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Quotative indexes and reported discourse in Bohairic Coptic narratives

Coptic (Afro-Asiatic) is the last stage of the Ancient Egyptian language (attested ca. AD 300-1200). Of the two main literary varieties of Coptic, Sahidic and Bohairic, only Sahidic has a reference grammar that meets contemporary linguistic standards (Reintges 2004). This contribution is devoted to the other variety, Bohairic. It is based on my original research of a single corpus of narrative texts, the *Martyrs Acts*, edited by H. Hyvernat (1886/1977) and is part of my larger research project on the linguistics of Bohairic narrative. Originally, the *Martyrs Acts* must have been intended to be read aloud to the pilgrims visiting the shrine of the Martyr on the occasion of his festival. The *Martyrs Acts* were thus written in order to reach broad public by means of oral performance. Not surprisingly, many features of these texts are characteristic of oral texts.

Quotative indexes form a separate category of linguistic expressions and have been enjoying growing scholarly interest in recent years (see e.g. Gündelman & Von Roncador, (eds.), 2002; Gündelman 2008; Buchstaller & Van Alphen (eds.) 2012; Buchstaller 2014). Their importance for oral literature has also been amply acknowledged (e.g. Foley's (1999: 221) striking characterization: "aural punctuation marks"). Not only was it important to mark distinctly the onset of the often lengthy direct speech renderings as a different voice, that of one of the characters but also, in order to stress this difference, the direct speech fragments were probably read on a different tone by the performer (Foley 1999: 104, 221-224; Ott 2003: 193-202).

There are three layers of quotative indexes in Bohairic Coptic:

- the quotative particle *če* (< older Egyptian *r-dd* 'to be said') which can introduce reported discourse (direct and indirect), complement clauses and names in naming constructions;
- the generic speech verb *peče-* /*peča=* 'say' (a vestigial form of the so-called suffixal conjugation, etymologically derived from an older Egyptian quotative index *p3-dd=* 'that what X said') followed by the above-mentioned quotative particle *če*, see ex. (1):

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| (1) <i>ouoh</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>pi-sōtēr</i> | <i>n-agat^hos</i> | <i>nifi</i> | <i>exoun</i> |
| PART | PERF1 | SDEF.M.SG-Saviour | ATTR-good | breath | into |
| <i>xen</i> | <i>pef-ho</i> | <i>peča=f</i> | <i>na=f</i> | | |
| in | POSS:3.M.SG-face | say-3.M.SG | DAT-3.M.SG | | |
| <i>če</i> | <i>c^hi</i> | <i>na=k</i> | <i>n-ou-pn(eum)a</i> | <i>e=f-ouab</i> | |
| QUOT | receive:IMPER | DAT=2SG.M. | ACC-INDEF.SG-spirit | CIRC=3SG.M-holy | |

'And the good Saviour breathed into his face (and) said to him: "Receive a holy spirit"' (*AM*, 54).

- a circumstantial clause containing the generic speech verb *čō* 'say' with the marker of simultaneity *e-* and a pronoun cataphorically referring to the following quotation. The quotation itself is again preceded by particle *če*, see the expression *e=f-čō mmo=s* in ex. (2):

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| (2) | <i>Apatēr</i> Apatēr | <i>de</i> PART | <i>a=f-erouō</i> PERF1=3SG.M-answer | <i>na=f[...]</i> DAT=3SG.M [...] | <i>e=f-čō</i> CIRC-3.M.SG-say | | |
| | <i>mmo=s</i> ACC=3SG.F | <i>če</i> QUOT | <i>iōs</i> hasten | <i>mmo=k</i> REFL=2SG.M | <i>ma</i> give\IMP | <i>apop^hasis</i> verdict | <i>ero=n</i> ALL=1PL |

‘And Apatēr answered him [...] saying this: “Hasten yourself to sentence us”’ (AM, 97).

Each of the three indexes can follow a clause with a reportative verb, such as ‘answer’ in (2).

The starting point of the present contribution is the assumption that the selection of an appropriate index should be interpreted as facilitating strategic organization of the text. The aim is to chart and explain the relations between each of these three expressions and the types of reported discourse they introduce. Some factors which have been shown to play a role in reported discourse are evidentiality, mimetic effects and ‘distributed subjectivities’ (see Buchstaller 2014: 37-50; Herman 2013: 263-28; see also Wierzbicka 1974 for an early account). A question will thus be examined whether these factors are also at work in Coptic.

Quotative indexes differ from narration proper in that they correspond to a different way in which the narrator communicates with his audience. While the narration proper constitutes the narrated world, the other elements belong to the “world of the narrator” (Fleischman 1991: 94) who manifests himself overtly in this way. This is a parallel textual reality, a ‘meta-reality’ which is indicated by the use of dedicated linguistic devices. One of these devices, which can be ascertained at present, is the occurrence of a relative tense (in contrast to narration proper characterized by the absolute past). What still has to be examined is the compatibility of a particular index with other modifiers and/or expressions referring to the Addressee.

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