

The relatives in Dahalik (Afro-Semitic language)

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Dahalik is spoken exclusively in Eritrea, on three inhabited islands of the Dahlak archipelago. The language was completely unknown until the end of 1996. It belongs to the Southern branch of the Western Semitic and has many common features with other Afro-Semitic languages of this region, essentially with Tigre. The data reported here have been collected from native speakers during my fieldwork in Eritrea, on the islands and in Massawa.

*Basing on the analysis of the relative propositions, I shall provide evidence for specific features of the Dahalik language and point to the links with other languages of the group. In Dahalik there is no formal difference between the determinative (restrictive) relative and the nonrestrictive, appositive relative. The relative clause has a nominal function and it is tied up with the head phrase (determined phrase) by an invariable connector. The latter has the same lexical basis as the proximal demonstrative : **d(i)**. With rare exceptions the relative clause is placed after the determined phrase. Most often, the connector is pro-cliticized to the verb of the relative clause, while the verb is not necessarily the first element of the relative. Moreover, object (or circumstantial) can be inserted between the head phrase and the relative verb. This results in a variable order of the constituents inside the relative clause.*

Either : Determined + {connector-Verb + Object/circumstantial}

Or : Determined + {Object/circumstantial + connector-Verb}.

Although it occurs very rarely, the connector can be prefixed to object or circumstantial. In such cases the order is : Determined + {connector-Object/circumstantial + (connector-)Verb}. I shall try to determine if these constructions have a semantical impact and an influence on the syntactic scope of the relative.