

REFERENCE SYSTEM IN SIWI (BERBER, EGYPT)

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The presentation describes the preliminary results of a study that I have started in collaboration with Professor Zygmunt Frajzyngier during my time as a Fulbright Research Visiting Scholar at the University of Colorado, Boulder (October 2019-February 2020).

Following the approach adopted by Frajzyngier and Shay (2003), the aim is to focus on the interaction of different means of coding reference within the grammatical system of a language. The language under study is Siwi (Berber family), spoken by about 25,000 people in the oases of Siwa and El Gara (Egypt). I have gathered the data during fieldwork in the years 2011 and 2018. The data represent various genres, including folktales, descriptions of customs and objects, and different kinds of narration.

Among the means used to code reference in Siwi we find a number of means used in many other languages, e.g. use of subject affixes on verbs, subject pronouns, demonstratives, word order, etc., as well as several typologically rare means, e.g. the shift of the accent on a noun (last vs. penultimate syllable), which does not seem to be related to the widespread distinction between indefinite nouns vs. definite nouns or first mention vs. second mention. Instead of analyzing the position of the accent on the noun alone, it is important to observe the interaction between the change of accent on nouns + word order + topic(alization).