

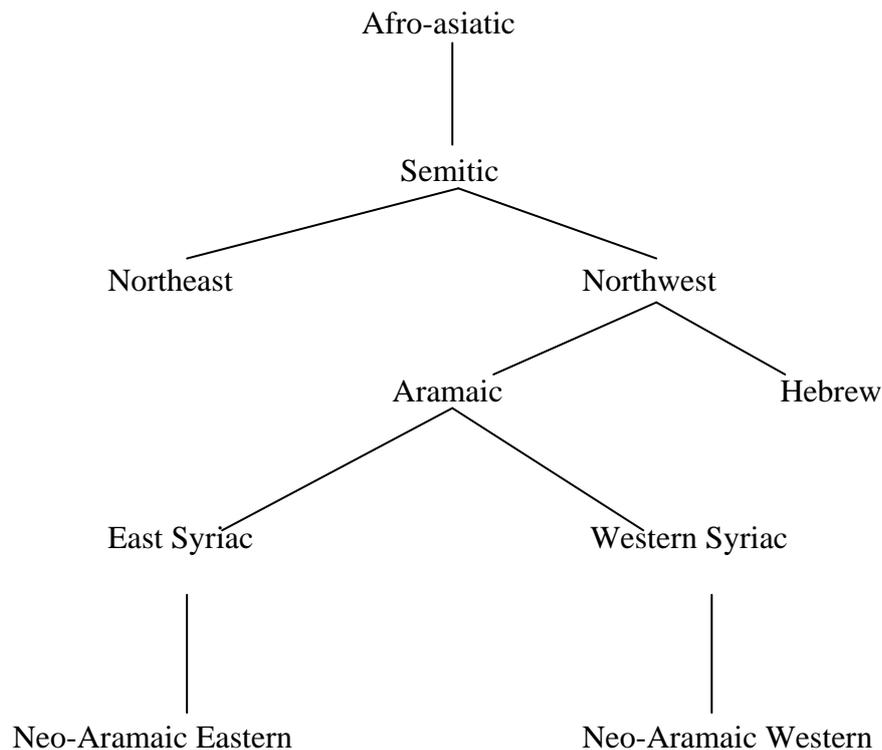
Relativization in Aramaic-Syriac

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1. Introduction

This paper is a preliminary approach to relativization in Syriac, which is a dialect of Aramaic, a Semitic language of the Afro-Asiatic family. This study will concentrate on the morpheme ‘d-’ as a “relative morpheme”. In the introduction I will quote other dialects of Aramaic, including oriental/Western and neo-Aramaic.

(1) Linguistic classification of Syriac within language families



2. Sociolinguistic Point of View

Historical approach 1

Aramaic appeared in Syria and in Mesopotamia before the 1st millennium BC. The spread of Aramaic resulted from the fact that it was an official language in the Assyrian, Babylonian and then Persian empires. Syriac is a dialect of oriental Aramaic which was first spoken in Edessa and which spread after the appearance of Christianity. With the conquest of Alexander the Great, Syriac and other Aramaic dialects began to appear in writing in reaction to the dominant Hellenism. However, Aramaic continued to be used for communication even after the introduction of the Greek language.

Historical approach 2

Around 132 years B.C.E, the kingdom of Orsena, established in Edessa, adopted Syriac as its official language. With the appearance of Christianity, Syriac supplanted the imperial Aramaic language as the standard version of Aramaic.

The Syriac people were divided into two branches: the oriental, called “Nestorians” Syriac, which were established especially in Mesopotamia and in Iran, and the western Syriac including “Jacobites”, who lived in Syria, in High Mesopotamia and in Lebanon.

Today, the Syriac language, which is used in certain oriental churches, has approximately 400,000 speakers. It is spoken mainly in the southeast of Turkey and in the north of Iraq, as well as in Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. It is also attested in North and South America, as well as in Europe.

3. Method - Corpus

Due to the difficulty of getting manuscripts, because of the political problems which exist in the Middle East, I have chosen to work on a written corpus. This enables me to have a view of the syntactical structures of the classical Syriac language. The corpus is Peshitta – Matthew’s gospel or [kruzuto da - mti chliho] “prophet Matthew’s gospel”.

4. Traditional analysis of the morpheme ‘d-’

The morpheme ‘d-’ in Syriac plays a variety of syntactic roles. It is used in several syntactical structures; that is why its nature changes according to the context by which it is surrounded.

It is an old demonstrative like others in many Semitic languages. It is followed by a *nomen rectum* when a *nomen regens* is not a construct

(‘peripheric genitive’); it also enters a noun phrase to mark the complement of the noun; it binds two clauses as a conjunction: main clause and subordinated clause or adverbial clause; it can bind a direct or indirect short speech; it can also introduce indirect questions; and finally it can be a relative pronoun. Its original meaning is the one of a demonstrative-relative or of a demonstrative-preposition: ‘the one who/that of’ according to the traditional grammars (Duval 1881, Nöldeke 1904, Costaz 1955, etc.), and even from Homeric Greek where the relative pronouns are still properly demonstratives. In Aramaic their function may be attributed to a determinative: *zī / dī* (Lipinsky 2001:533).

Thus the syntactic flexibility of ‘d-’ goes from the syntax to the clauses. We are not going to study every syntactic point of the morpheme. Instead, we are going to concentrate on ‘d-’ as a ‘relative pronoun’.

There are a certain number of sentences which are sometimes considered relative and sometimes adverbial clauses according to French or other translations. In (2) the translation is ‘that’, and the traditional grammarians analyzed this morpheme as a relative pronoun.

(2) a. Matthew 8:19

⋆ ܘܩܪܝܒ ܘܥܡܪ ܘܥܠܝܢܐ ܘܥܠܝܢܐ ܘܥܠܝܢܐ ܘܥܠܝܢܐ ܘܥܠܝܢܐ

[u qareb safro had w emar
And to come near.inac.3m.sg. scribe num and to say.acc.3m.sg.

l – eh Rabb-ay ite botr – okh l – atar
prep-3m.sg. teacher-1sg. to come.inac.1sg. after-2m.sg. Prep-Loc

d – ozel – at]
REL-go.imp.-2m.sg.

‘And a scribe came near (to him) and said to him: “Teacher, I shall follow you **towards the place that** you are going to.”’

b. Matthew 5:34

⋆ ܘܠܘ ܬܝܡܢܐ ܘܠܘ ܬܝܡܢܐ ܘܠܘ ܬܝܡܢܐ ܘܠܘ ܬܝܡܢܐ ܘܠܘ ܬܝܡܢܐ

[...Lo timun sokh lo ba – Šmayo **d** – kursy – aw
no to swear.imp.2m.pl. never no prep-sky **CONJ**- chair-3m.sg.

d – aloho]
Gen-god

‘...make no oath at all, either by heaven, **because** it is the throne of God, or...’

Basing their translations on other languages, traditional grammars analyzed the morpheme ‘d-’ as a relative in the first sentence and as a conjunction in the second. The same is done in other reference languages.

5. Typological classification of relative clauses

Several parameters enable a typological study of relatives in different languages. The study of relatives was particularly prevalent in the seventies and in the nineties. The most notable results of these studies are:

- I- To identify the position of relative clause
- II- To identify the different strategies of relativization
- III- To determine the different degrees of accessibility to relativization

a. Types of relatives

The relative varies according to an essential syntactic parameter: the position of the relative clause with regards to the nominal head and to the main sentence. A relative clause can be set or removed from its noun phrase. A relative clause can be preposed or postposed with regards to its main clause (Lehmann 1984, 1986).

- Embedded relative clause (prenominal or postnominal) or untied from its nominal syntagm
- Relative clause can be preposed or postposed to the main clause.

6. The postnominal relative clauses in Syriac

Syriac is concerned only with one type of relative: postnominal. Postnominal relatives are common to almost all the languages of the world, including French, Arabic, and Modern Hebrew. They are composed of a nominal head and postposed relative clause, which is dependent. In this example, the nominal heads are in bold and dependents are postposed to this name. Here we can see that the postnominal relative is placed after all the other dependents of the noun. This is normal for postnominals, according to Creissels (2006).

‘For I am a man that (has) soldiers under him...’

7. Relativization and relativized noun

The process of relativization is made with regard to a noun or a nominal head. A relativized noun is indicated here by the term of domain noun according to Creissels (2006). In some languages the relative pronoun is not always present, as in English:

(9) The girl {we met last week}

In a language such as the Syriac, the presence of a particle, the morpheme ‘d-’, is compulsory for the structure of relativization.

a. Strategies of relativization

If we consider the realization of the nominal head in relative, Comrie (1981:204-211) classifies four strategies of prototypical relativization in the languages in the following points:

- non-reduction strategy
- resumptive pronoun strategy
- relative pronoun strategy
- gap strategy

(10) Strategies of relativization

Non-reduction strategy	<p>Japanese (internal head nominal)</p> <p>[Neko-ga sakana-o cat- Antiacc fish - acc torootoshita]-no-o Hanako-ga steal.pfv-Nom-acc Hanako- Antiacc tukamaeta to catch.pfv ‘Hanako caught a cat that was trying to steal a fish.’</p>
Resumptive pronoun strategy	<p>Arabic :</p> <p>[al - rajulu alla-zi ta’araftu Def-man JONC-m.sg. to meet.pfv.1sg. ,alay-hi huwa min almanya] prep-3m.sg. 3m.sg. prep(loc) Germany</p>

relative pronoun strategy								
gap strategy or strategy of disappearance	<p>b. Matthew 3:8</p> <p style="text-align: right;">* ܐܘܢܝܢܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܦܘܬܘܪܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">['bed</td> <td style="width: 25%;">hokil</td> <td style="width: 25%;">fir – e</td> <td style="width: 25%;">d -</td> </tr> <tr> <td>produce.Ipfv3m.pl.</td> <td>adv</td> <td>fruit-pl</td> <td>REL-</td> </tr> </table> <p>Sowen l – thaybutho] worthy.Ipfv.3m.pl. prep – repentance</p> <p>‘Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins.’</p>	['bed	hokil	fir – e	d -	produce.Ipfv3m.pl.	adv	fruit-pl	REL-
['bed	hokil	fir – e	d -						
produce.Ipfv3m.pl.	adv	fruit-pl	REL-						

i. Resumptive pronoun strategy

Because the Syriac verb contains necessarily an indication of subject enclitic in the verb and susceptible to represent on its own the subject argument, resumptive pronouns are used in a relativization of the roles different from the subject.

So the relative clauses of the Syriac language are characterized by two different formats: their common point is the same morpheme ‘d-’. The difference between the two is that the first one includes a pronominal object marker which refers to the domain noun, while the second one does not include this marker. For the former one the pronominal object marker is the same as the one that would appear in the assertive sentence where the object is not expressed.

In order not to confuse the terms, we will be using the term relativizer (which was used by Creissels) instead of relative pronoun. The example in (12a) presents the sentence in its assertive state. (12b) presents the pronominal indications attached to the verb, the object being absent. Example (12c) reveals the presence of the same pronominal indications in spite of the presence of an embedded proposition.

(12) Matthew 7:9

a. [bro nešal gabro laḥmo]
son ask.Ipfv.3m.sg. man bread
‘The son will ask for some bread to the man.’

b. [br - eh nešel – iw laḥmo]
son-3m.sg. ask.Ipfv.3m.sg.-**3m.sg.** bread
‘His son will ask **him** for some bread.’

- c. [...gabro **d** – nešel – **iw** br – eh lahmo]
 man **REL**-ask.Ipfv.3m.sg.-**3m.sg.** son-3m.sg. bread
 ‘The man **whose** son will ask **him** some bread.’

In the following example, the personal pronoun in the sentence (13b) replaces the noun complement of the sentence (13a): [d-atto] ‘of the woman’:

(13) Matthew 9:20

- a. [dmo d – atto rode – wo]
 blood gen-woman flow.Ipfv-be.Pfv.3m.sg.
 ‘The blood of the woman was flowing’
- b. [dm – **oh** rode – wo]
 blood-**3f.sg.** flow.Ipfv.- to be.Pfv.3m.sg.
 ‘her blood flowed (was flowing)’
- c. [... atto **d** – rode – **wo** dm – **oh** Snin
 woman **REL** – flow.Ipfv-to be.Pfv.3m.sg. blood-**3f.sg.** year.Pl
 tarta’esre...]
 twelve
 ‘... A woman **who** had been suffering from severe bleeding for twelve years (lit: whose blood was flowing)...’

ii. Gap strategy or strategy of disappearance

Is the relativizer ‘d-’ a genuine relative pronoun? The syntactical elements of a Syriac independent sentence do not follow a strict order in their structures, which is rather flexible; we can have a verb at the beginning of the sentence (e.g. 14a) and we can have a verb in a position after the subject (e.g. 14b):

(14) Assertive clauses

- a. Matthew 2:4
 ❖ ܕܩܘܠܘܢ
 [u **kaneš** kul – hun rab – ay kohn – e u ...]
 and **to call.pfv.3m.sg** Quant.-3m.pl. big-et.c. Priest – pl. and
 ‘He called together all the chief priests and...’

b. Matthew 1:2

ܐܒܪܗܡܐ ܒܥܝܬܐ ܝܫܥܐ

[abrohom **awled** l-ishoq ...]
 Ibrahim **to beget.Pfv.3m.sg.** prep-Isaïc
 ‘Abraham begat Isaac.’

The clause which enters the canonical position of a subordinate relative clause has normally the peculiarity of having at least a constituent. In the process of relativization in primary strategy, a syntactic gap occurs in the canonical position of the name. The clause constituent of the relative clauses of the first and second example corresponds to (15-16a), and we are going to represent the syntactic gap, which appears in an embedded relative, by a horizontal line in (15-16b):

(15) Main vs. subject relative clause

a. Main clause:

[foraḥto da-šmayo lo zor'in u lo ḥoşdin]
 Birds gen-sky no sow.Ipfv.3m.pl. and no harvest.Ipfv.m.pl.
 ‘The birds of the sky neither sow and nor harvest.’

b. Subject relative clause:

Matthew 6:26

[foraḥto da-šmayo **d – lo ——** zor'in ...]
 sky gen-sky **REL - no** sow.Ipfv.3m.pl.
 ‘The birds of the sky (**which**) do not sow...’

(16) Main vs. object embedded clause

a. Main clause:

[šeqlat atto temrat la-ḥmiro]
 take.Pfv.3f.sg. woman hide.Pfv.3f.sg. prep-yeast
 ‘The woman took (and) buried a yeast.’

b. Object embedded clause:

Matthew 13:33

[la-ḥmiro haw **d –** šeqlat ——— atto]
 Prep-yeast dem **REL-** take.Pfv.3f.sg. woman
 ‘the yeast, the one that the woman took.’

Certainly, there is a nominal term of the independent clause which does not appear in the subordinate clause, but the question is: does the relativizer ‘d-’ refer to this nominal term?

A relative pronoun is called this because it represents in an anaphoric way the contents of a nominal constituent with which it is usually put in correlation. It varies according to the nature of the relativized noun. It is essential for the pronoun to have a case marker which facilitates the identification of the relativized noun.

A relative is characterized by the considerable difference which exists between the relative sentences and the independent sentences concerning the linear order of their structures. A relative pronoun can also have the function of subordination.

The Syriac relative clauses (subject / object / oblique) are subordinate clauses whose clause constituents correspond to the sentences (a) in each example that will follow:

(17) Matthew 1:16

	⋆	ܕܘܢܘܢ	
[...marya	d	– men – oh	eth-iled
Mary	REL	–prep- 3f.sg.	Pfv-to give birth.3m.sg.
			yešu'
			Jesus

d – metqre mšiḥo]

REL-Pfv.call.3m.sg. Messiah

‘(...) the husband of Marie, **from whom** (lit: **that of her**) Jesus was born, who (lit: **that**) is called Messiah.’

We can see in the independent clauses that no term is missing; in other words they have the same units as those present in relative clauses.

Main clause:

[men	marya	eth-iled-∅	yešu']
Prep	Mary	Pfv-to give birth-3m.sg.	Messiah

‘Of Marie Messiah was born.’

[yešu'	metqre	mšiḥo]
Jesus	Pfv.call.3m.sg.	Messiah

‘Jesus is called Messiah.’

Here it is the same; the terms of the relative will be in the independent sentence which follows:

Oblique relative clauses:

This is an example of a relativized noun having the oblique function. In such examples with oblique functions, the resumptive pronoun strategy is used:

(19) Matthew 18:7

❖ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ

[...Gabro **d** – b-id – eh nitun makšul – e]
 man REL-prep-hands-3m.sg. to come.Ipfv.3m.pl. scandal-pl.
 ‘(...) woe to that man through whom (lit: that by his hands) the scandal comes!’

In the oblique functions and in others at lower positions in the Hierarchy, the strategy with resumptive pronouns is mostly used. But it does not prevent the presence of the primary strategy. In the following examples we find the inconstant of time is not resumed (taken back) by a resumptive pronoun in the relative (20). Also it is the same case about the second example (21) where the object is referred by any pronoun.

(20) Matthew 24:38

❖ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ

[...’damo l-yawmo **d** – ’al nuḥ l – kewelo]
 until prep-day REL-enter.Pfv.3m.sg. Noé Prep-Arc
 ‘(...) Until the day (lit: **that**) when Noah entered the Ark.’

(21) Matthew 13:33

[la-ḥmiro haw **d** – šeqlat atto]
 Prep-yeast dem REL- take.Pfv.3f.sg. woman
 ‘the yeast, the one **that** the woman took.’

The relativizer ‘d-’ does not change according to the gender or according to the relativized role. The translatives which “mark the subordinate clause (...) are invariable words, the relative pronoun is a variable word” (Tesnière 1966:560). What would be difficult to analyze is its relativized role because this role is more or less necessarily assumed in Syriac by a resumptive pronoun. The relativizer ‘d-’ serves as a morpheme of subordination exactly like the subordinating conjunctions ‘d-’. The relativizer ‘d-’ = complementizer ‘d-’.

clause and a subordinate. As a conclusion, the Syriac relative clause does not have a clearly anaphorical relative pronoun. According to Lipinsky (2001), “Semitic languages do not have real relative pronouns.” The Syriac relative clauses are simple appointed subordinate clauses.

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