Copular Clauses in Muher

Workie Musa Arega[1] and Baye Yimam[2]

Abstract

This paper describes the present tense copular clauses in Muher. Copular clauses are minor sentence types in which their predicates are not verbs, but some other categories such as AP, NP, or PP. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method. The Muher data have mainly been accessed through elicitation by consulting purposively selected Muher native speakers. In this case, both elicitation and recording of free speech and narratives have been employed as major data-gathering tools. For elicitation, 2 male and 2 female Muher native speakers were consulted. Besides, data have been extracted from the Muher corpus complied by the NORHED project. The linguistic data were presented based on the Leipzig glossing rules by using three-line glossing. Phonemic transcription is employed by using IPA consistently. The result revealed that the affirmative present tense copular clauses in Muher are constructed by the copula *-n* (or *-ja* for 3SGF). We have identified equative, predicational, specificational, identificational, locative, possessive and presentational copular clauses in Muher. It is also found that it is not easy to make a clear distinction between and among the different copular clauses in Muher. Since Muher is a verb-final language, the copula morpheme is restricted to a position following the predicate nominals. The phrases preceding the copula are complements of three types: locative, attributive and equative, i.e, noun phrase (NP), prepositional phrase (PP), or Adjectival phrase (AP). In Muher, demonstrative identifiers are part of a copular clause. Demonstratives can also serve as complements to the copula.

Keywords: copular clause, equative, predicational, specificational, locative, identification

1. Introduction

Muher is one of the Ethio-Semitic languages under the sub-branch of Gurage languages or varieties that are spoken in the Gurage zone (Hetzron 1977: 4). Generally speaking, the sub-grouping and classification of the Gurage varieties as they are distinct languages and related dialects is still under

[1]PhD Candidate of Linguistics at Addis Ababa University: workieme@yahoo.com
[2]Professor of Linguistics at Addis Ababa University: bayemekonnen@gmail.com

discussion (cf. Hudson 2013: 11–34). For instance, it is known in the literature that Muher belongs to the Gurage languages cluster within the Ethio-Semitic language family, but its exact classification is still controversial. While Hetzron (1972: 119) grouped Muher under a Northern Gurage language in the genealogical tree of the Ethio-Semitic language family, Leslau (1992) and Rose (1996) claimed that it is a western Gurage variety. Despite these disagreements on the position of Muher in the Ethio-Semitic language family, for the present study, Hetzron's (1972: 119) genealogical tree or classification based on shared morphological innovations has been employed, for it is the most widely accepted one so far.

The name Muher (*mʷəhɨr* as the native speakers called it) indicates the name of the people, the place where they live and the language they speak. The Muher people, as used in this article, live in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) in the northwestern part of the Gurage Zone.

anə bet and *ədi bet* are said to be the two varieties of Muher. These varieties are named on the basis of the first singular independent personal pronoun *anə*/*edi* 'I' and *bet*, where *bet* means 'house, family' (Meyer 2005: 41; Hetzron 1977: 5). The *anə bet* variety is spoken by more people than the *ədi bet* variety. The *ədi bet* variety and Kistane use the same first person singular personal pronoun *edi* 'I'.Of the 30 kebele administrative districts of MuherAklil, 18 of them, who live in the Upper part of River Kereb, speak the *anə bet* variety, while the *ədi bet* variety is spoken by the majority of the people who live in the lower parts of River Kereb.

The Muher people live in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS) in the northwestern part of the Gurage Zone. 86, 783 people are native to Muher language (CSA 2007: 76). The administrative town of the wereda, which is called Hawariyat, is located 52 km southeast of Welkite (Gurage zone administrative town) and 207 km from Addis Ababa. Muher-speaking children learn Amharic as a subject and Amharic is also being used as a medium of instruction in elementary school. The geographical area of Muher people is surrounded by Cushitic (e.g K'abeena) and other Gurage varieties speakers such as Dobbi, Mesqan, Ezha and Wolane. Due to this, many of the Muher speakers who live on the border of these areas are bilinguals in one of these languages and/or in Amharic.

According to the Ethiopian Language Research Center (2005: 28), Muher is identified as one of the least-studied languages in Ethio-Semitic language groups. Of course, there are some comparative studies (cf. Ullendorff 1955; Hetzron 1968, 1969, 1972, 1977; Leslau 1969; Rose 1997; Tsehay 2008; Meyer 2011) and grammatical descriptive works (Meyer 2005, 2007a, 2012, 2014, 2019; Rose 1996; Awlachew 2010; Biruk 2013) on Muher. However, in all these studies some areas are given little attention or left untouched. For example, there is no detailed description and analysis of copular clause types in Muher.

As can be seen from the above studies, both Ethiopian and foreign scholars have carried out several studies on Gurage languages including Muher. However, in a multilingual Ethiopia, most of the studies on Ethiopian languages are comparative and descriptive. Moreover, some languages are not well-studied; Muher is one of these under-described languages.

Although the above works are relevant to the study of Muher in one way or another, there is little attempt or no account has been made on the types of copular clauses in Muher. The present study is, therefore, an attempt to fill in these gaps by examining the copular clause types in Muher. This study does not have any purpose to make a comparative or typological analysis. The description of the copula clause of Muher has been done in line with its own peculiar features without adhering to any theoretical framework. This article, therefore, analyzes the different types of the present tense copular clauses in Muher in line with their information structure notions such as focus and topic markings. Muher has copular clauses that have syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features, but in this article, their pragmatic features have been discussed thoroughly.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Notion of the Copula

Copula elements or verbs are functional words. Copulas are a subset of verbs that possesses grammatical function and they are used to connect subject and predicate or the copula subject and the copular complement (Bussmann 1996: 257). Copula verbs have relational meaning as opposed to transitive and intransitive verbs that possess referential meaning (Dixon 2002: 1). Sometimes the terms copula and linking verbs can be used interchangeably (cf. Kroeger 2005: 173). One of the striking features of copula is that it lacks semantic

meaning (Pustet 2003: 5; Dik 1989:56; Brown and Miller 2013: 112; Hengeveled 1992:32). The copulas in Muher are placed at the end of the clause and hence do not juxtapose (connect) the subject and the complement of basic copular clause. Muher copulas include words, morphemes, and verbs. Muher employs the morpheme *-n* or *–ja* and it agrees in number, person and gender and takes the form of a suffix. The Muher existential copulas *nənə* and the past tense copula *banno* are inflected for number, gender and person and followed by main verbs markers (MVM). These copulas are used to construct different copular clauses. Copular clauses are minor sentence types in which their predicates are not verbs, but some other categories such as noun phrases (NPs), prepositional phrases (PP), or Adjectival phrases (AP) (Mikkelsen2011: 1805).

2.2. Copular Clauses: the Taxonomy Question

Different languages have different copular clause types. Many studies on the syntax and semantics of copular clauses take, as a starting point the taxonomy proposed by Higgins (1979: 204–293), who distinguishes four types of copular clauses based on an in-depth observation of the syntactic structures of English copular clauses and depend on whether the non-verbal categories combined by the copula are referential or not. Higgins identified equational, predicational, specificational and identificational clauses (Higgins 1979: 204-240; see also Mikkelsen 2011).More or less than these copula clause types may be found in other languages of the world in general and Ethiopian languages such as Amharic and Muher in particular. Recently, there are alternative taxonomies of copular clauses proposed by different scholars such as Mikkelsen (2005), Heycock and Kroch (1999) and den Dikken (2006) based on the data taken from other languages.

Higgins' (1979) four taxonomy copular clauses are not acceptable for some reasons. The first reason is that Higgins's (1979) copular classifications are not universally accepted (cf. Mikkelsen 2011). The second reason is that one or more of his classifications are overlapping as in the specificational and equatives clauses, being specificational clause a subtype of the equative clause (Heycock & Kroch 1999). Mikkelsen (2005: 118-130) disregards the identificational clause as an independent copular clause type. She subsumed it under the specificational clause if the clause has a pronominal subject as in *That/It is Joe Smith*, or under the equative clause when the subject is a phrasal demonstrative as in *That man is Joe Smith*. den Dikken (2006), on his behalf, merges the two, and calls it specificational. Heller (2005:198) also challenged

the classification of the copular clauses of Higgins by reducing the four taxonomies into two: the predicational clause (identificational + predicational) and the equative clause (specificational + equative). When we come to Muher's case, Higgins's (1979) copular clause classification may not work. This is because Muher and English typologically belong to different language families; Muher is an Afro-Asiatic Language (Ethio-Semitic Language), whereas English belongs to an Indo-European Language Phylum. Thus, in this article, we analyze the Muher copula clause based on its own characteristic features without taking into account any theoretical taxonomy.

2.3. Previous Studies on the Copula Clause Types: Ethiopian Languages

Regarding copula clause types, there are few studies conducted on Ethiopian languages in general and Ethio-Semitic languages including Muher in particular (cf. Meyer 2007b; Girma 2007; Mulusew 2014). Mulusew (2014), for example, has conducted a study on the syntax of non-verbal predications in Amharic and Geez. He dealt with the copula system, of the two languages. He mentioned the predicational, identity, and locative copula clauses when he was discussing the Amharic Present tense copula *näw*. He did not make an in-depth analysis of the types of copula clauses in each language. Similarly, Meyer (2007b: 175-192) analyzed the non-verbal predication in East Gurage Languages (Silt'e, Wolane and Zay), and Gunnan Gurage Languages such as Kistane, Dobbi, Muher, Mesqan, Chaha and Endegen. Since the aim of his study was on the structure of nominal clauses, he discussed the status and positions of the affirmative present tense -*n* in the above-mentioned languages.

While these two studies have importance to this article in understanding the structure of copula clauses in Ethio-Semitic languages, regarding the taxonomy of copular clauses, their study has little relevance. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to fill in this gap.

Girma (2012)has identified and described the copular clause types in Amharic. Girma (2012:106) identified three copular clauses with the present tense affirmative verbal copula ***n-*** in Amharic as shown in (1).

(1) a. *kasa   astəmari   nə-u [nəw]*
         kasa   teacher   be-3SGM
         'Kasa is a teacher'
     b. *kasa   ɨ-bet   nə-u*
          kasa   in-house   be-3SGM
          'Kasa is in the house /at home'

> c.   *jɨh*   *kasa*   *nə-u*
>   this   kasa   be-3SGM
>   'This is Kasa'

Girma calls clauses like (1a) predicational copular clause, (1b) locative copular clause, and (1c) presentational copular clause. However, clauses like (1c) could be identificational according to Higgins's (1979) classifications. In what follows, the types of copular clauses in Muher, the language of the present study, are identified and discussed in detail.

Having said all these and in light of the above arguments claimed by different scholars, the following sections of the article examine how copular clauses in Muherbehave.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method. The Muher data have mainly been accessed through elicitation by consulting Muher native speakers. In this case, both elicitation and free speech recording have been employed as major data-gathering tools. For the elicitation, 2 male and 2 female Muher native speakers who are from Hawariat[3] have been consulted. These informants are purposively selected because random selection may lead to wrong data in cases where participants may have limited information on the issues raised. Besides, some examples are extracted from Muher corpus compiled by the NORHED project. For the transcription of the Muher data, IPA symbols were consistently used. The linguistic data were glossed based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules by using three-line interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing. The first line is the phonemic transcription; the second is the linear morphological analysis; the third line is the English free translation. However, whenever there occur differences between the phonetic and phonemic forms (since there are many morphophonemic processes undergone in the phonemic level of the Muher data), four-line interlinear glossing has been followed. In this case, the phonetic level will be presented in the first tier to show the actual speech of the native speakers of Muher. The analysis is informed by the assumption of descriptive linguistics without considering any particular theoretical framework. This means the data from Muher has been analyzed qualitatively by describing or addressing it based on its own features.

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[3] The capital of Muher and Aklil Wereda (district)

4. Data Presentation and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

In the literature, there are various types of copula clauses. The classical classification of copular clauses stems from Higgins (1979) who proposed a four-way division of copular sentences (equative, predicative, specificational and identificational) based on the referential status of the non-verbal categories conjoined by the copula. Although many works on copula clauses use Higgins' (1979) taxonomy copula clauses as a starting point, this classification is not universally accepted by other scholars. They have taken data from other languages and proposed different copula clause taxonomies. For example, Mikkelsen (2005: 118-130) identified equative and specificational copula clauses and disregarded identificational as independent copula clause types. She categorized the so-called identificational copula clauses either into equative or specificational. To Haycock and Kroch(1999), the specificational type is treated under equatives. den Dikken (2006), merged the two copula clause types and label both as specificational. However, this does not mean that all the English copula clause types identified by Higgins (1979) and by other scholars who have taken data from different languages are also the copula types in Muher.

Having this in mind, this paper tried to analyze the copular clause types of Muher without taking into account any specific theoretical frameworks proposed by other scholars such as Higgins (1979); the analysis was made by focusing only on the inherent feature of Muher. This is because Ethio-Semitic languages in general and Gurage languages, in particular (being Muher one of these languages), may show many features (as opposed to English and other non-Ethio-Semitic languages)regarding copula constructions such as the use of suppletive copular morphemes in Muher as in *-ja* and main verb markers suffixed to the copular morpheme. Thus, in what follows, we have identified and analyzed the different copular clause types in Muher.

4.2. Types of Copular Clauses in Muher

In Muher, there is a copular clause that consists of a referential subject and a predicational predicate which specifies a certain attribute of the subject flanking or suffixing the copula at the end of the clause as in (1).

(1) a. *gə⁴rəd-we   məlkamma-ja*
      girl-DEF   beautiful-COP.3SGF
      'The girl is beautiful'

    b. *ambəzatʃ   lik'[liʔ]   əttəmʷ-əŋŋa-ja*
      ambezach   elder   sister-POSS.1SG-COP.3SGF
      'Ambezach is my elder sister'

The subject of (1a) and (1b) are *gərəd-we* 'The girl' and *ambəzatʃ* 'Ambezach', respectively which are referential NPS. The complement in (1a) is an adjective AP, (i.e *məlkamma* 'beautiful'), which specifies the property of the referential subject *gərəd-(we)* 'the girl'. The VP in the predicational copula clause in (1a) ascribes the property of being *məlkamma* 'beautiful' to the referent subject NP *gərəd-we* 'the girl'. The noun *gərəd* 'girl' is introduced into the discourse or conversation as a piece of new information and predication is made of its attribute supplied by the adjective *məlkamma* 'beautiful' and the copula element *-ja*. Similarly, the complement of (1b) is NP which indicates that Ambezach has the property of being *lik'e əttəmʷ-əŋŋa* 'my elder sister'.

The clauses in (1) are pragmatically unmarked predicational copula clauses with a presentational focus whose basic communicative function is not to predicate a property of an argument but to introduce a referent into a discourse. The predicational copula clauses such as (1b) encode non-contrastive focus since there is no alternative in the common ground, which according to von Heusinger (1999: 96), introduces a new referent that cannot be recovered from the discourse context.

In Muher copula clauses, the copula morphemes such as *-n/ja* and *nənə* are restricted to a position following the predicate nominals. The copula complement can be an AP, PP, DP or NP. As shown in the following predicational copula clauses, the copula complement is PP.

(2) a. *waga-we   bə-bet   dən   nənə-mʷ*
      cattle-DEF   LOC-house inside   EXIST.PRES-3PLM
      'The cattle are inside the house'

    b. *zi   miss   jəmʷəxir-akililʔen*
      zi   miss   jə-muher-akilil-k'e-n-ø
      PRX   man   GEN-Muher-Akilil-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
      'This man is from Muher-Aklil'

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⁴is ä as it is used in the system employed by *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*

The subject of (2a) is 'the cattle' which is referential and the PP *bebetdən* 'inside the house' is structurally related to the copula, and hence the PP is a complement to the copular clause. In (2b), the property of being from a specific place called Muher-Aklil is ascribed to a certain person. The basic word order of pragmatically unmarked predicational copula clauses in Muher is [NP1 + AP/PP/NP2 +COP], where NP1 is the subject nominal, while the rest part of the clause is a predicate (nominal). The copula clause in (2a) seems equivalent to existential sentences ascribing a location to the subject referent.

Copula constructions whose predicate is a genitive noun are used to express possession in Muher, as shown in (3).

(3) a. *nəzi   mət'af   jaləmuʔenəm^w*
        nəzi   mət'af   jə-aləmu-k'e^5-n-m^w
        these   book.PL   POSS-Alemu-thing-COP.PRES-3PLM
        'These books are Alemu's/These books belong to Alemu'

    b. *aləmu   nə-zi   mət'af   baləbet-n-ø*
        Alemu   ASSO.PL-this   book   owner-COP.PRES-3SGM
        'Alemu is the owner of these books'

The possessive copula clauses in (3a) and (3b) are constructed by the Muher present tense copula element *-n*, and the possessive marker morpheme *jə-* and the lexical item *baləbet* 'owner', respectively. In (3a), the possessed (i.e, *nəzi mət'af* 'these books') occurs as the subject of the non-verbal predication, and the possessor (i.e, Alemu) is the predicate which is also an NP. The copula *n-* agrees with the subject *nəzi mət'af* 'these books'. In (3b), the possessor NP comes before the possessed NP and the two are linked by a copula that projects a VP. This means the copula element shows a possessor-possession relationship. This entails that it is possible to have such constructions in Muher.

The phrases preceding the copula are complements of three types: locative, attributive and equative, i.e, PP, AP and NP. There are also clauses, in Muher, that show the location of a certain entity as in (4).

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[5]Generic *k'e*(with the post-vocalic allomorph *ʔe*) 'thing' grammaticalized into a very frequent non-specificity marker, which typically attaches as dummy to headless nominal modifiers and relative clauses, but may also modify the semantics of the attributive modifier (cf. Meyer 2019: 235).

(4) *tɨxə-we   bə-bet   dən   nənə-ə-u [nəno]*
child-DEF   LOC-house   inside   EXIST-3SGM-MVM
'The child is inside the house'

The clause in (4) indicates the location of the child, i.e. *bebetdən* 'inside the house' is PP with a locative function.

However, the equative copula clause equates the referent of the copula subject and the copula complete suffixing the copula -*n* and -*ja*(cf. Mikkelsen 2011: 1807). The examples in (5) equate the copula subject NP with the copula predicate NP.

(5) a. *zəwditu   adot-əɲɲa-ja*
Zewditu   mother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES.3SGF
'Zewditu is my mother'

   b. *xʷa   abəra-n-ø*
he   Abera-COP.PRES.3SGM
'He is Abera'

In (5a), the copula -*ja* agrees with the 3SGF subject. The copular clause in (5a) equates the subject constituent (i.e. *Zewditu*) to a complement, *adot* 'mother' which is further specified by the possessive clitic -*əɲɲa*. The referents of the two referential NPs are identical. The subject is a proper noun, *Zewditu* that is equated with the complement NP, *adot* 'mother'. In (5b), the referent of the copula subject NP1, which is *xʷa* 'he', and the copula complement NP2, which is Abera, is identical. The function of the copula element is to equate the referents of the two expressions.

The clause in (5b) is commonly used in situations where the addressee does not have an acquaintance with *Abera*. The speaker or the addressor is introducing *Abera* to an addressee by pointing his/her finger towards *Abera*, for the referent represented by the personal deictic expression *xʷa* 'he' is physically present in the discourse context. Thus, in equational clauses, it is possible to argue that the two refereeing expressions have the same referent. In both (5a) and (5b), the background information precedes the focus.

The equative copula clause in (5b) seems to me very close to the identificational copula clause for two main reasons. First, in both copula clause types, the copula subject and the copula complement stand for the same referent. The second reason is that the equative copula clause *xʷa abəran* 'He

is Abera' can be used to introduce or teach the name of an individual by the name called Abera. This kind of the function of copula clause is the typical characteristic feature of the identificational copula clause (Higgins 1979: 237; Mikkelsen 2011: 1807). However, the clear distinction between equative and identificational copula clauses is that in equative copula clauses, the order of the two referring expressions (NPs) can usually be reversed without any meaning change. Again, the subject of the identificational copula clause is a demonstrative pronoun or phrase, but the subject of the equative type can be an NP with demonstratives, NP without demonstratives, or independent personal pronouns such as *anə* 'I', *x^{w}a* 'he',*x^{j}a* 'she' and *ax^j* 'you'.

In the *anəbet* variety of Muher, there are also copular clauses that are constructed to specify who someone is or what something is. This type of copular clause does not describe something about the person or entity. The predicate of the specification clause type is usually a noun. Consider the following examples.

(6) a. *jə-zi   bora   baləbet   zəbərga-n-ø*
         GEN-this   ox   owner   Zeberga-COP.PRES-3SGM
         'The owner of this ox is Zeberga'

     b. *zəbərga   jə-zi   bora   baləbet-n-ø*
         Zeberga   GEN-this   ox   owner-COP.PRES-3SGM
         'Zeberga is the owner of this ox'

     c. *jə-hawarijat   astədadari   wolde-n-ø*
         GEN-Hawariat   administrator   Wolde-COP.PRES-3SGM
         'The administrator of Hawariat is Wolde'

All the clauses in (6) serve to give information about the predicate NPs. From a semantic point of view, a possessor has precedence over a possessed and it is higher in prominence, just as a theme/patient is lower in a hierarchy than an agent. Things exist in relations of dominance and precedence which grammars reflect in linearity. In light of this, I could consider (6a) and (6c) as derivatives of a structure of the type in (6b).

The clause in (6a) states that the owner of the ox which is specified by the proximal demonstrative *zi* 'this' is Zeberga. The clause is not constructed to say something about the owner more specifically Zeberga; it answers only the question of who is the owner of the Ox, whose answer is Zeberga. The complement NP in (6a) is a proper noun, Zeberga that is referential. The

clause in (6a) is topicalized. (6b) is the underlying form of (6a) in that (6b) is, semantically formulated as NP (Zeberga) be the possessor of this ox. The clauses in both (6a) and (6b) are genitive constructions of the possessor and possessed NPs in an equative relationship. In this case, the specification copula clause seems the same as the equative clause as stated by Heycock and Kroch (1999) who claimed that there is no independent specification copular clause, rather it is subsumed under the equative copula clause. I would argue that the subject of the specificational copula clause in Muheris non-referential, but the subject of the equative clause is referential NP (cf. Mekkelsen 2005: 64-86).

The copular clause in (6c) specifies who is administrating a particular district, Hawariat; it is not talking about the administrator or *Wolde*. In (6c) again, the predicate complement NP is a referential proper noun, but the other NP (i.e. *The administrator of Hawariat district*) is non-referential since it does not directly refer to a particular object or entity; it seems to function the same as attributive. Such kind of copular clauses as in (6) are recognized as specificational clauses or "sentences" (cf. Higgins 1979; Mikkelsen 2011).

The value Zeberga in (6a) above provides an answer to a question. Specificational clauses such as (6a) and (6c) are often used to answer explicit WH-questions. Thus, the clause *jɔzi bora baləbetzəbərgan* 'the owner of this ox is Zeberga' provides an answer to the question 'who is the owner of this ox?' Specificational clauses such as (6c) seem to be the same as equatives NP be NP. We think that this could be the reason why Heller (2005: 198), and Heycock and Kroch (1999) merged specificational clauses with equatives and categorized them as an equative copula. Unlike Heller (2005) and Heycock and Kroch (1999), den Dikken (2006) brought equative and specificational copula clauses together and named them specificational. However, Mikkelsen (2005: 118-130) and Higgins (1979: 219) claim that equative and specificational copula clauses are independent copular clause types. The data shows that both clauses should be separately treated.

Regardless of the above controversies on the status of the specificational copular clauses in (6), the clauses specify who the owner of the ox is (6a), and the administrator of Hawariat (6b). The clauses in (6) have the same topic, which is Zeberga. This shows that clauses with various word orders may talk about the same topic, but the way information is packaged could be different.

Higgins (1979) claims that the subject of specificational sentences is not referential. I would argue that this is not true of all specificational clauses in Muher. In Muher, there are specificational clauses that can be reversed and the subject NP becomes referential as in (7).

(7)   a.   *jə-zi   bora   baləbet-we   zəbərga-n-ø*
           GEN-PRX   ox   owner-DEF   Zeberga-COP.PRES-3SGM
            'The owner of this ox is Zeberga'

      b.   *zəbərga-n-ø   jə-zi   bora   baləbet-we*
           Zeberga-COP-3SGM   POSS-PRX   ox   owner-DEF
           'Zeberga is the owner of this ox'

The canonical word order of Muher is SOV, but this can be changed for different purposes. As can be seen in (7) above, the variable NP in (7a) is turned up as a subject NP in (7b) and become a predicate nominal. In (7a), the subject is non-referential, which is identity in nominal features such as person, number and gender. The semantics in (7b) is Zeberga owns Ox and the syntax shows this by making Zeberga a possessor subject, and in (7a) for reasons of topicalization, the possessed NP which is ox gets fronted to become a topic of the clause. In (7b), the subject NP, Zeberga, is referential.

In Muher, we have also identified a copular clause that involves a demonstrative pronoun or noun phrase modified by a demonstrative determiner in the subject position. In the literature, such kind of copula clause is termed an identificational copula clause (cf.Mikkelsen. 2011: 1812; Higgins 1979: 239-240). As stated by Mikkelsen (2011: 1812), the identificational copula clause is characterized by its use of a demonstrative pronoun or phrase as a subject of the copula clause. The following Muher data clearly shows this.

(8)   a.   *zi   jə- dada-we   tʃʼaf-n-ø*
           PRX   GEN-mountain-DEF   tip-COP.PRES-3SGM
           'This is the tip of the mountain'
      b.   *zi   en-n-ø*
           PRX   eye-COP.PRES-3SGM
           'This is an eye' [This part of the body is an eye]

      c.   *zi   abəra-n-ø*
           PRX   Abera-COP.PRES-3SGM
           'This is Abera [This man is Abera]'

As can be seen in (8a) through (8c), the subject is an NP (a demonstrative phrase), where the proximal demonstrative *zi* 'this' is used as a specifier in each of the copular clauses. In all the examples in (8), there is an empty head noun; when we want to have a head noun, we can spell it out as *zi miss* 'This man'. The Muher present affirmative copula *-n* is used to conjoin the demonstrative subject as an NP and specific referents such as *en* 'eye' and *Abera* as complements of the clauses. This always involves a pointing gesture by the speaker.

Higgins (1979: 237) stated that such kinds of identificational copular clauses are important in teaching the names of people, places and/or things. Thus, the clause in (8b), for example, is constructed to teach one of the sense organs *en* 'eye'; (8c) is used to introduce to somebody else or to make someone learn or know that the referent indicated by the deictic *zi* 'this' is *Abera*. The identificational clauses in (8a-c) contain presentational focus and the information is structured in a background-focus relationship since it is strictly a topic-comment clause in Muher. To Mikkelsen (2005: 118-130), the above identificational clauses whose subjects are demonstrative pronouns or phrases are equatives("demonstrative equatives").

Besides, Mikkelsen (2005: 49) argues that there is a subclass of the identificational clause that she calls 'truncated clefts' that have the type-distribution of specificational copula clauses. She even suggested that the identificational clause is not a class of copular clauses at all and favored the three-way classification. If she calls clauses with demonstrative subjects demonstrative equatives, she must have grouped equatives into two subclasses (presumably, demonstrative equatives and non-demonstrative [subject] equatives). This paper, however, disregards this reduced form of copula clause classification that eliminates identificational clauses from the list and treats equatives and identificational clauses with demonstrative subjects separately and independently. This is because identificational copular clauses can be used as responses to questions for more information about an individual as in Abera? Who's that? Besides, identificational copula clauses are productive in Muher.

The following identificational clause has topic-comment reading with a copular predicate.

(9) a. *bəsər-we   jə-bənna-n   zəbərga-n-ø*
        meat-DEF   REL-eat.PFV-O3SGM   Zeberga-COP.PRES-3SGM
        'The one who ate the meat is Zeberga'

     b *zəbərga   bəsər   bənna-ø-m*
        Zeberga   meat   eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
        'Zeberga ate (the) meat'

In clause (9a), the noun (NP) *Zeberga*, which identifies the missing argument in a presupposed open proposition, is a referring expression. Clause (9a) is an instance of a WH-cleft or pseudocleft) construction. The topic of (9a) is *Zeberga* since it is synonymous with the basic Muher copula structure in (9b). Therefore, in the topic-comment reading, (9a) is a simple identificational copular clause in which the subject *bəsərwe jəbənnan* 'the one who ate the meat' refers to an identifiable individual and in which *Zeberga* is a non-referring predicate nominal.

In Muher, there are certain subtypes of nominal predicates that involve possessive constructions. Possessive copula clauses, as Hatim (1997: 204) claimed, often involve kinship and other interpersonal relationships as in (10).

(10) *məsfin   g^wəbbe-əŋŋa-n-ø [g^wəbbeŋŋan]*
        Mesfin   brother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES-3SGM
        'Mesfin is my brother'

The copular clause in (10) can be understood as Mesfin having the property of being in a fraternal (brotherhood) relationship with me which is predicational. It can also be conceptualized as Mesfin is the one who is identified with the referent of the expression 'my brother' expressed in the previous discourse. The property of possessive copula clauses makes it very much similar to the equational copula clause. The clause in (10) is equational because the referent *g^wəbbeŋŋa* 'my brother' is identical to the person by the name 'Mesfin'; Mesfin and my brother have the same referent. The two NPs can be reversed, and the clause conveys the same meaning. Clause (10) can be understood as the person that the addressee knows as Mesfin is also my brother. The information structure in (10) follows a background-focus pattern.

Such copular clause constructions are ambiguous since it is very difficult to label them as equatives, identificational, specificational and so forth. Heller (2005: 198), however, labeled all the copula clause types as predicational and

equational. Some languages such as English make a formal distinction between the three readings. For example, in English, it is possible to use verbs like *consider* and *believe* with predicational copular clauses, but in other types of copular clauses, the copula is obligatory (cf. Rothstein 1995:32). Clauses such as (10) are very common in Muher, and these constructions are more of predicational and equational types.

4.3. The Relationship between Copula and Demonstratives in Muher

Although demonstratives are a universal category, their occurrence varies cross-linguistically. What is common in all demonstrative types is that they are specifiers or they can act as pronouns or determiners. The meaning of demonstratives comprises two kinds of features: (i) deictic features, which indicate the location of the referent relative to the deictic center, and (ii) qualitative features, which characterize the referent (Diessel 1999: 35). Demonstratives are also classified by the syntactic contexts in which they occur. Diessel (1999: 57) identifies the type and occurrence of demonstratives in the following four syntactic contexts: (1) *pronominal demonstratives* which are used as independent pronouns in the argument position of verbs and adpositions, (2) *adnominal demonstratives* which are used to modify the head noun in an NP, (3) *adverbial demonstratives* which serve as verb modifiers, and (4) *identificational demonstratives* which are used in copular and non-verbal clauses. Each of these belongs to a different grammatical category such as *demonstrative pronouns*, *demonstrative determines*, *demonstrative adverbs* and *demonstrative identifiers*, respectively (cf. Diessel 1999: 57-88).

As mentioned above, one of the syntactic functions is that demonstratives occur in copular and non-verbal clauses, which is the concern of this section of the study. The demonstratives that occur in copular or non-verbal clauses are referred to as identificational demonstratives which are also known as demonstrative identifiers in different grammatical categories (Diessel1999:58). Because demonstrative identifiers often occur in non-verbal clauses, they are sometimes considered to be functionally equivalent to a demonstrative plus copula (cf. Diessel 1999:58).

InMuher demonstrative introduces the copula predicate into the discourse for the first time by contrasting it with someone or something stated either covertly or overtly. In what follows, we describe demonstrative identifiers in identificational clauses with the present tenses copula -*n*. In Muher, demonstratives are part of a copular clause as in (11):

(11) a. *zi-xinnəm^w*   *jə-zəbərga*   *deng^ja-n-(ə)m^w [deng^janəm^w]*
          PRX-3PLM   GEN-zeberga   son.PL -COP.PRES-3PLM
          'These ones are Zeberga's sons'

      b. *ziwe*   *li?e*   *g^wəbbeŋŋan*
          zi-we   *lik'e*   *g^wəbbe-əŋŋa-n-ø*
          PRX-DEF   elder   brother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES-3SGM
          'This one is my elder brother'

In (11a), the demonstrative *zi* 'this' followed by the possessive clitic *xinnəm^w*forms an NP. The relation is co-occurrence where the DEM comes preceding the N. The phrase *zixinnəm^w* 'these ones' is further specified by possessive clitics *jə-* which is attached to the noun Zeberga. In (11a), the copula agrees with a 3PLM subject *xinnəm^w*, so the DEM is functioning as the clause subject, though the subject is an NP. However, if the referent is singular, only the proximal demonstrative *zi* is marked with possessive clitics of the third person, and the present tense copula *-n* or *-ja* is attached to the referent being addressed by the speaker as in (11b).

The speaker in (11a) above is showing 'Zeberga's sons' by distinguishing them from the other person's sons. The predicate of the identificational copula clause in (11a) is a noun phrase. The proximal plural demonstrative pronoun *zixinnəm^w* is the subject of the identificational copula clause. The demonstrative with the possessive clitic (i.e., *zixinnəm^w*) is the subject of the clause, and hence the topic; its referent becomes evident from the communicative context. In the canonical copula clause in (11a), the predicate coincides with the comment, and the background information precedes the focus.

By the same token, the proximal demonstrative '*zi*' in (11b) co-occurs with the 3rd person masculine possessive clitics and the present tense copula *-n* is attached to *lik'g^wəbbeŋŋa* 'my elder brother'. The referent of *ziwe* is the NP *lik'e g^wəbbeŋŋan* 'my elder brother'. It is the NP that is the subject and the demonstrative *zi* 'this' is the specifier of the copular clause in (11) and represents demonstrative identifiers (cf. Diessel1999: 79) since *zi* occurs in the copular clause.

Generally speaking, the NPs *jəzəbərga deng^jam^w* 'Zeberga's sons' and *lik'e g^wəbbeŋŋa* 'my elder brother' carry focus in clauses (11a) and (11b),

respectively. In the canonical identificational copula clause the old information (the topic) precedes the new information (the focus).

In Muher, demonstratives can also serve as complements to the copula as in (12).

(12) *jə-kəbbədə*   *bet*   *zi-tt-n-ø*
       GEN-Kebede   house   PRX-IFOC-COP.PRES-3SGM
       'Kebede's house is this [The house of Kebede is this]'

As can be seen in (12) the proximal demonstrative *zi*'this' is used as the complement of the copular clause, and *jəkəbbədə bet* 'Kebede's house' is the copula subject. The basic word order of the noun phrase in Muher is DEM > (ADJ) > NOUN. However, the construction in (12) is a non-basic identificational copula clause and it is cleft since the speaker wants to emphasize which house is Kebede's. The DEM *zi* is identified by the identificational focus marker *-tt-* when it functions as the complement of a copula. Therefore, in the non-canonical identificational copula clause, the demonstrative encodes identificational focus for the copula clause with pragmatically marked word order. In (12), the addressor is trying to identify Kebede's house from somebody else's house. The referent of the DEM pronoun can be found in the situational context, for the referent entity must be physically there, and a pointing gesture is accompanied to encode focus emphatically. However, the identificational focus marker disappears when the demonstrative is used as part of the subject NP, as the basic word order is as such. Consider, for instance, the following example:

(13) *zi*   *bet*   *jə-kəbbədə-k'e-n-ø [jəkəbbedəʔen]*
       PRX   house   GEN-Kebbede-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
      'This house is Kebede's. [This is Kebede's house]

In (13), the demonstrative is part of the subject NP as a specifier of the noun *bet* 'house' and has a deictic reference. The identificational focus marker *-tt* in (12) does not exist in (13) since the construction does not show any focus on a particular entity. The demonstrative *zi* in (12) which serves as a copula complement is different from the demonstrative *zi* in (13) in that it is used as a demonstrative identifier and part of the subject of the copular clause in (13).

The copular clause in (10-13) involves subject constituents and complements; one of the constituents is a demonstrative element and the other is a specific reference such as a son, brother and house. However, as Diessel (1999:79)

states it is very difficult to clearly distinguish demonstrative identifiers from copula that appears in a clause with no overt subject. It should be noted here that there are no such things as single-word sentences in syntax, but we may have utterances of single words. Thus, to express pragmatic meaning, Muher uses demonstrative presentative deictic by uttering the expressions with zero-copula such as (14).

(14) *zɨx*
      PRX.
      'Here it is/Here they are!'

In (13), the speaker presents the entity to the addressee by uttering a single word *zɨx* 'Here it is' simultaneously without using a pointing gesture. Thus, the demonstrative in (14) is a demonstrative identifier. If someone was given the responsibility to keep someone's property with him/her for some time and when he/she finally hands it to the owner, he/she presents the entity with the following expression.

(15) *zɨx*   *bet/bora-axə*
      This (PRX)   house/ox-POSS.2SGM
      'Here is your house/ox'

The examples in (14) and (15) are utterances in discourse; they are not in syntactic structures. The speaker in (15) uses a pointing gesture to indicate the entity being mentioned by the proximal deictic expression *zɨx* without the copula morpheme. The two clauses use a covert copula. Thus, we can say that when we have constructions like (14) and (15), we express pragmatic meaning.

5. Conclusion

In this article, we identified and analyzed the copula clauses in Muher. The analysis was made by describing the Muher data with its own peculiar features without adhering to any particular theory on the taxonomy of copular clauses. The Muher clauses types are treated in relation to their information structure notions, especially focus and topic marking. Although Muher has copula clauses that have syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features, this article mainly focused on the pragmatic features. Thus, we have identified seven types of copula clauses in Muher namely: Predicational, equative, specificational, identificational, presentative, locative and possessive. The predicate complement of Muher copula clauses cannot be a verb, but some

other categories such as Noun Phrase, Adjective phrase, or Prepositional Phrase.

In Muher, Demonstratives and copula can co-occur in identification and equative copula clauses. The copula agrees in person, gender and number with demonstrative subjects. Demonstratives can also function as a complement to the copula. In this case, the demonstrative pronoun encodes the identificational focus for the copula clause with pragmatically marked word order. The copula can also equate an NP subject whose demonstrative is used as a specifier and a specific referent in copula clauses. Although we have identified seven copula clause types, some of the copula clause types seem to be overlapping. Moreover, there is no consensus on the different taxonomies of copula clauses. The question of how many copula clauses are there and what are their defining properties should deserve an in-depth investigation.

List of abbreviations

1	First person	LOC	Locative
2	Second person	M	Masculine
3	Third person	MVM	Main Verb Marker
AP	Adjectival Phrase	NP	Noun Phrase
COP	Copula	PL	Plural
DEF	Definite	POSS	Possessive
DEM	Demonstrative	PP	Prepositional Phrase
EXIST	Existential	PRES	Present
F	Feminine	PRX	Proximal
GEN	Genitive	SG	Singular
IFOC	Identificational Focus	VP	Verb Phrase
IPA	International Phonetics Alphabet	ASSO	Associated
FOC	Focus		
NORHED	Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development		

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