

Where Syntax and Semantics Meet: A Typological Analysis of Old Egyptian Causatives

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The earliest stage of the ancient Egyptian language, i.e., Old Egyptian, seems to have had two productive causative mechanisms that increase the valency of verbs: morphological (mono-clausal) and periphrastic (bi-clausal). The former is characterized by the prefix *s-*, while the latter employs the verb *rDj* "give" followed by a complement clause. Both causative strategies have been known to scholars since the inception of the study of the ancient Egyptian language, mainly due to their numerous attestations as well as their parallels in related languages. However, any systematic or comprehensive study of Egyptian causative verbs is virtually lacking. Moreover, most descriptions of causatives are confined to few paragraphs within grammar books, without any extant analysis of their meaning or function.

Therefore, my paper aims to provide a new insight into the Egyptian morphological and periphrastic causatives by examining the syntactic and semantic properties of these verbs in Old Egyptian, employing the most recent linguistic theory of causative constructions. My work goes beyond the syntactic division of verbs into transitive and intransitive, and instead explores their semantic categories as well. The causative forms of active/inactive verbs, ingestive/egestive verbs, as well as verbs of motion are examined. The results of this analysis show which types of verbs have a preference for which of the two causative strategies and demonstrate the semantic differences between the morphological and periphrastic causative constructions. Furthermore, my paper clarifies the causative derivation of transitive verbs, whose valency does not increase and which have thus represented a puzzle to the Egyptologists. A possible solution to this issue is connected with the results of my study of the *n*-prefix in Old Egyptian, which might represent a necessary first step in the causativization of transitive verbs.