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## Relativization in Siwi (Berber)

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**Relativization in Siwi (Berber)**  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to show how language documentation, in the form of a large corpus of spontaneous data, can give crucial insights about relativization, and modify some of the assumptions found by elicitation and a limited use of texts. This study shows that relativization in Siwi, an endangered Berber language spoken in Egypt, involves several constructions whose formal features depend on the grammatical role of the head noun, as well as on the restrictive vs. descriptive modification realized by the relative clause.

The paper is organized as follows: I start by a presentation of Siwa and its linguistic situation, then I discuss the presence or absence of a resumptive pronoun in relative clauses and the different relativization strategies in Siwi. The last section shows that the presence / absence of a relative marker is linked to the distinction between restriction of the reference of the head noun, and description of that reference.

## 2. SOME INFORMATION ABOUT SIWI

Siwi is an Eastern Berber language. The closest Berber varieties are Sokna and El-Fogaha in Libya while Awjila is the closest geographically. The population is of about 25,000 Siwans and 5,000 foreigners (coming mainly from other Egyptian cities).

The contact with Arabic speakers has a long history, Arabs have been in the area since 642 and they have lived in Siwa since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. According to Souag (2010) who has been studying the contact between Arabic and Siwi Berber, the influence on the language derives not exclusively from Cairene or Bedouin Arabic but from some earlier stratum. He points out similarities with the dialects of the other Egyptian oases. Many workers from Upper Egypt live in Siwa and many Siwans go to Libya or other Egyptian cities to work.

While Siwi is the language used everywhere, in all contexts and is still passed on from generation to generation, Arabic is used in official contexts, in the communication with Arabic-speaking foreigners and at school. Almost the entire population is bilingual, except children before school age and some very old people. Intermarriage of Siwi women with Arabic-speaking men is starting to spread, endangering intergenerational transmission. A documentation of this language through the collection of spontaneous corpus data was necessary.

Examples used in the present study come from a selected corpus of five hours, transcribed and translated into English, but the whole documentation project contains twelve hours of recordings<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. SIWI RELATIVIZATION

From a formal point of view, the typical Siwi relative clause is of the form: Head noun - (relative marker) - (lexical subject) - verb - arguments<sup>2</sup>. This type of clause is identified through the following functional definition: “A relative clause is a clause narrowing the potential reference of a referring expression by restricting the reference to those referents of which a particular proposition is true.” (Comrie and Kuteva, 2013: Relativization strategies)

#### 3.1. The resumptive pronoun

A resumptive pronoun, which specifies the relativized function, is present in the relative clause, under constraints linked to the relativized role: subject relativization is incompatible with a resumptive pronoun (1), while for object relativization, the resumptive pronoun is optional (2 and 2'). For all other roles, the resumptive pronoun is obligatory (3).<sup>3</sup>

(1) *talti tən t-nəggər g fali*  
 woman.F REL.F 3SG.F-live.IPFV in citadel  
 ‘The woman who lives in the citadel’

(2) *timədrast tən ssn-aṭ*  
 school.F REL.F know.PFV-2SG  
 ‘The school that you know’

(2') *tanfast tən t-unṃma-i-tət*  
 tale.F REL.F 3SG.F-tell.PFV-1SG.IO-3SG.F.DO  
 ‘The tale that she told me’

(3) *talti wən agg<sup>w</sup>id-ənn-əs jə-mmuṭ*  
 woman REL man-of-3SG 3SG.M-die.PFV  
 ‘The woman whose husband died’

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<sup>1</sup> Those data were collected during four fieldworks sessions: two of them were possible thanks to the financial help of ELDP (SG00115), and the other two thanks to the financial help of Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and Ile-de-France MOBIDOC grant.

<sup>2</sup>The resumptive pronoun is cliticized on the verb for direct/indirect object relativization, on the noun for genitive relativization and on the preposition (after the verb) for oblique relativization.

<sup>3</sup> The abbreviations used in this paper are : 1= first-person, 2= second-person, 3= third person, DO: direct object, IO= indirect object, M= masculine, F= feminine, SG= singular, PL= plural, PFV= perfective, IPFV= imperfective, AOR= aorist, IRR= irrealis, PREP= preposition, REL= relative marker, EXIST=existential, RELSBJ= subject relativization form, ABS= absolute state, IMP= imperative, VN= verbal noun.

In his corpus, Souag notices that any grammatical function of the relative clause other than subject needs a resumptive pronoun: ‘Resumptive pronouns are used for non subject-relativization’ (Souag 2010: 270). This is also the case for some dialectal varieties of Arabic (like Cairene or Cyrenaican) while in Classical Arabic the resumptive pronoun for direct object relativization is optional. Regarding this feature, Leguil (1986) and Souag believe that the Arabic calque is evident and that data from Laoust (1931) showing no resumptive pronoun for object relativization at all were not acceptable anymore. That is why Souag believes that Awjila and Nafusi are to be considered more conservative in this regard: at least they retain the gap for object in the relative clauses, which characterizes object relativization in most Berber languages. (Souag 2010: 271-272)

### 3.1.1. Object relativization

My own observations show that object relativization sometimes implies the use of a resumptive pronoun, and sometimes doesn't. This makes Siwi closer to some Berber varieties like Awjila and Nafusi. The latter situation is somewhat rare in spontaneous data, it is however confirmed in elicitation by my consultants, who accepted variants of relative clauses where I suppressed the resumptive pronoun.

- (4) *alluwaḥ-ənn-ək*                      *wən*    *ərrəsm-ət*                      *af*    *fali*  
 painting\F.PL-of-2SG.M    REL    paint.IPFV-2SG    on    citadel  
 ‘The paintings that you painted about the citadel’

- (5) *i-zərraḥ-ən*                      *tmaṭəm*    /    *i-fəll-an*                      /    *ummaxmax*    /  
 3-cultivate.IPFV-PL    tomato.F    /    PL-onion-PL    /    purslane                      /

*kull*            *fi*            *ədbəf*            *wən*            *i-zərraḥ-ən*  
 every            thing            things\PL    REL            3-cultivate.IPFV-PL  
 ‘They cultivate tomato, onions, purslane. All of them are the things that they cultivate’

- (6) *naṭṭfu*    *wən*    *jə-ɣ<sup>w</sup>mmaṛ-ən-t*                      *g*    *əlfid*  
 food            REL    3-do.IPFV-PL-3SG.M.DO    in    Aid  
 ‘The food that they do during the Aid’

Resumptive pronoun (6) and gapping (4-5) are therefore both possible. The two strategies are equivalent in terms of semantics or pragmatics according to my consultants, pointing therefore towards a contact-induced change from gapping to resumptive strategy.

### 3.1.2. Subject relativization

In the subject relative clause in other Berber languages there is a special subject-relativization verb form. No resumptive pronoun is present in the relative clause:

- (7) *twašunt*                      *[y-iwy-ən]*                      *argaz]*  
 girl:ABS                      RELSBJ-bring:PFV-RELSBJ                      man:ABS  
 ‘The girl that married the man’ (Figuig Berber, Kossman 1997:160)
- (8) *tin*                      *ara*                      *i-sərs-n*  
 the\_one-SG.F                      REL.IRR                      RELSBJ-be\_placed\CAUS.AOR-RELSBJ
- isyarən*  
 firewood:ABS.PL.M  
 ‘the one who would put down her firewood’ (Western Kabyle, Mettouchi 2012, KAB\_AM\_NARR\_01\_0855)

In Siwi the verb in the subject relative clause has no special dependent form: the verb of the relative clause (10) is finite and bears the same bound pronouns as main clause verbs (9), as opposed to Figuig Berber or Kabyle (7 and 8) whose relative clause verbs bear a circumfix (RELSBJ) that does not vary according to person and number.

- (9) *talti*                      *t-umma-i*                      *tanfast*  
 woman.F                      3SG.F.say.PFV-1SG.IO                      tale.F  
 ‘The woman told me a tale’

- (10) *talti*                      *tən*                      *t-umma-i*  
 woman.F                      REL.F                      3SG.F.say.PFV-1SG.IO  
 ‘The woman who told me’

The fact that example (10) contains a relative clause is obvious from the presence of the relative marker *tən*. However, in some cases, the relative clause can lack a relative clause marker:

- (11) *di*                      *agg<sup>wid</sup>*                      *jə-ndzif-a*                      *talti*                      *t-axfəm-t*  
 EXIST                      man.M                      3SG.M-marry.PFV-RES                      woman.F                      F-stupid-F  
 ‘There is a man who married a stupid woman’

In this case, the presence of the relative clause is identified through both the existential predicate preceding the head noun, and the lack of prosodic boundary (one prosodic contour for the whole sentence). See 2.2.3 for more details.

### 3.2. The relative marker

Siwi relative clauses generally contain a gender-specific relative marker (*wən* for M.SG and M/F.PL and *tən* for F.SG). Less than a century ago, a plural form *wiyən*, for both genders was attested (Laoust 1932: 119)

### 3.2.1. Grammaticalization

The relative marker *wən* (*tən* for F.SG) is a pronoun whose role is to represent the antecedent in the relative clause, and in some cases, to simply mark the left boundary of the relative clause ('relative marker'). My claim is that:

(a) the relative marker has been grammaticalized from 'determination carriers', a series of nominal elements which cannot appear on their own and must be complemented by a demonstrative, a relative clause, or a complement noun (Galand 1969 (2002:206)). The system of determination carriers is quite large and they have many functions. For a complete list, see Galand (2010:97-101). Their function is to send back to a referent that is in the discourse or implied in the situation (Galand 2010:97)

(b) the relative markers have undergone further grammaticalization, marked by the loss of number and gender agreement between the relative marker and its antecedent.

The formal similarities between Siwi demonstratives and relative pronouns (cf. Souag 2010:253, 256) point to a link between the two functions. This link is supported by general typological evidence (cf. Diessel 1999) and by the fact that some other Berber languages, such as Tuareg, use the same markers in both functions: *wa* and *ta* can be both relative markers and postnominal modifiers.

Despite the fact that in Siwi *wən*, and *tən* cannot function as postnominal demonstratives, it can be argued that this function used to be available, and that the relative marker use is derived from it. In the following examples, the first glossing line gives the synchronic function of the various morphemes, whereas the second line and the translation in parentheses point what we hypothesize as the first stage of the grammaticalization of *wən* and *tən*.

(12) *itadəm wən i-nəggr-ən g fali*  
people REL 3-live.IPFV-PL in citadel  
(people those they live in citadel)  
'People who live in the citadel'  
(formerly: those people (who) live in the citadel)

(13) *əssikkət wən ət-təffal i Ayurmi*  
road.F REL 3SG.F-go.IPFV to Aghurmi  
(road this she goes to Aghurmi)  
'The road that goes to Aghurmi'  
(formerly: that road (which) goes to Aghurmi)

This is supported by the agreement between the preceding noun and the marker: *wən* contains the masculine morpheme *w-* and the determination carrier *n* (Vycichl 1957: 141-142 and Galand 2010:98); *tən* contains the feminine morpheme *t-* and the determination carrier *n*; *wijən* (no longer used in

contemporary Siwi) contains the masculine morpheme *w-*, the plural morpheme *-i-*, and the determination carrier *n*.

Further grammaticalization can be observed, which had not been noticed in previous studies: the masculine relative marker *wən* is on the way to being used also for feminine singular head nouns:

(14) *tizarrət wən i-fforṭ-ən səgd-əs əlḥammam*  
 broom.F REL.M 3-sweep.IPFV-PL PREP-3SG toilet  
 ‘The broom with which they swept the toilet’

(15) *tjaṭṭost wən tə-ṭṭfa taza n iyijarən*  
 cat.F REL.M 3SG.F-eat.PFV dish of ighiyaren  
 ‘The cat that ate a dish of ighiyaren’

This last point shows that the marker *wən* is in the process of further grammaticalisation (towards the use of it as a unique form, irrespective of gender and number).

This relative marker cannot be preceded by a preposition, except in a headless relative clause, as in the following example:

(16) *g-i-qqalləb i wən jə-xsa jəmmum*  
 IRR-3SG.M-mix.AOR to REL 3SG.M-want.PFV sweet  
 ‘He mixes to the one who wants it sweet’

In this case, the marker *wən* actually acts as a pronominal head, it retains its referential value. This referential use of the masculine marker *wən* is also encountered in main or independent clauses, as indefinite pronoun:

(17) *wən i-bəṛṛam-ən / wən i-tubb-ən i əlfondoq*  
 REL 3-go\_around.IPFV-PL / REL 3-bring.IPFV-PL to hotel  
 ‘Some people go around, some bring (them) to the hotel’

### 3.2.2. Presence or absence of *wən/tən*

According to Souag ‘Where a head noun is present, a distinction must be drawn between definite and indefinite forms: definites feature the marker *wən / tən*, indefinites drop it’ and :

‘this phenomenon obviously parallels Arabic (classical and dialectal) where, in general, the relative marker is obligatorily present with definite heads and obligatorily absent with indefinite ones (unless pronominal).’

(Souag 2010: 268 and 273).

The situation is however more complex in Siwi. A thorough study of my spontaneous corpus showed that the presence / absence of a relative marker is actually a matter of restrictive vs. descriptive modification. In the former case, the

relative clause restricts the reference of the head noun, while in the latter, the head noun has independent reference, and the relative clause is a descriptive expansion of additional properties of that noun.

This is shown for instance by the following example, where despite the definite reference of the noun (implied by the possessive affix *-ənn-əs*), no relativization marker appears. The type of modification is here descriptive, it adds a property to the set represented by the head noun, rather than restricting the set (to the children who entered as opposed to those who didn't).

- (18) *yur-əs tərɯawən-ənn-əs i-təkkam-ən sg əldʒamb*  
 at-3SG children-of-3SG 3-enter.INACC-PL from side  
  
*n tʃarfat*  
 of room  
 ‘She had children, who used to enter from the side of the room’

Similarly, the following example shows that despite the indefiniteness of the head (indefinite pronoun) of the clause, the relative marker is indeed present. This is because the interpretation of the modification is restrictive: only those who have a garden are concerned by the main predicate.

- (19) *kull ədʒdʒən wən yur-əs aʃil / i-tərraħ*  
 every one REL at-3SG garden / 3SG.M-go.IPFV  
 ‘Everyone who has a garden, goes’

Other examples of relative clauses with (20 and 21) or without relative marker (22 and 23) confirm my analysis in terms of restrictive vs descriptive modification:

- (20) *zənz agmar i agg<sup>wid</sup> wən i-tasəd*  
 sell.IMP horse to man REL 3SG.M-come.IPFV  
 ‘Sell the horse to the man who is coming’
- (21) *jə-bnu-n zadir wən j-uta-ja*  
 3-build.PFV-PL wall REL 3SG.M-fall.PFV-RES  
 ‘They built the wall that had fallen’
- (22) *j-usəd agg<sup>wid</sup> smijət-ənn-əs Aħmad Zafar əl Madani*  
 3SG.M-come.PFV man.M name-of-3SG Aħmad Zafar el Madani  
 ‘A man whose name was Ahmad Zafar el Madani came’
- (23) *di agg<sup>wid</sup>-an i-nəffu-n i aħħuwəl*  
 EXIST man-PL 3-be\_useful.IPFV-PL to transport.NV  
 ‘There are men who are useful to the transport’



The fact that the overall interpretation of the sentence leads to a definite reading of the head noun in (20) and (21) is a consequence of the restrictive nature of the relative clause: the reference of the noun is defined by the relative clause. In (22) and (23), the descriptive relative clause does not define the reference of the head noun but provides an additional modification, on a head noun that is interpreted as indefinite given the context (first mention of the man in (22), generic interpretation in (23)).

Generalization about the link between definiteness and relative marker is therefore not essential, but rather indirect and statistical: it is because the relative clause is restrictive that its head noun is interpreted as definite (if it is not already construed as definite), and not the other way around. And since a descriptive relative clause does not establish the reference of its head noun, the reference of the head noun is not restricted by that modification, and it can be definite or indefinite.

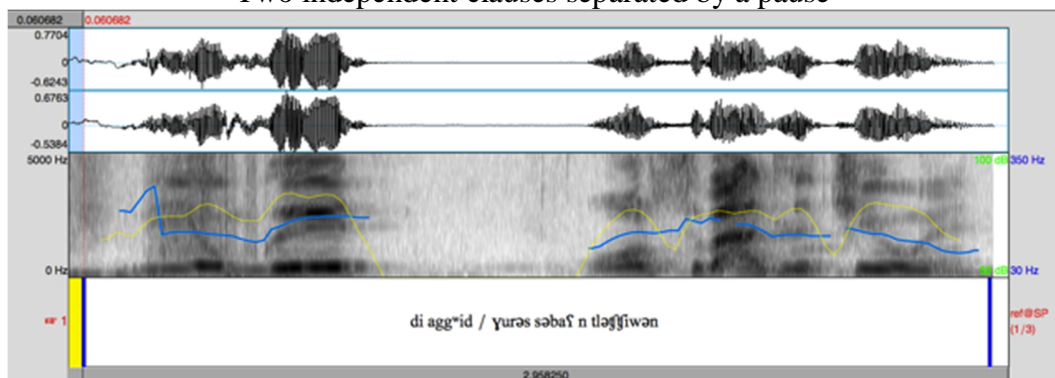
### 3.2.3. *Relative clauses and independent clauses*

An additional problem is posed by the identification of relative clauses in the absence of a relative marker. In this case, only prosody can differentiate a relative clause from an independent clause if there is no resumptive pronoun (Galand 1984 (2002: 222) for Berber).

Indeed, in Siwi, an independent clause is separated from another by a prosodic break, and has its own prosodic contour (example 24) whereas a relative clause is included in the general contour of the sentence, and is not preceded by a prosodic break (example 25):

**Figure 1**

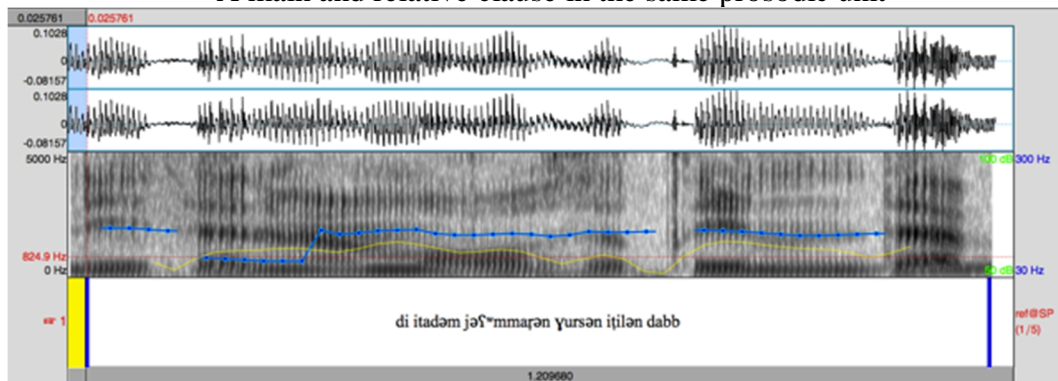
Two independent clauses separated by a pause



- (24) *di*      *agg'id* / *yur-as*   *sabaŋ*   *n*   *tləfffi-wen*  
 EXIST man.M / at-3SG seven of girl-PL  
 'There is a man. He has seven girls'

**Figure 2**

A main and relative clause in the same prosodic unit



- (25) *di itadəm jəŋˀmmaɾ-ən ɣursən i-til-ən dab*  
EXIST people 3-do.IPFV-PL at-3PL PL-garden-PL many  
'There are people who do have many gardens'

This phenomenon is well-attested in many languages of the world, as in Mohawk for instance (Mithun 2009).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Through this paper I tried to show that the study of spontaneous data collected in the course of a rich documentation project can give interesting results. The original discoveries I have been able to make are:

- (a) the optional presence of a resumptive pronoun for object relativization;
- (b) a current tendency to use *wən* as a unique form, irrespective of gender and number;
- (c) the use of a relative marker when the relative clause is a restrictive modification of the head noun, its absence when the modification is descriptive.

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