

Ignorance and Forgetfulness in Late Egyptian and Classical Egyptian from the New Kingdom until the 26th Dynasty

A Lexical Study

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Abstract

The conceptual domain of cognition in Ancient Egyptian is realized linguistically through numerous lexemes and expressions. Following Fortescue², these lexical units can be organized around five pivot-concepts that appear to consistently emerge cross-linguistically and define subdomains within cognition. These subdomains are: knowing, understanding, intending, remembering and thinking, to which a sixth notion attention³ has here been added. The present study focuses on three verbs with negative meanings in relation to the subdomains knowing and remembering: *hm* “be ignorant”, *smh* “forget” and *mhj* “be forgetful, forget”, as well as the negative constructions neg. + *rh* “not know”. The aim of this article is to show that the semantics of these lexical units are interconnected with contextual para-synonymy and complementarity relations.

1 Introduction

1.1 The cognition domain and its subdivisions

The main goal of the present article is to present as case study a para-synonymic network made of three negative verbs in Ancient Egyptian related to the semantic domain COGNITION: *hm* (to be ignorant, to ignore), *smh* (to forget), and *mhj* (to be forgetful, to forget). They have been selected for their behaving in some contexts as para-synonyms, which reveals the semantic proximity of some of their respective senses. They also function as para-antonyms to one or several cognition verbs. As the scope of this article is limited to the aforementioned case studies, I will not at this juncture give an exhaustive overview of the COGNITION domain as conceptually and linguistically realized in Egyptian. This will be the topic of a forthcoming publication⁴. However, a few theoretical notions and a glimpse at the “big picture” are needed to fully grasp the pertinence of the case studies.

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2 Fortescue (2001).

3 Lindsay (2020).

4 The present article is part of ~~my ongoing~~ research project about Cognition and cognition related verbs in Late Egyptian (funded by the F.R.S.-FNRS).

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

Indeed, they have for example attracted a lot of attention for their subjectivizing and inter-subjectivizing functions in formal and functional linguistics⁵. Semantically, they have well-known applications in expressing epistemic modality and, pragmatically, they express a subjective standpoint (“I think that...”)⁶. Cognition verbs have also been studied in recent years from cross-linguistic and pragmaticalisation perspectives⁷.

Another point of view, adopted here, is the one of semantics and semantic typology⁸. Indeed, a precise description of the inner organization of the semantic domain of COGNITION as well as of the relations between the different lexemes pertaining to that domain for ancient Egyptian allows for comparison with other world languages. More specifically, the domain of cognition, due to the highly abstract nature of the notions it encompasses, is the seat of numerous inter-field extensions from other semantic domains such as perception, action, motion, volition, etc. Indeed, many lexemes expressing cognition are a result of metaphor or metonymy induced polysemy. Egyptian data thus allow for comparison with previous works on trans-field extension with cognition as target domain, its link with the hierarchy of senses⁹ as well as embodied cognition in a more general way¹⁰.

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

As mentioned earlier, in some languages, the domain of cognition is defined more finely than in others (see the parallel established by Fortescue with Rosch’s taxonomic categorization¹¹). All of them though appear to have at least one lexical unit referring to mental activity unavailable to external observation¹².

In the current research project of which this article is part, the basic subdivisions proposed by Fortescue (2001) are used as the main frame of reference as this framework has

5 Fetzer, A. & Johansson (2010), Brington (2001), Givón (1993).

6 Fetzer, A. & Johansson (2010); Andersen (1996: 313–314).

7 Dostie 2004; Schneider (2007).

8 Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2015).

9 Sweetser (1990); Evans & Wilkins (2010); Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2008); Vanhove (2008); Vanhove & Hamid (2019).

10 Sharifian & al. (2008), Zwaan (2021).

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

12 Fortescue (2001: 15).

been tested on a large corpus of 73 languages. On the basis of these data, according to Fortescue, five subdomains linked to five pivot-concepts appear to consistently emerge cross-linguistically. This means that they all have at least one lexical unit expressing this pivot-concept¹³. These subdomains are KNOWING, UNDERSTANDING, INTENDING, REMEMBERING, and THINKING. Instead of MEANING used by Fortescue, INTENDING has been preferred here because MEANING implies a polysemy (“cognitive process oriented toward the future” and “signification of a word”), which does not as consistently emerge from the data and can therefore lead to ambiguity if chosen as pivot-notion. The issue was already pointed out by Fortescue himself¹⁴, without providing any alternative to MEANING. This terminology was thus applied so far as it is, with a simple disclaimer regarding the ambiguity of the label. As suggested here, this ambiguity can be avoided with the choice of the alternative label ATTENDING. These five subdomains of COGNITION can of course in turn be further subdivided and their boundaries are permeable to different extents in different languages (one can *think* in terms of *remembering*, of *anticipating* etc.)

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

Fortescue’s five categories can be further subdivided in more specific types of knowledge and thinking processes. For that purpose, the theory for teaching and learning developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (A&K)¹⁵ and based on a former categorization by Bloom¹⁶ provides a more refined model whose main categories can be equated with Fortescue’s: KNOW, REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND and INTEND respectively match KNOW, REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND and CREATE found in A&K’s model. The detail of their subcategories for KNOWING and THINKING (in the broad sense of “conceptual process”) is given in Tables 1 and 2. The notion of THINKING in Fortescue (thinking process without projection into the past or the future) can be equated to the categories APPLY, ANALYSE and EVALUATE in A&K. These subcategories are very useful for a more precise classification of (Egyptian) cognition verbs. However, some of the distinctions made between ANALYZE and EVALUATE are not always very clear and therefore some minor amendments might be useful there. Finally, it is also important to note that the core of A&K categorization is based on the opposition KNOWING (as state) vs THINKING (as process). THINKING in A&K is thus also superordinate to THINKING in Fortescue.

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

14 Fortescue (2001: 26).

15 Anderson & Krathwohl (2001).

16 Bloom & al. (1964).

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

In complement to these categories and subcategories, it is proposed here to retain a sixth one, ATTENTION. The notion of ATTENTION has been the object of many definitions in cognitive psychology, neuroscience and even, more recently, machine learning. One of the first scholars to take on this task was William James, pioneer of early experimental psychology and author of the famous quote: “Everyone knows what attention is. It is the taking possession by the mind, in clear, and vivid form, of one out of what seems several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought”¹⁷. Since then, many attempts have been made at defining more precisely the notion of attention but also at quantifying it and at understanding the mental and neural patterns that underlie it. Yet, despite the plurality and vagueness of definitions¹⁸, at least one core quality of attention seems to have reached a consensus: “attention is the flexible control of limited computational resources”¹⁹. Attention is a pre-requirement to learning and knowing, and this translates in its important representation in the Egyptian lexical data, mainly through trans-field metaphorical extension.

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

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

17 James (1890: XI).
18 Hommel & al. (2019).
19 Lindsay (2020).

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

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

1.2 Corpus

The core corpus investigated is made of texts in Late Egyptian and classical Egyptian from the New Kingdom (NK), the Third Intermediate Period (TIP) and the 26th dynasty in the early Late Period (LP). Most of the examples have been gathered from the *Ramses* database²⁰. The core corpus was completed with the data for *hm*, *smh* and *mhj* from the

20 Link to the beta version: <http://ramses.ulg.ac.be>. The core version of the database was used for gathering the data. I hereby sincerely thank the project’s directors for allowing me access to it. Last access: 04/08/2023.

Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae (TLA)²¹, which includes texts from previous and following periods. Examples prior and posterior to the NK-LP timeframe have been considered in a diachronic comparison perspective but have not been treated systematically.

For the cognition domain, 42 verbs²² have been identified so far in Classical Egyptian and Late Egyptian, including 4 verbs carrying a negative meaning²³. To these must be added a set of compound expressions whose exact number has not been established yet. Table 3 below gives an overview of the 38 verbs with a positive meaning²⁴, organised according to Fortescue's five categories to which was added the category ATTENTION. The adequation with the categories of A&K for THINKING are also mentioned. This categorization, applied with all due caution to Egyptian data because of the considerable temporal and cultural gap with our own frames or reference in a modern western society, seems to be actualized quite accurately in the Egyptian lexicon.

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

ATTEND	KNOW	REMEMBER	UNDERSTAND	THINK (APPLY, ANALYSE, EVALUATE)	INTEND
1	ʕm “swallow, learn”				
2		ʕn “come back, remember”			
3	ʕrk “tie together, understand, be wise”		ʕrk “tie together, understand, be wise”		
4				jb “think”	jb “wish”
5					w3w3 “plot”
6				wpj “judge”	
7			wḥʕ “untie, understand”		
8				wḥ3 “search, want”	

21 <https://aaew.bbaw.de/tla>

22 Some of them have been already identified and studied by Winand (2013). He focuses on verbs expressing cognition as derived sense resulting from metaphor induced polysemies in earlier Egyptian. However, he adopts a strictly intra-linguistic perspective and does not touch upon more general theory about cognition nor semantic typology.










23 The list may not be exhaustive yet as the project is still ongoing.

24 The verbs are listed in the alphabetical order of the Egyptian transliteration.


ATTEND	KNOW	REMEMBER	UNDERSTAND	THINK (APPLY, ANALYSE, EVALUATE)	INTEND
9				<i>wḏꜥ</i> “judge”	
10	<i>ptr</i> “see, look, pay attention”				
11	<i>m33</i> “see, look, pay attention”				
12				<i>nḥb</i> “assign, decide on”	
13				<i>nk3</i> “think, reflect on”	
14					<i>ngmgm</i> “plot”
15	<i>rḥ</i> “know”				
16	<i>rs</i> “be awake, watch”				
17				<i>ḥn</i> “equip, organize”	
18				<i>ḥḥj</i> “seek, analyze, look for”	
19				<i>ḥsb</i> “calculate, identify”	
20				<i>ḥ3j</i> “measure, evaluate”	
21				<i>ḥmt</i> : intend, plan, hope	
22	<i>gmj</i> “find”				
23				<i>k3j</i> “think, intend”	<i>k3j</i> “think, intend”
24	<i>s33</i> “understand, be wise”		<i>s33</i> “understand, be wise”		

	ATTEND	KNOW	REMEMBER	UNDERSTAND	THINK (APPLY, ANALYSE, EVALUATE)	INTEND
25					<i>sjʒ</i> “recognize, discern”	
26					<i>sjp</i> “inspect, examine, consider”	
27		<i>sbk</i> “be wise, thoughtful”				
28				<i>spd</i> “be sharp, insightful”	<i>spd</i> “be sharp, insightful”	
29					<i>smtr</i> “examine, question”	<i>smtr</i> “examine, question” (?)
30						<i>sr</i> “predict, foresee”
31			<i>shʒ</i> “remember”			
32						<i>ss</i> “write, compose, create”
33				<i>stp</i> “choose, select”	<i>stp</i> “choose, select”	
34	<i>sdm</i> “ear, listen, pay attention, understand”		<i>sdm</i> “hear, listen, pay attention, understand”			
35					<i>šʒ</i> “elect, assign”	<i>šʒ</i> “elect, assign”
36		<i>šsʒ</i> “be instructed, wise”				
37	<i>dʒj</i> “see, watch, notice”				<i>dʒj</i> “see, watch, notice” ?	
38		<i>dʒr</i> “seek, scrutinize, create”			<i>dʒr</i> “seek, scrutinize, create”	<i>dʒr</i> “seek, scrutinize, create”

Table 4 | Basic information on *mhj*, *smh*, *hm* and neg + *rh*

	Verb	Standard translation	Total Number of attestations	TLA	Attestations core corpus	Most common classifier(s)	Classifier category	Subdomain of COGNITION
1	<i>mhj</i>	forget	7	9	10	 G37	SMALL/ NEGATIVE	NOT REMEMBER
2	<i>smh</i>	forget	45	52	55	 G37  D35  A2  F18-A2	SMALL/ NEGATIVE NEGATIVE ACTION INGESTION/ SPEECH/ COGNITION (+) EXTERIORISE/ EXPRESS	NOT REMEMBER
3	<i>hm</i>	Be ignorant, ignore	105	319 ^a	175	 D35  D35:Y1  G37 D35:G37	NEGATIVE ACTION NEGATIVE ACTION + ABSTRACT NEGATIVE ACTION + SMALL/ NEGATIVE ABSTRACT	NOT KNOW
4	Neg + <i>rh</i>	Not know	ca. 282 ^b	ca. 394	ca.325	 Y1	ABSTRACT	NOT KNOW

- a The number of attestations for *hm* appears very high compared to the other two lexemes. However, it must be noted that many attestations are very formulaic, and therefore repetitive.
- b The number of attestations for the negative constructions with *rh* was obtained by a search on collocations through the databases, which is not as precise as a simple search on single lexemes. Minor inaccuracies may thus have occurred, hence the mention “ca.” The total number of attestations for *rh* (with and without negation) is 1643 in the TLA and 1094 in Ramses. Last access to the database on 04/08/2023. The legacy version was used as the new TLA does not allow yet for a search on collocations.

The present study focuses on the para-synonymic relations between three verbs with negative meanings related to the subdomains of KNOWING and REMEMBERING: *hm* “to be ignorant, to ignore”, *smh* “to forget” and *mhj* “to be forgetful, to forget” and the constructions involving *rh* “to know” in a negative pattern (neg + *rh*). These verbs have been chosen because they constitute a system and their semantics show points of contacts for some of their senses. As a consequence, they function in some contexts as para-synonymic lexemes. They also function as asymmetrical antonyms to one or several cognition verbs from the aforementioned subdomains. “Asymmetrical” here means that, for none of them, their semantics seem to match perfectly the semantics of their closest positive counterpart. In a perspective of exhaustiveness, one should here mention that a fourth verb with negative meaning has been identified so far,  *swg3* “to be stupid” (Wb 4, 76.8). It will not be treated here as it is not part of the same system of semantic complementary oppositions as *hm*, *smh*, *mhj* and neg + *rh* but completes the list of identified verbs with negative meanings pertaining to the COGNITION domain. An overview of basic information regarding *hm*, *smh*, *mhj* and neg + *rh* is provided in Table 4. One should note that the number of attestations given for *Ramses* and the *TLA* is the total of attestations for the given lexemes currently encoded in each database, all periods and language stages included. The *core corpus* number corresponds to the total of attestations in Late Egyptian and Egyptian de Tradition gathered in both databases, after overlaps have been weeded out.

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

Table 5 | List of verbs with positive meaning related to COGNITION in para-antonymic relation with *hm*, *smh* and *mhj*

Verbs with a positive meaning	Verbs with a negative meaning
<i>ʕm</i> (learn, know)	<i>hm</i> (be ignorant, ignore)
<i>rh</i> (know)	<i>hm</i> (be ignorant, ignore) <i>smh</i> (forget) <i>mhj</i> (be forgetful, forget)
<i>sh3</i> (remember)	<i>smh</i> (forget) <i>mhj</i> (be forgetful, forget) <i>hm</i> (be ignorant, ignore)
<i>ss3</i> (be wise, knowledgeable)	<i>hm</i> (be ignorant, ignore) <i>smh</i> (forget) <i>mhj</i> (be forgetful, forget)
<i>rdj m jb/h3ty</i> (place in the heart = memorize)	<i>smh</i> (forget)
<i>rdj hr r</i> (turn the face toward = dedicate oneself to)	<i>smh</i> (forget)

1.3 State of the art: *hm*, *smh* and *mhj* in the current lexicography tools

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

hmj/hm: to be ignorant, to ignore

Standard spelling (as provided in dictionaries): 

Verb category: 3ae inf, later 2-rad

Distribution in diachrony and by genres:

The verb *hm* is attested from the Old Kingdom until the Greco-Roman period. From the NK, it is found both in Late Egyptian and in Classical Egyptian (or better Egyptian de tradition), in all literary genres. Based on Vycichl's list²⁵, it does not seem to have survived in Coptic. The distribution of attestations in *Ramses* and the *TLA* is as shown in Table 4, as well as the main classifiers and their corresponding conceptual categories.

The entries listed in existing dictionaries and databases for *hm* are the following ones:

Wörterbuch (Wb 3, 278.5–280.5): *nicht wissen*

- with object
- with infinitive
- negated, with preposition: *hr* “not to forget someone” (“jemanden nicht vergessen”)
- with preposition *r* “nicht wissen”

Hannig (2006: 643, 23414–23440):

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

hm is also signalled in *Hannig* as antonym of *rh*.

Ramses: ignorer

lemma number: *hm*_1006_30218

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

lemma number: 116910

²⁵ Vycichl (1983).

smḥ: to forget

Standard spelling (as provided in dictionaries): 

Verb category: caus. 2-rad. (causative of *ḥm* “to be ignorant”)

Distribution in diachrony and by genre:

The verb *smḥ* is attested from the Old Kingdom until the Greco-Roman period. From the NK, it is found both in Late Egyptian and in Classical Egyptian (Égyptien de Tradition). It seems mostly attested in literary texts and it also present in letters. It does not seem to be attested in administrative documents. The verb *smḥ* did not survive in Demotic²⁶ nor Coptic²⁷. The distribution of attestations in *Ramses* and the *TLA* is as shown in Table 4, as well as the main classifiers and their corresponding conceptual categories. The entries listed in existing dictionaries and databases for *smḥ* are the following ones:

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

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

Also listed as antonym of *sh3* “to remember”.

Hannig (2006: 767, 28156–28162):

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

Ramses (lemma number: *smḥ*_100_1880): *oublier*

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

mḥj: be forgetful, to forget

Standard spelling (as provided in dictionaries): 

Verb category: 3ae inf.

Distribution in diachrony and by genre:

The verb *mḥj* is attested from the First Intermediate Period until the Late period. From the NK, it is found in Late Egyptian and in Classical Egyptian (Égyptien de Tradition). The verb *mḥj* is relatively rare and its use seems to be restricted to texts of the tradition: royal texts, hymns, teachings. Vycichl²⁸ suggests a possible link with the Coptic word **MOEICE** (S), **MAEICE** (AL), **MAZEIE** (L) “miracle” and **P-MOEICE** “to be astonished”. The distribution of attestations in *Ramses* and the *TLA* is as shown in Table 4, as well as the main

²⁶ Does not appear in CDD. However, *shḥm* is attested (CDD: 377).

²⁷ Does not appear in Vycichl (1983).

²⁸ Vycichl (1983: 110).

classifiers and their corresponding conceptual categories. The entries listed in existing dictionaries and databases for *mhj* are the following ones:

Wörterbuch (Wb 2, 113.7–11)

- *mhj jb/h3ty* = vergesslich sein
- *mhj hr* = etwas vergessen, eine Person vergessen

Hannig:

- vergessen
- vergesslich sein (+ *jb/h3ty*)

Ramses: oublier

lemma number: *mhi_100_6805*

TLA: vergessen, vergesslich sein

lemma number: 73070

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

1.4 Ignorance and forgetfulness: two interconnected subdomains

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

IGNORING and FORGETTING, however, are also attested cross-linguistically as active processes implying a high degree of control by the subject on the action, and therefore moving the subject from a role of experiencer to one of agent. This active component consists in the fact of 1) purposely pretending not to have knowledge or awareness of something/someone in the case of IGNORING and 2) refusing or avoiding retrieving and using information previously stored in the memory in the case of FORGETTING. In both cases, the antagonistic behaviour consists in denying/not acknowledging the detention of information and the capability of retrieving it.

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

2 Uses and senses of *hm*, *smh* and *mhj* in context

2.1 Case 1: *hm* vs neg + *rh*

Knowledge is usually divided in 3 subdomains²⁹: factual knowledge (know what), procedural knowledge (know how) and personal acquaintance (know someone). Their negative counterparts are expressed by *hm* and neg + *rh*, according to a different yet complementary pattern. Each scenario encountered in the corpus is listed and the uses of *hm* and neg + *rh* contrasted below.

2.1.1 Experienced ignorance

2.1.1.1 Being ignorant of/not knowing a fact

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

The semantics of *hm* and neg + *rh* partially overlap for the expression of “not knowing”, “not having acquired knowledge”. The knowledge conveyed here is factual: not knowing something, a fact. However, the nuances conveyed by *hm* and neg + *rh* respectively are not exactly identical. *hm* seems to more often refer to a statement of ignorance with a general validity: in ex. 1, the future is unknown, under any circumstance, a semantic feature that adds to the use of the stative. In the opposition neg + *rh* vs *hm*, the latter appears to be the marked term of the pair: its use is preferred for statements with a general lasting validity and contextually independent, while neg + *rh* can be used for both general statements and negation of knowledge pertaining to specific facts or events, related to specific circumstances, to a given conjecture.

ex. 1 *p3* *z* *hm(.w)* *dw3w* *mj jh*

ART:SG.M man be_ignorant:STAT tomorrow like Q

The man does not know how tomorrow will be

Amenemope³⁰, P. BM 10474, 19, 13

ex. 2 *hy-r- bw* *rh* *=k* *shrw* *n* *ntr*

since NEG know:PFV=2SG.M plan-PL of god

Since you do not know the plans of god

Amenemope, P. BM 10474, 23, 8

ex. 3 *rmw* *jw* *wn* *bw* *rh* *=w* *sy* *hr* *=j*

people-PL SBRD was(AUX) NEG know:PFV=3PL 3SG.F on=1SG

The people who did not know this about me

Inscription of Taharqa, c. 4³¹

²⁹ Fortescue (2001) and previous bibliography.

³⁰ Laisney (2007).

³¹ Voir Winand (1992: ex. 558).

ex. 4 *jw bw rh <=j> p3 nty p3 3h-hw.t*
MCM NEG know:PFV=1SG ART:SG.M REL-M.SG ART:SG.M shaft-F.PL
n t3y=j mch.t jm
of POSS: F.SG=1SG tomb-F here:ADV
For I did not know where the shaft of my tomb was

O. BM EA 5624, r° 6 = KRI V, 475, 12

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

ex. 5 *y3 twn (hr) dj.t smj.t*
indeed PRS-1PL on give:INF go:INF
jw=n (hr) htht
SBRD=1PL on go-backward:INF
jw bw rh =n s.t rd.wj=n
SBRD NEG know:PFV=1PL place-F leg-M.DU=1PL
Indeed, we push ourselves to go forward; while we also go backward; for we do not know where to step

P. BM 10375, v° 13 = LRL 47, 15

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

ex. 6 *mw md bw rh =tw phr.w s.t-hm.t w3.tw <r>*
water deep NEG know:PFV=3SG border-PL woman-F be-away:STAT to
h3y=s
husband=3SG.F

A woman away from her husband, it is a deep water, one cannot know its borders

Ani³², P. Boulaq 4, 16, 14

A recurrent case: not knowing someone's name

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

32 Quack (1994).


- ex. 7 *p3 hm rn =f jmw.w n =f r*
 ART:M.SG be_ignorant:PTCP name =3SG.M lamentation-PL for =3SG.M day
nb
 every
 The one who does not know his name (= Amun-Râ), lamentations for him every day
 O. BM EA 29559³³, r^o 13
- ex. 8 *n{n} rh.n ntr:w rn =f*
 NEG know:PFV god-PL name=3SG.M
 The gods cannot know his name
 P. Turin 1993³⁴, l. 9

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

In the first example below, *hm* is used without a direct object to refer to a general state of ignorance, which is considered part of someone's qualities or condition on behavioural basis. This nuance of usual condition is reinforced by the use of the participle³⁵.

- ex. 9 *bn twk m j3w hm bn twk m dd*
 NEG 2SG.M in old man be_ignorant:PTCP NEG PRS-2SG.M in young_man
swg3
 stupid
 You are not an ignorant old man; you are not a stupid young man

O. Gardiner 320³⁶, r^o 3

In the satirical letter of Hori, the alternation of *hm* and neg + *rh* runs  thread through the text, which plays recurrently and ironically with the concepts of knowledge and ignorance. In all cases, the object of knowledge is unspecified. Different strategies are used for that purpose: a predication of non-existence in the first example, the non-expression of the object in the second example and the use of *nkt* "something", undefined by essence, in the third example. The opposition between *hm* and neg + *rh* is also interesting here in the context of hierarchical relations between Hori and his interlocutor Amenemope. Indeed, while Hori points out – ironically – that there is nothing that Amenemope does not know (*hm*), the reported speech of Amenemope about Hori uses neg + *rh*. This implies that, even if some of the flaws pointed out by Hori's interlocutor against him were true, they are contingent and confined to specific facts. On the contrary, Amenemope's ignorance is phrased as being inherent, which is thus a more offensive statement.

³³ Černý & Gardiner (1957 [= HO, I]: 24, pl. 89).

³⁴ Gardiner (1935: 116–118, pl. 64–65).

³⁵ One cannot exactly talk about inalienable quality here because it would apply only to a nominal predicate.

³⁶ HO, I, 26, pl. 97, 2.

- ex. 10 *sš stp ḥ3ty w3ḥ ndw.t-r3 ḥꜥj tw n*
 scribe chose:PTCP heart place:PTCP advice rejoice:IPVF 3SG of
ḥn.t=f
 speech-F=3SG.M
ḥft sdm=w ḥmw n mdw-ntr
 against hear:IPFV=3PL artisan of word-god
nn ḥm=f
 not-existent be_ignorant:REL=3SG.M
 The scribe perspicacious of judgement, the one who delivers advice, one rejoices
 when hearing his speeches, expert in divine words, there is nothing that he does not
 know.
 Hori, P. Anastasi 1³⁷,1,1

- ex. 11 *jry=k shrj-ꜥ=j m sš dd=k*
 do:PFV=2SG.M underestimate:INF=1SG in scribe say:PFV=2SG.M
bw rh [=f]³⁸
 NEG know:PFV=3SG
 You underestimated me as a scribe when you said “he does not know anything”
 Hori, P. Anastasi 1,8,8

- ex. 12 *m-jrj dj.t dd tw <n/r>=k*
 PROH-do give:INF say:SBJV 3sg to=2SG.M
wn {m}nkt ḥm=k
 existant something be_ignorant:REL=2SG.M
 Do not allow that one would say about you “there is here something that you do
 not know”
 Hori, pAnastasi 1,14,7

2.1.1.3 Being unaware

a) Being unaware of the existence/nature of something

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

- ex. 13 *ddm.n wj ḥ.wt nn rh.n=j sw*
 sting:PFV 1SG thing-F.COLL NEG know:PFV=1SG 3SG.M
 Something that I do not know stung me, (it is no fire, it is no water; my heart is
 burning)
Legend of Isis and Rê, O. Queen’s College 1116³⁹, r° 12

³⁷ Fischer-Elfert (1983).

³⁸ Other versions of the text have *rh=k*.

³⁹ HO, II.

- ex. 14 *h3s.wt hm.w km.t*
 hilland-F.PL be_ignorant:PTCP Egypt-F
dj=j hnd sn hm=k mj swd-hr mj s3b
 give=1SG threaten 3PL Majesty=2SG.M like recreation like jackal
 The foreign [redacted] tries who were ignorant of Egypt, I cause your Majesty to threaten
 them as recreation like a jackal

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

b) Being unaware of a situation

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

- ex. 15 *y3 jh p3y=s wstn <m> p3 wd3 n*
 indeed Q POSS:M.SG=3SG.F walk:INF in ART:SG.M granary of
pr-3 3.w.s m hm=sn
 pharaoh life, prosperity, health in be_ignorant:INF=3PL
 Indeed, why is she walking freely in the granaries of pharaoh l.p.h. without them
 knowing it (lit: in their ignorance)
 O. Ashmolean 1945.37+1945.33+O. Michaelides 90, r° 19 = KRI II, 381, 15

- ex. 16 *h3.n=sn k m-hnw [redacted] m3 n hm=f*
 CJVB:ANT=3PL enter:STAT inside ART:SG.M army of Majesty=3SG.M
jw=sn hr m3 jw bw rh =sn
 SBRD=3PL on walk:INF SBRD NEG know:PFV=3PL
 They entered the army of His Majesty while they were walking, them being
 unaware

Qadesh, Bulletin (L2), 19 = Kuentz §80 = KRI II, 118, 14

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

- ex. 17 *dw wnm z bw.t=f m hm=f*
 bad eat:SUBJ man abomination-F=3SG [redacted] n be_ignorant:INF=3SG.M
 Bad: if a man eats his abomination while be [redacted] ignorant

P. Chester Beatty 3⁴⁰, r° 1–11

40 Gardiner (1935).

2.1.1.4 Not being able to: *hm* and neg + *rh* + infinitive

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

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

- ex. 18 *bw rh =f b3k*
 NEG know:PFV=3SG.M work:INF
 He was not able to work (on a specific day)
 O. Caire CG 25785⁴¹, r° 8 (list of workers on duty)

- ex. 19 *hm rdj.t s3 hr jr.n=k*
 be_ignorant:PTCP give:INF back on do:REL=2SG.M
 Who does not know how to turn the back on what you accomplished
 Hymn to Amun, P. Berlin P 3049⁴², 5, 9

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

- ex. 20 *hm=k jsft*
 be_ignorant:SBJV=2SG.M evil
 So that you do not know/ignore evil
 O. BM 29549⁴³, r° 1

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

⁴¹ Černý (1935: 88, 110 ; pl. CV).

⁴² Gülden (2001).

⁴³ Demarée (2002: 25–26; pl. 77–78).

2.1.2 Active ignorance

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

This sense of *hm* is sometimes associated with an oblique expression of the object.⁴⁴ The oblique construction is not systematic and it is attested *only* when *hm* bears the sense of “active ignorance”. The verb can then be followed with: 1) the preposition *hr* when the object is an animate (a person) of inferior or equal status and 2) the preposition *r* when the object is an animate of higher status or an inanimate.

2.1.2.1 Actively ignore something

hm r “ignore toward/against”

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

In the first example below, the object of *hm* is *ntr*, an animate of higher status than its subject, *j3w*.

ex. 21 *bn mntk j3w hm=f r ntr*
 NEG 2SG.M old man be_ignorant:REL=3SG.M to god
bn mntk ʕdd swg3 hm=f ʕnh
 NEG 2SG.M young man stupid be_ignorant:REL=3SG.M life
 (It is death in which I find myself with you/because of you!) You are not an old
 man who ignores the god; you are not a young man who is ignorant of life
 pTurin A, v° 4, 10 = LEM 124, 14

In the next two examples, the object of *hm* is an inanimate (respectively *sš* “writing” and *mw.t* “death”).

ex. 22 *hn-ḏd twk ʕš3 m ʕk prj*
 COMP PRS-2SG.M be_numerous:STAT in enter:INF go_out:INF
jw hm=k r sš
 MCM be_ignorant=2SG.M to write:INF
jth=k <tw> m-dj=j r sdm
 pull=2SG.M 2SG.M with=1SG to hear:INF
 You are restless, while you neglect the writing; you pull away from me regarding
 listening
 pLansing, 3, 4 = LEM 103, 4

⁴⁴ On the oblique expression of the object in Egyptian, mainly focusing on the use of *m*, with some typological considerations, see Winand (2015).

ex. 23 *m-jrj hm r mw.t*
 PROH-do be_ignorant:INF to death-F
 Do not ignore death

oDeM 1730⁴⁵, r° x+2

2.1.2.2 Actively ignore someone, denying attention to a person

hm hr “ignore upon”

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

ex. 24 *m-jrj hm hr rmt rh =k*
 PROH-do be_ignorant on man know:REL=2SG.M
 (if you are powerful and have become mighty), do not ignore a man that you know
 pChester Beatty 4⁴⁶, v° 2,1

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

ex. 25 *jmy=k hm hr s3h.w=k hrw.w*
 not-be:IMP=2SG.M be_ignorant:INF on neighbour-PL=2SG.M day-PL
gbw=sn
 be-weak:IPFV=3PL
 May you not neglect your neighbours/close relatives when they are in misery
 oPetrie 11⁴⁷, v° 6

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

ex. 26 *js p3 n jt hm hr s3=f*
 Q ART:SG.M of father be_ignorant:INF on son=3SG.M
 Is it the deed of a father, to be neglecting his son?
 Qadesh, poem (L1), 26 = Kuentz 93 = KRI II, 34, 8

2.1.2.3 Rare cases *hm* + direct object, with the meaning “actively neglect, not pay attention to”

In some rare cases, this meaning can be obtained without resorting to the construction *hm* + preposition (*hr/r*). Two scenarios seem to be attested: when the object of *hm* is a suffix

⁴⁵ Gasse (1990).

⁴⁶ Gardiner (1935).

⁴⁷ Hagen (2005).

pronoun (see below, ex. 27), or in the expression *hm jb* “to neglect, to be (purposely) oblivious of the heart” (ex. 28).

ex. 27 *hm=k jb=k r ʕnh*
You neglected your heart at the time of taking an oath oDeM 1595⁴⁸, 2

ex. 28 *jb=k (hr) hm=j*
heart=2SG.M (upon) be_ignorant:INF=1SG
(One told me that you abandoned the writings, that, lost in pleasures, you turned away from the divine words; and that you had abandoned this function of Thot).
Your heart ignores me (...). pAnastasi 5, 6, 2 = LEM 58, 4

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

hm and *neg + rh* can both have a person (or animate in general) as object, but their meanings are not identical. *NEG + rh* refers to not knowing as not being acquainted with/not having met a specific person, while *hm* rather refers to actively ignoring or not paying attention to someone with direct or oblique construction of the object (*hm hr*), at least in Late Egyptian and Egyptien de tradition (ex. 32)⁴⁹.

ex. 29 *jw bw rh =j rwdw hʕy*
MCM NEG know:PFV=1SG administrator person name
As I do not know the administrator Khai
Inscription of Mes, N7 = KRI III, 426, 9

ex. 30 *m-mjtt jr wʕr wʕ rmt r-pw rmt 2*
likewise if flee:SBIV one man or man 2
jw bw rh.tw=w
SBRD NEG know:PASS =3PL
Likewise, if one man flees, or two, who are not known
Hittite peace treaty (Ramses II and Hattusil III), KRI II, 229, 10

In the example below, the verb *rh* is used in the vetitive. As seen earlier, the use of the vetitive empowers the subject with control on the action.⁵⁰

ex. 31 *m mh jb=k m [sn] m rh hnms*
PROH trust:INF heart=2SG.M in brother PROH know:INF friend
Do not trust a brother, do not acquaint a friend
Teaching of Amenemhat⁵¹, oBM EA 05623, r° 6

48 Posener (1980: 77, pl. 47–47a).

49 cf. infra, B.

50 On the use of some grammatical patterns to reinforce the subject’s agentivity, see Winand (2021: fn. 77, 6.2.2, exs. 76–77).

51 Adrom (2006).

neg + *rh* does not seem to be attested in the sense of “actively ignoring/neglecting” acquired knowledge or “not paying attention” to someone. This sense is specific to the semantics of *hm* only, constructed with *hr* (ex. 30) or, more rarely, with direct object (cf. supra ex. 28, *hm=j*):

ex. 32 *jmy=k* *hm* *hr s3h.w=k* *hrw.w*
 not-be:IMP=2SG.M be_ignorant:INF on neighbour-PL=2SG.M day-PL
gbw=sn
 be-weak:IPFV=3PL
 May you not neglect your neighbours/close relatives when they are in misery
 oPetrie 11⁵², v° 6

2.2 Case 2: *smh* “to forget”, “to forgive”, “to actively turn the attention away from”

The primary sense of *smh* is “to forget” as failing to remember, experience an incapacity to memorize or to retrieve a previously stored/learned information. Etymologically, *smh* is a causative built on *hm* “be ignorant”⁵³ and went through an evolution from *s-hm* to *s-mh*. It thus initially means “cause to be ignorant”, which developed into “forget”. In addition to that, *smh* can contextually take other senses. As it is the case for *hm*, a distinction can be made between *experienced* forgetfulness and *active* forgetfulness. In the second case, the subject becomes agent instead of experiencer and gains control over the action. The sense expressed by *smh* in such cases is the one of *purposely* avoiding/refusing to retrieve an information stored in memory. It can have a negative connotation (neglecting, dismissing), similarly to *hm*, but also a positive one (forgiving).

2.2.1 Experienced forgetfulness

2.2.1.1 Forgetting something

In Late Egyptian, *smh* in its primary sense of “experienced forgetfulness” relatively rarely refers to simply forgetting a material object (i.a. leaving it somewhere) or to losing the memory of a fact. Yet, even if recessive, it remains in use. The exs. 33 and 34 below illustrate some of those cases.

ex. 33 *smh* =*f* *n3* *dd=f*
 forget :PFV=3SG.M ART.PL say:REL=3SG.M
 He forgot what he said
 oBM EA 29551⁵⁴, r° 2

⁵² Hagen (2005).

⁵³ Hannig (2006: 767); Wb 4, 243.

⁵⁴ Demarée (2002: 26, pl. 81).

- ex. 34 *smw nb m-^c hrd.w=f smh.n sw wnm.w*
 greens every in-hand child-PL=3SG.M forget:PFV 3SG.M eat:PTCP
 All the greens remain in possession of his children, after the eaters have forgotten
 them⁵⁵ Hymn to the Nile, pSallier 2⁵⁶, 14, 6

In the realm of factual memory/forgetfulness, *smh* most often conveys the sense of 1) forgetting to do something; 2) not thinking about someone (who is dead, out of sight, etc.) any longer. As regards procedural memory/forgetfulness, the sense “forgetting how”, “losing a capability, an aptitude” is also attested. In the next example, *smh* is used as a participle and translates as “the things that have been forgotten”. In the present context, it might refer to actions that should have been performed rather than to something concrete, material.

- ex. 35 *hr m-dj n3 smh=w hr m-dj n3 nty*
 CORD with ART.PL forget:REL.PASS=3PL CORD with ART.PL REL-M.SG
bwpw=w jrj=w
 NEG=3PL do:INF=3PL
hr m-dj n3 nty st (hr) šd =sn
 CORD with ART.PL REL-M.SG 3PL on recite:INF=3PL
 (We will do for *ms-hr*, whose mother is *ns-t3-3*, the one said to be the child of
pn-imm, everything that is in this oracle) with all the things that have been forgotten
 and all the things that have not been done and all the things that are usually recited.
 pTurin 1985⁵⁷, 116

2.2.1.2 Forgetting to do sth.

smh r + inf

When *smh* takes as object an infinitive, it is usually expressed obliquely by means of the preposition *r*. The meaning obtained is “forgetting to” + ACTION. This construction is frequent in amuletic decrees from the TIP, as in examples 36 and 37 below.

- ex. 36 *hr m-dj n3 smh=w r dd=w m-b3h=j*
 CORD with ART.PL forget:REL=3PL to say:INF=3PL in-front=1SG
jw=w (r) nfr
 FUT =3PL FUT be_good:INF
 (as for everything that has been reported in my presence while saying “do them for
 her”) and (all things) that they have forgotten to report in my presence; they will be
 good Neskhonsu, pCaire CGC 58032⁵⁸, 96

⁵⁵ *smw* is a collective in Egyptian.

⁵⁶ Van der Plas (1986: 12, 6).

⁵⁷ Edwards (1960: 73–76 ; pl. XXVII–XXIX).

⁵⁸ Golénisheff (1927: 226).

ex. 37 *jr md.t nb.t j.jr=w hr p3y hrtw*
 TOPZ speech-F every-F do:REL=3PL on DEM:SG.M oracle
hn^c n3 smh=w r jr:t=w hr =f
 with ART:PL forget:REL=3PL to do:INF=3PL on =3SG.M
 As for every word that they included in this oracle as well as all the things that they forgot to include in it (I will make them good for *t3-b3k.t-n-hr*, the daughter of *tyty-šrj*)
 Oracular amuletic decree, pOIM 25622⁵⁹, 96

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

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

ex. 38 *smh.w h3w =sn nb*
 forget:PASS relatives=3PL every
bw jr=w n=sn mhr.w m hmty wd.w jrm bj3-n-p.t
 NEG do:PFV=3PL for=3PL pyramid-pl in copper stela-PL with iron-of-sky
 All their relatives have been forgotten, they did⁶⁰ not make for them copper
 pyramids and celestial iron stelae pChester Beatty 4⁶¹, v^o 2, 7

ex. 39 *st šm smh.w rn =sn*
 3PL.C go:STAT forget:PASS name =3PL
m sš.w j.djdj sh3.tw=w
 AGT writing-PL give:PTCP remember:PASS=3PL
 They are gone; their names have been forgotten; it is the writings that allow for
 them to be remembered pChester Beatty 4, v^o 3, 10

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

ex. 40 *hr twk rh.tw n3 nfr.w knw*
 CORD PRS-2SG.M know:STAT ART.PL good-PL numerous
j.jr =j n=k
 do=1SG for=2SG.M
m -jrj smh=w
 PROH-do forget:INF=3PL
 Because you know the many good deeds that I did for you; do not forget them
 pBankes I⁶², v^o 5

59 Edwards (1960: 106–110. Vol. II, pl. XLII–XLIIIa).

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

61 Gardiner (1935).

62 Demarée (2002: 7–9 ; pl. 2–4).

2.2.1.4 Being distracted from something, not paying attention anymore

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

- ex. 41 *jw=s* *hr dj.t* *smh=j* *n mhr*
 SBRD=3SG.F on give:INF forget :SBJV=1SG of sickness
wn m jb=j
 exist:PTCP in heart=1SG
 (She returns to me as the benevolent one), while she causes that I forget the pain/
 sickness that existed in my heart Stele Turin N. 50058⁶³, col. 14

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

The expression appears in situations that are emotionally driven and do not pertain to a rational decision of the subject. The status of experiencer of the subject clearly appears from the cotext, through metaphorical expressions describing the despair of the lovesick woman in terms of experienced physical symptoms of sickness. One shall also note the use of the stative *hpr.kwj*, which has been commented both by Mathieu⁶⁴ and Meltzer before him. Meltzer suggests a stative in dependant use to express a resultative clause, which is quoted by Mathieu but the relation of causality between both clauses does not appear clearly in his translation.⁶⁵

- ex. 42 *k^ck.n {=j}* *hy.t* *jm=j*
 penetrate:PFV=1SG sickness-F within=1SG
hpr.kwj h^c=j wdn
 become:STAT body=1SG heavy:STAT
smh<=j> d.t=j ds=j
 forget:PFV=1SG body-F=1SG own=1SG
 Sickness insinuated itself inside me, so that my body has become weary; I forgot
 my own person pChester Beatty 1⁶⁶, Love Songs, v^o C 4,7

63 Roccati (1972: 94–96, 286).

64 Mathieu (2009: 30 and 43, n. 94).

65 “(...) La maladie s’est insinuée en moi. Mon corps est devenu lourd et j’ai perdu toute conscience” (Mathieu 2009: 30).

66 Mathieu (2009: 25–54, pl. 1–7).

2.2.1.5 Forget how, not to be able anymore

A first point of contact between the semantics of *hm* and *smh* is the sense “not know how”, “not being able”. This sense is rare for both *hm* and *smh* and is attested in two variants of the same passage of the *Teaching of Ani* in examples 43 and 44 below. They were thus likely considered in this specific context as having (quasi-)synonymic meanings. The two verbs indeed express the same outcome, being unable to fight. They both express an inability of retrieving information (not remembering and not knowing anymore). In both cases, the information had been previously learnt and knowledge had been acquired. These two examples show clearly the reminiscence of the etymological link between *hm* and *s-mh*.

ex. 43 *p3* *k3* *h3* *sm3.w* <*m*> *t3* *md.t*
 ART:M.SG bull fight:PTCP kill:PTCP in ART.SG.F stable-F
hm=f *h3c* *s3tw*
 be_ignorant:IPFV=3SG.M throw:INF soil
 The wild bull who was fighting and killing in the stable, he does not know how to
 throw away the soil (anymore) Ani, pBoulaq 4⁶⁷, 23, 1

ex. 44 *p3* *k3* *h3* *sm3* <*m*> *t3* *md.t*
 ART:M.SG bull fight:PTCP kill:PTCP in ART.SG.F stable-F
smh=f *h3c* *s3tw*
 forget:PFV =3SG.M throw:INF soil
 The wild bull who was fighting and killing in the stable, he forgot how to throw
 around the soil Ani, pGuimet 16959⁶⁸, 5, 3

2.2.2 Active forgetfulness

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

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

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

ex. 45 *h3c* =*w* *h3*=*w* *r* *n3y=w* *ntr:w*
 turn:PFV=3PL back=PL to POSS:PL=3PL god-PL
smh=w *r3.w-pr:w*
 forget:PFV =3PL temple-PL
 (the ships *mnš*, the ones that are on the sea (*ym*), the first of *w3d-wr*); they have
 turned away from their gods; they have forgotten their temples
 P. Turin 1893, r^o 88, 10 = KRI VI, 393, 12–13

67 Quack (1994).

68 Idem.



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

- ex. 46 *smḥ* <wǝ> *m -jrj* *whʒ* =*j*
 forget:IMP 1SG PROH-do search:INF =1SG
 Forget me! Do not come search for me gr. DeB 8⁶⁹, 2

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

- ex. 47 *jw=f* *smḥ(.w)* *tʒy=f* *snd.t*
 SBRD=3SG.M forget:STAT POSS:F.SG=3SG.M respect-F
 When he forgets the respect toward him (= the master)
 P. Brooklyn 47.218.135⁷⁰, 4, 8

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

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

- ex. 48 *mkhʒ* *smḥ* (*r*) *jry* *mʒʕ.t*
 ignorant forget:PTCP to do:INF justice-F
 (while) the ignorant turns away from doing justice
 Khâkheperrêseneg, T. Cairo JE 43261 B⁷¹, inv. 1.2

In the next two examples, *smḥ* takes the sense of purposely neglecting, overlooking advice and example coming from the past. It is in contextual association with *hm*, which is used in the sense of denying attention⁷². The *sdm=f* form *rḥ=f* expresses here concomitant action in a circumstantial clause and is thus neutral regarding the aspect.

- ex. 49 *bn* *twk* *m* *ʕdd* *swgʒ*
 NEG PRS-2SG.M in young man stupid
smḥ=k *md.wt* *tp-ʕ* *ts* {*hʒty.kwj*} <*hʒ.t-ʕ*> / <*hry-hʒ.t*>
 forget:PFV =2SG.M word-F.PL before sentence before

69 Marciniak (1974: 67–68, pl. VIII/a).

70 Jasnow (1992).

71 Hagen (2019: 177–208).

72 Vernus (2002: 220 and n. 32) translates as “Une arène qui ignore hier” and interprets it as “without precedent”, in other words, as not knowing sth. because it never happened, thus, as *experienced* ignorance. This translation raises issues: he translates *smḥ* as “ignore” instead of “forget”, which would be acceptable in the case of active ignorance/forgetfulness. Indeed, *hm* and *smḥ* are parasyonymous in this sense of *active* ignorance/forgetfulness. However, *hm* and *smḥ* in the respective senses of *experienced* lack of knowledge (as he translates it) or *experienced* forgetfulness do not appear as interchangeable since the first implies that a fact never happened and the second implies that a fact happened/may have happened but has been forgotten.

hm=k *jb=k* *r* *ʿnh*
 be_ignorant=2SG.M heart=2SG.M to swear

You are not a stupid young man; but you neglected the words of before, the advices of the past; you were ignorant of your heart at the moment of swearing

O. Gardiner 320⁷³, r° 4

ex. 50 [*bw-ʿ3* *n* *ʿh3* *n* *m33.n.tw=f*
 place-great of fight NEG see-PASS =3SG.F
jst *ʿh3=tw* *hr* *mtwn* *smh* *sf*
 SBRD fight:IPFV=3SG on arena forget:PTCP yesterday
nn *km.n* [*bw-nfr*] *n* *hm* *rh* *=f*
 NEG complete place-good of be_ignorant:PTCP know:IPFV=3SG.M

The importance of a fight is not possible to be seen when one fights in an arena that forgets yesterday: the good deed cannot suffice to the one who pretends not to know while he (actually) knows.

Amenemhat, O. BM EA 05623, 12

2.2.2.3 Giving up, growing out of sth

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

ex. 51 *dd=j* *m* *jb=j* *hm=f* *r* *md.wt*
 say:PFV=1SG in heart=1SG be_ignorant=3SG.M to speech-F.PL
dd=j *n=f* *hry-h3.t* *whm=j* *dd* *n=k* *ʿn*
 say:REL=1SG to=3SG.M before repeat:SBJV=1SG say to=2SG.M again
 I said to myself: he ignores the words I told him before; I shall repeat again my saying to you
ptr *pnʿ=k* *tw* *r* *sjp* *md.wt=j*
 see turn_over:SBJV =2M.SG 2SG.M to inspect:INF speech-PL=1SG
gm *=k* *shr.w=j* *mnh.w*
 find:SBJV=2SG.M advice-PL=1SG excellent-PL
jmy *hr* *=k* *r* *sdm* *sb3y.t=j*
 give face=2SG.M to hear:INF teaching-F=1SG
r *jr.t* *shr.w=j* *nb.w*
 to do:INF advice-PL=1SG every-PL
dj=j *smh=k* *sn* *r-drw*
 give:SBJV=1SG forget:SBJV=2SG.M 3PL entirely
 (Other weaknesses grew after your deed of ignoring me); see, may you retract yourself to inspect my words; and you will find my advices excellent; dedicate

⁷³ Černý & Gardiner (1957: 26, pl. 97, 2).

yourself to listening to my teaching and to ap[] my advices; I will cause that you forget them all (= the weaknesses, etc) []

Teaching of Menna, O. Chicago OIC 12074, v° 12 = KRI VI, 217, 11

In the following passage from P. Anastasi 4, *shm* has the sense of forgetting for “giving up”, “freeing oneself from”. The object of *shm* is *tnrk* “beer” and the whole passage is nicely built around the idea of breaking free from alcoholic habits, which are depicted as an abomination (*bw.t*), something one should be untied from (*rk*) and something one should remove from their memory (*smh*). Regarding the latter, one will note the parasynonymic relation between *smh* “forget” and neg + *rdj m h3ty* (“to place in the heart”). The expression *rdj m h3ty* is the most common way of expressing the idea of memorizing, of storing information (vs. *sh3* which implies an active application of the retrieved information).

ex. 52 *hn twk rh.tw jw bw.t jrp*
 if PRS:2SG.M know:STAT MCM abomination-F wine
mtw=k rk=k hr sdh
 CORD.MOD=2SG.M untie:INF=2SG.M on pomegranate wine
mtw=k tm dj.t tbw m h3ty=k
 CORD.MOD=2SG.M NEG give:INF cup in heart=2SG.M
mtw=k smh tnrk
 CORD.MOD=2SG.M forget:INF beer
 If you knew that wine is an abomination; you would give up the pomegranate wine; you would not have cups in mind anymore; and you would forget beer
 pAnastasi 4, 12, 1 = LEM 47, 13

2.2.2.4 Forgive

The colexification of forgetting and forgiving is well-attested cross-linguistically⁷⁴. Egyptian makes no exception to that and *smh* realizes this sense.

ex. 53 *smh=j sn mj-kd p3y=j smh*
 forget:SBJV=1SG 3PL like POSS:M.SG=1SG forget:INF
n3y nty jm=j
 DEM:PL REL-M.PL inside=1SG
 (Even if you commit against me a million faults); I will forget/forgive them like I forget/forgive my own
 pMond 2⁷⁵, 6

⁷⁴ This colexification is also listed in CLICS (<https://clics.clld.org>) for at least four languages (Selkup, Cofan, Tuyuca, Hup) which can be consulted through a simple search on the platform. (<https://clics.clld.org/edges/1523-1528>). Note that the list of colexifications in the database is far from exhaustive but gives an idea of the most cross-linguistically attested ones. On top of that, one can also simply note that the same colexification exists in colloquial French “c’est oublié” for “it’s forgiven”.

⁷⁵ Silverman (1991: 301–314).

ex. 54 *jr jry=j hḥ.w n bt3*
 COND do:SBJV=1SG million-PL of fault
bw jr {=j} wḥ nfr dj.t smḥ =w
 NEG do:PFV=1SG one good give:INF forget:INF =3PL
 Even if I had committed a million sins, would not one good deed allow for them to
 be forgotten? pLeiden I 369, 8 = LRL 2, 1

2.3 Case 3: *mhj*: to be forgetful

2.3.1 Experienced forgetfulness

2.3.1.1 State of being forgetful

The verb *mhj* in its primary sense refers to experienced forgetfulness, to the fact of being forgetful (for example because of old age), as is the case in this well-known passage from Ptahhotep⁷⁶.

ex. 55 *jb mhw.w*
 heart forget:STAT
 The mind has become forgetful
n sh3.n=f sf
 NEG remember:PFV=3SG.M yesterday
 It cannot remember yesterday (Ptahhotep, P. BM EA 10509, 1, 5 (§D16))⁷⁷

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

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

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

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

This use of *mhj* as being forgetful in the sense of “losing focus” is due to an external trigger, “being troubled and not thinking rationally anymore” for being in the grip of emotion. As a correlate to this, the expression *sgnn dr.wt* “to weaken hands” refers to agentivity

⁷⁶ Note that this Middle Egyptian text is not part of the core corpus but has been added for comparison in diachrony.

⁷⁷ Žaba (1956).

loss. This use of *mhj* does not seem to have an equivalent in the nuances of meaning expressed by *smh*. The closest seems to be the expression *smh d.t ds=f*, which, as seen before⁷⁸, also conveys the idea of losing rationality over an emotional behaviour.

- ex. 56 *km3=k nfr hr s-gnn dr:wt*
 aspect=2SG.M beautiful on CAUS-weak:INF hand-F.PL
h3ty.w mh.w n m33 n=k
 heart-PL forget:STAT because see:INF to=2SG.M
 Your beautiful aspect weakens hands; hearts are forgetful at your sight

P. Boulaq 17⁹, VI, 2

In the following example, the verb *hm* is used in the sense of “being forgetful” and is associated with *sh3* “remember” as antonym. The verb *sh3* has here the sense “remembering” but also carries an emotional connotation of appreciation (in the present case, being in loving admiration of the god).

- ex. 57 *imn sh3=j mrw.t=k*
 Amun remember:IPVF=1SG love-F=2SG.M
twj mh.kwj m ptr=k twj m pr =k
 PRS-1SG forget:STAT in see:INF=2SG.M PRS-1SG in house=2SG.M
 Amun, I remember your love; I was forgetful at your sight; I am in your house
 Hymn to Amun-Râ, O. BM EA 41543, r^o 1

2.3.1.3 Not entertaining the memory of sth.

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

- ex. 58 *k.kwj hr bs =f n zp-tpy*
 enter:STAT on hidden-form=3SG.M of first-time
šš3.kwj m b3.w =f mnh.w
 be_wise in power-PL=3SG.M excellent-PL
n mh=j hr zp n š3.n=f <wj>
 NEG forget=1SG on time of designate:REL=3SG.M 1SG
 I am initiated in his hidden form of the First Time; I am learned in his excellent power; I am not oblivious about the time of (my) designation (when he designated (me))
 Northern obelisk of Hatshepsut, 363, 5 = Urk. IV, 363, 5

2.3.1.4 Passively neglecting, being careless

The next examples illustrate cases of *mhj* with the sense of “forgetting” for “neglecting”, “not paying attention”. The nuance expressed is not an active, antagonistic negligence, rather a lack of care and/or of motivation that leads to a neglecting attitude. The subject is

⁷⁸ cf. supra ex. 40.

⁷⁹ Luiselli (2004: 72, 3, 25).

less agentive than it is in some uses of *hm* or *smh* (see sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.2.). In sum, *mhj* used in this sense does not refer to actively forgetting but rather not caring enough to remember. In the present examples, *mhj* conveys a sense very similar to *smh* in section 2.2.1.3. It is also to note that the object of *mhj* in this sense is expressed obliquely, introduced by the preposition *hr* or the preposition *m*.

ex. 59 *m stnj jb=k hr ntr (...) mh hr =f*
 PROH divert:INF heart=2SG.M on god forget:PTCP on=3SG
r šw m mnj
 FUT be_free:INF in anchor
 Do not divert your attention from the god (...) the one who forgets him will be
 unanchored Teaching of a man to his son, leather roll BM 10258⁸⁰, 1, 7

ex. 60 *nm ft.n=j*
 NEG be_disgut:PFV=1SG
n{n} mh.n=j m hn.wt hr mw hr t3
 NEG forget:PFV=1SG in duty-F.PL on water on land
 I will not get fed up⁸¹, I will not forget/neglect my duties at sea and on land
 Nauri Decree, 28 = KRI I, 50, 11.

3 Conclusions

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

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

Neg + *rh* on the contrary presents the state of non-knowledge or non-awareness as being transient, tied to specific circumstances and thus context-driven. The same observation applies for neg + *rh* used in function of modal auxiliary (not being able to do sth.), which is a recent development of the language⁸².

The pattern neg + *rh* does not seem to be attested in the sense of *actively ignoring/neglecting* acquired knowledge or *not paying attention* to someone. It is specific to the semantics of *hm* only and in most cases, *hm* is constructed with the preposition *hr* or *r* when it actualises this sense (with a couple of exceptions, when the object is a suffix pronoun or in the expression *hm jb* “to neglect/be ignorant of the heart”. When the subject of neg + *rh*

⁸⁰ Fischer-Elfert (1999: § 2, 4).

⁸¹ Metaphorical extension from physical disgust to being fed up of an activity.

⁸² The negation of the epistemic modality is usually expressed in Earlier Egyptian by grammatical means, the most common being the pattern *n sdm.n.f* “he cannot hear”: see Malaise & Winand (1999: §903, 923); Winand (2021: 6.1.6 and fn. 143).

is highly agentive (for ex., with the vetitive), it refers to the process of knowledge acquisition (not getting to know, not acquainting), and not to the one of knowledge restitution.

The inability to perform a task (*not know how*) can be expressed both by *hm* and neg + *rh*, at least in later development of the language, when *rh* becomes used as a modal auxiliary. The system is well established in Late Egyptian and, here again, the opposition between inherent and contextual applies: neg + *rh* expresses a non-ability that is tied to specific circumstances (e.g. not being able to work on a given day), while *hm* appears to have a general validity and depicts the non-ability as being inherently part of someone's qualities. The latter was already attested in Old Egyptian and even became lexicalized in some cases, for example in the compound words *jhmw-wrd* "the ones who does not know tiredness" (Wb 1, 125.15–16) and *jhmw-sk* "the ones who do not perish" (both refer to the circumpolar stars).

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

The semantics of *smh* and *mhj* overlap for some of their uses. They can both express the incapacity of retrieving memorized information in their basic meanings. However, *mhj* primarily refers to a state of forgetfulness while *smh* rather describes an active process. *mhj* is also of recessive use and by far less attested than *smh*. Its usage is restricted to texts that are part of the tradition and early New Kingdom wisdom texts and pertain mostly to the classical language (Égyptien de Tradition). Its primary sense seems to have fallen out of usage in the New Kingdom and *mhj* is rarely attested in Late Egyptian, even in its derived senses. It does not seem to be attested in Coptic anymore. However, Vycichl⁸³ pointed out a possible link with the Coptic words **MOEIZĖ** (S), **MAEIZĖ** (AL), **MAZEIE** (L) meaning "miracle" and the verb **PHOEIZĖ** (S) "to be astonished".

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

Syntactically, some uses of the verbs are recognizable because marked by an oblique expression of the object, as shown in the following summary list:

- *hm hr* + noun (animate): actively ignoring someone of lower or equal status
- *hm r* + noun (animate of higher status or inanimate): actively ignoring someone/something.
- *smh r* + infinitive: forgetting to do something
- *mhj n/m* + noun (inanimate): to neglect something

83 Vycichl (1983: 110).

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

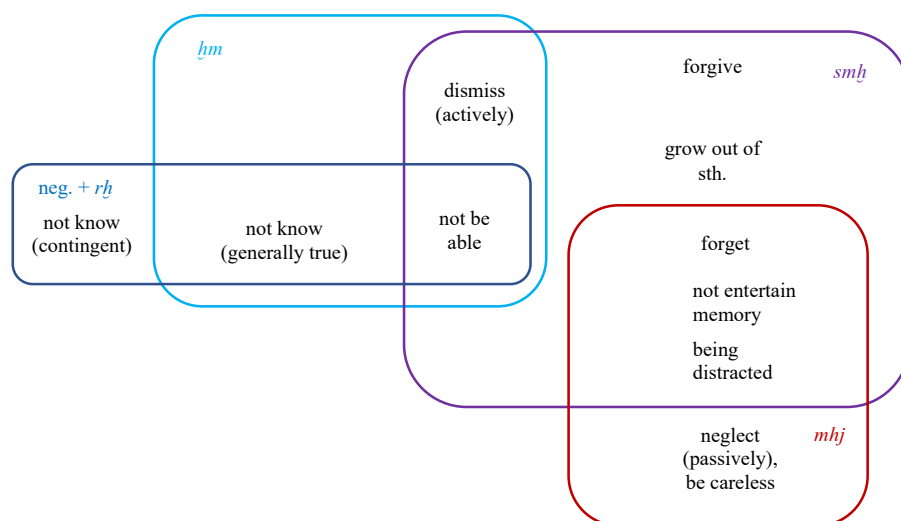


Fig 1

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