

Roots of syntax: Subordinates and their equivalents in Balochi

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Recordings made with Afro-Baloch informants in South-Eastern Iran show a surprisingly low number of subordinated clauses if “subordination” is understood in the traditional way, as clauses introduced by conjunctions (and/or potentially marked by other overt means).

Conversely, passages which invite a translation into English (etc.) by subordination do occur. Particularly clear are procedural text, where the completion of one step is the precondition for the next one (1). Passages such as this are frequently marked by repetition (Step 1 – Step 1', Step 2) and by a specific intonation.

- 1) (...) *nēmag* *ĵam* *bī.*
butter together become.PT3SG
{ *ĵam* *bī* } *nī* *byār* *dēza*
together become.PT3SG now bring.IPR2SG bowl.OBL

‘The butter has become solid.

{ The butter has become solid (= When the butter...), } bring a bowl!’ [Konarak, SE 2: 51ff.]

Intonation alone may also mark subordination:

- 2) { *šēr* *ē* *šo* } *naparok=ē* *kāt*
lion DEM go.PT person=IND come.PT
‘ { The lion went (= When the lion had gone), } some person came.’ [Konarak, GO 1: 113f.]

intonation: 

As noted by CREISSELS (2006: 185),¹ “Il faut notamment tenir compte du fait que la construction d’une phrase complexe peut reposer uniquement sur l’intonation. Par exemple, en français oral, une intonation particulière suffit pour indiquer qu’un enchaînement tel que *Tu as faim, je te donne à manger* doit être reconnu comme une phrase complexe avec une relation de type conditionnel entre les deux unités phrastiques (‘si tu as faim, je te donne à manger’) et à l’oral, il est impossible de confondre une telle phrase complexe avec une séquence de deux phrases assertives indépendantes”.

Another strategy used in combination with intonation, and sometimes in combination with repetition, is the use of connectives, (viz. *o* ‘and’ and *nī* ‘now’ (1), which introduce either the subordinate or the matrix clause.

We will argue that these strategies of subordination are typical for spoken language (while overt marking with conjunctions is typical for written and literary styles). Obviously such patterns cannot be seen in written records of historical languages, but the use of the Hittite connective *nu* (conate of Bal. *nī*) for parallel purposes² might suggest that we are looking at an inherited phenomenon.

¹ CREISSELS, Denis 2006: *Syntaxe générale : une introduction typologique. 2: La phrase*. Paris: Lavoisier

² Cf. WIDMER, Paul 2009: “Hethitisch *nu* als Mittel der informationsstrukturellen und syntaktischen Verknüpfung” // Elisabeth RIEKEN & Paul WIDMER (eds.): *Pragmatische Kategorien: Form, Funktion und Diachronie. Akten der Arbeitstagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft vom 24. bis 26. September*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, pp. 323-335