantic proximity  
 381 between *wnj* and *thj* (to transgress, neglect).  
 382

383 (15)  
 3h p3 di.t =sn m jb =k  
 useful ART:M.SG give:INF 3PL in heart 2SG.M  
 To place them (=the words) in your heart is useful  
 wgg n p3 **wnw** sn  
 misery for ART:M.SG PTCP 3PL  
 misery to the one who **neglects** them  
 (Amenemope, pBM 10474, 3, 12) – Dyn. 26

384 By contrast, in example 16, *wnj* is used with its primary sense of “running”, “hurrying” and,  
 385 accordingly, is written with the general classifier  $\wedge$  (D54) for [MOTION].  
 386

387 (16)  
 388 j ntr.w jpw **wny** m-h3.t wj3 n r<sup>c</sup>  
 PTCL god:PL DEM:M.PL PTCP in\_front bark of Ra  
 O those gods who **run** in front of the bark of Ra!  
 (pLeiden I 348, v° XI, 9) – Dyn. 19 (Ramses II)

#### 389 2.4.5 *wsf*: “to be inactive” → “to temporize”, “to make ineffective”

390 The verb *wsf* appears in the lexicon during the Old Kingdom. It is attested in all language stages and  
 391 survives in Coptic under the form  $\sigma\gamma\omega\sigma\sigma\eta$  (S). It means primarily “to be inactive”. Very early, by  
 392 extension from activity to temper, it adopts the derived sense “to be idle”, “to be lazy”, which becomes  
 393 its core meaning. In this sense, it is usually spelled with the classifier  $\mathfrak{S}$  (G37) for  
 394 [SMALLNESS/NEGATIVITY]. The polysemy of *wsf* became then further enriched with two more metaphor-  
 395 induced senses: “to temporize” and “to make ineffective”<sup>33</sup>. As regards classifier distribution, *wsf*  
 396 displays a flagrant contrast: out of 455 attestations of the verb, only 6 are written with  $\wedge$  (D55), all  
 397 the other ones with the regular classifier  $\mathfrak{S}$  (G37). All the tokens of *wsf* with the  $\wedge$  (D55) orthography  
 398 convey the metaphorical senses of “temporizing” or “making ineffective”. They are attested in two  
 399 genres: wisdom texts and oracular/amuletic texts.

400 The first example below refers to counteracting the negative effects of a bad oracle<sup>34</sup>. A parallel is  
 401 found in pTurin 1985 (l.24): *wsf* is attested with the same meaning, but the spelling is slightly different  
 402 since it comprises the combination of both classifiers  $\wedge$  (D54) and  $\mathfrak{S}$  (D55):  $\mathfrak{S}\wedge$ . In the second  
 403 example (Ex. 18), *wsf* has the softer meaning of “temporizing”, “pausing” and is written with the same  
 404 group  $\wedge\wedge$  (D54-D55).  
 405

406 (17)  
 407 jw =j (r) **wsf** ph-ntr nb bjn  
 FUT 1SG FUT be\_inactive:INF festival ph-ntr every bad  
 I will **neutralize** every bad oracle  
 (Oracular Amuletic Decree L.6 = pBM 10587, 90)<sup>35</sup> – Dyn. 22

408 (18)

<sup>33</sup> These two meanings are very close and could be possibly seen as contextual variants of a same meaning, with a nuance of different intensity.

<sup>34</sup> The word *ph-ntr* has the sense of “oracle”, see Kruchten (1997) and Winand (2003).

<sup>35</sup> Edwards (1960).

ky sp nfr m jb n p3 ntr wsf r- md.t  
 h3.t  
 other time good in heart of ART:M.SG god be\_inactive:IMP in- speak:INF  
 front

Other good action for the heart of the god: **temporize before speaking**  
 (Amenemope, pBM 10474, 5, 8)<sup>36</sup> - Dyn. 26

410

411 By contrast, a large number of attestations of *wsf* are found in administrative texts and refer to actual  
 412 inactivity, usually to days off from work. This case is illustrated in example 19, from a workmen report.  
 413 The regular spelling with the classifier  (G37) is used.

414

415

(19)  
 nty (hr) wsf z 29  
  
 REL:M.SG on be\_inactive:INF man 29  
 the ones who are inactive: 29 men  
 pTurin cat. 1960 + 2071, r° 2, 2 = KRI VI, 641, 7 – Dyn. 20 (Ramses IX)

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#### 2.4.6 The case of *sh3j*: when metaphor induced polysemy leads to semantic change

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(20)  
 jr jw =f (hr) nw r p3 sh3 m db° =f  
  
 if PTCL 3SG.M on look:INF to ART:M.SG let\_down:PTCP in finger 3SG.M  
 If he looks at **the one who lies with his finger**  
 (Amenemope, pBM 10474, 17, 11) – Dyn. 26

438

439

(21)  
 jw bw- jrj sh3 wp.t  
  
 PTCL NEG-do let-down:INF judgement-F

<sup>36</sup> Similar attestation in 5,12 with the same meaning assumed by *wsf* (“temporize in front of a dissident”).

<sup>37</sup> Winand (2018).

<sup>38</sup> One shall note though that in the case of Ex. 22, the passage might have to be amended in *r-dd sh3=k <wj> m p3 hd*.

The enforcement of the laws was strict, judgment was not **corrupted**  
(pTurin 1882, r° 2, 10 = KRI 6, 72, 13) – Dyn. 20 (Ramses IV)

440

441 As already mentioned, the usual classifier for *sh3j* within the Late Egyptian corpus is  $\wedge$  (D55). However,  
442 two attestations of alternating classification<sup>39</sup> are attested, one with  $\text{𓂏}$  (G37) and one with  $\wedge$  (D54).  
443 Both examples are from the Tomb Robberies text corpus (exs. 22 and 23).

444

445

(22)

They started chatting among them

*r-dd*     *sh3*                    =*k*     *m*     *p3*                    *hd*

COMP     let\_down:PFV     2SG.M     in     ART:M.SG     silver

You **cheated** with money

They said to one another

(pBM 10052, v° 8, 10 = KRI VI, 786, 7) – Dyn. 20 (Ramses XI)

446

447

(23)

While they were arguing about money

*r-dd*                    *sh3*                                    =*k*                                    *wj*

COMP                    let\_down:PFV                                    2SG.M                                    1SG

“you **cheated** me”

They said to one another

(pMayer A, v° 9, 19 = KRI 6, 821, 14) – Dyn. 20 (Ramses XI)

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449

### 3. Conclusions

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#### 3.1. Word order and direction of the speech flow

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#### 3.2. Figurative language as non-straightforward expression

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Figurative language was not only applied but consciously conceptualized as *non-straightforward expression* (spoken or written) by the Ancient Egyptians. This idea was visually expressed by the classifier  $\wedge$  (D55) when used as marker of metaphoricity. The choice of the classifier is thus in this case not motivated by the lexeme’s semantics, but by the metaphorical extension used to refer to the concept of metaphor itself.

<sup>39</sup> Alternating classification designates the use of different classifiers for a same lexeme with a same meaning. The different classifiers chosen highlight different semantic features that enter the composition of the lexeme’s semantics (author’s concept and definition).

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed inventory, see Borghouts (2001), followed by Uljas (2013).

472 This meta-semantic<sup>41</sup> role of  $\wedge$  (D55) is also a precious clue for text dating, since it is tied to a well-  
 473 delimited period (end of New Kingdom, Third Intermediate Period and possibly 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty). Its usage  
 474 also highlights a certain level of rhetoric and implies that specific, conscious, attention was paid to the  
 475 language.

476 To sum up, one can identify  $\wedge$  (D55) as a metaphor marker when:

- 477 • It is not the primary/main classifier of the lexeme;
- 478 • It is the *marked term of an opposition*. This means that, for a given lexeme,  $\wedge$  (D55) can be  
 479 used to mark a metaphor, but *does not have to* be used to mark all the metaphors. However, for  
 480 that given lexeme, *all attestations with  $\wedge$  (D55) are metaphorical*;
- 481 • It is attested in a well-delimited time span and in specific genres (based on the present corpus)

### 483 3.3. Word classification

484 To conclude, let us remind that the classifier system itself is a testimony of an essentially lexicon-based  
 485 linguistic thinking. The organisation of the lexicon into categories, the continued reflection on this  
 486 organization and the resulting productivity of the system are all signs of a conscious phenomenon.  
 487 Indeed, especially from the Ramesside Period, the classifier system shows obvious signs of  
 488 reorganization, of “rationalisation” (Chantrain 2014) according to an economy principle, which gives  
 489 pride of place to large conceptual categories and reduces the stock of commonly used classifiers.  
 490 Multiple/composed<sup>42</sup> classification becomes a recurring phenomenon and translates an analytical  
 491 approach to lexical semantics by organizing the lexicon in a systematic distribution according to  
 492 chosen salient semantic features. This principle applies to both nouns and verbs and to both concrete  
 493 and abstract concepts.

494  
 495 To this picture, one shall also add other elements which, even though they are not discussed in this  
 496 article, corroborate the lexicon-based approach:

- 497 • The existence of lexical lists (“onomastica”) and their classifier/semantic based organisation  
 498 (Borghouts 2001);
- 499 • The principle of group writing/syllabic orthography, which is composed of groups that are in  
 500 fact monosyllabic words (Kilani 2019);
- 501 • In direct relation to this, one can also include in this list texts with teaching purposes that  
 502 purposely feature specific (loan)words and how to use them in context. A good example is the  
 503 tale of Wenamun, which uses in context some words from the onomasticon of Amenemope  
 504 (pGolenischev)<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> A similar case to  $\wedge$  (D55) is the use of  $\imath$  (T14) for “foreignness”, as showed by Allon (2010).

<sup>42</sup> See Goldwasser (2006) and Goldwasser & Grinevald, in Grossman & al. (eds.), *Lexical Semantics in Ancient Egyptian*, 2012, 17–53. She uses the term “multiple” which is a fair, descriptive way of calling such phenomenon. I prefer “composed” since it better translates the operating principle consisting in a composition of semantic features that motivates the formation of these groups.

<sup>43</sup> The two documents were found together in a jar at El-Hibah, as well as the manuscript of the Tale of Woe.

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