

Relativization in Awngi

Yaregal Allene (PhD), Debre Markos University, Department of English Language and Literature
Email: yaregal.alene@gmail.com

Abstract

*This paper discusses Awngi relative clauses. Relative clauses in Awngi normally play identifying role. There may also exist instances where relative clauses may be used as non-restrictive. Their restrictive or nonrestrictive type is determined by co texts – there are no linguistic elements that distinguish between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses. Awngi relative clauses appear preceding main clauses. In sentences where the main and the relative clauses do not share a common subject, the subject of the main clause can be moved to sentence initial position yielding a way for the relative clause to be imbedded between the subject head and the predicate of the matrix clause. Relative clauses in Awngi are marked by relativizers, AGR suffixes that attach to verbs and relativize them. When relative and main clauses do not share a common subject, the relativized verb will be hosting both the subject and direct object markers. Hence the relativized verb in such structures appears laden with TAM cum AGR elements, as in *tás-ú-n-kú-sà* (kick-PRF-3PL (SUB)-3PL(DO)-ACC) ‘those that those kicked’ (the first those refers to the kicked ones and the second to the kicking ones).*

Key words: Relative Clauses, Relativizers, Relativized Verb, (Non-) restrictive, Main Clause and Host

I Introduction

Awngi is one of the Central Cushitic (the Agaw) languages within the Cushitic Language family, spoken in north-west part of the Amhara Region. It is spoken by 2 million peopleⁱ. The syntax and semantics of Awngi relativization has been little described except for brief discussions in Yaregal (2010, 2011). The main aim of this investigation is, therefore, to show the workings of relativization in Awngi. In so doing, this work will reveal that Awngi relativization has much to contribute to linguistic inquiries made at general and theoretical level in the (Central) Cushitic Language Family.

The organization of this paper is as follows: Section 2 describes the features of lexical adjectives in Awngi, Section 3 investigates the syntactic structures of Awngi relativization with occasional comparison with some other closely-related Agaw languages. Section four discusses Awngi relativization within complement clauses. Before I embark on relative clause discussions, I shall present some highlights of Awngi lexical adjectives, for relative clauses like lexical adjectives are noun modifiers that also share common morphological and syntactic features.

II Lexical Adjectives in Awngi

Syntactically, as Awngi is a head final language, qualifiers precede the qualified. Noun modifiers may assume NP heads in constructions where head nouns take covert realizations. Morphologically, noun modifiers behave like nouns in several respects. Of course, they are, like nouns, inalienably gender marked – every qualifier ends with inherent gender marking vowels, *-i*, *-u* or a *consonant* for masculine or *-a* for feminine. They are pluralized in concord with head nouns or, in NPs where head nouns do not appear overtly, alone.⁸

- (1) a. fútĩ/fútǎ (MS/FM) → fútǎ-ká (PL) ‘white’
b. fútĩ fiyál / fútǎ fiyálá / fútǎ-ká fèl-kā⁹
white.male goat.male / white.female goat.female / white-PL goat.PL
‘white male goat’/ ‘white female goat’/ ‘white goats’

As can be noticed from the above illustrative examples, both singular nouns and adjectives end in gender marking vowels (*-i* (masculine) *-a* (feminine)), which are inherent or inalienable markers of gender. The same is true with the plural forms – the adjective and the noun pluralize in concord (cf. 3b).

The fact that Awngi adjectives behave like nominals as mentioned above has given a way for them to assume NP heads where nouns they qualify take covert realizations.

- (2) *fútǎ* (*àqqá*) ɲitǎ-χ
white (woman) his mother-COP
‘The white (woman is his mother.)’

The italicized part in (2) above is the NP, and its head is *àqqá* ‘woman’, which, as it is put in parentheses, can be elided without causing difference in meaning. As far as overt realization is concerned, the adjective *fútǎ* assumes the NP head at least overtly.

As adjectives show number and gender correspondence with nominals in the language, possessive pronouns, like nouns, match with adjectives in this regard (cf. 3).

⁸ Noun qualifiers in Awngi can appear as NP heads where head nouns are understood (Yaregal, 2017: 163).

⁹ In Awngi some nouns pluralize by dropping their final vowels (gender vowels), hence dǎχòrí ‘male donkey’ dǎχòrá ‘female donkey’, dǎχòr ‘donkeys’.

- (3) dímímí jí-w-éχ / dímímá jí-t-éχ / dím-ká jí-k^w-éχ
 red.MS my-SG-COP red.FM my-FM-CP red-PL my-PL-COP
 ‘The red is mine. / The red is mine. / The red are mine.’

III Awngi Relative Clauses

Like in languages in general (Miller, 2002: 63), complex sentences in Awngi consist of a main clause and one or more other clauses subordinate to it. Subordination according to Cristofaro (203: 2) is functionally defined as a relation between two events, such that one of them (which is called the dependent event) lacks an autonomous profile, and is construed in the perspective of the other event, the main event. In many languages of the world, constructions expressing the two events are joined by separate words as connecting elements. However, some inflectional languages do not have separate words as subordinators. Subordination in these languages is handled via affixal elements that attach to content verbs or nouns.

As Awngi is an inflectional language, it does not have separate words as subordinators. Nonetheless, it has some sentence connecting elements that do not occur independently as separate words – they are subordinating agreement suffixes that occur attached to verbs. It is also the case that Agaw languages do not have sentence connecting particles; “Agaw has no sentence connecting particles, so that conjoining and subordination are handled by verbal morphology (Hetzron, 1976: 28).”

Awngi is an SOV language; typical of OV languages (Payne 1997:327), Awngi employs prenominal relative clauses – relative clauses appear preceding main clauses.

Relative clauses in Awngi are normally restrictive. There also exist instances where relative clauses may be used as non-restrictive. Consider (4) below.

- (4) ṇitálá áṇjá nì-χ^{wā} jí-nt-ú-χí dzímántéχ
 his father yesterday we-home 3MS-come-PRV-3MS.PR.V.FOC singer
 ‘His father who came to our house yesterday is a singer.’

A relative clause (henceforth RC) functions as a modifier of a head NP within a main clause, and shares an argument (which may be stated in both clauses, or in just one, or in neither) with a main clause (Dixon, 2010: 314). The argument that an RC shares with the main clause (hereafter MC) can be in A, S, or O function. RCs in Awngi are marked by agreement affixes which attach to the verb and relativize it.

Like lexical adjectives, relative clauses show gender and number agreement in concord with the noun they qualify, the noun in the MC, and, in the relative clause, it is the verb that hosts AGR elements **due** to which it is relativized (cf. 5).

- (5) a. dàdìχê ímm-í-x^w pòlís
 thief.ACC catch-PRF-3SM police
 ‘The policeman who caught the thief’
 b. dàdìχê ímm-í-nkú pòlís-ká
 thief.ACC catch-PRF-3PL police-PL
 ‘The policemen who caught the thief’

A relativized verb that shares its direct object with the verb in the MC agrees with both the RC and the MC's subjects (cf. 6).

- (6) **intsàχàrí jag-ún-kú-sà dór-kà-wà àj kàts-iχ^w**
 children bring-PRF.3P(sub)-3P(OB)-ACC chicken-PL-ACC who take-PRF.3MS
 'Who took the chickens that the children brought?'

As can be noticed in (6) above, we see two PL glosses for -ún and -kú under relativized verb. As shown in parenthesis, *-un* refers to the subject (**intsàχàrí**) and *-kú* to the object (**dórkàwà**) of the relativized verb. Thus, a change in the subject or object of such relativized verb entails a change of the form of a relativized verb, for agreement affixes change accordingly.

As touched upon earlier, Awngi RCs appear preceding main clauses, which, according to Payne (1997:327), is typical of SOV languages. The RC is structured from a verb and an agreement suffix that attaches to the verb and relativizes the clause. Other adjuncts may accompany the verb. In sentences where an RC and MC do not share a common subject, an RC may occur imbedded within an MC.

- (7) **tirémá díbs-úχ àqí jítsè-χ**
 stand-CNV speak-PRF.3MS.REL man my-brother-COP
 'The man who spoke standing is my brother.'

The *italicized* form in (7) above is an RC. The suffixal form *-úχ* may be further analyzed as *-ú-χ* (PRF-3MS.REL).

When the verb of the MC is transitive, the verb in the RC attaches an accusative marker *-sà*,¹⁰ the suffixal form that occurs only with RCs. Consider (8b) below); (8a) is presented for comparison

- (8) a. **ɲárgè χ^w-áw àqí wàlādɜ́-á-là**
 honey.ACC eat-PRV.3MS.REL man grow old-IPRV-NEG
 'A person who eats honey does not get old.'
 b. **ídɜ́dɜ́-*má* jint-úχ-sà àqí gènzáb-s kits-únà**
 stay-CNV come-PRV.3MS.REL-ACC man.ACC money-INSTR fine-PRF.3PL.REL
 'They fined the man who came late.'

The bald parts in (8) above are RCs. The verb, *χ^wáw*, in (8a) is transitive and its object is *ɲárgè*. The verb, *kits-únà*, in (8b) is transitive; hence the RC is used as the direct object of this verb. The subject of the MC is *they*, covertly realized but referenced on the verb.

While the occurrence of the direct object of the RC, *ɲárgè*, in (8a) cannot be optional, that of the direct object of the MC, *àqê*, in (8b) is optional, for it is referenced in the relativized verb. As touched upon earlier, qualifiers in general may assume NP heads in constructions where the qualified nouns are not overtly realized. The same rule applies to RC-MC constructions – as the noun in the MC is referenced on the relativized verb, it may be understood, i.e. it may not appear overtly (cf. 9).

- (9) **χa`r-ô gérk-ô intsáχíst-úχ míntɕ-ò bírr-ò ímí-χ^wà**
 night-TMP day-TMP work-PRF.3MS lots of-ACC BIRR-ACC hold-PRF.3MS

¹⁰ Other Awngi accusative marker suffixal forms are phonologically conditioned allomorphs, *-ò* and *-è* (Yaregal, 2007).

‘He who worked day and night got lots of money.’

The italicized part in (9) above is a relative clause. The subject of the MC, as can be seen from the gloss, does not appear overtly. As it is referenced by AGR suffix, 3MS, the translation reads as *he who*.

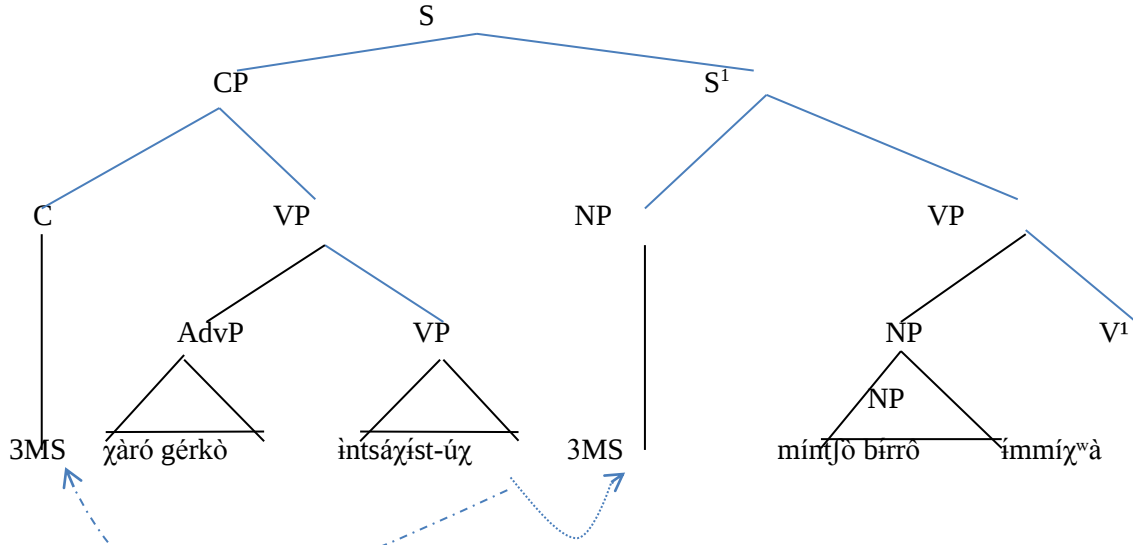


Fig 1: The structure of the sentence *χάρò γέρκò ìντςάχìστ-ύχ μίντjò bíρrò ìμμίχ^wà* (9) on a tree diagram

As can be noticed from the above tree structure, the terminal node under the NP (under the S-bar) of the MC, i.e. the subject of the MC, is filled by 3MS to show that it is referenced. Both the RC and the MC share a common subject, which referenced by 3MS on the relativized verb.

As touched upon above, RCs normally occur preceding the head nouns and MCs occur in independent positions, i.e. one is not imbedded within the other. Nevertheless, in sentences where an MC and RC do not share a common subject, an MC's subject may be moved to sentence initial position, giving a way as a modifier (a relative clause) to be imbedded within the MC (between the subject and predicate of the main clause) (cf. 10c-e). (10a-b) are presented for comparison. Some of the dependent clauses in these constructions play completion role to the verb semantically; they are, therefore, complement clauses comprise relative clauses within them (this is discussed under section IV).

- (10) a) *án dzèp-ύχ bírì kír-ύ-χà*
I buy-1s(SB).3MS(OB).PFV.REL ox die-PFV-3MS
'The ox I bought died.'
- b) *án dzèp-ύχ-sà bírì jítsè kíràjt-ύ-χà*
I buy-1s(SB).3MS(OB).PFV.REL-ACC ox.ACC my brother rent-PFV-3MS
'My brother rented the ox that I bought.'
- c) *tàblí dzèr-kí jàg-ún-kú-sà dór-ká-wà kíràjt-ύ-χà*
father child-PL bring.3P.PFV(SB).REL-3P(OB).REL-ACC chicken-PL-ACC rent-PFV-3MS
'The father rented the chicken that the children brought.'
- d) *àqá ìnk^aná tif-t-ύχ ñirdzí-lì àràkí-η-t-ύχ-à*
woman last year divorce-FM-PRF.FM.REL male-CONC reconcile-RECIP-3F-PRF.3F-PRF
'The woman reconciled with the husband she divorced last year.'
- e) *kìntítsántí kás-ká-wà zúrts-ύχ kintántí-s màtsáf-ò jèlám-ύχ-à*
teacher question-PL-ACC answer-PRF.3MS student-DAT book-ACC reward-PRF.3MS-PRF
'The teacher rewarded the student who answered the questions.'

The *italicized* clauses in all of the above illustrative sentences are RCs. All of them qualify the noun in the main clause, which is the subject of the MC in (10a), the object in (10b–e). Thus, *bìrì* in the MC of (10a) is in S function since it is the subject of an intransitive verb, *kìr-ú-χà*, and it is in an O function in (10b) since it is the direct object of the verb in the RC. The subject of the RC is *án* in (10a–b). *án* and *jítsè* in (10b) are the subjects of the RC and MC respectively, and they are in A function since they are the subjects of their respective transitive verbs. The RCs in (10c–e) are placed within the MC: they occur between the subject and the predicate of the MC, *án* and *bìrì* *kìrájt-ú-χà* (10c), *àqá* and *ηirdzili àràkìntúχà* (10d), and *kìntítsántí* and *kìntántís màtsàfò fèlànúχà* (10e). As touched upon earlier, such placement is possible in sentences where the RC and MC do not share a common subject.

As can be noticed from the gloss, *-ún* (subject agreement) occurs closer to the root verb while *-kú* (object agreement) occurs at the end of the relativized verb form. This can be attested from the table presented following the tree structure below and showing paradigmatic data of the verb, *jàg-* ‘to bring’. A full sentence structure of (10c) can be depicted on the tree structure below.

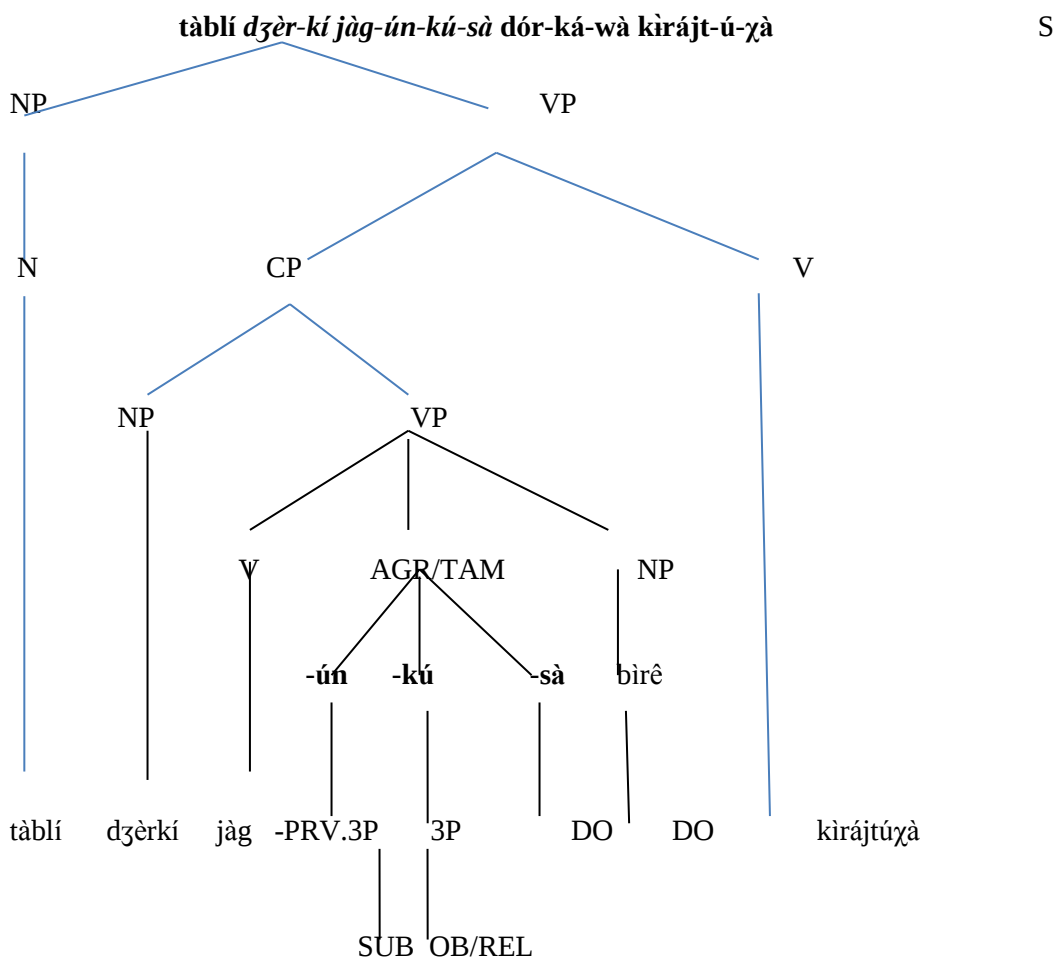


Fig. 2: A Tree Diagram Showing the Structure of the Sentence in 10c:

The following table depicts Awngi RC paradigm of the verb *jàg-* ‘to bring’ in perfective aspect.

Table: Awngi RC Paradigm of the Verb *jàg*- ‘to Bring’ in Perfective Aspect.

Person (SUB)	Number-Cum-Gender	<i>dʒèw</i> - ‘to buy’	DO
1	SG	<i>dʒèp-úχ</i>	MS
		<i>dʒèp-út</i>	FM
		<i>dʒèp-úk</i>	PL
	PL	<i>dʒèw-núχ</i>	MS
		<i>dʒèw-nút</i>	FM
		<i>dʒèw-úk</i>	PL
2	SG	<i>dʒèw-túχ</i>	MS
		<i>dʒèw-tút</i>	FM
		<i>dʒèw-túk</i>	PL
	PL	<i>dʒèw-tínù</i>	MS
		<i>dʒèw-tíntí</i>	FM
		<i>dʒèw-tínkú</i>	PL
3	MS	<i>dʒèw-úχ</i>	MS
		<i>dʒèw-út</i>	FM
		<i>dʒèw- úk^w</i>	PL
	FM	<i>dʒèw-túχ</i>	MS
		<i>dʒèw-tút</i>	FM
		<i>dʒèw-túk</i>	PL
	PL	<i>dʒèw-nù</i>	MS
		<i>dʒèw-nútí</i>	FM
		<i>dʒèw-únkú</i>	PL

The above table shows gender-cum-number markers of subject and direct object. Direct object markers take final position in the relativized verb form.

IV Relativization within Complement Clauses

Relative clauses may occur within complement clauses (cf. 11).

- (11) *mállàsá kúp ts-úχ-sà fumbê sàfē kàts-ĩχ^w-à*
Mälläse collect.IDP make-PRV.3MS-ACC maize.ACC Shashe take-3FM.PRIV-PRV
‘Shashe took the maize that Mellese collected.’

The verb *kàtsĩχ^w* ‘she took’ in MC of (11) above is divalent – it requires two arguments, a subject and a direct object. Thus, the italic part in (11) functions as an NP complement, direct object, of this verb. This complement clause on its part has a relative clause within it – *fumbê* ‘the maize’, which is in O function for the verb *kèwúχsà* ‘that he cut’ in the complement clause, is qualified by the relative clause (with ideophonic VP) *mállàsá kúp ts-úχ-sà*. Hence *mállàsá kúp ts-úχ-sà* is a relative clause construction within the complement clause, *mállàsá kúp ts-úχ-sà fumbê*. As *fumbê* is an NP head of the complement clause, it is in O function for the verb of the main clause, *kàtsĩχ^w-à*. Thus it is in O function for the verbs both in the main and in the complement clauses.

The following tree structure presents a clear picture of the structure in (11).

màllàsá kùp ts-úχ-sà fùmbê sàfê kàts-ĩχ^w-à

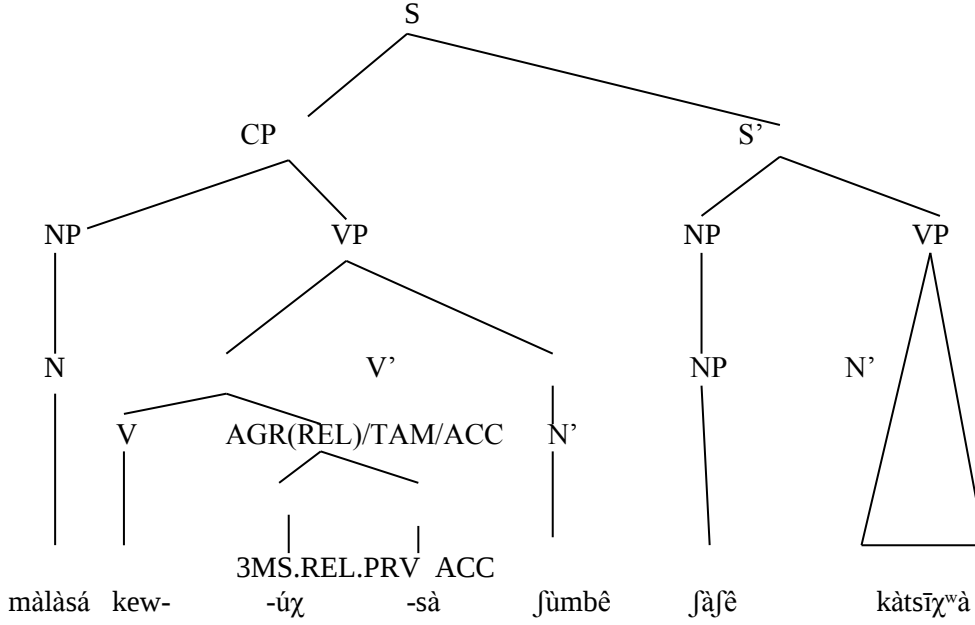


Fig. 3: A Tree Diagram Showing the Structure of the Sentence:

As can be noticed in the above tree structure, the VP within the complement clause branches into V' and NP. The NP is fùmbê, an argument shared both by the matrix and the dependent clause verbs – it is in O function for the verbs under VP of CP and VP of S', viz. *kèwúχsà* and *kàtsĩχ^wà* respectively. The relativized verb *kèw-úχ-sà* qualifies *sùmbê*, and is in O function for *kàtsĩχ^wà*, an MC verb – it is marked accusative in concord with *shumbê*, the noun it qualifies (recall earlier discussions in respect of this). See Yaregal (2007 & 2017) with regard to formal difference between *-sà* and *-ê*, accusative markers that have attached to the relativized verb and its qualified noun, *fùmbê*.

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
AGR	agreement
CONC	concomitant
CNV	converb
COP	copula
DAT	dative
DO	direct object
FM	feminine
FOC	focus
IDP	ideophone
INSTR	instrumental
IPRV	imperfective
MS	masculine
MC	main clause
NG	negative
(O)B	object
PL	plural

PRV	perfective
RC	relative clause
RECIP	reciprocal
REL	relative
SG	singular
SUB	subject
TMP	temporal
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person

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