

The linguistic metaphors of deafness in Egyptian literary, biographical and medical texts

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ABSTRACT

This article examines and explores the attested occurrences of the linguistic metaphors of deafness in the Egyptian literary, biographical and medical texts, with a special examination of their significances and connotations. It examines how the Egyptian culture expresses its values through various metaphors of deafness. The article also considers the virtues and vices of deafness in literary and biographical contexts. It examines the cognitive approaches to different lexical semantics of the Egyptian words for deafness. Comparative literary, biographical and medical sources, inscriptions in private tombs, statues, papyri and stelae are examined. The article also examines deafness to Maat and its consequences. The Egyptian lexemes and expressions designating deafness will be examined in lexicographical, phraseological and thematic textual analyses.

KEYWORDS

Linguistic metaphors – deafness – deafness to Maat – virtues – vices

الاستعارات اللغوية للصمم في النصوص الأدبية المصرية، و نصوص السير الذاتية والطبية

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الملخص

يقوم هذا المقال بالبحث والتحقيق في وجود الاستعارات اللغوية للصمم في النصوص الأدبية المصرية، وأيضاً في السير الذاتية أو النصوص الطبية، مقدماً دراسة خاصة حول دلالاتها ومضامينها. يتناول البحث كيف عبرت الثقافة المصرية عن قيمها من خلال استعارات متنوعة لفقدان السمع. كما يتطرق المقال إلى فحص فضائل ورتائل الصمم في السياقات الأدبية والسير الذاتية، باستكشاف المناهج المعرفية للدلالات المعجمية للكلمات المصرية ذات الصلة. ويشمل البحث دراسة المصادر الأدبية والسير الذاتية والطبية المقارنة، بالإضافة إلى فحص النقوش في مقابر الأفراد والتماثيل والبرديات واللوحات. يتناول المقال أيضاً آثار عدم الإنصات لماعت وعواقبه. سيتم فحص المعاجم والعبارات المصرية ذات الصلة في تحليلات نصية معجمية ولفظية وموضوعية.

الكلمات الدالة

الاستعارات اللغوية – الصمم – عدم الإنصات لماعت – الفضائل – الرذائل

Deafness is a little-discussed phenomenon in ancient Egypt. However, Nili Shupak briefly discussed the concept of “deafness as a metaphor” in a concise study of three expressions of deafness, namely *shy* (*shy*), *idi* and *msdrt dng*. She examined these expressions in Egyptian wisdom literature in comparison to Biblical wisdom literature (Shupak 1993: 91–92). She

briefly discusses deafness as a metaphor in specific “school” and literary texts (Shupak 1993: 91–92). On the other hand, Jan Assmann, in his book “*Ma’at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*,” elaborates the topic of deafness for the words of Maat resulting in lack of friends (Assmann 1990: 69–84). In this part of his study, Assmann discusses deafness to Maat as deafness to connective justice (i.e. “communicative solidarity and reciprocity”; Assmann 1990: 69–84). This article, however, does not only study deafness as an impairment, but it also examines and detects its linguistic metaphors, significances and consequences in the literary, biographical and medical texts. In this context, the concept of deafness is examined in terms of other concepts, where there is some similarity or correlation between them revealing the linguistic metaphors of this concept.¹

In order to compile a study of deafness one should make use of sources from different historical and textual scopes to come to a broader understanding of such a phenomenon. A semantic lexicographic study of deafness in ancient Egyptian therefore would require a detailed study of different genres of texts. I will focus on compiling the words for deafness in Egyptian language and on explicating their basic meanings and linguistic metaphors, which can be used as a methodology for in-depth analysis in the subsequent discussion of the corpus. The pieces of evidence include different genres, ranging from literary and biographical texts and in specific cases medical texts. Monumental pieces of evidence are also considered including inscriptions and papyri.

Deafness in Egyptian texts is not only a physiological phenomenon but also psychological, social, and cultural. Thus, this article extends the existing knowledge of this phenomenon and develops the current scholarly work about this topic in a way which demonstrates the ambivalent and metaphoric use of deafness as a virtue and as a vice. Additionally, this article adopts a different methodological approach to deafness through the discussion of its metaphoric aetiologies as a phenomenon, and the phraseological explanation and analysis of its various occurrences beyond the levels of lexemes and semantics.

The addressed research problem is to ascertain the linguistic metaphors and experiences of deafness as a dysphemism or euphemism. It also aims to ascertain if this impairment was regarded as a virtue or a vice in the perceptions of the ancient Egyptians. The methodology followed is to examine and analyse occurrences in which living individuals are described as deaf. Thus, the methodological approach of this phenomenon is examined in lexical, phraseological and thematic textual analyses. The methodology followed aims at classifying the occurrences in consistent cases with the purpose of analysing them, taking into consideration their context, significance and phraseology.

DEAFNESS IN EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE

Different words for deafness can be attested in the Egyptian language. They provide subtle shades of meaning with nuances of semantics consistent with their perspective and phraseology. The Egyptian words include *imr*, ‘to be deaf’ (*Wb* I: 87, 18; Faulkner 1991: 21; P. Prisse 4,

1 Lakoff argues that “the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another” (Lakoff 1993: 203).

3-4, 4 (ll. 10-11), Allen 2015: 168-169),² *idi*, 'to be deaf, to deafen' (*Wb* I: 151, 13-15),³ *sh*, 'deaf, to deafen' (*Wb* IV: 228; Allen 2015: 319), *shi/ shi*, 'to be deaf, turn a deaf ear' (*Wb* III: 473, 16-474, 12; Faulkner 1991:239), *dng*, 'deaf' (*Wb* V: 470, 2-3), *hhi*, 'to be unheard (of words), to deafen' (*Wb* II: 502, 10; Lesko 2002: 292), and *hhit*, 'hearing disorder/ ear disease' (*Wb* II: 502, 10-11).⁴

THE GESTURAL SIGN LANGUAGE OF THE DEAF PEOPLE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

It is attested that there were deaf-mutes in classical antiquity,⁵ and both physicians and non-professionals would have noticed that any person who was born deaf and suffered congenital deafness also had limited speaking ability. Thus, deafness can cause impairments in speech and language acquisition as well as educational achievement.

There are a few attestations of a gestural sign language that employs signs made with the hand as a communication medium for the deaf people in ancient Egypt. In the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Koller*, an early reference of signed or gestural means of communication is attested in a series of Egyptian admonitions addressing threats and warnings to an idle scribe (Gardiner 1911: 39*; Erman 1927: 292; Iversen 1986: 183). Thus, a magistrate addresses the idle scribe saying: "You are one who is deaf and does not hear, to whom one make (signs) with the hand (*ntk <s>hy bw iriꜣf sdm i iriꜣtw nꜣf m dꜣt*)" (P. Koller = P. Berlin 3043, 2, 5; P. Anastasi IV = P. BM EA 10249, 2, 7; Gardiner 1911: 39*; Erman 1927: 292; Iversen 1986: 183). Similarly, in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Anastasi IV*, when the idle scribe is rebuked for abandoning writing, he is addressed, "(Yet) you are not one who is deaf and cannot hear, to whom one make (signs) with the hand (*nn ntk shy iw bw iriꜣf sdm i iriꜣtw nꜣf m dꜣt*)" (P. Anastasi IV = P. BM EA 10249, rt. 2, 7; Caminos 1954: 131-132, 134; Gardiner 1937: 36, 86; Ragazzoli 2012: 220). These attestations of scribal texts merely allude to the fact that such a sign language for the deaf people with such impairments exist in the Egyptian society.

DEAFNESS TO MAAT

Hearing is the beginning of wisdom for listeners, since hearing is a sublime virtue and a feature of the wise man (Shupak 1993: 54). In Maatian ethical discourses,⁶ a clear distinction is made explicit between the one who shuts his ears and the one who listens to the words of Maat. Horemheb, before his accession to the throne, justifies himself saying: "I am kind-hearted before god, one knowledgeable and content, who hears to Maat (*sdmꜣf mꜣt*)" (see Winlock 1924: 2, pl. 4). In his self-presentation on his Abydene stela (Twelfth Dynasty), the chamberlain Intef, son of Senet, describes himself as "a listener who listens to the truth (*ink sdmw sdmꜣi mꜣt*)"

2 See also lexeme no. 26370 in the *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*. This word is only attested in the *Instructions of Ptahhotep* (see P. Prisse 4, 3-4, 4: ll. 11-12; Allen 2015: 168-169; Žába 1956: 16-17, ll. 16-22: version C, trans. 70-71; Estes 1993: 75).

3 'Taub sein, taub werden lassen'; lexeme no. 33890 in the *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*.

4 See further information about this word (Takács 1997: 150).

5 The Latin Vulgate version describes the deaf-mute man as *surdum et mutum*. On the other hand, the Greek version describes the deaf as *kophos* (Laes 2018: 117, no. 8).

6 Maulana Karenga argues that the Maatian ethics "is an ethical doctrine rather than a set of ethics" (Karenga 2004: 28).

(Stela BM EA 581, l. 20; Sethe 1928: 81, ll. 3–4; Lichtheim 1973: 122; Lichtheim 1988: 111). He then presents himself speaking of the virtues he has done to his neighbours, friends and the poor. Thus, he makes a link between listening to Maat and doing Maat.

Similarly, on his Abydene stela (Twelfth Dynasty), the steward Mentuwoser makes a straightforward link between listening to and doing Maat saying: “I am one who listens rightly and leans not (i.e. was not partial) to the possessor of bribes (*ink sdmw r wn m3^c tm nm^c n nb db3w*).”⁷ He declares that he has acted in a manner conforming to Maatian moral values. Thus, listening to the words of truth implies paying attention and reacting in a right way to the demands of Maat (Karenga 2004: 372).

Individuals may declare that they did not turn a deaf ear to Maat in a reference to their righteousness. In a text on the Eighteenth Dynasty schist scribal palette of the chief of craftsmen and vizier Ptahmose, he “turned not a deaf ear (lit. face) to the truth, through the terrors of his eye (*n shi.nsf hrzfr m3^ct m hrywt n ir(t)z*).”⁸ In contrast, deafness to Maat may lead to bad consequences. In the Middle Kingdom *Discourses of the Eloquent Peasant*, the peasant says: “There is no yesterday for the negligent, no friend for the one deaf to Maat (*nn sf n wsfw nn hnms n sh m3^ct*)” (P. Amherst 2, P. Berlin 3025, B2 109–111; Allen 2015: 319; Parkinson 1991: 47; Parkinson 1997a: 74; Parkinson 2012: 300–301). This is a metaphor for Rensi’s deafness as a physical incapacity and an expression of partiality and negligence (Parkinson 2012: 300). Thus, the pleas of Khunanpu have fallen on the deaf ears of Rensi, and consequently, the peasant was deprived of his possessions, rights and dignity. Khunanpu stresses hearing and responding in seeking justice (i.e. Maat), and defines the ideal relation between speaker and hearer (Parkinson 2012: 82), saying to Rensi: “When I speak, may you hear and do Maat (*ddzi sdmz k iri m3^ct*)” (P. Amherst 1, P. Berlin 3023, B1 99; Allen 2015: 253–254; Parkinson 1991: 18–19; Parkinson 1997a: 61; Parkinson 2012: 81–82). He also addresses a hopeless speech to him saying: “I am appealing to you and you do not hear it. I will go to appeal about you to Anubis (*mi3k wi hr spr nz k n sdm.nz k st iwzi r smt r spr hrz k n Inpw*)” (P. Amherst 2, P. Berlin 3025, B2 113–115; Allen 2015: 319–320; Parkinson 1991: 47; Parkinson 1997a: 74; Parkinson 2012: 302–303; Shupak 1992: 10).⁹

One of the peasant’s condemnations of Rensi is attested in his address to him saying: “Hearer, you just do not hear, why do you fail to hear? (*sdmw n 3 sdm.nz k tmz k tr sdm hr mi*)” (P. Amherst 1, P. Berlin 3023, B1 211; Allen 2015: 281–282; Parkinson 1991: 31; Parkinson 1997a: 74; Parkinson 2012: 177–178). Thus, Rensi is acting as a deaf or choosing not to hear. Furthermore, the peasant speaks of Rensi saying: “The seer comes out blind and the hearer deaf (*pr m3w špw{t} sdmw shw*)” (P. Amherst 1, P. Berlin 3023, B1 144–145; Allen 2015: 265–266; Parkinson

7 Stela of the Steward Mentuwoser, dated to the seventeenth year of King Senusret I (MMA 12.184, ll. 13–14, PM V, 102; Sethe 1928: 79, 18–19; Lichtheim 1988: 103–104; Lichtheim 1992: 33; Karenga 2004: 372; Parkinson 2012: 195).

8 Louvre Museum (N 3026; PM III^a, 773; Pierret 1874: 93–94; De Putter – Karlshausen 2022: 150–151, fig. 79). In the ‘Declaration of Innocence’ in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty *Papyrus of Nu*, the deceased declares that he has not been deaf to the words of Maat (*n shizi hr mdwt nt m3^ct*), see BD 125 in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty *Papyrus of Nu* = P. BM EA 10477 (Lapp 1997: pl. 66; Faulkner 1985: 32; Quirke 2013: 272). See also BD 125 in P. Cairo CG 24095 = P. Maiherperi, l. 432, it reads, “I have not been deaf (lit. my face was not deaf) to the words of Maat (*n shi hrzi hr mdt nt m3^ct*)” (Munro 1994: pls. 129–131).

9 Parkinson argues that “the peasant does not rebuke Rensi for not listening to him, but to his petitioning” (Parkinson 2012: 303).

1991: 24; Parkinson 1997a: 74; Parkinson 2012: 123). Rensi is also described as the one whose “face is blind to what he sees and deaf to what he hears, his heart straying from what has been mentioned to him (*hrꜥf šp(w) r m33tꜥf sh(w) r sdmtꜥf th ib hr sh3yt nꜥf*)” (P. Amherst 1, P. Berlin 3023, B1 218–220; Allen 2015: 283–284; Parkinson 1991: 31; Parkinson 1997a: 67; Parkinson 2012: 183–184). The deafness of Rensi in the aforementioned stanzas may indicate his failure to fulfil his duties (Shupak 1993: 79).

The aforementioned stanzas also imply Rensi’s inability or rather unwillingness to respond fairly and hear the appeals of the peasant, and thus, he violates the moral Maatian values. In the meantime, no action of justice was taken and Rensi has metaphorically been blind and deaf indicating his partiality and unfairness. Thus, the peasant demanded hearing as an official virtue and response to all his appeals (Parkinson 2012: 123).

THE VIRTUES AND VICIES OF DEAFNESS

The linguistic metaphors of deafness in Egyptian literary and biographical texts explicitly show the ambivalent use of deafness in different contexts. In specific occurrences, deafness can be regarded as a virtue in accordance with the Maatian moral values. A stanza in the *Instruction of a Man for his Son* demonstrates that turning a deaf face is a linguistic metaphor to calmness: “one who turns a deaf face is calm,¹⁰ in contrast to the one who rouses hostility (*qbb shi hrꜥf tm štm*)” (Lichtheim 1983: 13; Fischer-Elfert 1999: 248, 250, 427, § 24: 7; Posener 1950: 79–80, 83, nos. h–i).¹¹

Deafness is also used as a metaphor to impartiality and negligence of the rich in favour of the weak. Hor-iri-aa (*Hr-iri-ꜥ3*), the court official of King Psametik II,¹² presents himself on the Twenty-sixth Dynasty seated Osiris statue (Cairo CG 38236) saying: “<I> was found as one deaf to the rich, but as (one) friendly to the deprived and as one who helped the weak against the strong. For I know that god is satisfied with one who acts thus (*gm.tw <wi> m sh hr iwti.nꜥf n ib n hwd nd<i> m3r m-ꜥ wsr iwꜥi rh.kwi htp n ntr m ir<ꜥ> nn*)” (Piehl 1887: 120–121; PM III/2, 849; Otto 1954: 161–162: 127, Inschrift 22; Lichtheim 1992: 140–141; Jansen-Winkel 1996: 192–193, fig. 2b, pl. 33d; Heise 2007: 184, nn. 463–464: Text II.20, C, ll. 6–8; Jansen-Winkel 2014: 336–338; Karenga 2004: 293). This text demonstrates the right deeds of Hor-iri-aa throughout his life, since he is acting in accordance with the god’s instruction in doing Maat and establishing impartiality. Thus, he turns a deaf ear to the rich in favour of the deprived, poor and weak. In a similar context, Rekhmire, the vizier of Thutmose III, justifies himself saying: “I did not per[vert justice] for reward. I was not indeed deaf (lit. I was not indeed deaf of my face) to the weak of arm (indigent) (*n shiꜥi hrꜥi rssi r s3-ꜥ*)” (Urk. IV: 1079, 4–5; Gardiner 1925: 70–71; James 1984: 57).¹³

10 The mayor Paheri in his tomb at el-Kab says: “I did not turn a deaf face (*n shiꜥi hrꜥi*) to payments” (Urk. IV: 118, 16; Taylor – Griffith 1894: 30).

11 *shi hrꜥf* in this occurrence also means ‘careless’ (Fischer-Elfert 1999: 250). See also O. IFAO 2185, 3, where the text reads, *shi hrꜥf r sw3 hrꜥf*, “he who turns a deaf face will pass him by” (Fischer-Elfert 1999: 427).

12 His surname is *Nfr-ib-Rꜥ-nfr*. See further information about him (Pressl 1998: 21–22, 202–207, C2.1–8).

13 In the *Duties of the Vizier*, he is the one who hears every case (*sdm mdt nbt*) (Urk. IV: 1114, 12).

Discretion of the secret of a high official's house and dealing with what he has said like a deaf person is instructed in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Maxims of Ani*:¹⁴ “Beware of false testimony (lit. an instance of falsification) against a high official when making a report. Hide what <he> has said in <his> house! Treat it like one who is deaf, i.e. [One] did not (once) hear (it)! (*s3w tw r spi (n) sꜥd3 r sri iwz k (hr) ʿnn smy imn i dd<ɛf> m pr<ɛf> i iri sw m shy bw*)” (P. Cairo CG 58042 = P. Boulaq 4, rt. 15, 9–15,10, Version B; Quack 1994: 86–87).

On the other hand, deafness can be attested as a vice against the Maatian moral values. Turning a deaf ear to the advice of gods is regarded as a vice. Thus, it is said about the king that he is the one “who acts according to their (i.e. gods’) words, and is not deaf to their advice (*iri išt hft ddzsn nn shi hr hr md(t)zsn*).”¹⁵

Deafness is regarded as a vice during the periods of foreign invasions and chaotic circumstances. A stanza in the Eighteenth Dynasty *Laments of Neferti*, which describes the chaotic status of Egypt with persistent concerns about foreign invasion with its attendant reversal of authority and governmental anarchy, reads, “This land will go to and fro; the consequence is unknown and what will happen is hidden, like the saying: “See how the hearer is going deaf and the silent one is in front” (*iw t3 pn it int n rh bs hpr.ty.fy imn m dd ptr sdm hr idw iw gr hft-hr*)” (P. Neferti VIIIc–VIII d = P. Petersburg 1116B, 37–38; Helck 1970: 34–35; Parkinson 1997a: 136–137; Quirke 2004: 137).¹⁶ In other poems, silence is presented as indifference to evil and lack of hearing is presented as an established theme in laments and notably those of Khakheperreseneb and Sasobek (Parkinson 2012: 66).¹⁷

Deafness is used as a linguistic metaphor of idleness and unresponsiveness in an address in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Koller* to the idle scribe who forsook and abandoned writing. The scribe is warned, admonished and insulted because of his unresponsiveness: “Your ear is deaf (?);¹⁸ you are like an ass in taking beatings (i.e. you are as stubborn and insensitive when punished as a beaten ass) (*msdrtz k dng(?) twz k mi ʿ3 {t} m šsp qnqn*)” (P. Koller = P. Berlin 3043, 2, 3–2, 4; Gardiner 1911: 38*; Gardiner 1937: 117; Caminos 1954: 437; Iversen 1986: 181–186; Eyre 2011b: 184). A similar text is also attested in *Papyrus Anastasi IV* (P. Anastasi IV = P. BM EA 10249, rt. 2, 5–2, 6; Gardiner 1911: 38*–39*; Gardiner 1937: 36; Caminos 1954: 131–132). In a similar context, in the Twentieth Dynasty *Papyrus Lansing*, in an advice of a scribe to an unwilling pupil, the latter is addressed: “Oh young fellow, how conceited/ haughty you are (lit. How high is your heart)! You do not hearken when I speak (*kri-šri ʿ3 wsy ibz k bw sdmz k iwzi mdt*)” (P. Lansing = P. BM EA 9994, rt. 2, 3–2, 4 = P. Louvre 80 / P. Louvre E. 8419: 2, 4–9; Gardiner 1937: 101; Caminos 1954: 377; Moers 2001: 127–128).

14 Quack argues that the original text of the *Maxims of Ani* dates to the early Nineteenth Dynasty (Quack 1994: 61–62).

15 The Naucratis Stela of King Nectanebo I (Cairo JE 34002: l. 5; Lichtheim 1980a: 88).

16 Nyord argues that this text relates to the violation of the bodily archetypes (Nyord 2009: 492, nos. 4590–4591). Parkinson argues that the hearer in this stanza can mean ‘judge’ as the following stanzas give information about internal troubles without any reference to the invaders (Parkinson 1997a: 141, no. 17).

17 The text in the *Laments of Khakheperreseneb* reads, “silence against what is heard is a disease (*pw gr r sdmt ih*)” (see *Khakheperreseneb*, vs. 4, Parkinson 1997a: 148; Parkinson 1997b: 60). The text in the *Laments of Sasobek* reads, “you have not heard what you (should) have heard (*n sdmz k sdmt.nz k*)” (see P. Ramesseum I, Bii, 15; Quirke 2004: 194).

18 See the word *dng*, ‘deaf’ (*Wb* V: 470, 2–3).

Deafness as a linguistic metaphor for haughtiness is also attested in a scathing tirade in a letter dating to the Twentieth Dynasty, addressed to the childless Nekhemmut by an anonymous writer, it reads, “Oh, what is the meaning of your getting into such a bad state in which you are that nobody’s speech can enter into your ear as a consequence of your haughty (lit. high) character (*hn^c-dd i3 ih p3y=k hpr m p3y shr bin nty tw=k i m=f iw bw irt mdwt n r(m)t nb ^cq m msdr=k m-s3 t3y=k bi3t ^c3*)” (O. Berlin P 10627, 3–6 = KRI VI, 155, 10–12; Wente 1990: 149; Neveu 2015: 133).¹⁹ The text demonstrates that Nekhemmut’s reluctance to listen implies that he is no longer able to listen to reason because of his haughty character. Thus, Nekhemmut behaves in an unfriendly way towards other people because he thinks that he is better than them.

Deafness is also used as a linguistic metaphor for the affliction of malaise. In a text entitled “Longing for Memphis” in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Anastasi IV*, the writer appeals to Ptah to come and take him to Memphis saying that he spent the day longing for sleep but evil has seized all of his limbs, his eye is faint when looking, his ear hears not (lit. <it> does not fill (with noises), and his voice is hoarse (*t3i nb t[3y]=w dw irt3i bsd m nw {t3y}=i} msdr3i bw mh=<st?> hrw=<i> hnr*) (P. Anastasi IV = P. BM EA 10249, rt. 5, 2–5, 5; Caminos 1954: 150; Lichtheim 1980b: 21; Foster 1992: 60).²⁰

The linguistic metaphor of deafness as reluctance to listen is attested in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Anastasi I*,²¹ where the writer Hori, a man of great knowledge and celebrity, working in the royal stables, writes to his friend the scribe Amenemope. Hori mentions that he received a letter from Amenemope, who has taken other scribes to help him with his writing. The letter of Amenemope was somehow concerned with obtaining grain from the granary for the soldiers’ provisions. Here Amenemope “had proved his incompetence, his accounts being confused and inexact (Gardiner 1911: 9*, no. 6).” Therefore, Hori addresses him saying: “Your (Amenemope’s) lists are confused, and cannot be made right. Kheruef plays the deaf man,²² and does not listen (*n3y=k {wpwt} <wpt> thth bw iri=w wd3=w iry Hrif shy bw ir=f sdm*)” (P. Anastasi I = P. BM EA 10247, 6, 5–6, 6 (= T 65); Gardiner 1911: 10*, 22*; Fischer-Elfert 1983: 64–65; Fischer-Elfert 1986: 57, 60: Kapitel V; Wente 1990: 101–102).²³ The text demonstrates that Kheruef, the pretended name of the overseer of the granary, pretends to be deaf and he is reluctant to hear.

Deafness as a vice is attested in the retribution of the herald. The theme here is malfeasance, misbehaviour or transgression against the regime. In the Middle Kingdom *Story of Sinuhe*, he explains how process for treachery had not been instigated against him reading, “I had not heard any reproaches. My name was not heard in the mouth of the herald (*ni sdm3i B3 hwrw ni sdm.tw rn3i m r whmw*)” (P. Berlin 3022 and P. Amherst n–q, B 227–228; Parkinson 1997a: 38, Allen 2015: 129–130; Eyre 2011a: 706).

19 Bierbrier has argued that Nekhemmut II, son of Amenkbau I, is identified with the childless Nekhemmut, the subject of a scathing tirade in the letter of Ostrakon Berlin P. 10627 (Bierbrier 1984: 205). See the letter of this ostrakon (Ermann 1905: 100–106).

20 According to Foster, the writer of this text is an apprentice scribe weary of his schoolwork. Thus, he prays to Ptah to help him concentrate on his lessons.

21 It is a satirical letter that contains a series of statements probably written by a royal scribe in command of the troops.

22 Kheruef is the pretended name of the overseer of the granary (see Gardiner 1911: 10*, no. 13).

23 See also the Nineteenth-Twentieth Dynasty O. DM 1177, vs. 2–3 (Posener 1952: 20, pl. 32).

A contrast is made explicit between the hearer and the deaf in the Middle Kingdom *Instructions of Ptahhotep*. A father will make of his son a hearer, who guides his mouth according to what has been said to him. He is a son who is talented, while the installation into office of a non-hearer will go wrong (*nmm bs n tm sdm*). In this occurrence, the non-hearer is used as a metaphor for the incompetent official whose installation will fail. Therefore, the wise man rises early to establish himself; while the foolish struggles (P. Prisse 16, 13–17, 4: ll. 564–574; Allen 2015: 218–219). The virtuous man is a hearer who hears speech, “but he who does what is said is the one who loves hearing (*mrr sdm pw irr ddt*)” (P. Prisse 16, 8–16, 9: ll. 550–553; Allen 2015: 216–217).

Deafness can be regarded as a linguistic metaphor for ignorance. Ignorance and blindness can be metaphorically used as traits of people who are reluctant to listen. A stanza in the Middle Kingdom *Instructions of Ptahhotep* contrasts the character of the disobedient son in the following way: “As for the fool who does not hear (*ir wh3 iwt(i) sdmꜣf*), he will not be able to see anything. He sees knowledge as ignorance, what is useful as what is painful (*mnt*)” (P. Prisse 17, 4–9: ll. 575–578; Allen 2015: 219–220).²⁴ Thus, in this stanza the deafness of the son is ascribed to his foolishness in contrast to the preceding stanza which describes the righteous Maatian man. In a relevant context, in a teaching in the late Middle Kingdom *Papyrus Ramesseum II*, the experienced says that the trapper is like the ignorant, swallowing his talents, the talented heart is deaf to what it once knew (*sh.n ib 3h rht.nꜣf*). Thus, the wise man says: “to whom can I speak?” (P. Ramesseum II, vs. li, 4; Quirke 2004: 189).

Deafness is also used as a linguistic metaphor for incompetence and failures by magistrates in their duties to investigate individual complaints and document mistreatments, and the abuse of revenue management in the exercise of government. These acts of corruption were condemned by the regime. This is attested in the Nauri Decree of Seti I to protect the endowment of his temple reading,²⁵ “But as for any [magistrate of] a court, who is in any city, to whom any person of the Temple Heart-of-Men-maat-Re-is-happy in Abydos shall come to complain to him, and he shall be deaf about it (*iw swt ir [sr n] qnbt nb nty m niwt nb nty r rmt nb n t3 hwt Mn-m3ꜣt-Rꜣ ib hr(w) m 3bdw spr rꜣf r smi nꜣf mtwꜣf sh hr rꜣf*), so as not to leap up at (his) voice to deal with his case quickly,” (Nauri Decree of Seti I, Chap. 7, ll. 115–117; Edgerton, 1947: 227; Kitchen 1996: 48–55; Eyre 2011a: 709; David 2006: 104–105).²⁶ He will be dismissed from his post and reduced to the position of a peasant in the service of the Temple of Seti I at Abydos (Nauri Decree of Seti I, Chap. 7, ll. 117–119; Edgerton, 1947: 227).

In a different context, deafness is used as a linguistic metaphor for negligence. In the Twentieth Dynasty *Papyrus Deir el-Medina IV*, the scribe Nakhtsobek is attested as sending a letter to the crew member Amennakht asking him what offence he has done against him. The letter indicates that Nakhtsobek was not only being warned to abstain from entering

24 The word *mnt* is used to mean “suffering of pain,” but it is used here in a figurative expression (see *Wb* II: 67).

25 Eyre argues that fierce punishment was laid down for anybody who reduced the revenues, either by personal or office-related taking of income (Eyre 2011a: 709).

26 Arlette David translates *sh hr rꜣf* as ‘he will not respond to him’. The determinative of *sh-hr* in this text is the walking legs (Gardiner sign-list D54) instead of the ear of the ox (Gardiner sign-list F21) (David 2006: 257).

Amennakht's house, but he is also instructed to distance himself even from the posts which delimit the borders of Deir el-Medina (P. Deir el-Medina IV, vs. 1–4; Sweeney 1998: 109, no. o).

It seems that Nakhtsobek offended Amennakht and the problem is that Amennakht intentionally ignored him, and therefore, he addresses him saying: “Don't [turn a deaf ear (?)] to me” (P. Deir el-Medina IV, vs. 1–4; Wentz 1990: 151; KRI VI: 264–265; Černý 1978: 16, pl. 20; Sweeney 1998: 109–110, no. q). Another occurrence in the Satirical Letter of Hori in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Anastasi I*²⁷ mentions the various towns visited by the Maher and speaks of the Mariannu or the Syrian warriors. It speaks of them as ones turning a deaf ear to the request of the Maher who asks them, “You may give (me) food and water, for I have arrived safely (*i di=tn šbb hr mw iw p̄zi iwzi wd3.k(wi)*)” (P. Anastasi I = P. BM EA 10247, 26, 2–3; Gardiner 1911: 28*; Wentz 1990: 108; Fischer-Elfert 1983: 148). However, “they play deaf and do not listen (*iri=sw šh hr bw iri=sw sdm*)” (P. Anastasi I = P. BM EA 10247, 26, 2–3; Gardiner 1911: 28*; Fischer-Elfert 1983: 148, verse 1, § KÄT 148.3; Fischer-Elfert 1986: 224, 226, no. g, Kapitel XIXe; Wentz 1990: 108). Thus, they take no notice of his account.

AETIOLOGIES OF DEAFNESS

Physical deafness can result from a variety of causes, including infection, trauma, aging, genetic syndromes, or excessive noise exposure. In the Middle Kingdom *Instructions of Ptahhotep*, deafness is regarded as a typical ailment of old age reading, “The eyes have shrunk, the ears have grown deaf, and strength is collapsing because of the heart's weariness (*irty ndsw ḥnhwy imrw p̄ty hr 3q n wrd-ib*)” (P. Prisse 4, 3–4, 4: ll. 11–12; Parkinson 1997a: 250; Allen 2015: 168–169; Žába 1956: 16–17, ll. 16–22: version C, trans. 70–71; Estes 1993: 75).

In the description of the idle scribe in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Anastasi V*, the noisy pleasures of life have deafened the ears of the scribe, who whirls in pleasures. Thus, he is addressed, “You pay no attention to any word. Pleasures have deafened your hearing (lit. your temple (of the head)) (*hhi 3bw [m3]ḥk*)” (P. Anastasi V = P. BM EA 10244, 17, 4; Gardiner 1937: 65; Caminos 1954: 250; Ward 1969: 267; Vernus 2001: 379–380; Bresciani 1999: 331). This text is attested as an advice to the youthful idle scribe warning him not to be idle, or he shall be curbed immediately. He is also advised not to give his heart to pleasures, or he shall fail (P. Anastasi V = P. BM EA 10244, 8, 1–8, 2; Gardiner 1937: 59; Caminos 1954: 231). In a different context, deafness may also originate from outside the body. Thus, in the Nineteenth Dynasty medical *Papyrus Berlin 3038*, fumigation of the patient is necessary “[to dispel] a form of deafness which has entered from outside (*[dr] hhyt ḥq nt m rwt*).”²⁸

As for the medical texts, the main sources of ear diseases are demonstrated in both the *Edwin Smith* and *Ebers Papyri*.²⁹ The Egyptian medical papyri are of great importance regarding the symptoms of ear diseases including ear discharge, hearing loss, ear pain and tinnitus. The

27 It is a satirical letter written by the scribe and squire Hori, who was employed in the royal stables to his friend the royal scribe in command of the army Amenemope, son of the steward Mose, who had claim to the title Maher (see Gardiner 1911: 5*; Wentz 1990: 98–99).

28 See *[dr] hhyt* (Wb II: 502, 11). See also *ḥq nt m rwt* (P. Berlin 3038, 6, 10 = Section 70 of *Brugsch Papyrus*; Wreszinski 1909: 13; Caminos 1954: 250; Mudry 2006: 137).

29 There are many cases in *Edwin Smith Papyrus* dealing with ear troubles, discharge from the ear, wound in the ear, slit in the ear, bleeding from the ear, and orifice of the ear (Breasted 1930: 581;

early occurrences of otology, ear symptomatology and the first attested reference to deafness can be found in *Ebers Papyrus* (P. Ebers 854 to c: 99, 19–21, 854 e: 99, 14–17; Ghalioungui 1987: 219; Lucarelli 2017: 59; Moores 1987: 33). A case in this papyrus demonstrates the relation between hearing and speech, and thus, when the patient is deaf, his mouth cannot be opened (i.e. cannot speak; P. Ebers 854 to c: 99, 19–21; Ghalioungui 1987: 219). This case mentions a proposed vascular cause of deafness and its influence on speech. It is regarded as the earliest attestation of an association between deafness and speech problems.³⁰

Deafness may result from the exhaustion of all the body parts. Thus, the ears are deprived of the energetic breath indispensable to hear sounds. The *Ebers Papyrus* also mentions that the ears become deaf (*ir idd(w)t msdrwy*) through the two vessels leading to the roots of the eyes (P. Ebers 854 e: 99, 14–15; Ghalioungui 1987: 219; Lalanne – Métra 2017: 202–203; Lucarelli 2017: 59). They also become deaf through the vessels that are on both temples of a man suffering from (lit. under) *nššw*-air (*ir nw idd(w)t msdrwy hrꜥs nꜥ pw wnn tp mꜥwy n(y) s hr nššw*). This means that the patient breathes air from the beheading demon (*hsq*), and thus, he receives the demon's breath (P. Ebers 854 e: 99, 15–16; Ghalioungui 1987: 219; Lalanne – Métra 2017: 202–203; Lucarelli 2017: 59).

One of the cardiac glosses in *Ebers Papyrus* records the weakness of the heart and the clinical diagnosis of a failing heart describing its vessels as being deaf, having fallen down as a result of their heat (Ghalioungui 1987: 221–230; Nunn 1996: 85–86).³¹ Thus, debility in the heart means that “its vessels become deaf (*idi.nꜥf mtwꜥf*)” (P. Ebers 855 d: 99, 22–100, 1; Ghalioungui 1987: 229; Lalanne – Métra 2017: 203–204; Saba *et. al.* 2006: 418–419). It is a clinical case which describes the heart of patients who suffer from weakness of the heart or cardiac dysfunction.

DISCUSSION

The substantial theoretical overview of this study provides a corpus of thirty-seven attestations of deafness-words and expressions ranging from the Middle Kingdom to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. Different attestations are examined from different genres of texts including literary, auto/biographical, funerary, medical and other specific texts designated as narratives, teachings and laments. The use of different genres brings into focus significant interpretive principles that a lexical and literary analyses alone cannot address. The generic perspective can enhance understanding of the meanings of deafness in the Egyptian texts through the examination of the linguistic metaphors of this phenomenon. This would develop into a comprehensive study that covers a broad range of textual sources.

In the corpus of this study, metaphors are not only a linguistic phenomenon or a persuasive device but an essential cognitive mechanism whereby the conceptual structure of deafness as a tangible and physical domain is conveyed to other abstract and intangible conceptual do-

Sanchez – Meltzer 2012: 60–62: case 5, 72–74: case 7, 87–89: case 88B, 120–122: case 13, 135–137: case 17, 156–158: case 22, 163–165: case 23).

30 Aristotle acknowledged the association between congenital deafness and muteness (see Laes 2018: 122).

31 The most common word used to indicate ‘weakness of the heart’ is *wgg* (*Wb* I: 377; Faulkner 1991: 71).

mains of experience. Thus, metaphors play an essential role as containers for thoughts (Nyord 2012: 153, no. 32). They also play an essential role in forming new metaphorical extensions from the prototypical meanings of words for deafness (Nyord 2012: 160). The use of such metaphors is likely due to the importance of verbal communication as a cultural phenomenon and particularly in moral discourses and the necessity to conceptualize the potential consequences of deafness in daily life communications.

Lexical semantics are formed by the basic theoretic ideas about the meaning and conceptual structures of words (Nyord 2012: 141). The analysis of the Egyptian words for deafness can contribute to a more enhanced understanding of the conceptualization of the linguistic metaphors of deafness in Egyptian literary, biographical and medical texts taking into consideration their cognitive linguistics and semantics. This will help to define their lexical semantics in association with the semantic roles of the experiences and motivations of metaphoric deafness.

THE LEXEMES *sh/sh* AND THEIR DERIVATIVES

The recurrent lexemes *sh/sh* and their derivatives *shy*, *shw*, *shi/shi* are metaphorically attested in various occurrences by the meaning of ‘reluctant to hear/ turn a deaf ear/ turn a deaf face/ deaf/ play deaf’ in literary and biographical contexts.³² Their cognitive semantics involve the conceptualization of an experience of negligence, unwillingness or reluctance to listen by a speaker for metaphoric purposes. In two occurrences, in the the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Anastasi I*, the cognitive semantics of *sh* involve the conceptualization of playing deaf, i.e. pretending to be deaf or turning a deaf ear to a certain request. In four occurrences dating to the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and the late Twenty-first Dynasties, the lexeme *sh* is used to express the negligence of someone by another when he/she complains or asks for something.³³ It is clear that the aforementioned metaphorical expressions are based on the conceptualization of deafness as a disinclination to do something. These expressions are not just used as linguistic metaphors, but they are also used to explain the reasoning behind them.

In one occurrence, in the late Middle Kingdom *Papyrus Ramesseum II*, the lexeme *sh* is metaphorically used to express deafness (i.e. ignorance) to acquired knowledge. In contrast, hearing was perceived as a significant means of getting knowledge. This is attested in the frequent use of the verb *sdm* in the Egyptian wisdom literature (Shupak 1993: 54).

In specific occurrences, the lexemes *sh/sh* are used with the word *hr*, ‘face’. The expression *sh hr* has the linguistic metaphors of “to be neglectful to, ignore, not respond/react, and refuse to take cognizance.”³⁴ It also has the meaning of “to be careless” (Fischer-Elfert 1999: 250). The syntactic construction of this expression is parallel to those of *šp hr*, “blind of face” and *hbs*

32 The occurrences are attested in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Koller* (P. Koller = P. Berlin 3043, 2, 5); the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Anastasi IV* (P. Anastasi IV = P. BM EA 10249, 2, 7); the Middle Kingdom *Discourses of the Eloquent Peasant* (P. Amherst 2, P. Berlin 3025, B2 109–111, B1 144–145, 218–220).

33 In the self presentation of Mentuemhat on his Twenty-fifth Dynasty statue in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (CG 646/ JE 31883), he says: “I was one who didn’t turn a deaf face to a noble (*tm shi hr r s’hw*)” (PM II²: 269; Heise 2007: 72, Text I.16, Ca, l. 11; Jansen-Winkel 2009: 460–461: 206).

34 For the syntactic construction of this expression, see David (2006: 105). In contrast, the verb *sdm* can be metaphorically used to mean “to understand.” This is expressed in the phrases “open of hearing (*wb3yfm sdm*)” and “a hearing heart (*sdm ib*)” (Shupak 1993: 53).

hr, “to cover one’s face, to turn a blind eye to, or to ignore deliberately” (Parkinson 2012: 167, 184). Thus, the description of Rensi as the one whose “face is blind to what he sees and deaf to what he hears” in the *Discourses of the Eloquent Peasant* (B1 218–220) implies his negligence of the peasant (Parkinson 2012: 167, 184).

THE LEXEMES *idi/idw*

The lexeme *idi* is likely associated with the Egyptian word *idn*, “ear” (*Wb* I: 154; Shupak 1993: 92). In a medical context, the lexeme *idi* is metaphorically used once to describe the heart’s vessels as being deaf, as a symptom of cardiac debility. Although the heart is described as being deaf, it is closely associated with hearing. This may find an explanation in the fact that the Egyptians regarded it as the seat of knowledge, thoughts and understanding. Therefore, “it is the heart which makes of its owner a hearer or a non-hearer” (P. Prisse 16, 7–16, 8: ll. 550–551; Parkinson 1997a: 263, no. 51; Allen 2015: 216–217; Shupak 1993: 55–56). The metaphoric expression “its (i.e. heart’s) vessels become deaf (*idi.n=fmtw=f*)” (P. Ebers 855 d: 99, 22–100, 1; Ghalioungui 1987: 229; Lalanne – Métra 2017: 203–204; Saba *et. al.* 2006: 418–419), may allude to another metaphoric expression in the Eighteenth Dynasty *Biography of Amenhotep son of Hapu*. Thus, he praises himself as having a “hearing heart”: “He has a hearing heart, seeking counsel (*sdm ib pw d^rf sh*)” (Urk. IV: 1817, 8; Shupak 1993: 56).

The lexeme *idw* is used in a stanza in the Eighteenth Dynasty *Laments of Neferti*: “See how the hearer is going deaf and the silent one is in front (*ptr sdm hr idw iw gr hft-hr*)” (P. Neferti VIIIc–VIII d = P. Petersburg 1116B, 37–38; Helck 1970: 34–35; Parkinson 1997a: 136–137; Quirke 2004: 137). Neferti is talking to the king and also to later generations. However, in this stanza he gives his speech as a paradox or a riddle (Pérez-Accino 2015: 1499). This stanza is structured as if giving an answer to the question “what happens to the land?” Furthermore, it is preceded by the expression *imn m dd*, “is hidden like the saying” which is reminiscent of the name *Imn-m-h3t* of Amenemhat I telling the reader that the one who is expected to listen is deaf, but the silent one is about to speak (Pérez-Accino 2015: 1499).

In addition to these occurrences, the lexeme *idi* is attested in various spells in the *Book of the Dead*,³⁵ and in a ritual text to protect Osiris in the *Papyrus of Imuthes*.³⁶ It is also used in association with the Ritual of Overthrowing Apophis in *Papyrus Bremner Rhind*.³⁷

35 The spell of Chapter 134 in the P. of Nu = P. BM EA 10477, ll. 6–7 reads, “Be dumb and be deaf before Osiris N. (*grw idiw n Wsir N*), justified” (Lapp 1997: pl. 48). In Chapter 154, the deceased says: “My neck has not been despatched, my ear has not gone deaf (*n h3b p(3)qtzi n idi msdrzi*)” (P. of Nu = P. BM EA 10477, l. 19; Lapp 1997: pls. 51–52; Quirke 2013: 384). Furthermore, Chapter 190 reads, “to remove the deafness from him (i.e. Nu), to cause his sight (lit. face) to be opened with the god (*dr idit hrzf swb3 hrzf hn^c ntr*)” (P. of Nu = P. BM EA10477; Lapp 1997: Pl. 45; Quirke 2013: 491).

36 The text of this ritual reads, “Step back Seth! Your eyes are blind, you cannot see any more! Your ears are deaf, you cannot hear any more! (*h3zk Stš irtyzk šp nn m33zk nhwyzk idi nn sdmzk*)” (P. Imuthes = P. New York MMA 35. 9. 21, col. 29, 4–5; Goyon 1975: 380–381; Goyon 1999: 69, pl. 28A).

37 Apophis is addressed: “Your ears are deaf (*idi nh<wy>zk*)” (P. Bremner-Rhind = P. BM EA 10188, 31, 16–17; Faulkner 1933: 84.7).

THE LEXEME *imr*

As for the lexeme *imr*, it is attested in only one occurrence in the corpus of this article. It appears in a literary context in the *Instructions of Ptahhotep* as a reference to physical decay and decline in power and vigour.

THE LEXEME *hhi*

The lexeme *hhi* is attested in two occurrences in literary and medical contexts.³⁸ It is metaphorically used in a literary context in association with the words *3bw*, ‘pleasures’ and *m3c*, ‘temple (of the head)’. Thus, pleasures are metaphorically used as aetiology for conductive deafness. The text states that pleasures have deafened the scribe’s temple, which is probably a reference to the temporal lobe. This lobe sits behind the ear. It is associated with processing auditory information and concerned with the understanding of speech. Therefore, the idle scribe in this occurrence pays no attention to any word.³⁹ The close association between a physical ailment of the temple and deafness is made explicit in a magical spell for a mother and child to expel the *Nšw*-disease from all limbs of a child in the Eighteenth Dynasty Papyrus Berlin 3027. The spell addresses the disease: “Don’t attack (lit. fall on) his temple beware of deafness. Don’t attack (lit. fall on) his ears beware of hearing loss (*m h3i hr m3c3f s3w šht m h3i hr msdr3f s3w id*)” (P. Berlin 3027, ll. 4,1–4,2: Spell E; Erman 1901: 20; Yamazaki 2003). Thus, the aforementioned attestations imply that the Egyptians knew about the physiological auditory function of the temporal lobe.

THE LEXEME *dng*

The lexeme *dng* is attested twice in the corpus of this article addressing the idle scribe who forsook and abandoned writing.⁴⁰ In both occurrences, it is associated with the word *msdrt*, “ear” and metaphorically expresses the idleness, stubbornness and unresponsiveness of the lazy scribe. The negative connotations of this lexeme are made explicit in its meaning “*eine schlechte Eigenschaft des Ohres*” in *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache* (*Wb* V: 470, 2–3).

Among the Maatian ethical virtues is to be impartial in judging the humble and rich; and not turning a deaf ear to the weak by rescuing him from the one who is stronger than he. The one who is deaf to Maat is an insensible, unresponsive and unsociable person. Therefore, he has no friend and cannot be integrated into society. The couplet in the Ninth Discourse in the *Discourses of the Eloquent Peasant* clearly demonstrates Rensi’s malevolent character and the bad consequences of turning a deaf ear to the words of truth (P. Amherst 2, P. Berlin 3025, B2 109–111; Allen 2015: 319; Parkinson 1991: 47; Parkinson 1997a: 74; Parkinson 2012: 300–301). The word *hnms*, ‘friend’ in this occurrence alludes to the communicative aspects of Maat (Quirke 2012: 300), and having no friend alludes to the social isolation of Rensi.

38 See note 115 in this article.

39 Papyrus Anastasi V also mentions that the idle scribe has abandoned writing and whirled around in pleasures and has turned his back upon the god’s words (P. Anastasi V = P. BM EA 10244, 15, 6–15, 7; Gardiner 1937: 65; Caminos 1954: 247).

40 See notes 45 and 46 in this article.

CONCLUSION

The Egyptian language provides different words for deafness with specific phraseology consistent with the context of each occurrence. The occurrences demonstrate the extensive and recurrent use of the lexemes *sh/sh* and their derivatives *shy*, *shw*, *shi/shi*. These words are frequently attested within social contexts in the realm of the living and particularly in admonitions, maxims, literary and biographical texts and also to express deafness to Maat. It can be argued that the Egyptian conceptualization of *sh/sh* derives from linguistic metaphors of deafness corroborated in daily life and communicative experiences in a metaphoric way. Thus, given the particular semantic scope of the lexemes *sh/sh* and their derivatives, it seems rather problematic to use them as semantics for physical deafness and hearing impairment. On the other hand, the lexemes *idi*, *imr* and *hhi* are metaphorically used to describe the aetiologies of deafness. The three lexemes are metaphorically associated with human body parts, namely vessels of the heart, ear and temple, respectively. However, in the occurrences where *idi* and *imr* are used the aetiologies of deafness are originated from cardiac dysfunction and physical decay respectively. On the other hand, in the occurrence where *hhi* is used, the aetiology of deafness is attributed to the pleasures of evil in a morally corrupt environment.

The occurrences demonstrate a diachronic range of the lexemes *sh/sh* which expands from the Middle Kingdom to the Twenty-first Dynasty with extensive use during the Nineteenth Dynasty. The diachronic development of these lexemes shows that they are used phraseologically and metaphorically to mean reluctant to hear or disobedient,⁴¹ playing deaf, turning a deaf face and turning a deaf ear to people and their requests implying negligence. In contrast, these lexemes and their derivatives are metaphorically used to express virtuous traits of calmness, impartiality, discretion, responding the pleas of the poor and indigent people and negligence of the rich in favour of the weak.

Thus, these lexemes are metaphorically used to demonstrate a variety of positive connotations of deafness in contrast to its common negative connotations. Therefore, the concept of deafness figures prominently in moral discourse, as a concept closely associated with the notions of justice, sympathy, care and compassion that are essential for promoting social harmony and instilling moral virtues. In contrast, deafness is metaphorically used to express the notions of partiality, unfairness, haughtiness, incompetence and failures by magistrates in fulfilling their duties. These notions are believed to endanger social communications and harmony resulting in admonition, condemnation and personal rejection.

Deaf people in ancient Egypt are unique among individuals with a remarkable difference in that they form a linguistic minority. A deaf-mute person may communicate by signs and be communicated with using signs. Thus, the deaf-mute community used hand gestures in their daily life communications.

It is made explicit that the concern for the linguistic metaphors of deafness is much more attested in literary and biographical texts than deafness as a physical lack of hearing. The experience of physical deafness profoundly differs from that of metaphoric deafness in a fundamental way. In the corpus of this study, deafness is attested as a linguistic metaphor

41 According to Shupak “the metaphor of deafness indicates the refusal to listen and to obey” (Shupak 1993: 376).

and dysphemism for negligence, carelessness, idleness, insensitivity, unresponsiveness, unwillingness, incompetence, misbehaviour and disobedience. Thus, “deafness” is used as a dysphemistic metaphor since it is harsher than the other words in these occurrences. In the occurrences where the deaf is admonished, condemned and rebuked for vices and bad behaviours, deafness is used as a dysphemistic metaphor. On the other hand, deafness is used as a euphemistic metaphor for ignorance, metaphoric blindness, haughtiness, abuse of authority, partiality, transgression, unfairness, ailment and evil. These concepts of deafness demonstrate one of the significant features of metaphors as extensions of meanings. Thus, the linguistic metaphors contributed to produce new meanings of deafness.

The deafness of humans may imply their helplessness and vulnerability. Thus, they need divine help (David 2011: 79). In specific occurrences, deafness is repelled by gods among other evil beings and impairments, implying its malign connotations and negative consequences. In a ritual of protection and purification in the Nineteenth Dynasty *Papyrus Chester Beatty IX*, deities are appealed to protect, loose and release the recipient from everything bad and evil, from every god, goddess and from every spirit, male and female (*mkiꜣtn sw sꜣhꜣtn sw whꜣꜣtn sw m-ꜣ ꜥꜣt nb(t) bin ꜥwt nꜣꜣ nb nꜣꜣ nbt ꜣꜥ nb ꜣꜥ nbt*) (P. Chester Beatty IX = P. BM EA 10689, vs. B 17, 9–17, 11, Gardiner 1935: 113, Pl. 61; Quack 2011: 54). They are also appealed to protect, loose and release the recipient from every deafness, and blindness (*sꜣt nbt ꜣꜣp(t) nbt*) (P. Chester Beatty IX = P. BM EA 10689, vs. B 18, 1; Gardiner 1935: 113, Pl. 61; Quack 2011: 54).⁴² This spell implies the danger of deafness as a malign threat which needs to be repelled by the deities. Therefore, it can be argued that evil and bad state of affairs, on the one hand, and deafness on the other are closely associated. This is due to the occurrence of deafness as a vice and moral disregard that violates the moral Maatian values. This is also made explicit in the text entitled “Longing for Memphis” in *Papyrus Anastasi IV* (P. Anastasi IV = P. BM EA 10249, rt. 5, 2–5, 5). It states that malaise and bad health conditions have seized all limbs and body parts of a man including his ear.

Metaphoric deafness has ambivalent significances as virtue and vice with positive and negative connotations. Thus, it ambivalently occurs as an implication of virtue, righteousness and moral traits or as a vice and immoral behaviour. In case it is regarded as a virtue, it should not be confused with passivity or unresponsiveness. In this context, it shows a moral attitude and a rhetorical approach like impartiality and discretion. On the other hand, the individuals’ deafness to Maat and other divinities demonstrate that they act in a manner which does not conform to Maatian moral values. Thus, their reluctance to hear the words of truth implies that they do not pay attention to the demands of Maat. When deafness is attested as a vice, it violates Maatian moral values in contrast to listening, which implies a moral value and consciousness of truth. In this case, deafness is contrasted with hearing which encompasses all virtue.

The deafness and blindness to the words of truth (Maat) are regarded as linguistic metaphors for moral disregard, insensitivity and unresponsiveness to justice. Thus, the deaf to Maat is unwilling to hear any appeal or respond fairly. This is made explicit in several stanzas in the *Discourses of the Eloquent Peasant* as the exemplary text demonstrates deafness to Maat. On the other hand, deafness to Maat is frequently associated with foolishness and ignorance. As the foolish does not hearken to the words of righteousness, therefore, his deafness results

⁴² The determinative of *sꜣt* in this text is the walking legs (Gardiner sign-list D54) instead of the common ear of the ox (Gardiner sign-list F21).

in seeing knowledge as ignorance causing pain which distresses his life. Thus, he is a typical non-listener, one deaf to the requests and demands of Maat (Karenga 2004: 132).

In contrast, the one who is discrete and reticent, who has access to knowledge, is open of ears (Frood 2007: 131). The hearer's ears listen to what is beneficial; he is the one who acts in harmony with Maat (P. Prisse 16, 1-16, 2: ll. 531-532; Allen 2015: 215-216). Therefore, the hearer as a righteous man opens his ears to the one who speaks Maat (*wnꜥi ṣḥwy n dd mꜣt*).⁴³ As a result, the one who hears is loved by the god; but the one whom the god hates cannot hear (P. Prisse 16, 3: l. 534, 16, 6-16, 7: ll. 545-546; Allen 2015: 216-217).

It can be argued that the people who turn a deaf ear and who are unresponsive and reluctant to listen have been treated in the same way in all the aforementioned occurrences. Therefore, they were admonished, rebuked and sociably rejected, and thus they were described as being ignorant, foolish, stubborn, insensitive, impartial, hated by the gods and having no friend. Therefore, no diachronic changes regarding their treatment can be observed.

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43 The biography of Bakenkhons, high priest of Amun during the reign of Ramesses II, on the back pillar of his block statue from Karnak, now in Cairo Museum (CG 42155, see KRI III: 296, l. 12-13).

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