Isn't Linking *Be* an Auxiliary?

By Husam Hasan, MA. in English language and linguistics.

١. Statement of the Problem

Although copious literature has been written on linking *be*, there are very scant hints in English grammar books that it is an auxiliary. Linking and auxiliary *be* are usually dealt with separately under two separate headings, and virtually very little reference is made to the striking similarities they have in common. This is probably due to the very nature of human beings who tend to excessively classify things. However, our ardent and heated inclination for taxonomy sometimes leads us unconsciously to concentrate on the differences and pay no or at best very little attention to points of resemblance.

Among the few books that point out the similarity between linking and auxiliary *be* is English Grammar: A Generative Perspective (Haegeman and Gueron, ١٩٩٩: ٤٠). There, the authors note that like progressive *be*, copula *be* does not assign theta roles. It further has the same distributional properties of progressive *be*, *so copula* **be***, like progressive be, is an auxiliary.* Later (ibid: ٣٠٣), the authors give passive *be* the same treatment given earlier to copula and progressive *be*. However, we find a more clear reference to this similarity and conclusion in (Huddleston and Pullum, ٢٠٠٥: ٤٢) where the authors point out that *be* qualifies for auxiliary not only in progressive and passive constructions, that is, when there is also a main verb in the sentence, but also when it is the only verb in the sentence followed by a complement. As evidence for this, they note that its behavior with respect to negation and inversion is the same in both constructions. Now although this clearly constitutes a more advanced step towards what we think is true and therefore want to prove, only two aspects of syntactic behavior are mentioned as evidence with no examples and details. So in this study we do not claim that we are coming up with a new idea, but our aim is to look for and think of as much evidence to prove it as we can, with some detail and examples. This is something that we have not found in the literature we have surveyed to prepare this study.

٢. Introduction

In our attempt to look for similarities between linking and auxiliary *be* and consequently prove that linking *be* is an auxiliary, we shall consider three basic linguistic aspects. These are form, meaning and syntactic distribution and behavior. However, before we set out with our task, we have to take it into account that, as noted by Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ٤٨), not all members of a certain category exhibit all the typical characteristics of that category. In other words, members of most grammatical categories display a sort of gradience, so there are typical members, peripheral ones and still others that are midway cases.

٢. Form

In addition to the similarity in written form, linking and auxiliary *be* have exactly the same possibilities in spoken form including all the inventory of strong, weak and contracted forms. This is shown to be of special significance if compared for example to the modal auxiliary verb *can* versus its lexical homograph. Here as far as the spoken form is concerned, the modal often appears in its weak and contracted forms, whereas lexical *can* has no weak or contracted forms. So this is a first indication that linking *be* is not a lexical verb; rather it is like auxiliary *be* and actually most auxiliaries in having strong forms as well as weak and contracted forms.

٣. Meaning
٣،١. Lack of lexical content

As far as meaning is concerned, both linking and auxiliary *be* are void of any lexical content, and they mainly perform a grammatical function in the sentence. The traditional terms "linking" and "auxiliary" indicate that traditional grammarians are aware that their main function in the sentence is grammatical. However, as opposed to "auxiliary", the term "lexical verb" is sometimes used in the literature. So, some grammarians who do not treat linking *be* as auxiliary are alternatively tempted to use the term "lexical verb" to characterize it, as is the case of Borjars and Burridge (ibid: ١٦٧). Yet, it seems paradoxical to use the label "lexical" to refer to items that are indeed lexically vacuous. It is a peculiarity of English

that it requires a verb in every sentence, so when semantically the sentence does not actually need a verb, a dummy verb is used to fulfill the requirement of grammar. This is the case of sentences with linking **be** in English. But, as noted by Huddleston and Pullum (٢٠٠٥: ٧٣), it is quite common in other languages for the verb to be missing in such constructions and surely Arabic is one of these languages. On the same line of thinking, Huddleston (١٩٨٨:١٦٩) points out that linking verbs are easily deletable and recoverable because they have little semantic content of their own as compared to other verbs. In the verb phrase, they are dependent on the predicative which is usually an adjective or a noun phrase acting as a subject complement, or it may be an adverbial. Their main syntactic role is to link the complement to the subject.However, saying that an element has no lexical content does not mean that it has no meaning at all. Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ١٨٤) point out that auxiliary verbs are verbs with functional rather than lexical content. They further elsewhere (ibid: ١٤٤) state that there is some sense in which the meanings of the auxiliaries modify the meaning of the lexical verb. They explain that just as we have **create** present vs. **created** past, we have **has created** present perfect. However, I think that the perfective meaning is one of the meanings of the past participle form of the verb, and what the auxiliary verb **have** does is specify this particular meaning of the past participle among the other meanings attached to it. Then the particular form of the verb **have** shows whether it is present or past perfect. The verb **be**, whether linking or auxiliary, similarly shows this present/past grammatical or functional meaning distinction. Huddleston and Pullum (٢٠٠٥: ٧٣) explicitly point out that the role of linking **be** in English sentences is to show the tense.

٣.٢.   Theta role assignment

Haegeman and Gueron (١٩٩٩: ٣٨) remark that auxiliary verbs do not assign theta roles. Then, as noted above, they (ibid: ٤٠) observe that linking **be** does not assign theta roles either. We would say that this is a natural consequence of the lack of lexical content. So in a sentence like:
    ١- The burglar is smashing the window.

It is the lexical verb **smash** rather than the auxiliary **be** that is the argument taking item which determines the number and types of arguments required to build up the sentence. In other words, the argument structure of the sentence is determined exclusively by the *valency* of the verb **smash**. Therefore, in the above sentence we have two arguments **the burglar** and **the window** since the verb **smash** is *bivalent*, that is, for it to make up a complete sentence, there have to be two arguments: one functioning as a subject and another functioning as its object. The verb **smash** further assigns its arguments the semantic roles of agent and patient or affected respectively and imposes selection restrictions on them. It follows then that the auxiliary verb **be** has no role whatsoever in shaping the argument structure of the sentence and assigning semantic roles to arguments since it is not the argument taking item. Rather, it is the element following it that does all this. Hence, we can say that the verb **smash** is the *semantic clausal head*.
    Similarly in a sentence like:
    ٢- I'm aware that John is your brother.

Linking **be** has no role in determining the argument structure of the sentence as it is not the argument taking item. Again it is the element following it that performs this function. So, it is the adjective **aware** in the sentence above that is the semantic clausal head which imposes selection restrictions on arguments. For example, we say that the clause **that John is your brother** is a complement of the adjective **aware**, not the verb **be**. Now for comparison, let us consider the following sentence:
    ٣- I know that John is your brother.

Here we say that the clause **that John is your brother** is a complement of the verb **know** since, unlike linking **be**, it has a lexical content and therefore can function as the semantic clausal head that determines the argument structure of the sentence and assigns semantic roles. The same can be said about the following sentences from Thomas and Kintgen (١٩٧٤: ١١٤):
    ٤-   John pleases me.
    ٥-   John is pleasant to me.

While in sentence ٤, **me** is said to be the complement of the verb **please** as it has a lexical content and therefore can function as the semantic clausal head that takes arguments, **to me** in the somewhat

semantically equivalent sentence ٥ is the complement of the adjective ***pleasant*** as it is the real semantic clausal head.

Commenting on the sentences:

٦- The bull is in the ٤٠-acre field.
٧- This book is for Louise.
٨- This poppy is red.
٩- That animal is a cow.

Hurford et al. (٢٠٠٧: ٢٥٦) consider as predicators the prepositions ***in*** and ***for***, the adjective ***red*** and the noun phrase ***a cow*** in the above sentences respectively. They further state that the above sentences include one-place predicates, that is, they contain one argument each, namely, that which is occupied by the subject. It is to be noted here that the authors use the term "predicator" in a way equivalent to the way we use the term "semantic clausal head". So we can conclude that in all instances of linking ***be,*** it is the element following it in the sentence, whatever it might be, that is the semantic clausal head. Similarly, discussing the sentences:

١٠- I consider that his reply is inadequate.
١١- Louise is in the room.

Haegeman and Gueron (١٩٩٩: ٤٠) prove that in ١٠ above, it is the adjective ***inadequate*** that is the semantic role assigner in the clause ***that his reply is inadequate***. Likewise, it is the preposition ***in*** that is the argument taking item and the semantic role assigner in ١١. The term "clausal head" is used by Langacker (١٩٩١: ٢٠٥) when he discusses linking ***be***. There, he states that it is too abstract to act as a clausal head by itself. It derives a clausal head when it combines with an atemporal relation expressed by an adjective, a prepositional phrase or a predicate nominative such as ***tall, under the table*** and ***teacher*** respectively. By "too abstract", of course, Langacker means *void of lexical content*. What Langacker notes in effect is that linking ***be*** and the element which expresses the atemporal relation complete each other; while the latter bears the lexical content, the former performs the function of the expression of time. But all of this is within the domain of meaning, that is, linking ***be*** which carries the grammatical meaning of the expression of time combines with an atemporal linguistic unit with a lexical content to derive a composite semantic unit with both lexical and grammatical meanings. Yet we have to bear it in mind that when two elements make up a composite semantic unit, this does not necessarily entail that they constitute an equivalent syntactic unit as well. We need syntactic constituency tests to prove that they do. We shall carry the distinction between ***be*** and the following element even further and hold the view that linking and auxiliary ***be*** are the syntactic heads of the clauses they appear in. This will be discussed in the following section.What we can infer from the above argument is that within Langacker's notion of "clausal head", we sometimes need to distinguish between semantic clausal head and *syntactic clausal head* because these do not always coincide as in sentences involving auxiliary and linking ***be***. However, in sentences ٣ and ١٠ above, for example, the verbs ***know*** and ***consider*** are rightly called simply *clausal heads* because they are so both in terms of lexical meaning as well as syntax that is our concern in the next section.

٤. Syntactic distribution and behavior

As far as syntactic distribution and behavior are concerned, linking and auxiliary ***be*** have a great deal in common. This will be investigated below:

٤٫١. Syntactic clausal heads

Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ٧٩) point out that although there is a long tradition to divide the sentence into a noun phrase and a verb phrase, they consider the verb as the head of the sentence. Besides, Langacker (١٩٩١: ٢٠٥) seems to be of the same opinion since, as we have seen in the previous section, he uses the term "*clausal head*" to refer to verbs, but he notes that linking ***be*** cannot function as such on its own because it is too abstract. There, we stated that in sentences with linking and auxiliary ***be,*** we need to distinguish between syntactic and semantic clausal heads because these do not coincide in such sentences. Huddleston and Pullum (٢٠٠٥: ٢٩٣) treat auxiliaries as heads rather than dependents, of course, syntactically speaking. Likewise, Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ١٤٣ff), commenting on the sentences:

١٢- Their inventor has created a new bunch of cartoon losers

with 'Futurama'.

١٣- The Y٣K bug is threatening to bring down society.

١٤- The show might meander.

note that the verbs *has, is* and *might* in the above sentences are a special kind of verb with a verb phrase as its complement. So in such sentences, we would say that the operators are the syntactic clausal heads, and the verbs following them are the semantic clausal heads. In sentences where syntactic and semantic clausal heads are two separate elements, we would say that there is an instance of lack of isomorphy between syntactic and semantic structures, or alternatively that the syntactic and semantic or logical structures are not isomorphic. By contrast, we say that the syntactic and logical structures are isomorphic if the former depicts the latter symmetrically, or if there is a one-to-one correspondence between the constituent parts of a proposition and of the sentence which encodes that proposition (Haegeman and Gueron,١٩٩٩: ٥٣٨). Taking this treatment into consideration, the similarity between linking and auxiliary *be* becomes even clearer as both are followed by complements. Obviously, the traditional term "*subject complement*" is semantically oriented as what follows linking verbs says something about the entity realized in subject position. Syntactically, though, it is undoubtedly a complement of the verb itself. I would note here that this treatment of the auxiliary as the syntactic head in the verb phrase is somewhat equivalent to treating the determiner as such in the noun phrase. (See Borsley, ١٩٩٩: ٣١)Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ١٤٤f) state that traditional grammarians have concluded that auxiliary verbs are structurally dependent on main verbs since they semantically in some sense modify them. However, we cannot rely solely on meaning to pass syntactic judgments. As we noted earlier, when two elements make up a semantic unit, this does not necessarily entail that they themselves constitute a syntactic unit as well. This seems to be truly the case with structures involving auxiliary verbs, which actually semantically (as far as grammatical meaning) modify the whole verb phrase rather than the lexical verb only, and syntactically have the whole verb phrase as their complement rather than again the lexical verb only. Borjars and Burridge (ibid.) put forth much evidence in this respect and conclude that "the notion of verb string is then just a convenient way of referring to a string of one, two, three or even four auxiliaries and the lexical verb which follows, but the verb string does not have any status structurally". Starting with sentence ١٢ above, they apply the following constituency tests, among others, to prove that the sequence *created a new bunch of cartoon losers with 'Futurama'* is a constituent and consequently *has created* is not:

١٥- They haven't created a new bunch of cartoon losers with Futurama, but their inventor has. (Omission)

١٦- Their inventor has *performed*. (Replacement)

١٧- Their inventor has created a new bunch of cartoon losers   with 'Futurama' and given us a new weird role model. (Co-ordination)

١٨- What their inventor has done is *created a new bunch of cartoon losers with 'Futurama'*. (Movement)

These same tests can be used with structures involving linking *be* to show their resemblance to those with auxiliary verbs, and similarly prove that linking *be* and the element following it, e.g. the adjective *aware* in the sentences below, do not form a syntactic constituent:

١٩- I'm aware that John is your brother, but Mary isn't.   (Omission)

٢٠- I'm *tired*. (Replacement)

٢١- I'm aware that John is your brother and *reluctant to tell you*. (Co-ordination)

The following examples are pseudo-cleft sentences from Borsley (١٩٩٩: ٢٠) and Miller (٢٠٠٢: ١٤) respectively:

٢٢- What the boy was was *angry about the girl*.

٢٣- What this parcel is is *very heavy*. (Movement)

In ٢٢ for example, the movement of the string *angry about the girl* establishes it as a constituent, hence, *was angry* alone is not.

٤,٢.   Co-ordination of complements

The syntactic equivalence between linking and auxiliary *be* constructions is clearly shown in the ability to co-ordinate their complements as in the following sentence from Borsley (١٩٩٩: ٢٦):

٢٤- I'm *hoping to get an invitation* and *optimistic about my chances*.

Since the present participle *hoping* is a verb (as stated by the author himself), the verb preceding it is auxiliary. On the other hand, the verb omitted in the second clause is linking *be* as the complement is an adjective. This means that linking and auxiliary *be* are actually one thing as one can make up for the absence of the other in sentences. In the sentence above auxiliary *be* makes up for the absence of linking *be*. If we reverse the order of the clauses, then it is linking *be* that makes up for the absence of auxiliary *be* as illustrated below:

٢٥- I'm *optimistic about my chances* and *hoping to get an invitation*.

٤,٣.   The distribution of the negative particle and sentence-medial adverbs

One further evidence Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ١٤٥) use to prove that the traditional verb string does not form a constituent is that there are some single-word modifiers that can go between the auxiliary and the lexical verb, e.g. *not, probably* and *just* as in the following sentences:

٢٦- Parents can *not* accuse me of providing a bad role model for kids.

٢٧- I will *probably* dream up a few songs.

٢٨- I might *just* break the rules to go to the loo.

The aforementioned words can similarly go between linking *be* and the following element, e.g. in:

٢٩- She's *not* ready now.

٣٠- John was *probably* at home.

٣١- They were *just* a nasty gang of robbers.

The distribution of the negative particle *not* and sentence medial adverbs, like *probably* and *just* in the above sentences, is taken to be a point of similarity between linking *be* and auxiliary *be* or auxiliaries in general, as stated in Haegeman and Gueron (١٩٩٩: ٨٨f).

٤,٤.   The distribution of floating quantifiers and floating emphatic reflexives

Floating quantifiers (See Radford, ٢٠٠٤: ١٣٧) seem to be like the negative particle and sentence-medial adverbs in their distribution with respect to linking and auxiliary be. The following sentences with all illustrate this:The Tringles all came to Merle Park.

٣٢- The foxes were *all* hunted by Larry Twentyman. (Miller, ٢٠٠٢: ٩١)

٣٣- The Smiths were *all* in London.

The same can probably be said about what Radford (٢٠٠٤: ٣١٠) calls *floating emphatic reflexives* as shown in the following sentences:

٣٤- I don't *myself* think that Svengali was the best choice for England manager.

٣٥- Two republican senators were *themselves* thought to have been implicated. (ibid.)

٣٦- John was *himself* absent yesterday.

٤,٥.   Acting as an operator

In forming questions, negatives and emphatic sentences, linking *be* acts as an operator. The following sentence shows how linking *be* works in emphatic sentences:

٣٧- He '*was* in an appallingly bad temper.

The above sentence has emphatic stress on *was*, the linking verb. By contrast, a lexical verb needs *do* in such emphatic constructions as in:

٣٨- They 'do neglect their homework.

Linking *be* can also make contracted forms with the negative particle *not* and undergo subject-operator inversion in questions and other structures such as those involving what is called *negative adverbs*.(See Hughes,٢٠٠١: ٧٨) These include ***never, rarely, seldom, scarcely, hardly, not only…but also, no sooner…than, not until*** and ***under no   circumstances*** as in:

٣٩- Not only *were they* sound asleep, but also they were in such a bedraggled condition that we were all amazed at their sight.

٤٠- Never *have I* seen such courage.

٤١- Rarely *did she* leave the house.

٤٠٦.   Appearance in sentences with existential *there*

One further property in common between linking and auxiliary *be* noted by Haegeman and Gueron (١٩٩٩: ٣٠٣) is their ability to appear in sentences with existential *there* as illustrated in the following sentences:

٤٢- There are three students absent from the lecture today. (linking *be*)

٤٣- There were three students waiting in the corridor. (auxiliary *be*)

٤٤- There were three students arrested last night. (auxiliary *be*)

٤٠٧.   Infinitival *to* and linking *be*:

Discussing infinitival *to*, Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ١٨٢f) argue that it is an auxiliary. They also claim that the major theories of syntax do this. They do not mention all the arguments in support of this, but discuss what they consider the most convincing evidence. This has to do with ellipsis. They point out that in English one can omit a verb phrase provided it is recoverable from the immediate linguistic context, and an auxiliary is left behind. They cite the following example:

٤٥- She said that they may have been seeing things,

   and they may.

   and they may have.

   and they may have been.

   *and they may have been seeing.

They comment that as long as the string ends with auxiliary, the rest can be deleted. Considering the following example:

٤٦- She said that they may have been waiting to see some   weird things,

   and they may.

   and they may have.

   and they may have been.

   *and they may have been waiting.

   and they may have been waiting to.

the authors observe that this kind of ellipsis is acceptable when the sentence before the missing verb phrase ends with an auxiliary verb or infinitival *to*. They think that as long as some elements share the same features, they should be considered as belonging to the same category. So, they believe that infinitival *to* is an auxiliary, and admit that it is an unusual one.

Since the argument made by the authors above is based on syntactic behavior, it is quite convincing. Radford (٢٠٠٤: ٥١) adds two further similarities. He states that infinitival *to* and such modal auxiliaries like *should* occupy a similar position within the clause as shown in the following sentences:

٤٧- a. It's vital [that John *should* show an interest].

   b. It's vital [for John *to* show an interest].

In the above sentences *to* and *should* are both positioned between the subject *John* and the verb *show*. Moreover, both infinitival *to* and modals are followed by the bare infinitive.

Here we can add three more similarities. First, infinitival *to* is similar to auxiliaries as far as the distribution of the negative particle and sentence medial adverbs referred to above. These can intervene between infinitival *to* and the following element in what is traditionally called the *split infinitive* construction. The following are examples from Curme (١٩٤٧: ٢٦٩) and Greenbaum (٢٠٠٠: ١٤٧) respectively:

٤٨- a. I wish the reader to *clearly* understand this.

   b. I wish that the reader may *clearly* understand this.

٤٩- How could people be so insensitive as to *not* know they've got wax in their ears?

Compare:

٥٠- They do*n't* know they've got wax in their ears.

Second, Trask (١٩٩٣: ٢٧٩) points out that in traditional grammar, such a sequence as **to buy** in a sentence like:

٥١- Lisa wants to buy a BMW.

is regarded as a single form, the so-called *infinitive* of the verb **buy**, but this analysis is rejected by all contemporary theories of grammar. He adds that all possible tests point to the conclusion that the sequence **buy a BMW** is a constituent (a verb phrase), and hence that **to buy** is not a constituent of any kind. Trask's comment here on the **to**-infinitive is remarkably equivalent to Borjars and Burridge's note above on the verb string, namely that it is only a convenient way of referring to a sequence of an auxiliary or auxiliaries and the following lexical verb although this string actually has no status structurally. This saves us the burden of applying the constituency tests discussed above to reach similar conclusions. So the elements following auxiliaries, linking **be** and infinitival **to** do not make up syntactic constituents with any of these three entities.The last piece of evidence has to do with analogy and native speakers' intuition. In 'The Free Encyclopedia,٢٠٠٤: ٣', it is stated that probably the worst problem caused by warning people against splitting the infinitive is that sometimes people unconsciously overgeneralize this prohibition rule to other complex verb forms avoiding to place the adverb in its normal position between the auxiliary and the rest of the verb phrase and producing such constructions as "**The argument originally had been used…*" instead of " *The argument had originally been used…*" which is more natural for most speakers. This avoidance of placing the adverb between the auxiliary and the rest of the verb phrase motivated by analogy and overgeneralization of the split infinitive prohibition rule shows that native speakers intuitively feel that infinitival **to** and the auxiliary are virtually equivalent.Besides, three important notes are due here. First, we have mentioned in the introduction that Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ٤٨) note that not all members of a certain category exhibit all the typical characteristics of that category. In other words, members of most grammatical categories display a sort of gradience, so there are typical members, peripheral ones and still others that are midway cases. Of course, auxiliary verbs are not an exception. For infinitival **to** to qualify for auxiliary, it does not have to show all the typical characteristics of auxiliaries; displaying only some of them will suffice, as infinitival **to** may be a peripheral member of the auxiliary category. Second, as with auxiliary verbs, ellipsis of the complement following linking **be** is acceptable provided that linking **be** is there in the sentence, so we can say:

٥٢- Mary reported that John was in an appallingly bad temper, and he really was.

٥٣- She said they were all crazy, and they certainly were.

Third and most important, considering all the characteristics in common between linking **be** and auxiliary **be** or auxiliaries in general, those that we have already discussed and those that are to follow, linking **be** is surely more auxiliary-like than infinitival **to** that is rightly considered an auxiliary as we have explained above.

٤,٨. Ellipsis

There are various elliptical constructions common in sentences with linking and auxiliary **be** alike. These include:

٤,٨,١. Ellipsis of elements following *be*

Ellipsis of elements following **be**, whether linking or auxiliary, is possible in structures other than the one discussed above, but again provided that **be** is there in the retained portion. Two of these structures are tail questions and short answers as exemplified below:

٥٤- The young linguist is sleeping in the garden, isn't he? (auxiliary **be**)

٥٥- The young linguist is intelligent, isn't he? (linking **be**)

٥٦- a: Who is sleeping in the garden?

    b: The young linguist is. (auxiliary **be**)

٥٧- a: Who is intelligent?

    b: The young linguist is. (linking **be**)

٤,٨,٢. Ellipsis of *be* and its subject

Another type of ellipsis that is common in structures involving both linking and auxiliary *be* is the ellipsis of *be* itself along with its subject, resulting in what is called verbless clauses, e.g. with such words as *if, when , while, whether, although, etc.* as in:

٥٨- *If (it is) a success*, the experiment could lead the way to many others. (linking *be*)

٥٩- *If (it is) carefully done*, the experiment should be very successful.(auxiliary *be*)

٦٠- *When (you are) in Rome*, do as the Romans do.(linking *be*)

٦١- *When (it is) attacked*, a dog starts barking.(auxiliary *be*)

Of course, it is possible to omit the verb *be* in sentences because, as we noted above, it is lexically vacuous and does not substantially contribute to the semantic content of the sentence.

This second type of ellipsis is also common in relative clauses where it is called "*whiz deletion*" by transformational grammarians.(See Crystal, ٢٠٠٣: ٥٠٠) The result is called a *reduced relative clause* as in the following example sentences:

٦٢- The girl (who is) talking to the policeman is my classmate. (auxiliary *be*)

٦٣- The car (which is) in the corner is mine. (linking *be*)

٤,٨,٣. Ellipsis of *be* alone

Besides, there is the possibility of omitting the verb *be* alone, linking or auxiliary, for example, in sentences where such ellipsis results in what is called *small clauses* as in the following sentences from Haegeman and Gueron (١٩٩٩: ١١٤):

٦٤- *Workers angry about pay* is the last thing we need now.

٦٥- *Louise in hospital* is what we shall avoid.

Commenting on the sentences above, they (ibid) note that in small clauses there is a subject/predicate relation between a noun phrase and a phrasal projection. The only difference between them and other clauses is the absence of the verb (copula *be*). However, I would argue that although it is true that in the authors' examples a linking *be* is missing, this is not the case with all small clauses. The following sentences have small clauses whose omitted verb is auxiliary *be*:

٦٦- *Workers shouting angrily* is the last thing we need now.

٦٧- *Louise taken to hospital* is what we shall avoid.

Finally, there is ellipsis of *be* alone in real discourse. Borjars and Burridge (٢٠٠١: ٢٨٢) point out that auxiliaries are often left out in real discourse as they are semantically light. For instance, the authors notice the following examples of ellipsis of copula *be* and auxiliaries in personal ads register (finding a friend). Omitted elements are in square brackets:

٦٨- ٢٠ Y.O. likes dancing, talks too much, [is] always over dressed, seeks good talker, profession /self/employed. ١٨-٣٠. Must like my kids, student [is] okay.

٦٩- ٣٠ Y.O. who knows how to spell 'compashion', [has] heard of sensitivity and [was] once accused of listening, seeks a light bulb girl.

٤,٩. Ambiguity

Linking and auxiliary *be* are especially near each other in structures involving participles, present and past. They are so because participles can function as verbs or adjectives, hence, they are preceded by auxiliary or linking *be* respectively. There is even the possibility for ambiguity between verbal versus adjectival use of participles, and consequently between auxiliary and linking *be*. The following sentences are examples from Thomson and Martinet (١٩٨٦: ٢٦٧):

٧٠- The lock was covered with paint.

٧١- The room was filled with smoke.

Clearly, sentence ٧١ above is ambiguous as it has stative as well as dynamic readings. In the dynamic reading, an agent is implied, while there is no such implication in the stative reading. The stative reading involves what is called stative or adjectival passive, in other words, the past participle is in its adjectival capacity and *be* is a linking verb. The stative reading merely indicates the state of the entity in subject position, that is, *the lock*. Semantically, the stative reading is not a real passive construction as it has no active counterpart and the participle is not a verb, but an adjective. In the dynamic reading, on the other

hand, the participle functions as a verb and the sentence has the following active counterpart:

٧٢- Someone covered the lock with paint.

In ٧١ above, the problem of ambiguity arises because the adjective has no form distinct from the verb. By contrast, we do not have such a problem in sentence ٧٢, which has a dynamic reading where the agent is implied, and it has the active equivalent:

٧٣- Someone filled the room with smoke.

The stative equivalent of ٧٢ above is the following sentence with an adjective that has a form distinct from the verb:

٧٤- The room was full of smoke.

Findings of the Study

The main findings of the study can be summarized by the following points:

١- Linking *be* can be rightly considered an auxiliary viewing the similarities it shares with auxiliary *be* in particular and auxiliaries in general, and having into consideration the fact that the category of auxiliaries, like most grammatical categories, is scalar. So even if linking *be* is not a typical member of the auxiliary category, it is surely more auxiliary-like than some other elements that are empirically proved as such.

٢- Linking *be* resembles auxiliary *be* and auxiliaries in general in various aspects related to form (spoken and written), meaning or semantics and syntactic distribution and behavior.

٣- Like most auxiliaries, linking *be* has strong, weak and contracted forms. These forms are identical with the forms of auxiliary *be*.

٤- As far as meaning, linking *be* is lexically vacuous, especially like primary auxiliaries in this respect. However, saying that an element has no lexical meaning does not necessarily entail that it has no meaning at all. Since linking *be*, like auxiliaries, primarily performs a grammatical function, the only type of meaning associated with it is the grammatical meaning of the expression of time.

٥- As linking *be* and auxiliaries in general are lexically vacuous or at best light, they cannot function as the semantic heads that take arguments, assign semantic roles or place selection restrictions in their clauses. It is the element following auxiliaries or linking *be*, whatever it is, that usually functions as such, for it is the predicator that carries the heaviest lexical burden in the sentence.

٦- In constructions involving auxiliaries and linking *be*, the syntactic and semantic or logical structures are not isomorphic. The syntactic and semantic clausal heads are two distinct entities.

٧- As for syntactic distribution and behavior, linking *be* has a great deal in common both with auxiliary *be* and auxiliaries in general. It can function as operator in forming questions, negatives and emphatic constructions. It can participate in subject-verb inversion.

٨- Linking *be* and auxiliaries in general are the syntactic heads of their clauses with the following element functioning as their complement.

٩- That linking and auxiliary *be* are actually the same thing is shown in the fact that they make up for the absence of each other in sentences involving co-ordination of their complements.

١٠- Linking be and auxiliaries behave in a similar way with respect to the distribution of sentence medial adverbs, the negative particle, floating quantifiers and floating emphatic reflexives.

١١- Linking *be* and auxiliaries, particularly auxiliary *be*, are very much alike in their syntactic behavior with respect to ellipsis.

١٢- Linking and auxiliary *be* are especially near each other in constructions involving participles, where participles are either verbs or adjectives, and consequently *be* is either auxiliary or linking respectively. There is even the possibility of ambiguity in such constructions.

Bibliography

Borjars, K. and K. Burridge. ٢٠٠١. Introducing English Grammar. London: Arnold Pub.

Borsley, R. ١٩٩٩. Syntactic Theory: A Unified Approach. ٢nd ed. London: Arnold Pub.

Crystal, D. ٢٠٠٣. A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. ٥th ed. Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Curme, G. ١٩٤٧. English Grammar. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Edan, A. ٢٠٠٤. "Evaluating the Performance of Iraqi EFL College Students in Using Verbless Clauses". Unpublished MA. Thesis, University of Babylon.

Greenbaum, S. ٢٠٠٠. The Oxford Reference Grammar. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haegeman, L. and J. Gueron. ١٩٩٩. English Grammar: A
    Generative Perspective. Oxford: Blackwell Pub. Ltd.Huddleston, R. ١٩٨٨. English Grammar: An Outline. Cambridge:
    Cambridge University Press. Cited in Edan, ٢٠٠٤, ٢٦. Huddleston, R. and G. Pullum. ٢٠٠٥. A Student's Introduction to English Grammar. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Hughes, A. ٢٠٠١. The Online English Grammar. [Online]٢٧

Retrieved June ١٨ ٢٠١١, from the World Wide Web: http://www.english٤today.com/grammar/

Hurford, J., B. Heasley and M. Smith. ٢٠٠٧. Semantics: A
    Coursebook. ٢nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Langacker, R. ١٩٩١. Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Vol. ٢, Descriptive Application. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Miller, J. ٢٠٠٢. An Introduction to English Syntax. Edinburgh:
    Edinburgh Univ. Press.

Mohammed, W. ٢٠٠٥. "Iraqi EFL University Students' Recognition and Production of Split Infinitive". Unpublished MA. Thesis, University of Babylon.

Radford, A. ٢٠٠٤. Minimalist Syntax: Exploring the Structure of English. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Free Encyclopedia. ٢٠٠٤. Internet.www.wikipedia.htm. Cited in Mohammed, ٢٠٠٥, ٣٧.

Thomas, O. and E. Kintgen. ١٩٧٤. Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English: Theory and Practice. ٢nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Thomson, A. and A. Martinet. ١٩٨٦. A Practical English Grammar. ٤th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Trask, R. ١٩٩٣. A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in
    Linguistics. London: Routledge Inc.