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Gabriel Bițună
Universitatea din București

The Conditional Clause in the Spoken Arabic of Siirt

Abstract

This study analyzes the conditional structures in the Spoken Arabic of Siirt, focusing on a series of aspects such as the topic of the sentences in such syntactical structures, the conditional markers, the verbal patterns and preverbal particles employed for introducing the conditionals and a compositional analysis of the conditional clause, with focus on the distinction between the real, open, generic, habitual and hypothetical conditionals, among other known types of the structure under study.

Keywords

Spoken Arabic of Siirt, Mesopotamian Arabic, Conditional Clause, Preverbal particles.

I. Introduction

The aim of this study is to present the existent structures in conditional clauses in the spoken Arabic of Siirt (henceforth, named SAB), following an analysis I conducted on the basis of a corpus of recordings in July 2013 and August 2014 in the city of Siirt, in South-East Turkey, and the SAB speaking communities in Istanbul.

The aim of the analysis is to establish the main features of this type of clause, referring to verbal tense and mood selection and markers selection for introducing the conditional sentences.

The analysis has been developed following some universal typologies of conditional structures, described by linguists such as Comrie (1986: 77–99) or Johnson-Laird (1986: 55–75), but also in correlation with works on the same issue in other North Mesopotamian varieties of Arabic, by Grigore (2005: 39–48), (2008: 63–77) and (2014: 173–181); Lahdo (2009: 183–185).

The corpus for this study contains over 70 conditional structures I recorded during conversations with SAB speakers of various ages in various circumstances.

The examples of SAB have been transliterated phonematically, not phonetically, but with the marking of the *imāla* whenever I considered it necessary.

I have used the following abbreviations for the glosses below each example:

1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; A = apodosis; OA = old Arabic; ART = article; C = radical consonant; COL = collective; COP = copula; PC = prefixal conjugation; SC = suffixal conjugation; DEM = demonstrative; DET = determinant; DU = dual; EX = existence particle; F = feminine; IMP = imperative; M = masculine; NEG = negation particle; PRED = predicative; OBJ = object; PA = active participle; P = protasis; PL = plural; PREP = preoposition; PREV = preverbal particle; REL = relative pronoun; SBJ = subject; SG = singular; V = verb;

II. Topic of sentences in the conditional clause

The conditional structure, also known as the double clause, consists of two clauses, the first is the conditional sentence or the protasis (P), which shows the necessary condition for the completion of the action in the second clause, which is known as the consequence or apodosis. The protasis is usually introduced by a marker (such as **if** in English).

In other words, the general formula for a conditional clause is:

- ***if*** P, [then] A.

Analysis of the corpus shows that the order of the two clauses in the SAB double clause is preponderantly P → A, with rare occasions when the order becomes A → P, for pragmatic reasons.

1. *inka* *ka-tṣīḥ-ni,* *ka-dərtu* *ʿaley-k*
   if PREV. yell-PC.2.SG-me PREV.pass.SC. on-you
   "If you had shouted for me, I would have visited you."

2. *ma yrō* *inka ma tīğ̌i maʿ-u*
   NEG.go-PC.3.SG. if-NEG-come.PC.2.SG-with-him
   "He is not going if you do not come with him."

In example 1, the order is the most frequent one in SAB; in example 2, the order is reversed: A → P. By bringing the apodosis in focus, with particular emphasis on the action it expresses ("he is not going" → "he is certainly not going"), while the action in the protasis loses much of the emphasis it has in the P → A topic.

The following example shows the emphasis on the consequence, rather than on the condition:

3.	*bəke*	*lə yğī*	*min ʿayney*	*inka*	*ma ᵃʿrof*
	crying	REL-come.3.PC.SG.	from-eyes. DU-mine	if	NEG-know.1.PC.SG.

sakken.
calmness

"[...] the tears that [would] be flowing from my eyes if I were not calm."

III. Conditional markers

Although in other Mesopotamian Arabic varieties, the various meanings of the conditional (real, unreal) are introduced by several markers, such as *in*, *iḏa* and *lō* in the spoken Arabic of Baghdad (Grigore 2005: 274), respectively *ənn* + *ka* and *lay* in the spoken Arabic of Tillo (Lahdo 2009: 183). The only marker which was observed in recordings for SAB was *inka*.

At first glance the form of the particle does not show any similarity with other varieties of spoken Arabic in the same geographical area of SAB. Nonetheless, on analyzing its components, we may formulate the following hypothesis:

inka ← *in* + *ka*

in may come from the old Arabic background, from the classical Arabic conjunction *'in* (if);

ka[1] is a preverbal particle employed to generate certain verbal moods and tenses, either on its own or together with other preverbal particles.

ka may come from the verb *kān* (existence verb or auxiliary verb in SAB), which due to its high frequency of use has lost the nasal [*n*] and has been reduced to *kā* → *ka*, and resemanticised.

The emergence of the *ka* particle in SAB can be explained through the grammaticalization of the 3rd person masculine singular perfective verb *kāna*, cf. classical Arabic, whose form has gone through many stages of reduction of its phonetic body and has lost its verbal feature (the disappearance of its conjugation). This potential etymology has been discussed by Grigore (1999: 11), Jastrow (1978: 305) and Sasse (1971: 265).

[1] Grigore (2014: 178) discusses the explanation of Otto Jastrow (1992: 116), who suggests that this particle occurs in *ṭuroyo* also, where it is connected with the presentative particle *kale*. A similar form of *ka* occurs before the temporal prefix *ko* for the present tense or for the perfect tense: *koḥozət* "you see" – *kalkoḥozət* "you are seeing"; *kaṯi* (*ko* + *aṯi*) „he came."

There was one recording of a particle which resembles *lay*, as indicated by Lahdo (2009: 183), that is *lə*, but it occurs only once in my corpus of recordings. Therefore it cannot be taken into consideration until it is not confirmed through other occurrences in SAB:

4. *lə* *təšrob* *ğəgāra* *bōš* *ʾtṣīr* *naḥōš*
   if[?] drink.PC.2.SG. cigarette very become.PC.2.SG. sick
   "If you smoke, you will become very sick."

Moreover, the particle *lə* from example 4 may be understood as its homomorphous relative pronoun, employed as such in example 5:

5. *lə ma* *kəl ʿabbor* *ḥazbe* *ma təḥseb-uh* *yəʿīš*
   which. NEG-PREV-pass.SC.3.SG. affliction NEG-count.PC.2-him live.PC.3.
   "He who has not passed through an affliction, don't count him as living."

IV. Verbal patterns

pc (the prefixal conjugation) is also known as the imperfective paradigm, which represents an unfulfilled verbal aspect, which marks the present or the future, as temporal value. In order to modify its meanings (which usually refer to the temporal component), various particles can be added before the **pc** (Grigore 2014: 178–180):

kān or ***ka*** **+ pc** → indicate an ongoing action, which can be identical with the Enlish imperfect as regards functionality.

6. *ana* *kān agri* *maʿ* *orṭaqi* *laman* *səməʿtu ḥəss [...]*
   (Grigore 2014: 178)
   I prev-talk.PC.1.SG. with friend-mine when hear.SC.1 sound
   "I was talking to my friend when I heard a sound."

ka **+** ***da/d-/t-*** **+ pc** → indicate a hypothesis or an inchoative value that marks an action which was about to happen but has been stopped:

7. *qabəl* *sāʿa* *eyš* *ka-d-ysewew*[2]*?*
   before hour what PREV-PREV-do.PC.3.PL.
   "An hour ago what would they have done?"

[2] The verb *sawa – ysey* "to do", "to make" has undergone a major transformation, being originally a stem II verb, which accounts for its irregular conjugation (*asey* "I do", *tsey* "you do", while *asawy* and *tsawy* etc. are in parallel use), as per Isaksson & Lahdo (2002: 323) and Lahdo (2009: 138).

***də +ka* + pc** → expresses an optative in the past:

8. *inka tṣīri šarap fi qadāḥ-i,*
   in become.PC.2.F.SG. wine in glass-me
   də-ka-ᵃšrap-ki hayla ma ajbaḥ
   PREV-PREV-drink.PC.1.SG-you until NEG-be full.PC.1.SG.
   "If you became wine in my glass, I would drink you until I were full."

***da / də /d-* + pc** → indicates a future tense, as is the case in other North Mesopotamian Arabic varieties, where the particle starts with the voiceless occlusive [*t*], becoming *tə* / *ta*, employed with the same function:

9. *baʿat nisil-na aḥat mo də-ygri seyn-na.*
   after generation-our one NEG-PREV-speak.PC.3.SG. language-our
   "After our generation no one will speak our language."

***ḫa* + pc** → indicates an eventual event or an injunctive:

10. *ḫa-ymūt ūwe* (Grigore 2014: 180)
    PREV.die.PC.3.SG. el
    "He may die!"

sc (suffixal conjugation) is also known as the imperfective paradigm, which represents a fulfilled verbal aspect which marks the generic past. It may take other meanings with functions in the present or even the future, depending on which preverbal particles accompany it:

***ka* + *kəl* + sc** → indicates a past action in the past, which can be roughly translated with the pluperfect.

11. *ka-kəl-ʿaṭat šā-ni ᵊmme pištōye.*
    PREV-PREV-give.SC.3.SG.F to-me also pistol
    "She had also given me a gun."

***kəl* + sc** → indicates an updated perfect:

12. *eyš kəṣ-ṣār? ənqalabot əl-ʿaṛaḅa*
    what PREV.become.SC.3.SG.M roll over.SC.3.SG.F. ART-car
    "What happened? The car (just) rolled over."

The imperative can be employed in the construction of conditional clauses. The imperative pattern does not usually occur with other preverbal particles:

13. *šeyš* *təbqa* *awne?* *ṛō!*
why stay.PC.2.SG.m here go.IMP.2.SG.M
"Why are you staying here? Go!"

V. Compositional analysis of the conditional clause

V.1. The real conditional

In the case of real conditionals the first action is represented by the cause or the condition which makes the occurrence of the second action possible. Depending on the context, we may say that if an event takes place, another will succeed, in other words, if an action takes place, it will have a consequence. Conditionals of this type always refer to real situations and, depending on their content and the information presented, they may be:

– Open conditionals
– Generic conditionals
– Habitual Conditionals
– Temporal clauses with conditional meaning

V.1.1. Open conditionals

In conditionals of this type, the action in the apodosis depends on the fulfillment of a condition described in the protasis and it represents a situation which can also be met in real life. The condition and the consequence are placed in the future, and the speakers take the fulfillment of the condition as a real possibility. The verb in the apodosis usually occurs at the prefixal conjugation, while the verb that reflects the condition can be either at the prefixal or the suffixal conjugation, depending on how sure the speaker is of the possibility of the condition being met.

a) **P: pc → A: pc**

14. *inka* *mo-toʿruf* *təzbaḥ* *ʾkwayyəs,*
if NEG.know.PC.2.SG.M swim.PC.2.SG.M well
ma-təʿḍoṛ *əl-ṃayy,* *təḫtanoq*
NEG.a.enter.PC.2.SG.M ART.water drown.PC.2.SG.M
"If you don't know [how] to swim well, don't go [in] the water, [or] you will drown."

b) **P: pc (present) → A:pc (future)**

15. *inka* *yčaḷḷoš,* *də-yaʿḅoṛ* *əṣ-ṣənəf*
if work.PC.3.SG.M PREV.pass.PC.3.SG. ART.grade
"If he works, he will pass the grade."

c) **P: sc → A: pc (present, future)**

16. *inka* *dərt* *əd-denīs* *kəllə-ha,* *mo-tqaffi* *aṭyap* *min*
if visit.sc.2.sg. art.sea all-her neg-find.pc.2.sg better from
avī-l-velāye
dem-art.city
"If you visit the entire sea[coast], you will not find [anything] more beautiful than this city."

17. *əl-ḥāwīs,* *inka* *ğaw* *ʿaley-k,* *da-ᵃḥṭī-k-ənne*
ART.clothes if come.SC.3.PL on.you PREV.give.PC.1.SG.you.they
"If the clothes fit you, I will give them to you."

d) **P: pc (present, future) → A: imperative**

18. *inka* *da-ttəšš* *əl-qarnabe,* *ʾal-l-i*
if PREV.see.PC.2.SG.M ART.rabbit say.IMP.2.SG.M-to-me
"If you see the rabbit, tell me!"

19. *inka* *də-ttīšši* *mimlekit-ti,* *selmī* *l-i* *ʿaley-ʰa*
if PREV.see.PC.2.SG.F fiancée. mine greet.IMP.2.SG.F to-me on-her
"If you see my fiancée, greet her for me."

e) **P: sc → A: imperative**

20. *inka* *rikap* *ʿa-l-ᵊḥmār* *w* *rāḥ* *ᵊl-karm,*
if mount.SC.3.SG.M on-ART.donkey and go.SC.3.SG. M ART.field
ṛōḥ *ḫalf-uʷ*
go.IMP.2.SG. M behind.him
"If he got on the donkey and went to the field, go after him!"

21. *inka* *rəḥt* *ṛās l-ətrāp,* *əqra* *l-fātiḥa*
if go.SC.2.SG.M head.ART.dirt read.IMP.2.SG.M ART.*Fatiha*
"If you go to the cemetery, read the *Fatiha*."

f) **P: sc → A: sc**

22. *inka rəḥt damm əl-baḥoṛ, baḥoṛ ərỵā-k*
if go.SC.2.SG.M in front ART.sea sea like.SC.3.SG.M.you
"If you go to the sea[coast], the sea will like you."

g) **P: sc → A: pc (eventuality)**

23. *inka ṣār bəḥd əmme ᵃẓ-ẓərrāḥ ḫa-yoˁṛof*
if become.sc.3.SG.M late also ART.farmer PREV.know.PC.3.SG.M
"If it was too late, the farmer might know."[3]

h) **No *inka* marker**: I observed that the *inka* marker was not necessary when the conditional was understood from the context:

24. *ma tīğ̌i ma-ᵃṛo*
NEG-come.PC.2.SG.M NEG-go.PC.1.SG.
"[If] you don't come, I'm not going."

25. *il-lōm yəlzim aṛo lə-l-ˁərs, ma-ᵃṛo*
today must go.pc.1.sg. to-art-wedding. neg-go.pc.1.sg.
yṣīr ˁayb
become.pc.3.sg.m shame
"Today I must go to the wedding. If I don't go, it will be a shame."

V.1.2. Generic conditionals

Generic conditionals express a dependency relation between a condition and its consequence; the relation is universal regardless of the time and place in which the condition occurs. This type of conditional clauses expresses statements about general features of a class or an entity, which are generally valid. In the protasis, as well as in the apodosis, the chosen verbs have forms employed also for the open conditional, fact that indicates the fundamental value of this type of conditional:

26. *inka gabru mo-we ṭayyop, āk da-nšīl-uʷ*
if grow.SC.3.PL NEG-he good that PREV-take.PC.1.PL-him
"If they grow, it is not good, we'll take that one."

27. *inka ğa ṃaṭoṛ də-nəthewe*
if come.SC.3.SG.M ploaie PREV.cool off.PC.1.PL
"If it rains, we will cool off."

[3] The last part of this sentence may also be translated as "let the farmer know".

I also recorded examples in which the subordinator marker *inka* is no longer necessary:

28. *tēkəl-lu* *də-ᵃqəṣṣ-uʷ*
eat.PC.2.SG.M-el.OBJ PREV.cut.PC.1.SG.el
"[if] you eat it, I'll cut it."

The verb in the protasis can be avoided, as I observed for a nominal sentence in SAB, in which the copulative verb is understood contextually.

29. *inka* *ma-l-ək* *ahaliyye,* *mo-taʿməl* *ʿaṛaḅa*
if NEG-to-you qualification NEG-work.PC.2.SG.m car
"If you don't have a qualification, you're not working on the car."

V.1.3. Habitual conditionals

Habitual conditionals describe behavior with features typical of a specific group. The relation of dependency between the conditions and their consequences is based on facts that are generally real. The examples I analyzed included conditional structures introduced by the expression *kəll kaṛṛa* "every time":

30. *kəll* *kaṛṛa* *ᵃṛōḥ* *staṇḅūḷ* *ənɣāḥ*
every time go.PC.1.SG Istanbul get lost.PC.1.SG.
"Every time I go to Istanbul I get lost."

V.1.4. Temporal clauses with conditional value

I observed a series of temporal clauses with conditional value, especially the generic conditional, introduces by expressions as *ma dām* "as long as", *hēr* "since", *əč-čēḥ lə* when:

31. *əč-čēḥ lə* *təšʿalu* *ṣ-ṣoṗṗa,* *ğawwa* *yṣīr*
when light up.PC.2.PL ART.stove inside become.PC.3.SG.M
bōš *ḥār[r]*
very hot
"When you light up the stove it becomes very hot inside."

32. *əč-čēḥ lə* *yği* *šahar* *azbāṭ,* *də-ᵃpʿaf*
When come.PC.3.SG.M month February PREV.send.PC.1.SG.
ʿasākər-i
soldiers.mine
"When the month of February comes I will send my soldiers."

33. *hēr* *kəl-rəḥt* *əl-maṭbaḥ* *ğib-l-i* *čāy-i*
Since prev.go.SC.3.SG.M kitchen bring.IMP.2.SG.M-to-me tea-mine
"Since you have gone to the kitchen, bring me my tea."

34. *ma dām* *harapt,* *šeyš* *sellimt* *rōḥ-ok?*
as long as run off.sc.2.sg.m why give in.sc.2.sg.m soul.your
"If you ran off, why did you give yourself up?"

V.2. The unreal conditional

Unreal conditionals can describe hypothetical situations and actions which may take place, or an imagined fact or action which might have taken place in the past, but has not been accomplished, that is an assumption in the past.

V.2.1. The hypothetical conditional (a possible hypothesis)

Conditionals of this type describe unreal conditions in the present or unexpected conditions in the future. Let us assume that P, then A. The action might take place in the present or the future if the condition included in the protasis were fulfilled. The subordinator marker introducing hypothetical conditionals is still *inka*, yet the verbs at the prefixal conjugation are accompanied by preverbal particles such as *da/də/d-* and *ka* in the apodosis.

a) **P: sc + A: pc**

35. *inka* *qəmt* *fi* *waḫta* *ma-ka-təbqa* *derenk.*
if get up.SC.2.SG.M in time NEG-PREV-stay.PC.2.SG.M late
"If you had gotten up in time, you wouldn't have been late."

b) **P: pc + A: pc**

36. *toʿṛof* *ma-maʿ-i,* *inka* *ka-yṣīr* *maʿ-i,*
know.PC.2.SG.M NEG-with-me if PREV-become.PC.3.SG.M with-me
də-ka-ᵃḥṭī-k
PREV-PREV-give.PC.1.SG.you
"You know I don't have it, if I had it, I would have given it to you."

c) **Lack of *inka* marker**

37. *ya* *pīč,* *ya* *fəstaḫ,* *ma-yṣīr* *ši*
or spoiled or pistachio NEG.become.PC.3.SG.M something
"[If it's] either pistachio or spoiled, it doesn't matter."

In these cases, the assumption seems to be unfulfilled, yet only in relation to the present or the future. This type of conditional may be used to describe a fact which might be possible, but not in the given circumstances.

V.2.2. The counterfactual conditional (unreal hypothesis)

Conditionals of this type present an unreal assumption, in relation to an action in the past or a fact that can no longer take place. In order to express this fact which did not occur, the action is introduced in the past with the help of the combination of particles *inka* and *ka* in the protasis and the preverbal particles *də* and *ka* respectively in the apodosis. The verbs can take a combination of forms:

a) **P: pc + A: pc**

38. *fi s-sečimet, inka ka-tziğğu rayāt-kən, awle*
in ART.elections if PREV.throw.PC.2.PL. opinions-your.PL those
ma ka-yəksibu.
NEG-PREV-win.PC.3.PL.
"At the elections, if you had voted, those [ones] wouldn't have won."

39. *inka ka-təṭbuḫū-l-na ḍōḷma, də-ka-nīği l-ʿašā*
if prev.cook.pc.2.pl-to-us *sarma* prev-prev-come.pc.1.pl. to-dinner
"If you had cooked [some] cabbage rolls for us we would have come to dinner."

40. *əš-šəmmām, inka ka-tğīb-ən əs-sōq, də-ka-nbīʿ-ən*
ART-watermelons if PREV-bring.PC.2.SG-them ART-market PREV-PREV-sell.1.PL-them
"If you had brought the water-melons, we would have sold them."

41. *inka ka-yṣīr ḥār, ma-ka-təbqa awne*
if PREV.become.PC.3.SG.m cald NEG-PREV-stay.PC.2.SG.M here
"If it had been warm, you wouldn't have stayed here."

42. *Inka ma k-ākel, də-ka-yiɣruḥ-ni*
if NEG-PREV-eat.PC.1.SG PREV-PREV-beat.PC.3.SG.M-me
"If I hadn't eaten, he would have beaten me."

b) **No *inka* marker**

43. *ma ka-yṣīr miš ḫaṭor-ok, ma-ka-ᵃlaḅḅoṭ min*
neg- prev-become.pc.3.sg.m for-you neg-prev-move.pc.1.sg. from
afārī
place-mine
"If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have budged from my place."

VI. Conclusions

Upon analyzing the entire corpus of recordings, I identified only one subordinator marker utilized in SAB: *inka*. It can introduce the protasis for real and unreal conditionals. In addition to using this marker, it is possible create clauses with conditional meaning in which the subordination is not necessary.

In order to distinguish between the many values of the conditional, a series of preverbal particles such as *ka*, *kəl*, *də* etc., may be used to accompany verbs in the apodosis and the protasis.

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