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Short articles on grammar and lexicon (max. two pages) will be published in the section “Miscellanea”. For these, there will be no separate offprints.

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A Semantic Approach to the Egyptian Language:
The Case of Time and Aspect. Towards a New Paradigm

Jean Winand, Liège

1 Preliminaries

It is not lacking in respect for the great scholar Polotsky was to bring critically under close scrutiny the system he built step by step over three decades. The weakest point in the Polostkyan Theory (PT) is his view of how forms and meanings (i.e. morpho-syntax and semantics) relate to each other. The basic question, which the PT has implicitly answered in the affirmative, comes down to deciding whether there are as many grammatical forms as semantic functions. When looking back on the foundations of the PT, one can see three major epistemological problems:

- synchronism: how far can we take the situation of Coptic as paradigmatic of a grammatical system more than two millennia older? The way the second tenses were handled in the PT is exemplary in this respect. Are we completely free to consider as equivalent what is completely grammaticalized in Coptic (tempora I vs. tempora II) and the grammatical system of Middle Egyptian, where there are no systematic morphological correspondences between emphatic and non-emphatic forms? Can we make a simple equation between what is the main raison d’être of the second tempora in Coptic, at the semantic level, and what is one function (and most probably a derivative) among many others in older Egyptian? In other words, how much Coptic can we see in Middle Egyptian without going completely astray?

- analogy and symmetry: how far can we go with analogy, be it syntactic or morphological (see Winand 2007)? For instance, does the sdm.n.tw.f definitively prove the existence of a substantival sdm.n.f distinct from another (other) sdm.n.f(s)? What is the implication (if any) of the existence of the mfr.f for the perfective and subjunctive forms? Is it necessary to forge two subjunctive sdm.f forms arguing from the existence of two different negative patterns (nn sdm.f vs. tm.f sdm)? Should we consider two forms for the pseudo-participle and so on.

- isomorphism: to what degree is there a strict adequation between form and function? Is the fact that the sdm.n.f has a circumstantial function (after having heard) and a sequential function (and he heard) sufficient in itself to create two distinct morphological forms?

All that is known of how languages work, in synchrony or diachrony, descriptively or typologically, invites us to answer the questions raised above in a negative way.

1 I have set aside the widely used concept of Standard Theory: it was never true to the diversity of opinions among Egyptologists, and it is now completely obsolete.

2 The Late Egyptian system of emphatic forms is not that close to the Coptic’s either, as the basic opposition between the periphrastic luf.f sdm and non-periphrastic luf.f sdm is one of modality.
In diachrony, permanence of forms does not imply permanence of functions. Complex processes are at work here, like semantic changes, grammaticalization and lexicalization. Egyptian offers numerous examples of it. For instance, the Late Egyptian Future III seems to be the carbon copy of the Middle Egyptian paradigm lw.f r sdm. But who would analyse hw in Late Egyptian as in Middle Egyptian? The simple fact that hw lw.f r sdm exists in Late Egyptian shows how much has changed in the grammatical system.

Asymmetry is everywhere in language. Looking at how languages, far better known than Egyptian, work may suffice. In French, for instance, there are eight tenses in the indicative; this has obviously no incidence on the number of tenses in the subjunctive or in the infinitive. Neutralisation is not unknown in Egyptian either: in Late Egyptian, there are two negative patterns (nn sw hr sdm vs. bw lw.f sdm) according to the opposition ± progressive, but only one affirmative pattern in the Present I (twi hr sdm).

Strangely enough, some scholars have tended to strictly link forms and functions in a series of one-to-one correspondences. This would imply that a language cannot fix the relations between members of a sentence or of a text without a syntactic system morphologically marked. This leaves on the roadside the far more fundamental system of information (Orel 2002), numerous phenomena of semantically motivated linkages and the role of context (Winand 2000, 2006b: ch. 9). From a cognitive viewpoint, it is only natural that a non-verbal predication, which by its very nature stays outside the temporal flux (Winand 2006a), would be most often backgrounded in narration. That the circumstantial function can be formally marked by a specific device, more or less grammatically integrated (izk, lw, etc.), is a matter of detail, relevant in a typologically oriented diachronic perspective.

1.1 Temporality: an overview

This paper is concerned with how Egyptian expresses time from a semantic viewpoint. It presents itself as a complete reversal of paradigm, when compared with the FT. How far the two systems can be integrated, how much they can influence each other, is for others to say. I have been working on questions related to time and aspect since 1994. The result is a book now published in the series Probleme der Ägyptologie in 2006. In this paper, I present the basic observations which worked for me more or less like a catalyst, and I present the general structure of my theoretical system.

As regards the semantics of time and aspect, the linguistic tradition in Egyptology (and in some degree in general linguistics) makes the following assumptions:

- the verbal lexeme is an unanalysable (or rather unanalysed) unit,
- the grammatical tenses directly operate on this unit,
- according to every Egyptologist’s personal belief, the tenses have aspectual values, temporal values, or both,
- whether explicitly stated or not, the temporal relations are analyzed in a Reichenbachian framework.

The following points have to some degree an impact on the aspectual values of a sentence:

a) A verb usually takes different meanings according to the grammatical tenses (e.g. "inaaccompli global" vs. "inaaccompli progressif"):

1: lr h.t k br mn r lw.f lw.f mng lw.f gwb.f
   "if you examine a man who is suffering from the stomach and who suffers from the left arm" (P. Ebers, 37, 10-11)

b) The sense of a grammatical tense must adapt itself to the lexical meaning of verbs:

2: 
   a: sp.n.i ksw.i m b.t
   b: snl.n.f.i lw.l.m b.t
   "I took a leaned position in a bush" [Sin., B.16-18]
   "he began to fear me as I was coming downstream" [St. Ramose II, 26]

c) The meaning of a sentence can be modified if the argumental structure of the verb has changed:

3: 
   a: th pty mty mny m twk hr lw.f r.l
   b: th n lw r
   a: "what is this bad plan you are making against me?" (KRI III, 534,8-9)
   b: "he is busy doing his mission" (LRL 32,13)
   c: "useful for the one who acts" (St. Berlin 7311, k 2)

Point a) has to do with the definition of the grammatical aspect(s), point b) with the relation between grammatical aspect(s) and actionality, and point c) with the definition of actionality.

To a) In this description of a medical pathology, the text shifts from a progressive to a non-progressive. This use of an aspectual opposition is very well known: while the patient is suffering from his stomach all the time that is under the progressive’s scope, he also suffers from the left arm from time to time. What is continuous in the former case is discontinuous in the latter and only potentially active.

To b) The sdm.n.f, which here expresses the PERFECTIF MOMENTANÉ, as I call it (cf. infra), has a completive meaning in 2a, but an inchoative force in 2b. This can be easily explained by considering the SoA’s actionality. The more common, completive sense only obtains with telic propositions, whereas atelic propositions take an inchoative sense. This is a very general rule supported by numerous facts coming from a vast array of typologically or genetically unrelated languages. It is here worth noting that tenses cannot be mechanically used with whatever verbal lexeme. There is always a dialectic process at work between both sets of instructions. In some cases, the speakers may feel the gap too wide to fulfill: for instance, I do not know of a single example of sm or wsm used in the progressive in Egyptian. This can be easily explained by both verbs’ Aktionsart: a non-

3 I most often keep the original French terminology for lack of a strict correspondence in English.

4 Occasional shifts of tense within a sentence cannot be explained but with reference to the SoA’s actionality: "(a teaching) m thk n sdm.gd.f m vgg n nry r thk s xo" is useful for him who will have listened to it, but useless for him who will neglect it (Pischon, 49-50) (inf. sr s.t N.n.r swm lw.f gwb.f f d w s). I therefore changed the construction: the arguemental structure of the verb has changed. For instance, I do not know of a single example of sm or wsm used in the progressive in Egyptian. This can be easily explained by both verbs’ Aktionsart: a non-

5 On the modal force of the non-progressive imperfective (a well known fact in the negative), see Winand (2006b: 209).
durative process without a pre-phase in the case of ṣm\(^6\), a non-agentive non-dynamic process in the case of wmn\(^7\).

To c) The same verb, ḫrī «to make, to do», appears in the three examples; in the first one, ḫrī has a direct object (\(f\)), in the second one, the object is indirectly expressed (\(m \pm SN\)), in the last one, there is no object. The presence or absence of the object, its syntactic expression, and of course its quantificational properties, affect more or less the meaning of the sentence. The changes can bear on the SoA's actionality, as in c (the process is detelicised, hence the shift in meaning from «to do» to «to act»)\(^9\), or it can modify the sentence's aspectuality, as in b (the participle expression of the direct object leads to a progressive meaning at the sentential level).

1.2 The moment of reference

The crucial issue is how time and aspect articulate with each other. Temporal instructions, as it seems, are not very well understood. According to Reichenbach's and Comrie's definitions, time relates the process (SoA) to a point of reference, which can be absolute (moment of speaking) or relative (another process). Unfortunately this model does not always work properly. The reason is that there is no direct link between the process and the point of reference. The relation is mediated by what I call the moment of reference, that is an interval in the process which functions as an interface between the aspectual and the temporal branches of the more general phenomenon of temporality.

\[
\text{moment of reference} \\
\text{TIME} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{ASPECT} \\
\uparrow \\
\text{point of reference} \\
\rightarrow \text{process}
\]

In the following example, the selection made by the moment of reference isolates an interval within the process. In a second step, this interval is related to the moment of speaking. If one sticks to the linguistic instructions, there is no way of calculating the limits of the process itself; this can be guessed at only by pragmatic inferences\(^8\).

This contrast with a verb like pḥ «to reach», which has a dynamic pre-phase, which can be attained in the progressive (KRI II, 65,9-14; P Caire CGC 58042, 15,12; P Valencay II, R\(^1\) 11,2). There are of course some examples of ṣm in the progressive. In those cases, the verb has been detelicised by the deletion of its argument. This triggers a shift in the verbal semantics: ṣm takes the meaning of «to walk, to move» (P. Ebers, 103,4-5; P. Chester Beauty III, 7,7). A possible instance of the progressive is Teaching of Amenemhat. XIVe. As predicted by the theory, the resulting meaning is felicitous "my legs are about to leave".

Those two features (+ DYN, + AGT) are part of the definition of the Egyptian progressive. This contrasts with English where the progressive can express a contingent state as opposed to a permanent state (Smith 1997: 52; Winand 2006b: 287).


9 In this example, one can assume that the process has come to an end at the moment of speaking. But if one changes the temporal adjunct, for instance, into «ten minutes ago", then the position of the SoA's right limit is left open. One cannot rule out that the subject is still playing at T.\(^9\). It is simply out of the scope (or out of the interest) of the speaker.


11 Vendlerian classes have been written (or added) in bold.
Processes can be visualized by using graphic representations. It is a very useful, intuitive device to show how selections are made by the moment of reference (cf. infra)\(^{12}\). As it was already clear in the first example above, fixing the limits of the process can be arbitrary, for their exact location is rarely linguistically given. One must keep in mind that the limits as fixed in the graph are to be considered only as possible ones. Since temporality (in both its aspectual and temporal dimensions) is calculated only through the moment of reference, this has no practical consequence.

state
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{durative activity, w/ agentive subject} \\
\text{durative activity, w/ less agentive subject} \\
\text{semelfactive activity} \\
\text{accomplishment} \\
\text{gradable accompl. w/ explicit telicity} \\
\text{gradable accompl. w/ implicit telicity} \\
\text{achiev. w/ pre-phase} \\
\text{achiev. w/ pre-phase}
\end{array}
\]
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textit{remain}} \\
\text{\textit{go to and fro}} \\
\text{\textit{bear}} \\
\text{\textit{build}} \\
\text{\textit{come}} \\
\text{\textit{open}} \\
\text{\textit{reach}}
\end{array}
\]

The clues to the symbols used in the graphs are given in the figure below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>symbols</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; &gt;</td>
<td>limits of the process \textit{stricto sensu}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>non dynamic situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>activity without the agent's control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>activity with the agent's control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>++++++</td>
<td>gradable predication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not the place here to discuss at length the categories of actionality. I would like to stress three points.

- The first branch of actionality divides what is termed a process \textit{stricto sensu} from what is not a process. The criterion is the temporal flux in the sense given to the term by Langacker in his seminal study (Langacker 1987: 78-80). In most Indo-European languages, there is no special grammatical device to express a situation, which stays by nature outside the temporal flux. In Egyptian, this function is taken over by a set of non-verbal predications. There is thus a very finely grained continuum in Egyptian from situations to activities. For instance, the four sentences \textit{lnk sš}, \textit{lw₁ m sš}, \textit{lw₁ hr.₁ sš}, \textit{lw₁ hr.₁ br₁ t sš}, could be, in an appropriate context (especially the last one), translated into French by \textit{Je scribe »}.

- Gradability is an important criterion. The vast majority of durative telic processes are gradable. Gradability means that the object (with transitive verbs) or the subject (with intransitive verbs) is not affected at once at the end of the process, but is gradually construed (or destroyed). This property elegantly explains the functioning of the so-called « verbs of quality ». This category is here renamed, less conveniently but more correctly, « gradable accomplishments with implicit telicity ». The telicity property accounts for the differences in Middle Egyptian between \textit{nfr sw} « it is (by nature) perfect » and \textit{lw₁ f jw. f nfr} « it is now perfect ». That the process has the gradability property is made evident by examples in the \textit{inaccompli} such as:

5: \textit{lw₁ r(3)-ib.f jw. f} \textit{nfr. w} « his stomach dries » (P. Ebers, 39,14)

6: \textit{rdl} \textit{fsw hr g.t hr t} \textit{t} « he who gives breath is becoming sparse on earth » (Peasant, B1, 131)

The telicity is only implicit in this kind of processes because the right limit assigned to them can fluctuate according to one's feelings. There is obviously no problem to decide whether, for instance, Paul is arrived at home, or whether a house has been built. But there is some room for interpretation when one has to decide whether a garment has been sufficiently dried, whether a hole has been dug deeply enough, and so on. For all these processes, there is a lot of expressions for measuring the degree of achievement, like « enough », « too much », etc, which have no sense when used with gradable accomplishments with an explicit telicity (? this house has been built too much »).

- From a cognitive viewpoint, pre- and post-phases are extensions of the process \textit{stricto sensu}. Pre-phases are always dynamic by nature; they express the activity leading to the culminating point which constitutes the process. Post-phases can be static or dynamic, the former case being far more frequent. They express the resulting state or activity of the process. Although post-phases can be attached to a punctual or a durative process, pre-phases are typical of non-durative processes. A verb like \textit{ph} « to reach » or \textit{mwt} « to die », both non-durative, have a dynamic pre-phase and a static post-phase\(^{13}\); \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} « to do » or \textit{jw. f} « to come » have only a static post-phase: \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} « to do » or \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} « to take power » have a dynamic post-phase: \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} « to reach ». Those phases can be selected by the moment of reference. For instance, the progressive, which prototypically selects a close interval inside the process \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} \textit{fo} « he is doing it », can make its selection in the pre-phase \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} \textit{shš.}\textit{fjy} \textit{fo} « he is doing it », its resulting phase is the movement itself:

7: \textit{mšt.}\textit{fy lgr} \textit{m-š t. d.} \textit{fr₁ w₁} \textit{nfr} \textit{r₁ n t} \textit{t}
« something similar occurred to myself as I was heading to the Mines of the Sovereign » (\textit{ShS}, 23-24)\(^{14}\)

The same applies with \textit{kšn} in the \textit{fsw} \textit{sdm.}\textit{f} pattern, which also conveys the \textit{accompli résultatf} (cf. infra, ex. 20 for an example with the \textit{sdm.}\textit{f} \textit{fr₁}, another form with a resultative meaning):

\(^{12}\) I also use a more sophisticated type of graphs to better match the internal constitution of the SoA's (see below for some applications).

\(^{13}\) In the case of \textit{mwt}, the graph should be \textit{--<--}, for the agent has no control on the process in the pre-phase.

\(^{14}\) Cf. \textit{ShS}, 154-156; P. Berlin 10050, V² 12; KRV II, 15.1-10.
3 Aspect

Studies on aspect have long been marked by the confusion between the semantic and the formal level. While the taxonomy of aspect at the semantic level legitimately claims universal validity, the realisation of aspect at the formal level can be subject to considerable variations across languages. To avoid confusion in terminology, I subsequently use the terms PERFECTIVE and IMPERFECTIVE for the two main semantic subcategories of aspect, and the pair accompli and inaccompli for the two main subcategories of the grammatical aspect. As will become clear below, grammatical aspect is only one way (of course the most prominent one in some languages) among many others to implement the semantic aspect in language.

3.1 Semantic aspect

Here is a simplified taxonomy of aspect, at the semantic level:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC ASPECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERFECTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPERFECTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M M O N T A N E O U S Resultative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G L O B A L Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCHOATIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLETIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HABITUAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTINUAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

The PERFECTIVE is the marked term of the opposition. Its main expression is the MOMENTANEOUS (the RESULTATIVE is a secondary development). MOMENTANEOUS is a new term, forged to encompass the two realisations of the PERFECTIVE, which at first sight do not seem very compatible: COMPLETIVE and INCHOATIVE. According to a widespread definition, the PERFECTIVE views the process as a whole. This contrasts with the IMPERFECTIVE, which is claimed to consider the process from within. Unfortunately, this definition is unable to explain why the PERFECTIVE can sometimes give an inchoative meaning. As we will see later, the generally accepted definition of the PERFECTIVE looks very much like that of the IMPERFECTIVE. Actually, the role of the PERFECTIVE is to isolate what is considered the most cognitively salient phase of the process. For telic processes, this crucial moment is the final one, as expected; for atelic processes, the only moment that can be safely assessed is when the process begins. The division of the uses of the PERFECTIVE thus mirrors that of actionality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telic proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atelic proposition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The IMPERFECTIVE is the unmarked term of the opposition. As already noted, the IMPERFECTIVE is said, by sheer symmetry with the definition of the PERFECTIVE, to view the process from within. This definition actually fits very well with the PROGRESSIVE. But it leaves unexplained the nature of the IMPERFECTIVE at a general level. I here propose that the IMPERFECTIVE opens a semi-open interval to the right, whose left limit coincides with the beginning of the process: \([i, j]\). This allows for the habitual meaning occasionally conveyed by the IMPERFECTIVE. As the interval is not closed to the right, factorisation of the process can occur. The PROGRESSIVE is a specialisation of the IMPERFECTIVE. The selection is a close interval within the process to the exclusion of the limits of the process: \(\langle i, j \rangle\).

I now give the formal definitions of the GLOBAL IMPERFECTIVE and the PROGRESSIVE IMPERFECTIVE:

The GLOBAL IMPERFECTIVE of a sentence \(f(k,l)\) is true, if there is an open interval \((ij)\) \(k<ij\) and \(t^* > i\).

The PROGRESSIVE IMPERFECTIVE of a sentence \(f(k,l)\) is true, if there is an open interval \((ij)\) \(k<ij\) and \(t^* > i\), with no subinterval of \((ij)\) \(k<ij\) and \(t^* > i\), with no subinterval of \((ij)\) \(k<ij\) and \(t^* > i\).

One can contrast the GLOBAL IMPERFECTIVE and the PROGRESSIVE IMPERFECTIVE as follows:

- The PROGRESSIVE's left limit is dissociated from the SOA's left limit.
- The PROGRESSIVE is bounded to the right (contingency).
- The point of reference \(t^*\) cuts the domain of the PROGRESSIVE in two subdomains. The subdomain to the right of \(t^*\) is part of the possible worlds (this allows a modal use of the PROGRESSIVE).
- The PROGRESSIVE has the gradability property. With this are most often associated dynamism and control (see below).

3.2 Formal realisations of aspect

Languages have at their disposal a large array of means to express aspect. One can distinguish, from the most to the least integrated at the grammatical level:

a. the grammatical aspect, as a system of a regular set of oppositions,
b. grammatical tenses outside the regular system of aspect but with strong aspectual instructions,
c. aspectual auxiliaries,
d. lexical means.
The four categories will now be briefly discussed.

3.2.1 Grammatical aspect

Middle Egyptian makes use of a regular set of oppositions between accompli and inaccompli. In its extended formation, grammatical aspect is a system of four basic tenses: 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>grammatical aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>inaccompli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accompli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progressif</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

According to the SoA's actionality, different shades of meaning obtain (dialectic relations between aspect and actionality). To give an example, the following table gives the selection made by the inaccompli progressif:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIONALITY CLASSES</th>
<th>BASIC CONFIGURATION</th>
<th>SELECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity with subject [+ AGT] [+ CTRL]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity with subject [+ AGT] [-CTRL]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity with subject [- AGT]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semelfactive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieve. w/ dyn. pre-phase and stative post-phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieve. w/ pre-phase and w/ dyn. post-phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-gradable accomplishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gradable accompl. w/ explicit telicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gradable accompl. w/ implicit telicity</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As in many languages, the Egyptian progressive carries the features [+ DYN] and [+ DUR]. That the use of the progressive is blocked with states and activities with agentless subject comes thus as no surprise 17. Activities with an agent in full control of the process and accomplishments are standard in the progressive. With other classes come very interesting features:

* the agent's control is strengthened with activities whose subject is prototypically viewed as having a small control (or no control at all) of the process. In Egyptian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>activity with subject [+ AGT] [-CTRL]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity with subject [- AGT]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semelfactive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieve. w/ dyn. pre-phase and stative post-phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieve. w/ pre-phase and w/ dyn. post-phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-gradable accomplishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gradable accompl. w/ explicit telicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gradable accompl. w/ implicit telicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a way, Middle Egyptian can be said to compensate a relative paucity of its stock of verbal lexemes by the use of aspectual tenses. Cf. the case of mwit « die », which takes on the meaning of an agonizing in the progressive, and that of « be dead » in the resultative.

18 Contrast with Persian.  

19 Use of the progressive is blocked with states and activities with agentless subject comes thus as no surprise. Activities with an agent in full control of the process and accomplishments are standard in the progressive. With other classes come very interesting features:

* the agent's control is strengthened with activities whose subject is prototypically viewed as having a small control (or no control at all) of the process. In Egyptian:

16 The French names have been retained to avoid ambiguities. I also note that translations like unachieved for inaccompli is not well received in the English tradition; it is also not completely devoid of ambiguity since it is sometimes taken as an equivalent of PERSPECTIVE in general linguistics! The subclasses of the accompli and the inaccompli are neutralized in the participles and relative forms, and in the emphatic formations.

17 The situation in Egyptian is different from that of English where the progressive can express a contingent state (The statue is standing in the park vs. The statue stands in the park): cf. Smith (1997: 52).

18 In a way, Middle Egyptian can be said to compensate a relative paucity of its stock of verbal lexemes by the use of aspectual tenses. Cf. the case of mwit « die », which takes on the meaning of an agonizing in the progressive, and that of « be dead » in the resultative.

19 Contrast with Persian.

20 Control of the process can have a demiurgic force, as in the following example: *glb in br m w br m w br m w br m w br m w* (CTIL 3374-3386).

21 Cited by Tournë (1990: ex. 388), with other possible cases. Cf. *bl pr pr br pr pr* (the Etnedead when discovering his name) (Kees 1932: 93). Cf. in Late Egyptian, treated as an aspectual auxiliary, *br pr pr* (Smith 1997: 49). Compare with Russian: *Aú na imater (imperfective) ... na onecer on mater (perfective) he was dying ... and finally he died* (Forsyth 1970: 49). Cf. *br pr pr pr pr pr pr pr pr pr* (Smith 1997: 49).
3.2.3 Aspectual auxiliaries

Aspectual auxiliaries are not systematically used in Egyptian. There are auxiliaries for inchoative (brp, stf, stf), progressive (rdl, tm), completive (bhp, rhp, bh, hlp, hlp, hlp), resultative (bhp) and progressive. It is sometimes difficult to decide whether they are (semi-)grammaticalized elements or lexical expressions.

The verb bhp quickly became integrated in the grammatical system to express the inchoative. The process, which can already be seen at work in Middle Egyptian, was probably achieved in Late Egyptian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Perfective</td>
<td>resultative (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>br + Inf.</td>
<td>progressive (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhp</td>
<td>inchoative (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The complex constructions involving the verbs bhp, hmsi and stf in Late Egyptian is another case to consider. When used as auxiliaries, they can be conjugated in the Old Perfective or in a dynamic construction (e.g. iw bhp bhp stf, mn, inf, br stf) ; they are followed by a verb in the Old Perfective or in the infinitive with the preposition br. The combinations are given in the table below:

26 The melliq (from the Greek auxiliary ἀπόκλεισις) expresses a process which is about to happen. This term has been chosen to avoid "inchoative" or "progressive", commonly used in this sense, but most unfortunately, since they etymologically express the beginning of a process. From a typological viewpoint, the situation of Egyptian is not isolated: cf. Russian (Forsey 1970: 47-51), Comrie 1976: 41-44, Baeder 1965: 38, 50, Fadoscheva 1995: 81-84. The following example is particularly clear: Ivan mene daved (impl. ctn) knigs, a potom ne da m (perf.) "Ivan was about to give me a book, but finally he did not give it to me" (Klein 1995: ex. 28). Greek offers a close parallel: καὶ γὰρ ἠδὲ ἐξελήφθη σφης εὐθὺς αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰεριχώνα ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ ἐξελήφθη σφῆς εὐθὺς αὐτὸς, τοῦ Ἰωάννης ἐξελήφθη σφῆς (Hdt IV, 108). In this example where the verb εἶλεθη appears in three different tenses, the choice of ἐξελήφθη shows that the first move of the Plateans turned out to be a vain attempt.

24 Cf. Venard (1990: ex. 285). See also Lit. Fragmentos, I: 1: brw nfr iw br m bhp t bhp; T. Carnarvon L, R° 15-16: iw nfr iw brm bhp t bhp. But the expression seems stereotyped: cf. Histoire de revenant, 8-9 (LES 91,6-7); Horne & Seth, 7-12 (LES 45,13-14); 8,11 (LES 48,10); Wenamun, 2,64 (LES 73,13).

27 With the verb rd m to go up, this expression seems stereotyped: cf. Histoire de revenant, 8-9 (LES 91,6-7). But bhp in a dynamic tense + Old Perfective is well attested (Winand 1996: I, 9,15-16). For other ex. with bhp, see LES 25,8; 29,9; 41,8; 53,5; 71,9-10; LRE 45,5; KRI V,476,5.

25 For an example of stf in the Old Perfective with a resultative meaning, see Pyr. § 779: stf, m bh m, m, t f, m ns, n m,t l "as for any governor who will govern in Hefat, and who will have done an evil and bad action against this sarcophagus" (Ankheli, II, 0,3).

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Here it is worth noting that the *sw 'f.w br sgm* pattern, which conveys progressive in Late Egyptian, never achieved a full grammatical status. It always remained an option for the speaker. Although the progressive is distinct from the non-progressive in the negative (*bn sw br sgm vs. bw ir.f sgm*), the present 1 (*mwi br sgm*) can express all the nuances attached to the inaccompli.

3.2.4 Lexical means

Lexical means can help fixing aspectual values. The best known are probably the temporal adjuncts (TEM), in the largest meaning of the term. There are three main categories of TEM:

- Temporal adjuncts of position (TEM-P) set a process on the timeline absolutely (tomorrow, June 14) or relatively by reference to a secondary point of reference (the day after, three weeks ago). TEM-P can explicitly integrate a time span (yesterday, between 3 and 5 o’clock).

- Temporal adjuncts of frequency (TEM-F) indicate, with more or less precision, the rhythm of a process (often, every day). TEM-F can be considered as a subcategory of TEM-P.

- Durative temporal adjuncts (TEM-D) give some indication on the time interval of a process (during three hours, for a long time). Either limit of the interval can be completely ignored (TEM-D-l: since one hour; TEM-D-r: until three o’clock). There is also a subcategory of TEM-D for expressing the time needed to achieve a process. In this case, the temporal adjunct is viewed *mutandis mutatis* as an instrument (TEM-Di: in three hours, quickly).

While some temporal adjuncts like TEM-P’s and TEM-F’s bear on the sentence (temporal relation), TEM-Di’s have the process under their scope (actionality). TEM-D’s are more ambiguous: they can affect the process (actionality) or explicitate the span of the moment of reference (aspectual relation). The figure below shows the chronogenesis of a sentence from the verbal Aktionsart to the final output.

Here are now some illustrations of TEM. The first example shows the perfect coincidence of the instructions given by the grammatical tense (*accompli momentané* with an inchoative meaning according to the verb’s actionality) and the TEM-P. In the chronograph, the moment of reference is figured with square brackets and the TEM with curly brackets:

28: *nw hm.f, w m br ns.t n.f-sr sp 2 m tj w.w.t*  
« and His Person, L.P.H, fell exceedingly in love with him on the spot » (LES 28,14)

With TEM-D and TEM-Di the situation looks different. In the following example, the SoA’s actionality is durative and telic. The TEM-Di bears on the whole process, but the grammatical tense (here an *accompli momentané*) entails a completive meaning:

29: *'f.r rdj.n wbs n snb.tv*  
« and then Reddjedet purified herself by a purification of 14 days » (P. Westcar, 11,18-19)

In the next example, the scope of the TEM-Di is still the process, and the moment of reference selects the post-phase of the process:

30: *iw ir.n(i) mi-lfd n mp.t*  
« I have done it all in one single year » (Urk. I, 109,3)

The last example shows how the moment of reference and a TEM-D-r interact. Although the moment of reference selects the process *stricto sensu*, the TEM-D-r encompasses the post-phase of the process. The right limit of the post-phase is extra-linguistically fixed:

31: *dy r fn sw hr hsk.wct r snb tf*  
« put him to bed until he has recovered » (CT II, 342a S2P)

4 Time

Expression of time by grammatical means is not the top priority in the Middle Egyptian verbal system. This sharply contrasts with the situation of Late Egyptian and Demotic.

In the theoretical approach sketched here, expression of time in a narrow sense is channelled through the relation of a moment of reference with a point of reference. As noted above, the moment of reference makes a selection within the process. It is the aspectual

---

31 As previously noted, the interval is here open to the right.
32 Egyptology has seen extreme attitudes as regards the expression of time: from a radically aspectual system, without time dimension (Hannig 1982: 37), to a time only system (Schenkel 1997).
4.2 Temporally marked verbal forms

Ancient and Middle Egyptian seem to have an opposition between an aspectual sub-system (accompli vs. inaccompli) and a modal-temporal sub-system. To the latter one belong the so-called ancient perfective sgm.f, and, with crisiscrossed relations, the prospective sgm.wf, the subjunctive sgm.f, and the future pattern iw.f sgm. From a typological viewpoint, the case of Egyptian is not isolated, for it could possibly share company, as far as time stricto sensu is concerned, with a small group of languages which basically oppose a future to a non-future (Comrie 1985: 49, Tournaire 2004: 40).

There are also in Middle Egyptian some tenses specialized in expressing relative time, as sgm.br.f, sgm.inf, sgm.k3.f (most recently, see Polis 2005). The sequential mtwf sgm and iw.f br (tm) sgm, both typical of the Late Egyptian system, are also engaged in a dialectic process at the modal and aspectual levels (Winand 2001a).

4.3 Enunciative auxiliaries

There is in Middle Egyptian a rich set of enunciative auxiliaries. They originally operate at the enunciative level by expressing the speaker’s attitude vis-à-vis what he/she says or what he/she expects from the hearer. Some of them have time implication. As is well known, there are auxiliaries for fixing the absolute time (iw, mk), for expressing sequentiality (if-n, wn.in, br, k3, lh), and for backgrounding (lk/kk).

4.4. Temporal auxiliaries

Temporal auxiliaries have not always been given the full attention they deserve. There are in Middle Egyptian verbal auxiliaries which help structuring the chain of events or linking an event to a point of reference. The best known of such auxiliaries is pw «to have done in the past» (Reintges 1997: 135). It etymologically implies the existence in the past of a SoA whose left limit of reference coincides with the zp epq.34 Besides pw, which became fully grammaticalized in Late Egyptian (bwpw.f sgm), one has to mention two patterns: n-zp sgm.f «it has not happened that he could hear» and n-zp psf sgm.f «it has never occurred that he had heard» (Vernus 1995: 76 sqq).

There are also semi-auxiliaries to specify the position of an event in a chain, in what I call a «processus». Egyptian has auxiliaries to fix the beginning of a processus (p3 «to begin, to start»35) to introduce a new development in a processus (fap «to receive»), iw.f «to

34 Obviously not all occurrences of pw connect the event to the primaeval time (Ulijas 2003: 399, but with excessive criticism). The left limit of the moment of reference can be linguistically specified: n-zp pb tw br.t st wr nb nq.ea t+ st npbw.f «one had never done this since the time of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Snefru» (Inscr. Serabit el-Khadim). In scientific texts, where the causal chain of events must be precisely known, pw is sometimes used to mark an event as past: br k3. k t psn.k hkh(t)k.t m w n «If you examine a woman who has already poured out substances like water» (P. Ebers 96,16-17), br swt glm.k x ps fbd.nnf psn.f wdd.l nhd «but if you find that this man has become pale, once he has overcome his feebleness» (P. Smith 3,13).

35 LEM2,12.
36 Sin., R 47.
come \(\text{mr} \) and \(\text{fhr} \) to fall \(\text{mr} \), or to express the end of a processus \(\text{pri} \) to go out \(\text{mr} \), \(\text{pfr} \) to reach \(\text{mr} \) and \(\text{fhr} \) to end \(\text{mr} \).)

### 4.5 Converters

There is a past converter in Egyptian, \(\text{wn} \), whose primary function is not, as it is widely assumed (Poloitsky 1960: § 10, Junge 1996: 169-171, Allen 2000: 20.16), to transfer a process to the past, but to explicitly state that this process is no more relevant at the considered point of reference \(\text{contre} \ Wente 1962: 307, \text{n. 21 whose advocated example is misunderstood}^{37} \).

In the following example, it is clear that the chaotic situation is over when the King has the report written:

\[
\begin{align*}
34: & \quad \text{wn p3 ti n km.t hfr} \\
& \quad \text{« the land of Egypt was neglected » (P. Harris I, 75,2)}
\end{align*}
\]

The meaning of \(\text{wn} \) clearly manifests itself in relative phrases by contrast with \(\text{ny} \). Although, in a phrase introduced by \(\text{wn} \), the moment of reference is closed to the right and set before \(\text{t} \), the moment of reference includes \(\text{t} \) if the phrase is introduced by \(\text{ny} \). The contrast is evident in the following example: the fact that the sceptre was in the King’s hand \(\text{wn m-s hm.f} \) was no more relevant when the text was written down; on the contrary, it was felt important to state that Rawer’s tomb was still in the necropolis at that time \(\text{nty m fr.t-nfr} \).

\[
\begin{align*}
35: & \quad \text{m-s hm.f rj rd n sm r-wr (...) wj hm.f wdt.t m [st] iW.i nty iw jr.iW.i m fr.t-nfr} \\
& \quad \text{« the sceptre which was in His Person’s hand hurt the leg of the sem-priest Rawer (...) His Person has ordered to put (it) in writing in his tomb which is in the necropolis » (Urk. I, 232,8-16)}
\end{align*}
\]

The past converter thus marks a rupture with the moment of speaking, and more generally with what constitutes the relevant world at \(\text{t} \). This explains the modal use of \(\text{wn} \) to express a counterfactual event. The pattern \(\text{wn lw.f fr sgm} \) in Late Egyptian to convey counterfactuality is very well known \(\text{cf. joue-r-ait} \) in French, for a typologically close formation \(\text{38} \).

### 4.6 Syntax

Temporal instructions can be conveyed through syntax. This has been poorly studied so far. As an example, one can consider what happens in Late Egyptian relative clauses in \textit{discourse} \(\text{44} \). Circumstantial phrases introduced by \(\text{lw} \) express a relative time, but an absolute

\[
\text{come }\] and \(\text{fhr} \) to fall \(\text{mr} \), or to express the end of a processus \(\text{pri} \) to go out \(\text{mr} \), \(\text{pfr} \) to reach \(\text{mr} \) and \(\text{fhr} \) to end \(\text{mr} \).)

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\[
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Future III with the circumstantial converter lw (lw lw f r sgm; see below). The situation can be prototypically figured as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T3</th>
<th>&gt;</th>
<th>main sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>circumst. (perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>circumst. (adverb)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40: *mn lw.l r hpr m s.t lw.k lm.s*  
«I will not stay in any place where you will be » (LES 16,5-6)

41: *l.r.l d.t lw.t.ply br 1/2 sp 2 sp 2, lw.f 3w.w*  
«you’ll let come back this great ship only when completely unloaded » (KRI III, 504,3-4)

- Main sentence in the future + lw + Future III: the moment of reference of the circumstantial phrase includes the moment of reference of the main sentence, or it can be posterior; in either case, it is set after T3: MR(rel) < ou > MR(main) => MR(rel) > T3. As noted above, this construction and the preceding one are complementary. The situation can be prototypically figured as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T3</th>
<th>&gt;</th>
<th>main sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>circumstantial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42: *mnw.k 3z p s y 3 p l (...)* *ntw.k tld n.s lw lw.k gm.s r tr nly.k wpw.t lm.s*  
« and you shall receive this bark (...) and you shall take care of it, for you shall find it (later) to do your missions with it » (LRL 10,4-5)

The circumstantial Future III is frequent in negative to connect two sentences in TIP texts:

43: *lw.n d.i. by m.p-jw lw.k ts m lb f-gb 3, s*  
« we will put another man or woman in her place in substitution, and we will not put her in their place in substitution » (P. Turin 1983, R° 89-92 = OAD, pl. XIX)

- The pattern Future III + lw + Future III is thus clearly distinct from the pattern Future III + lw + Present I, and from the pattern Present I + lw + Future III, where the moment of reference of the circumstantial phrase is set after T3 and after the moment of reference of the main sentence. In the following example, one should also pay attention to the modal nuances:

44: *twi d.l.n s.ply 1/23 br p[ly]x 3 s*  
« I give her my 2/3 in addition of her third, and nor her son, nor her daughter won’t speak against the plan I have done for her today » (KRI VI, 741,14)

4.7 Lexical means

Time can be specified by lexical means, like TEM-P. As with aspect, they can help fixing an absolute or a relative time.

45: *r-nty p[y] 5*s* t twt spr: <tw> r l (...)* m h3 t-ep 10 lbd 1 3m w sww 25  
« this letter of you has reached me (...) in year 10, 1st month of Shemu, day 25 » (LRL 17,10-11)

46: *br-br hpr-s*  
«and, after, I gave him a skin » (KRI IV, 229,1)

4.8 Intonation patterns

I only mention here the all important and very powerful role of intonation in structuring intra- and extra-clausal links (Oréal 2002). The hieroglyphic writing system is completely insensitive to intonation. It thus gives the misleading impression that Egyptian sentences are loosely concatenated without structure, which would obviously make Egyptian a typologically curious, a trend already too familiar in the discipline, unfortunately.

It is often the case that several of the points discussed above are simultaneously present in a sentence. For instance, in ex. 33 above, the instructions given by the sequential (*šp*n.f fr sgm), the level of enunciation (narration), and the TEM-P point in the same direction.

To this list, one should add other criteria whose links with time are much looser, but essential nonetheless for a correct understanding. They do not primarily aim at expressing time, but they display some statistically demonstrable correlations with time (Winand 2000, 2006b: 409-434):

- temporal implications of aspect,
- temporal implications of actionality classes,
- temporal implications of some constructions according to their polarity or their pragmatic force,
- the use by the hearer/reader of what I call the *infractions directionnelles* (*±* directional implications) for reconstructing the correct sequence of events as thought of by the speaker.

The correlations of the first three points with time expression can be summed up in a table like the one below. The focus here is the organisation of narration. The main division is a pragmatic one, between foreground and background constructions. Within the foreground constructions, there is a syntactic distinction between initial and intermediary constructions. From this, it is quite easy to establish a connection with a temporal system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predication</th>
<th>Initial constr.</th>
<th>Intermed. constr.</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verbal</td>
<td>verbal</td>
<td>verbal / non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>acc. résultatif / ponctuel</td>
<td>acc. ponctuel</td>
<td>acc. résultatif / inaccompli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actionality</td>
<td>activities / events</td>
<td>events</td>
<td>all kind of process, including non-verbal process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarity</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive / negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>indicative</td>
<td>indicative</td>
<td>indicative / subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enonciative level</td>
<td>unmarked</td>
<td>unmarked</td>
<td>marked / unmarked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One has to keep in mind that these are only statistically founded correlations. There is no automatic correspondence between, say, a negative construction and background information. There are of course some instances of negative patterns in foreground, but this is very rare and it always conveys a special meaning. In Late Egyptian, the negative sequential (*lw*f fr tm sgm) remains exceptional. When one bothers to mention what did not happen, it is usually because the course of events is not what the narrator expected to happen. The negative
sequential thus implies some emphasis, with an adversative side-meaning. The following example, with the adjunct m p.y.f 'shr, is a good illustration of this strategy:

47: lw.f hr spr r p.y.f pr
lw.f hr gn p.y.f l.m.t s.t 'di
lw.f 3m dl.3.mw he dr.t f.m p.y.f 'shr

"and he reached his home, and he found his wife lying down, as if sick. She did not put water over her hands as it was his custom" (LES 13,14-16)

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