

The Copula Verb Be in Modern English with Reference to Sorani - Dialect in Modern Kurdish.

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Abstract

The copula verb *be* is a linking verb which relates the subject to its complement in the sentence. The copula verb *be* exists in English and Kurdish languages, but the grammatical structures which are used to tackle this concept in English are entirely different from that which are used in Kurdish.

The present study aims at investigating the copular verb *be* in English and Kurdish, showing the similar and different points between the two languages with regard to expressing the copula verb *be*.

Section one includes the introduction which deals with the definition of the term copula, the problem of the study, the aim of the study, the limitation of the study and the value of the study, while section two involves the copula *be* in English. It covers the forms of copula *be*, its structural roles, complements of, and existential meaning of copula *be*. Section three is devoted to copula *be* in Kurdish. It covers copula *be*, complements, and existential meaning of copula *be*. Section four points out the contrastive analysis of the copula *be* in English and Kurdish and it comes out with some conclusions.

Introduction

The term copula is used in grammatical description to refer to a linking verb, which has little independent meaning, and its main function is to relate the subject with its complement (Crystal, 1991 : 84).

This area of language could be vague for Kurdish learners who study English as a second language.

This study is an attempt to solve this problem through investigating the similar and the different points regarding the copula *be* in English and Kurdish languages. The study aims at showing how the copula *be* is tackled in modern English and modern Sorani- Kurdish dialect in an attempt to show the similar and different points between the two languages concerning this subject. The study deals with the copula verb *be* in modern English and modern Sorani-Kurdish dialect.



1.0 The Copula Verb Be in English

The main copulative verb in English is verb *to be* to which the term copular is restricted . It is the most central , the most common , and the most neutral in meaning (Quirk and Greenbaum , 1973 :352 ; Quirk etal , 1985 : 1176; Crystal , 1991:84; Eastwood , 1994 : 9 ; Leech and Svartvik , 1994 : 388).

1.1 Form

The copula *be*, which is the most frequent verb in English, has many distinct forms with respect to person , number , and tense as it is shown in the following table (Murcia and freeman , 1999 : 53-4) .

| present tense | | | past tense | |
|---------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|-----------|
| person | singular | plural | singular | plural |
| 1st | I am | we are | I was | we were |
| 2nd | you are | you are | you were | you were |
| 3rd | he ,she ,it is | they are | he, she ,it was | they were |

(Murcia and freeman , 1999 : 53-4)

- 1 – I *am* a student .
- 2 – You *are* a student .
- 3 – He/she *is* a student .
- 4 – We *are* students .
- 5 – They *are* students .
- 6 - I *was* a student .
- 7 -You *were* a student .
- 8 - He/she *was* a student .
- 9 - We *were* students .
- 10 -They *were* students .
- 11_ I will *be* a student .
- 12_ You will *be* a student .
- 13_ He\she will *be* a student .
- 14_ We will *be* students .
- 15_ They will *be* students .

1.2 The Structural Roles of Verb to Be

Murcia and Freeman (1999 : 53) say that verb *to be*, which functions as a copula verb as well as an auxiliary verb, links non-verbal predicates such as nouns , adjectives , and central adverbials with their subjects :

16 - copula : John is {
a teacher
tall
in Boston
}

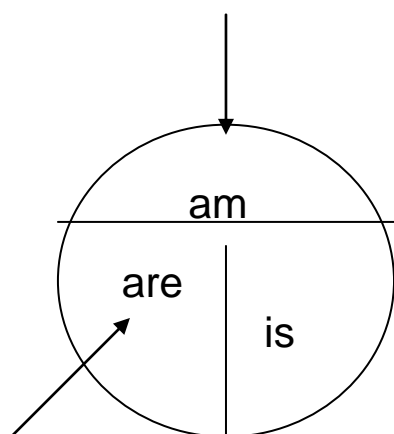
17 - auxiliary : John is talking to Susan .
(progressive aspect

It also works as a carrier for tense and subject-verb agreement .In other words , the form of verb *to be* in the case of present tense reflects the person and number of the subject noun and signals present tense : I *am* , he *is* , you *are* , and so on :

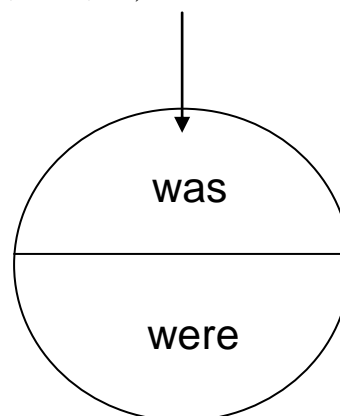
- 18 – I *am* clever .
- 19 – You *are* clever .
- 20 – He/ She *is* clever .
- 21_ We *are* clever .
- 22 – You *are* clever .
- 23 – They *are* clever .

They also add that there are four reasons which make the copula verb *be* different from all other verbs in English (ibid: 54). First , the copula *be* which is the most frequent verb in English has different forms regarding person , number , and tense as shown in the following diagrams :

1st person sg. (I)



1st and 3rd . person sg.
(I , he , she , it)



| | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| every thing else | 3rd . person sg. | every thing else |
| Present tense | (he ,she ,it) | past tens |

The difference in forms sometimes leads the learners to use the wrong forms of the verb *be* in their writing or speech .

- * You is late
- * We was out

The second point is that , the copula *be*, which is the most frequent and semantically the most neutral copula, shares a defining feature with other copular verbs in that it may be followed by adjective phrases

- 24 – Naomi is attractive .
- 25 – They appear funny .
- 26 – They remain protected .

Third , the copula *be* behaves syntactically like an auxiliary verb and has an operator function with regard to question formation and negation .

- 27 – Hal *is* an engineer .
- 28 – *Is* Hal an engineer ?
- 29 – Hal *is not* a teacher .

Finally , the copula *be* does not occur in all languages but all languages have verbs .

1.3 Complements of the Copula Be

Grammatically , *be* is the most flexible copular verb in English which cannot be followed only by adjective phrases , but also noun phrases and adverbial prepositional phrases (Quirk etal , 1985 : 1171-4 ; Greenbaum and Quirk , 1990 : 343-4 ; Leech and Svartvic , 1994 : 389 ; Azar , 1999 : A6 ; Murcia and freeman ,1999 : 55) .

30 – Naomi is an

| | |
|---|-------------|
| } | attractive |
| | an actress |
| | in New York |

 (Murcia and freeman,1999 :55)

1.3.1 Adjective Phrases as a Subject Complement

According to (Quirk and Greenbaum , 1973 : 395 _ 6 ; Quirk etal , 1985 : 1171-2 ; Greenbaum and Quirk,1990:343-4) a verb has copula complementation when it is followed by a subject complement (Cs) or a predication adjunct and this element cannot be dropped without changing the meaning of the verb .The copula *be* is the most common copula which is followed by an adjectival complement .

31 – She is intelligent .

Here the verb *be* is used to introduce a characterization of the subject

1.3.2 Noun Phrases as a Subject Complement

Biber et al (1999 : 447) say that *be* is the single most common copular verb which is followed by a noun phrase as a subject predicative , and the noun phrase following *be* provides either a descriptive characterization of the subject noun phrase or some identifying information .

A_ Characterizing :

32 - This *is* [a good example of how internal deviation can give prominence] .

33 - The only consolation *was* [a crowd at Harry Hadden stadium] .

B_ Identifying

34 - The Kernel *is* [the part of the plant of greatest value] .

35 - AMP *is* [the largest manager of private retirement funds in that country] .

36 - Maria suddenly broke out , " I *am* [his wife] " .

The verb *be* is the main copula which can be used with noun phrase complements , e.g. William *is* my friend (Quirk et al , 1985 : 1173) .

1.3.3 The Complementation by Adverbials

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973 : 396) ; Quirk et al (1985 : 1174 - 5) ; Greenbaum and Quirk (1990 : 344) indicate that *be* is the principle copula that allows adverbials as complementation . The adverbials are mainly space adjuncts :-

37 - The kitchen *is* down stairs .

38 - The children *are* at the zoo .

But the time adjuncts are also common with the overtime subjects :-

39 - The party will *be* at nine .

40 - The outing *is* tomorrow .

According to Eastwood (1994 : 9) the adverbials that follow the linking verb *be* relate to the subject . They often express place or time but they can have other meanings .

41 - The coat *was* here .

42 - The conference *is* every year .

43 - I *am* on a diet .

1.4 The Existential Meaning of the Copula Be in English

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973 : 396) existential sentences are principally those which begin with an stress form of *there* + *be* to express the idea of existence .



44 – There *is* nothing healthier than a cold shower .
(Nothing healthier exists than a cold shower)

Grammarians like Krusinga (1931) , Roberts (1954) , Tipping (1959)
Sweet (1968) talk about the existential meaning of verb to be :-

45 – God *is*

46 – I *am* here

In sentences (45) and (46) , verb *to be* is considered verb of complete predication used to express existence .

Biber et al (1999 : 364) remark that the copular as a verb *be* is one of the most common verbs of existence or relationship which reports a state that exists .In this case the copular verbs are typically followed by subject predicative and perform a linking function ; therefore, the subject predicative characterizes the subject directly :

47 – The problem *is* most acute in rural areas .

2.0 The Copula Verb Be in Kurdish

In Kurdish language the copula is indicated by the verb *bu:n* , which means the existence of something, and its exact counterpart in English is verb *to be*.

The verb *bu:n* is a multivalent item ; it occurs in different syntactic positions showing different functions (Amin, 1979 : 97 ; Mirawdeli , 2007 : 18 , 150)

In this study , the verb *bu:n* is treated as it occurs in its copulative function

2.1 Form

The copula verb *bu:n* ‘be’ occurs in the present tense with 3rd person singular pronoun as the personal suffix or clitic (-a) attached to the subject complement (a noun, an adjective, or an adverbial) and it performs the present tense function of the verb *bu:n* in its copulative case , but the copula disappears for the 1st and 2nd Persons . The personal suffixes (-m, -yt, -i:n, -n) are added to the predicate function as agreement markers (Agr.M) to show concord of number and person between the subject and the verb in the sentence (Amin, 1979:97-8).

48 – min a:za :_ ∅_ m
I brave am Agr.M
I am brave .

49 – to a:za :_ ∅ yt
You brave are Agr.M
You are brave .

50- aw a:za : (y) _ a
He / she brave is
He / she is brave .

- 51- ema a:za :_ Ø i:n
We brave _ are_ Agr.M
We are brave .
- 52- ewa a:za :_ Ø n
You brave are Agr.M
You are brave .
- 53- awa:n a:za :_ Ø_ n
They brave are Agr.M
They are brave .

Fattah (1997:285-291) states that "in cases where the verb of the sentence is the copular *bu:n* 'be' or contains an on-past stem, the subject clitic leans on the element of the verbal complex assuming that in the present tense of be, the stem *ha* has been deleted obligatorily".

- 54- Min kurd (ha)_m
I kurd *am*_Agr.M
I *am* Kurd
- 55- Awan kurd (ha)_ n
They kurd *be*_Agr.M
They are Kurds

If we change the above sentences into the past tense, the stem of the verb *bu:n* will be very clear, and it occurs preceding the personal suffixes which also perform in this case the function of agreement (*ibid* : 99).

- 56- min a:za : *bu:* - m
I brave was Agr.M
I was brave .
- 57- to a:za : *bu:* - yt
You brave were Agr.M
You were brave .
- 58- aw a:za : *bu:*
He / she brave was
He / she was brave .
- 59- ema a:za : *bu:* - i:n
We brave were Agr.M
We were brave .
- 60- awa:n a:za : *bu:* - n
They brave were Agr.M
They were brave .
- 61- ewa a:za : *bu:* - n
You brave were Agr.M
You were brave .

According to Baban (1997:49) the copular verb *bu:n* 'be' has two forms:-

1- Verb *ha_bu:n* 'be' in the present tense.

| person | number | ha_bu:n (be) | | |
|-----------------|--------|-------------------|------|--------------|
| 1 st | sing. | ha_ | _ m | i am |
| | Pl. | | _ yn | we are |
| 2 nd | sing. | ha_ | _ yt | you are |
| | Pl. | | _ n | you are |
| 3 rd | sing. | ha_ | _ ya | he,she,it,is |
| | Pl. | | _ n | they are |

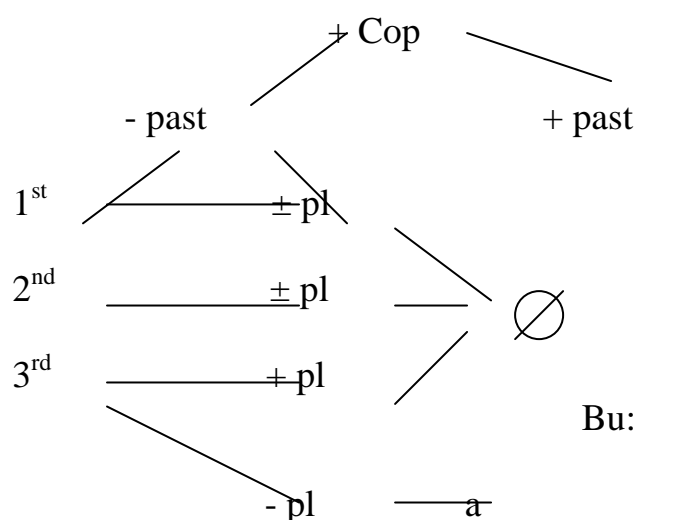
1- Verb *bu:n* 'be' in the past.

| person | number | ha_bu:n 'be' | | |
|-----------------|--------|-----------------|------|---------------|
| 1 st | sing. | bu: | _ m | I am |
| | Pl. | | _ yn | we are |
| 2 nd | sing. | bu: | _ yt | you are |
| | Pl. | | _ n | you are |
| 3 rd | sing. | bu: | _ ∅ | he,she,it,was |
| | Pl. | | _ n | they are |

- 62 - min da – bi - m ba, nusar
I will- be – Agr.M a writer .
I will be a writer.
- 63- to da – bi – yt ba nusar
You will - be – Agr.M a writer
You will be a writer.
- 64- aw da – bi ba nusar
He/she will-be a writer
He/she willl be a writer.
- 65- ema da – bi- i:n ba nusar
We will be-Agr.M writers .
We will be writer.
- 66- ewa da – bi- n ba nusar

- You will be-Agr.M writers .
 You will be writer.
 67- awa:n da - bi- n ba nusar
 They will be-Agr.M writers .
 They will be writers.

The following diagram shows the copula verb *be* in Kurdish



(Amin , 1979 :100)

2.2 Complements of the Copular Verb Be in Kurdish

McCarus (1958 : 94-5) says that the verbal phrase in Kurdish is a construction consisting of a head and its modifier , in which the head is a verb and the modifier could be a noun , an adjective , or an adverb ; the modifier precedes the verb .A special type of verbal phrase has the copula and a predicate as modifier .The predicate may be a noun or pronoun in which case it has the referent as the subject as in :

- 68- aw pya:wa ma:mosta _ y _ a
 that man teacher Agr.M is

That man is a teacher .or , the predicate may be an adjective , an interrogative , or a prepositional phrase , in this case it modifies the subject as in :

- 69- Čon_i ? Ča: k_i ?
 How are you ? Are you well ?

- 70- to . zor baquwat _ _Ø i
you very strong are Agr.M
You are very strong .

(ba quwat = with strength)

Kim (2010 : 24) declares that the complement of the linking or copula verb can be an adjective phrase , a noun phrase , or an adverbial phrase .

2.2.1 Complements with Adjective Phrases

- 71- kiča – aka jwa:n – a
Girl the pretty is
The girl is pretty .
- 72 - awa:n naxo:š _ Øn
they sick are Agr.M
They are sick.

2.2.2 Complements with Noun Phrases

- 73- narmi:n nusar – a
narmin writer _ is
Narmin is a writer
- 74- da:na: pa:rezar – a
Dana lawyer is
Dana is a lawyer .

2.2.3 Complements with Adverbial Phrases

- 75- kiteb – aka laser mez – aka – (y)a
Book the on table the is
The book is on the table .
- 76 - min la – quta:bxax : na _ _Ø m
I at school am Agr.M
I am at school .

2.3 The Existential Meaning of the Copula Be in Kurdish

According to Amin (1979 : 105) the idea of existence and the idea of possession are conveyed by the verb *ha-bu:n* (to exist , or to have) which is derived from the verb *bu:n* "to be" in its copulative function by the addition of the morpheme [ha] :

- 77 - ema awsa: *ha-bu:* _ i:n
We then existed Agr.M
We existed then .

- 78 - ema awsa: ha . ma:n _ bu:
 We then Agr.M had
 We had then .

Mirawdeli (2007 : 21) adds that the Kurdish morpheme *ha-ya* (exists) can indicate the idea of existence or the idea of possession.

- 79- Xwa : ha-ya
 God is
80- Mar sar_ i ha-ya
 Snake head Agr.M has
 Snakes have heads .

3.0 Acontrastive Analysis

In this section an attempt is made to point out the similarities and differences of the copula verb *be* in English and Kurdish .

1 – The copula verb *be* occurs in both languages under comparison but in different ways .In English ; the copula *be* is a free morpheme , while in Kurdish the copula *be* is a bound morpheme .

2 – In English , the copula verb *be* has many distinct forms with respect to person , number , and tense such as : *am* , *is* , *are* in the present tense , and *was* , *were* in the past tense . In Kurdish ,on the other hand ,the copula *be* is indicated by the personal suffix (-a) which is attached to the subject complement with the 3rd person singular pronoun and it disappears () with other persons. In the past tense the stem of the verb *bu:n* is very clear and it occurs preceding the agreement markers .

- 81- We are students .
82- ema ma:mosta : _ _ Øi:n
 We teacher are Agr.M
 We are teachers .
83- They *were* teachers .
84- ema ma:mosta : - bu : - i:n
 We teacher were Agr.M
 We were teachers .

3 – In the future , the copula *be* in English is indicated by the stem of verb *be* and it precedes the complement .In Kurdish , the copula *be* is realized by the morphemes (*dabim* , *dabi* , *dabe* ,*dabi:n*,*dabin*) which mean " will be " and also derived from the verb *bu:n* and it precedes the subject complement .

- 85- She *will be* a teacher .
86- ema da-bi:n ba_nusar
 We *will be* writer .
 We will be writers .

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4 – The subject complement in both languages resemble each other in that , they can be noun phrases , adjective phrases , adverbial phrases , or prepositional phrases .On the other hand , the positions of the complements are different as in English , they follow the copula verb *be* in the present , past , and future , whereas, in Kurdish, the subject complement follows the copula verb *be* in the present and past tenses and it precedes the complement in the case of future .

- 87- She *is* a teacher .
88- They *were* brave .
89- He will *be* here .
90- The book *is* on the table .
91- min a:za : _ _ Øm
I brave *am* Agr.M
I *am* brave .
92- aw da_be ba nusar
He / she will be a writer .
93- awa:n lera bu: - n
they here were Agr.M
They were here .
94- pši:la – ka la žer meza.ka – bu:
cat the under table the was
The cat was under the table .

5 – In English , the copular verb *be* is one of the most common verbs which give the meaning of existence and report a state that exists .In Kurdish , the copula verb *be* can express the meaning of existence or the meaning of possession by using the morpheme " *ha* " .

- 95- God *is* .
96- I *am* here .
97- Xwa ha_ya
God *is*
98- ma:r _ sar – i ha_ya
Snake head Agr.M has
Snakes have heads .

Conclusions

This study comes out with the following conclusions :-

1 – The copula verb *be* occurs in both English and Kurdish languages to link or connect the subject with its complement in the sentence .

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2 – In English , the copula *be* exists as a free morpheme , whereas in Kurdish it occurs as a bound morpheme ,

3 – The subject complement in English and Kurdish could be a noun phrase , a prepositional phrase , an adjectival phrase or an adverbial phrase .

4 – In English , the predicate follows the copula verb *be* in the present , past , and future tenses , whereas in Kurdish , the subject complement precedes the copula verb *be* in the present and past tenses , but in the future it follows the copula *be* .

5 – In English , the copula verb *be* gives the meaning of existence , while in Kurdish it cannot give the meaning of existence only , but it also gives the meaning of possession .

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فعل الربط " Be " في اللغة الانكليزية الحديثة مع الإشارة الى اللهجة السورانية في اللغة الكردية الحديثة

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الخلاصة

فعل الكينونة *verb to be* هو من أفعال الربط الذي يربط الفاعل بمكملته في الجملة . إن التراكيب النحوية المستخدمة للتعبير عن فعل الربط *be* في اللغة الإنكليزية تختلف كلياً عن تلك المستخدمة في اللغة الكردية لإبراز أوجه التشابه والاختلاف . إن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هي تناول فعل الربط *be* في اللغتين الإنكليزية والكردية لإبراز أوجه الاختلاف بينهما فيما يخص هذا الفعل . يتكون البحث من أربعة أقسام : يشمل القسم الأول المقدمة ، والتي تتناول طبيعة المشكلة التي يتطرق إليها البحث ، الهدف من الدراسة ، حدود الدراسة ، وأهمية الدراسة . يقدم القسم الثاني عرضاً لفعل الربط *be* في اللغة الإنكليزية ، حيث يتضمن أقسام وتركيب فعل الربط *be* ، استخداماته النحوية ، مكملات الفعل ومعنى الوجودية التي يتضمنها الفعل . يستعرض القسم الثالث فعل الربط *be* في اللغة الكردية ، حيث يتناول فعل الربط ، استخداماته النحوية ، أقسام ومكملات الفعل ، ومعنى الوجودية والتملك التي يملكها الفعل . أما القسم الرابع فيقدم تحليلاً مقارناً لفعل الربط *be* في اللغتين الإنكليزية والكردية ، ويظهر نقاط التشابه والاختلاف بينهما ، ويقدم النتائج التي توصل إليها البحث .

