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On Pragmatics of Circumstantial Clauses in Egyptian Proverbs

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1. Problem Formulation as an Introduction

1   The research of the structure of Egyptian proverbs reveals some questions about syntax and pragmatics of utterances which the first part may be represented by a clause (subject + predicate) (1) or a noun phrase (a word combination (2) or a single word (3)) and the second part – by a subordinate clause which is connected with the first part by *w(i)-* conjunction.

2   In the present article, we make an attempt to identify the type of syntactic structure that those clauses represent: whether it is a circumstantial clause or a clause of another syntactic type. By having analyzed a number of proverbs we managed to detect the following typical formal structure (or so-called typical syntactic scheme):

3   TOPIC (Syntax Structure A) + *w(i)-* + COMMENT (Syntax Structure B).

(1)
a. ibn-u 'ala kitf-u **w**-huwwa dāyir yidawwar 'alī-h (Badawi & Hinds 1986: 736)
His son is on his shoulders, but he is looking around for him.
[He can't see what is under his nose.]
b. 'ummu 'ayyāša **wi**-'āmil bāša (Taymour 1986 – 537[1])
His mother is a baker, and he acts like a lord (lit. "a pasha").
'uxt-u fi-l-ḥāra **wi**-'āmil 'amāra (al-Baqli 1987 – 71)
His sister [lives] in a poor neighborhood, and he acts like an emir.
[He is of a poor origin, but puts on airs.]
c. bātit ga'āna **w**-gūz-ha Ḫabbāz (al-Baqli 1987 – 361)
She went to sleep hungry although her husband is a baker.
bātit 'iryāna **w**-gūz-ha Ḫayyāṭ (al-Baqli 1987– 362)
She went to sleep naked although her husband is a tailor.
bātit 'aṭšāna **w**-gūz-ha saqa (al-Baqli 1987 – 363)
She went to sleep thirsty although her husband is a water carrier.
[One does not have something that he should have by his occupation.][2]

d. yumūt iz-zammār wi-ṣba'-u b-yil'ab (Mahgoub 1968 – 894)

A musician dies, and his finger plays.

[He is a master of his occupation.]

e. iš-šarr(i) bi-š-šarr(i) **wi**-l-bādi ʾaẓlam (Mahgoub 1968 – 148)

An evil for an evil, but the one who starts is more of a tyrant.

[The one who starts the evil is responsible for its consequences.]

f. ʾaftikir-l-ak ʾīh baṣala **w**-kull(i) 'aḍḍa b-dam'a (al-Baqli 1987 – 147)

What should I think of you, oh onion, if each bite is accompanied by tears?

[One judges someone/something based on the results of their interaction.]

(2)

kull(i) taʾḫīra **w**-fī-ha ḫīr (Badawi & Hinds 1986: 11)

In every delay there is something good.

[Every delay contains some benefit.]

kull(i) 'uqda **w**-la-ha ḥallāl (Mahgoub 1968 – 650)

Each knot has someone who unties it.

[Every problem is solved by someone.]

kull(i) waqt(i) **w**-lu-u ʾadān (Mahgoub 1968 – 660; Badawi & Hinds 1986: 17)

Each time has its azan.

[Everything is in its own time.]

kull(i) fūla **wi**-l-ha kayyāl (Taymour 1986 – 2391)

Every bean has someone who weighs it.

[Everything has someone to take care of it.]

kull(i) kilma **wi**-l-ha mradd (Taymour 1986 – 2396)

Every question (lit. word) has an answer.

[Everything that is said is followed by an answer/a feedback.]

(3)

ḥalla **w**-huwwa maġrafit-ha (Badawi & Hinds 1986: 620)

A cooking pot and he's its ladle.

[He knows the matter through and through.]

ḥasana wa-ana sīda-k (Taymour 1986 – 1063)

Alms and I am your mister.

[The poor man should rely on the charity of the rich man who becomes his mister.]

ḥumār **wa**-di(i) dīl-u (Taymour 1986 – 1102)

A donkey and this is his tail.

[One's sin is obvious.]

zabbāl **wi**-f-īd-u warda (Mahgoub 1968 – 441)

A garbage man but there is a rose in his hand.

[A contradiction between the expected and the reality.]

ʾarnab **wi**-b-yākul laḥm (al-Baqli 1987 – 102)

A hare and eats meat. [An unnatural contradiction.]

ʾaḥdab **wi**-yšaqlib (al-Baqli 1987 – 60)

A hunchback and somersaults. [An unnatural contradiction.]

šāyib **wi**-'āyib (Mahgoub 1968 – 498)

A grey-head and commits a sin. [An unnatural contradiction.]

4   Although the formal structure of these proverbs is the same, a throughout analysis shows that there is more than one type of semantic relations between two parts of the sentence as the semantic function of the conjunction *w(i)-* can be different. The modern and medieval Arabic scholars state that there are at least three types of conjunction *w(i)-* (As-Suyūṭi 1978: 1211-1214):

- *waw al-'aṭf* (a coordinate conjunction as "and" or "but")

- *waw al-ḥāl* (a conjunction that introduces a circumstantial clause)

- *waw al-qasam* (a conjunction that marks an oath)

5   The last type of the mentioned above is not taken into account as it is easily distinguished from the others. It is the first and the second types that cause a problem

of their syntactic and semantic interpretation. Furthermore, the first type of conjunction *w(i)-* (coordinate) occurs in the sentence either linking its two parts or opposing them.

2. Circumstantial Clause in a Proverb: Terminology

6   The relations between TOPIC (A) and COMMENT (B) connected by the conjunction *w(i)-* in the sentence that form a proverb are not necessary that of a main clause and a circumstantial clause. The Syntax Structure B may be represented by a coordinate clause or a subordinate clause (temporal or causal). It is to be underlined that in some cases it is quite hard to distinguish between a circumstantial clause and other options.

7   While looking for a definition of a circumstantial clause, we came to the conclusion that this term is usually used by scholars in Semitic studies while referring to a clause that is known in Arabic grammar tradition as *jumla ḫāliyya*. An English term *circumstantial clause* is mostly used in scientific and academic works on Arabic and Hebrew. According to various sources the definition of circumstantial clause must include the following features:
- it is a subordinate clause ("a clause providing 'background information' on an occurrence described by another clause" [Oren 2013]; it "describes the manner, circumstances, or conditions under which the main clause occurs" [Williams 2007: 176])
- it characterizes the state/qualities of the situation participants or conditions under which the situation occurs
- it has reference with the main clause subject or object *(ṣāḥib al-ḥāl)*
- it is hard to distinguish from temporal, causal and concession clauses; "the difference is the matter of emphasis" [Williams 2007: 176] a conjunction *w(i)* (*waw al-ḥāl*) that introduces the clause is optional

8   All in all, a circumstantial clause characterizes a state or condition (*ḥāl* – lit. "state, condition") of a main clause subject or object at the moment described in the main clause. Most scholars agree that in Arabic it is used "to express an action or event which took place simultaneously with the situation or event expressed in the main clause" [Woidich 2004: 191]. As for the circumstantial clauses in Egyptian Arabic in general, they can be classified as temporal and modal – based on their function – and according to Woidich's classification there are three types of structure of circumstantial clauses [Woidich 2006: 394 – 401]:
1) main clause + w(i) + Subject + Predicate [*'allaha wi huwwa nāzil*]
The main clause may or may not contain a verb (*jumla ismiyya*): *ma-fīš ḥāga smaha gū' w-inta btur'uṣ.*
2) main clause (wi) + Predicate + Subject [*rigi' wi ma'ā šanṭa plastik; ṭili' min hināk ma'āh iddibloom ikkibīr*]
3) main clause + Predicate [*biyimši yzukk*]

9   M. Woidich is interested in the internal structure of circumstantial clauses and gives a thorough analysis of various cases supplementing it with examples, their translation from EA to German and linguistic comments. The present research is mostly focused on the external relations between a main clause and a circumstantial clause in a sentence that forms a proverb.

10   It is common for the non-Arabic speakers for their practical needs to draw a line between two types of *jumal ḫāliyya* while using Arabic: temporal CC and modal CC.

There is a referential coherence (context) between the main clause and the circumstantial clause if the clause is modal; and in case the clause functions as temporal, there is no such coherence. However, the referent does not have to be a subject or an object of the main clause, it could be the whole situation in general.

11   The English equivalent of what is known in traditional Arabic grammar theory as *jumal ḥāliyya* is not quite accurate. It is to be underlined that *jumla ḥāliyya* is a substitute of a syntax position called *ḥāl* in Arabic: an additional description (*waṣf faḍla*) that is mentioned to report about the state of a subject (*'ism*) that is initially described in the sentence [Al-ġalāyyīni n.d.: 78]; the meaning of it being additional is that it is not a subject (*musnad*) or a predicate (*musnad ilay-h*) of the clause, but it does not mean that the sentence can exist without *ḥāl* – in some cases it can not[3].

12   This position is originally represented by a single word (which is by definition indefinite and accusative)[4] [Al-ġalāyyīni n.d.: 79, 82-85] as in the proverb *rāḥat min(i)-l-ġuzza ḥārbah qābl ū-ha l-maġārbah* (Taymour 1986 – 1283) She escaped running from the Turks and she was met by the Moroccans. Thus, any substitute that occurs in this position should be indefinite. However, even in the case when *ḥāl* is represented by a single word, this word has a potential of a clause, because it is usually a verb derivative. The subject or object which state of condition it describes (*ṣāḥib al-ḥāl)* are, on the contrary, definite.

13   Therefore, *ḥāl* is not a clause, it is a syntactic position that could be represented by a single word (a participle) or a clause – as any other syntactic position in Arabic sentence. In traditional Arabic grammar *ḥāl* is described as a "second predicate" (*ḫabar*), or comment, that forms the semantic and pragmatic focus of the sentence [Pak & Soukhareva 2008: 255]. So, when it occurs in Egyptian paremia, *ḥāl* represents the essence of a proverb as in sentence-final position this syntactic structure is shifted to semantic focus.

3. Circumstantial Clause in a Proverb: Pragmatics

3.1. The Internal Structure of a Proverb with a Conjunction *w(i)-*

14   The structure of a proverb which contains a conjunction *w(i)-* is that of three types, COMMENT (B) may accede a clause, a genitive construction or a noun/adjective: CLAUSE + (*w(i)-* + COMMENT), GC + (*w(i)-* + COMMENT), N/Adj + (*w(i)-* + COMMENT) (see examples (1-3) respectively in paragraph 1).

15   There are two main problems that should be pointed out regarding these structures.

16   *1) GC + (w(i)- + COMMENT); N/Adj + (w(i)- + COMMENT).* Among the proverbs based on these two schemes, we regard only those that cause no doubts in their interpretation in terms of the presence of a circumstantial clause in their syntactic structure. However, even though COMMENT (B) looks like a circumstantial clause, its TOPIC (A) is not represented by a clause.

17   <u>Problem #1</u>: the question arises on the reason of using the formal structure of *jumla ḥāliyya* in a proverb that does not have a main clause in its structure and, therefore, does not formally correspond to the features of *ḥāl* mentioned above (*ḥāl* is indefinite and accusative, *ṣāḥib al-ḥāl* is definite).

18 In the group of examples (3) a noun normally does not have a definite article, and the circumstantial clause gives such a characteristic to the object that underlines its main feature or contradicts it. Coordinating conjunctions normally connect the items that are of the same grammatical type (e.g. words, phrases, clauses). The fact that a circumstantial clause may equally supplement in the sentence a noun or a clause demonstrates that pragmatically this noun is an equivalent of a whole clause. Nevertheless, the syntactic position that this single noun would have in a sentence remains unclear.

19 2) CLAUSE + (w(i)- + COMMENT)

Problem #2: to distinguish between a circumstantial clause, a temporal clause and a causal clause; to tell them apart from a coordinate clause.

3.2. Pragmatic role of a circumstantial clause in a proverb

20 The formal structure of an utterance corresponds with its meaning. This approach appeared in the European linguistics in the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century, but it did exist in the medieval Arabic linguistics and Arabic rhetoric *('ilm al-balāġa)*.

21 In our attempt to resolve the problems stated above we propose a linguistic experiment of omitting the conjunction *w(i)-* in the examples (1-3) in order to compare the meanings of the sentences that we obtain as a result of this experiment with the original utterances (see the pairs in the Tables 1 – 3).

Table 1

ibn-u ʿala kitf-u	w-	huwwa dāyir yidawwar ʿalī-h
ʾaftikir-l-ak ʾīh baṣ ala	w-	kull(i) ʿaḍ ḍ a b-damɛa
bātit ga ʿāna	w-	gūz-ha ḫ abbāz
ʾummu ʾayyāša	wi-	ʾ āmil bāša
ibn-u ʿala kitf-u		huwwa dāyir yidawwar ʿalī-h
ʾaftikir-l-ak ʾīh baṣ ala		kull(i) ʿaḍ ḍ a b-dam ʿa
bātit ga ʿāna		gūz-ha ḫ abbāz
ʾummu ʿayyāša		ʿāmil bāša

Table 2

kull(i) taʾḫīra	w-	fī-ha ḫīr
kull(i) ʿuqda	w-	la-ha ḥallāl
kull(i) kilma	wi-	l-ha mradd
kull(i) taʾḫīra		fī-ha ḫīr
kull(i) ʿuqda		la-ha ḥallāl
kull(i) kilma		l-ha mradd

Table 3

zabbāl	wi-	f-īd-u warda
ʾarnab	wi-	b-yākul laḥm
šāyib	wi-	ʿāyib
zabbāl		f-īd-u warda
ʾarnab		b-yākul laḥm
šāyib		ʿāyib

We are to compare two cases – represented in examples (1), on the one hand, and in (2), (3) – on the other. By omitting the conjunction, we get two separate clauses that are no longer related to each other. In the second proverb, we even notice that without a referential pronoun the connection between two sentences becomes barely evident. As for the examples in (2) and (3), we notice that without a conjunction they are represented by a simple clause (2) or a noun phrase (3) the structure of which for pragmatic reasons has been changed in a proverb.

22   In examples (2) when the conjunction *w(i)-* is omitted, the general meaning of a proverb remains almost the same, but the expressiveness is reduced significantly. The proverb

has a structure of a nominal sentence with a nominal clause as COMMENT. Although the subject does not have a definite article, its uncoordinated attribute specifies its meaning and makes the word combination act like TOPIC. So, by a strictly grammatical means (using *ḥāl* to split a nominal clause into what looks like a sentence with a main clause and a subordinate clause) in the proverbs (2) the stylistic diversity and expressiveness are achieved. This proves that when the function of the conjunction is to separate a subject (TOPIC) from a predicate (COMMENT) it is applied as means of strengthening the focus on TOPIC. In addition, the presence of the conjunction *w(i)-* gives the utterance structural similarity with a subordinate clause. This reveals the pragmatic meanings of simultaneity and complementarity.

23   If a circumstantial clause is added to a main clause, it occurs in a COMMENT position and, therefore, gives the supplementary meaning to the whole utterance. Moreover, it represents the semantic essence of this utterance, its focus. If a clause is added to a single word or a word combination (in the cases when we assume that the "subordinate clause" is a circumstantial clause) in a proverb, the experiment of omitting this subordinate clause proves that the first part of the utterance can only assert a certain matter of fact. But in this case this single word or a word combination should have a figurative meaning. This is common for phraseological units and paremia (or proverbs): *kalb wa-la yiswa* (al-Baqli 1987 – 1068) A dog, and is worth nothing; *ʿalīl wi-ʿāmil midāwi* (Taymour 1986 – 1944) A diseased, and acts like a doctor. [One takes care of the others more than he does of himself.]

24   The expressiveness of the utterance in the proverbs such as in (2) and (3) is based on the semantic correlation between the first part of the proverb and a characteristic (a feature) mentioned in the second part:

> ta'ḫīra - ḫīr
> ʿuqda - ḥallāl
> waqt(i) - 'adān
> fūla - kayyāl
> kilma - mradd
> zabbāl - warda
> 'arnab - laḥm
> 'aḥdab - yšaqlib
> šāyib - ʿāyib

25   In these word pairs the elements are in a semantic opposition to each other. They are not necessarily complete opposites – in a linguistic meaning of this term – but they somehow contradict each other, the feature is not natural for the subject or opposes it in the given context.

26   The pragmatic function of a circumstantial clause in a proverb of a syntactic structure *GC + (w(i)- + COMMENT); N/Adj + (w(i)- + COMMENT)* is to draw a sentence predicate (*ḫabar*) or an attribute to a semantic focus and to emphasize the opposition between the TOPIC and its COMMENT. We may assume that the single indefinite noun at the beginning of a proverb can be a predicate of a noun clause (*jumla 'ismiyya*) where a subject is left out (the ellipsis occurs). This subject can be returned to its position in a form of a personal pronoun. However, even though this noun is indefinite by its grammar form, it is definite by its pragmatic function and is equal to a clause that reports about a certain situation. This explains the ability of this construction to be changed into a clause with *jumla ḥāliyya* for a pragmatic reason – the emphasis. If the first part of the proverb did

not have such semantic and pragmatic weight, this change could not occur because the subject or object that *ḥāl* refers to in the main clause *(ṣāḥib al-ḥāl)* has to be definite.

27   To conclude, the reason of using *jumla ḥāliyya* after a noun or a noun phrase is that this syntactic means helps to put an emphasis on a COMMENT in the TOPIC-COMMENT sentence structure.

28   As for the second problem stated above (to distinguish between circumstantial clauses and other types of syntactic structures in the position of a subordinate clause), we suggest to compare the proverbs in (1 a-h): the second part of these proverbs may be interpreted as *ḥāl* for the existence of formal features (see the definition in paragraph 2). Nevertheless, this interpretation is not always clear and can be argued upon. There are examples that are even more unclear and need to be studied thoroughly, but this is a topic of additional research that goes beyond the borders of this article.

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NOTES

1. Numbers indicated after – refer to the proveb's number.

2. Compare with: The shoemaker's children are ill-shod. The shoemaker's child does barefoot. There is none worse shod than the shoemaker's wife. The tailor's wife worst clad. [http://phraseology_ru_en.academic.ru]

3. وما خلقنا السماء والأرض وما بينهما لاعبين] 21:16[

4.واعلم أن الحال منصوبة دائما

يشرط في الحال ... أن تكون نكرة لا معرفة

ABSTRACTS

This article concerns a problem of syntax and pragmatics of circumstantial clauses (*jumal ḥāliyya*) in Egyptian Arabic, and particularly, in Egyptian proverbs. According to the most common definition, a circumstantial clause characterizes a state or condition (*ḥāl* – lit. "state, condition") of a main clause subject or object at the moment described in the main clause. In Arabic, it is used "to express an action or event which took place simultaneously with the situation or event expressed in the main clause" (modal and temporal circumstantial clauses) [Woidich 2004: 191].

Firstly, we claim that *ḥāl* is not a clause, it is a syntactic position that could be represented by a single word (a participle) or a clause. In traditional Arabic grammar *ḥāl* is described as a "second predicate" (*Ḫabar*), or comment, that forms the semantic and pragmatic focus of the sentence [Pak & Soukhareva 2008: 255]. So, when it occurs in Egyptian paremia, *ḥāl* represents the essence of a proverb.

Secondly, the structure of a proverb which contains a circumstantial clause is one of three types: a circumstantial clause may accede a noun, a genitive construction or a clause; the conjunction *w(i)-* (*waw al-ḥāl*) is optional.

The fact that a circumstantial clause may equally supplement a noun or a clause in the sentence demonstrates that pragmatically this noun is an equivalent of a whole clause. The question arises about the syntactic position that this single noun would have in a sentence.

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