
Copula Constructions in Tsara

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Abstract

This paper is mainly concerned with the description and analysis of copula construction in Tsara, a little studied language of the Omotic family, spoken in Southwest Ethiopia Regional State. The study employed Qualitative data analysis methodology, data collection included elicitation, in-depth interview, and group discussion. Secondary data was also used, while data analysis employed Basic Linguistic theory (BLT). In Tsara, copula functions with predicate adjectives and predicate nominals, without taking an object as compared to other verbal clauses. The study has two parts: defines the copula and showing the structure of copula in Tarsa. The first part defines copula as related to equative, attributive, locative, possessive and existential clauses. The second part focuses on the structure of copula. This includes non-tense/present tense, past, future, negative and interrogative copula clauses, which are represented by **-be** or zero copula, **-deenbe**, **-feri/fer-be**, and **ka-** or **kaya** respectively. It also presents an overview of the copula marker that express the attributive/equative, existential/possessive and interrogative copula constructions. All copula forms discussed so far in the language, are suffixed to either nouns or adjectives. The copula constructions in negative and interrogative clauses are dealt with exhaustively.

Keywords: [Copula, predication, non-tense/tense, negative, interrogative]

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1. Introduction

Tsara is an Omotic Language spoken in Kafa Zone. It is one of the least known and studied languages among the three languages spoken in the zone (i.e, Kafi Noono, Nayi and Tsara). The majority of the Chara (alternatively written as Ciara, C'ara, Ts'aara and Tsara) people live in Kafa Zone, within the Southwest Regional State. In this article, I use Tsara for both the people and the language. Currently, Tsara is neither used as medium of instruction nor in administration. Tsara people use the Kafi Noono language for both administration and medium of instruction. Thus, Tsara language is limited to daily use in the Tsarsa homeland. The absence of orthography and mother tongue education in Tsara language contributes to its gradual loss as a recognized language. In the course of fieldwork, the author of this article observed that the current use of the Amharic language for education and administrative purposes, as well as missionary activities has considerably reduced the role and function of the Tsara language.

The Tsara people live in Kafa Zone, Decha district. The 2007 Ethiopian census estimates the number of Tsara people to be 13,214 of which 13,087 are native speakers of the language. The Tsara communities in Decha and local informants confirmed that Tsara people are also found outside Decha district, in areas such as: Ch'etta, Salamago district, Konta Special District, Dawero Zone, Basketo, and Oromia region especially in a specific place called Kishi and in other neighboring areas.

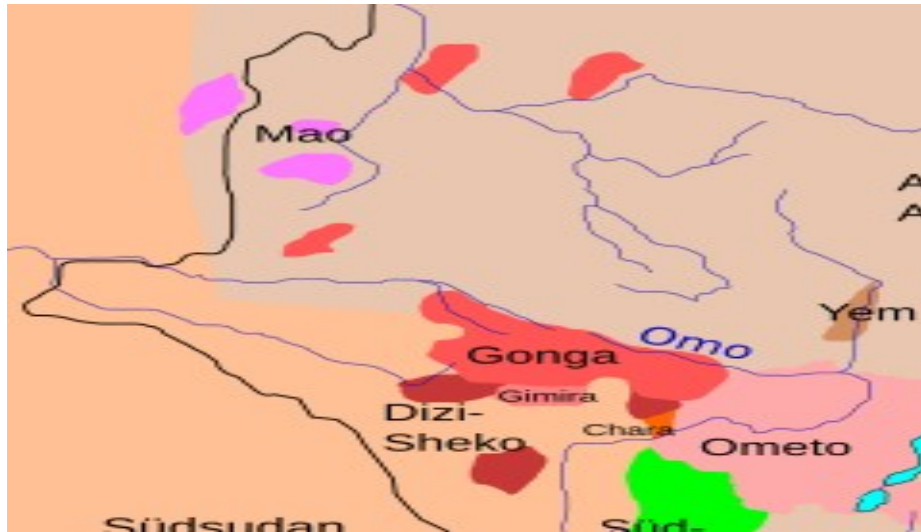


Fig -1 Tsara Language area map (Richard Hayward (ed.) (1990)

Dave Todd (1978:313) pointed out the two clans of Tsara (i.e. Cobints and Lassinits) migrated to the Dime area. According to Mulugeta (2012:2) the Dime area is home to 30 clans among whom are the Cobints and Lassinits . There is no evidence exactly where these clans came from, and whether it was Tsara. Furthermore, Addisalem and Abera (2013:20) stated that: “In case of Dime, it is clear that they were neighbours and even two clans of Dime have blood relationship with the Tsara.” Their research indicated that the Iron work of Dime practised for at least a century, was also known to the Tsara people. Some scholars refer to the Dime as ‘Dime of Tsara’ to indicate those Dimes who live with the Tsara. Siebert (2002:3) stated that the Dime and Tsara communities were neighbours.

This study aims to fill the knowledge gap in linguistic literature concerning the Tsara language. It does this by investigating the syntactic, semantic and grammatical structures of copula construction.

2. Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The study employed Qualitative data analysis methodology, the data was collected in the course of fieldwork among native speakers of the central

dialect Shallo, which is the most neutral and influential dialect spoken in the Tsara homeland. Elicitation and group discussion techniques were used for data collection. Secondary data was garnered by consulting archival material on the language. With regard to data analysis, Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT) was employed (Dixon 2010, Dryer, 2000, 2006).

3. The previous works

Tsara is one of the least studied Omotic languages. Some of the existing works include: Aklilu (1995, 2002), who has dealt with linguistic, socio-linguistic, and contrastive analysis of Tsara. Aklilu has produced comparative works on Tsara (Chara), Dime, Melo and Nay (Aklilu, 2002, Aklilu and Ralph Siebert, 1995). While Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016) produced a 37-page sketch grammar of Tsara. Recent studies by Mulugeta (2018, 2020, 2023) have dealt with gender markers, nominal inflection, and case markers in Tsara. So far, no work has been done on copula construction in Tsara, although there are a few works on copula constructions in related languages. Thus, I have given a brief overview of related Omotic languages (Maale, Hamar, Aari, Dime, Koorete and Baske) to facilitate a broader understanding of copula constructions in Omotic languages. For instance, in Maale the distinction of the present/tenseless and past copula constructions are not attested. Consider the following example from Maale: **?izi temaare-ke** ‘He is/was a student’ (Azeb 2001: 226). In this example, it is clearly shown that affirmative non-verbal two adjacent nominal express copula construction by suffixing a morpheme **-ke** to a nominal category.

According to Abebe (2002: 8) Basketo has no special copula. The language used zero copula and independent lexemes to represent negative or past copula constructions as shown below:

(1)

- a. **?izi tamare**
 3MS student
 ‘She is a student.’

- b. ገዢ tamare base
 3MS student not
 ‘She is not a student.’

In both of the above examples there is no copula verb but rather a verbless clause subject (VCS) and a verbless clause Complement (VCC).

Moreover, Biniyam (2008:115) discussed the copula constructions in Koorete, which appears in present habitual and past habitual tenses. According to his arguments the copula subject and copula complement occur in sequence devoid of any verbal element, and are inflected according to nominative and focus markers respectively, in affirmative form, as in the example below.

- (2)
 a **es-i kaiso-ko**
 3MS-NOM thief-AFOC:DEC
 ‘He is a THIEF.’

Biniyam (2008:115) further discusses copula constructions in the past and in negative forms, making use of the verb *maak’*- ‘be/become’. Consider the following example from his data (2008:115).

- b **es-i kaiso-ko maak’-i-tsha**
 3MS-NOM thief-AFOC: DEC be/become-EPN-Paii
 ‘He was a THIEF/He used to be a THIEF.’

According to his explanation, the above copula sentences appears to be in the past habitual. The past morpheme –**tsha** is added to the copula verb following the epenthetic vowel –**i**. The focus morphemes are added to the copula complements. The past habitual sentences in (2b), as shown in the gloss, are ambiguous between a ‘be’ and ‘become’ reading of the verb **maak’**-‘be/become’. Thus, according to Biniyam (2008) Koorete copula

construction has a simple two-way distinction: present and past in contrast to Tsara that expresses future copula clauses. Biniyam (2008:16) mentioned that in Koorete the two separate existential verbs such as the affirmative verb **yes-** ‘exist/live’ and the negative verb **ba-** ‘not exist/disappear’ may create some ambiguities in the interpretation.

Furthermore, Biniyam and Moges (2014) argued that Hamar typologically employs the ‘zero’ verb copula strategy. According to their Hamar data, it is interesting to note that the declarative, negative and interrogative markers are suffixed to the copular complement as shown below:

(3)

- a. **?inta hamar-ne**
 1S Hamar-DECL
 ‘I am Hamar.’

- b. **?inta hamar-u**
 1S Hamar-INT
 ‘Am I Hamar?’

- c. **?inta hamar-te**
 1S Hamar-NEG
 ‘I am not Hamar.’

Moges (2014:71-82) discussed how copular constructions, in many Omotic languages, are expressed by non-verbal sentences (nominal sentences), i.e. sentences without verbs. As we have discussed so far, each of the Omotic languages have their own copula construction strategy which is a bit different from Tsara.

In Dime, which is more similar to Tsara, there are zero, present, past and future copula construction (Mulugeta, 2015:9).

(4)

- a. **náʁ-is** **sulum-ub-éé/dan**
 water-DEF hot-M-COP
 ‘The water is hot’
- b. **náʁ-is** **sulum-ub**
 water-DEF hot-M
 ‘The water is hot’
- c. **nú** **níts** **déén-ká**
 3MS.SUBJ child EXS-PF
 ‘He was a child’
- d. **wúdur-af** **déét-tub**
 girl-PL EXS-FUT
 ‘There will be girls’

In the above examples in (4a) the present copula marker **-ee/dan** is used, while in example (4b) the copula marker is not used, which is a zero-copula construction. That means there is no copula verb but rather a verbless clause subject (VCS) and a verbless clause Complement (VCC) (Dixon, 2010). The last two examples (4c and 4d), the past tense and the future copula are represented, respectively. Moreover, in Dime the negative and interrogative copula construction is expressed as shown below:

- (5)
- a. **nú** **ké'ní yi-káy**
 3MS.SUBJ dog COP-NEG
 ‘It is not a dog.’
- b. **ké'ní** **yi-káy**
 dog COP-NEG
 ‘There is no dog’

- c. **yá** **?astemar-ée-y-áá**
 2S.SUBJ teacher-COP-y-Q
 ‘Are you a teacher?’

As can be seen in the above examples (5a and b) the negative copula is expressed by the suffix **-kay**, while the interrogative copula is expressed by the morpheme **-aa** as shown in examples above.

Furthermore, Aari, which is closely related to Dime, has copula constructions that are much similar to Tsara. Daniel (1993:39) pointed out that the language uses the morpheme **-ye** for present tense copula, as in example (6a) and (6b). For existential clauses the verb of existence **daye** is used as in example (6c).

- (6)
- a **kona gabre ey-ye**
 DEM gebre house-COP
 ‘This is Gebre’s house.’
- b **yints-ina rotimi-ye**
 boy-M-DEF tall-COP
 ‘The boy is tall.’
- c **kaʒi gaʔaifənda daye-e**
 cold big exist-PAS
 ‘There is a severe cold.’

Daniel (1993:39) discussed how the negative copula is marked by **dak-aye** as shown in the example (7a) below:

- (7) a. **laqmi dak-aye**
 good not-COP
 ‘It is not good.’

- b. **kona gabre ey-ye**
 this gebre house-COP
 ‘This is Gebre’s house.’
- c. **yints-ina rotimi-COP**
 boy-M-DEF tall-be
 ‘The boy is tall.’

As observed in Aari, the copula construction is very similar to Dime. For instance, the Ari declarative, existence, and negative copula form – **ye**, **daye**, **dakaye**, can be considered to corresponding respectively to the Dime **dan/-ee**, **deen-ka** and **yi-kay**, at least to some extent. As mentioned so far Dime, Ari and Tsara copula constructions have similar structures in most cases.

Linguistic literature shows us that copula construction has been the focus of much academic researcher. From the early period the work of Meillet (1906) and Benveniste (1950), the many language-specific papers in the series of volumes edited by Verhaar (1967-72), and other semantically-based studies such as Declerck (1988) and Hengeveld (1992), as well as Stassen’s (1997) typological study of intransitive predication, include the study of copula constructions. Payne (1997) discusses equative clauses make a close connection between one referent and other referents.

Moreover, there are recent works on the analysis of copula construction in different languages such as that by Dixon, (2010, 2012). Dixon (2010:101) for instance, explains the copula as follows: it contrasts two transitive and intransitive verbs, a copula verb has a relational meaning indicating a relation between copula subject and Copula complement. That kind of relation includes:

Relation

- ❖ Identity: [My son]CS is [an engineer] CC
- ❖ Attribution [Our bosses]CS are [very happy]CC

- ❖ Location [The dog]CS is [in the garden] CC

Dixon (2012:159) also discusses how in each specific language, a copula construction marks a range of relations rather than references. The predicate in transitive and intransitive clauses has references. He further argues that a copula will always cover aspects such as identity, attribution, possession and benefit. Copula functions vary with: predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives. Copulas in different languages show considerable structural diversity.

- Most languages have one main copula, some have more than one, and others have none.
- A verb to be identified as a copula, it must occur with two core arguments, Copula subject (CS) and Copula complement (CC) (Dixon, 2010:159)

To discuss copula construction in Tsaratsa, the study outlines at least six widely recognized non-verbal predication categories found cross-linguistically (with or without a copula), as acknowledged by various scholars.

(Dixon, 2010:159, 2012:159-160, Payne (1997:114): These are the following.

- Equation (identification): “she is my mother”
- Attribution: “she is nice”
- Location: “she is in the bathroom”
- Possession: “the book is hers”
- Benefaction: “the book is for her”
- Existence: “there is food (in the kitchen)”

There are a few works concerning copula constructions in other Ethiopian languages such as Girma and others (2004) on selected Ethiopian Languages (Geez, Tigre, Wellega Oromo, k’eebeena, Zay, and Silt’e), Biniyam and Moges (2014) Copula in Hamar, Mulusew (2014) non-

verbal Predicate in Amharic and Geez, Mulugeta (2008, 2015) Copula in Dime, Binyam (2017) Copula of Aerbore. Still detail or exhaustive research on copula constructions of Ethiopian languages is needed. Thus, further attention is required to examine the more typological feature of Copula in Ethiopian languages.

Even though, we consulted many grammatical, sociolinguistics and cultural description of Tsara, there are no other works done which focus on Tsara copula construction in the previous study, consequently description and discussion of copula construction in Tsara is an imperative.

4. Definitions of Copula constructions

Copula construction is called non-verbal or linking verb constructions. The general concept of copula verb is not an action verb, it can be defined as structures with a subject, a copula and a nonverbal predicate. The main functions of Copula are: predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives (Radford, 1997:240-245).

Dixon (2010:160) pointed out that for a verb to be identified as a copula, it must occur with two core arguments, Copula subject (CS) and Copula complement (CC) that means covering at least identity relations, and/or attribution relations. He further argues that some languages lack a copula verb, but show some of the semantic relations, simply by apposition. That means that the copula slot is left blank, and Tsara has 'verbless clauses'. Like copula clauses, these have two core arguments, a verbless clause subject (VCS) and a verbless clause Complement (VCC). According to Yidin, Australian languages, show similar features. Copulas in different languages show considerable structural diversity: Most languages have one main copula, some have more than one, while others have none. Tsara has zero, present, past, future copula and existential Copula Constructions. Thus, from the comparative perspective we noticed that there are languages that contain all the copula categories mentioned by Payne (1997). Such types of copula are found in Dime (Mulugeta, 2015:9) and as well as in

Tsara (see the previous section 3). We will discuss Tsara copulas and their template in the following section.

5. Copula Constructions in Tsara

The following is the Tsara copula template. In Tsara, Copula construction can occur in nouns, adjectives, pronouns and demonstratives. Copula construction can also be optional in the language as shown in the template below.

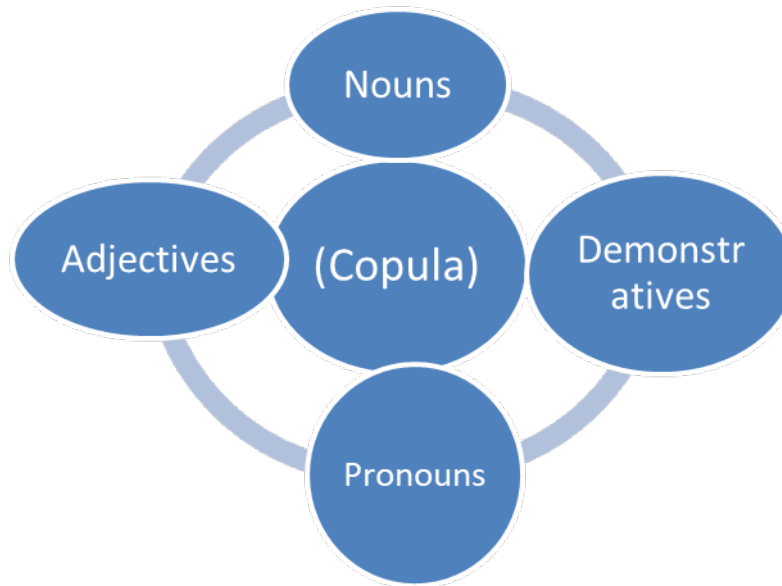


Fig-2 Tsara Copula template

In this section, we treated Copula as a clause in Tsara, based on two perspectives: Definitions and Structure of Copula Constructions.

5.1 Tsara copula constructions from the definition perspectives:

Different scholars discussed copula construction from structural and definitive perspectives. Among the scholars who could be mentioned concerning copula as relational meanings are: (Higgins, 1979, Mikkelsen, 2005, Dixon, 2010, 2012) and Copula Structure (Payne, 1997).

In this section we discuss copula construction in Tsara, from the perspective of relational meanings of Copula clauses (Dixon, 2010, 2012, Payne (1997):

- | | Equation | (Identification): |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| (8) | | |
| a. | admasi gofatsa-be
admasu farmer-COP
'Admasu is a farmer' | |
| b. | gofatsa-be admasi
farmer-COP admasu
'Admasu is a farmer' | |
| c. | keri taa ?iffi-be
Kero1S Elderbrother – COP
'Kero is my elder brother' | |

Equative clauses make a close connection between one referent and other referents. For instance, in the above construction (8a) **gofatsa-be** 'farmer' and (8c) **?iffi-be** 'elder brother' are in the predicative position and are used to identify the subject as belonging to a group.

Attribution

- (9)
- a. **?izi mina-be**
3MS strong-COP
'He is strong'
- b. **kana-azi karta-be**
dog-DEF black-COP
'The dog is black'

- c. nana gantfa- be
 girl ugly COP
 ‘The girl is ugly’

Attributive clauses qualify the subject in terms of property, colour, strength, etc., such as ‘strong’ and ‘black’ in the above examples (9 a-b):

Location

(10)

- a. **naazi keet-n deen-be**
 man house-DAT there-COP
 ‘A man was in the house’
- b. **?a keetn deen-be**
 child house there- COP
 ‘A child was in the house.’

Location relational meaning construction is used in order to state where some entity is located.

Possession:

(11)

- mart-é káná**
martha-POS dog
‘Marta’s dog’
- mart-é kan-endi**
martha-POS dog-PL
‘Marta’s dogs’

- a) **?akal-é boosa taareri be**
 akalu-POS goat mine-COP
 ‘Akalu’s goat is mine’

To express possession the morpheme-**e** is used in prenominal positions as in the examples above.

Existential

(12)

a. **kana deʔen**

dog EXS

‘There is a dog’

b. **kana deʔen-be**

dog EXS-PF

‘There was dog’

c. **kane-ndi deʔen-be**

dog-PL EXS -PF

‘There were dogs’

As can be seen in the above examples the existential form **deʔen** and the past form are followed by the copula **-be** as in example a, b and c), In this case the copula complement is inflected (Curnow, 2000:2).

5.2 Tsara Copula Constructions from the structural perspectives:

The structure of Copula constructions are discussed according to Payne’s (1997) analysis. Payne (1997: 114) argues that nominal clauses can be classified typologically into three major groups:

- (1) Simple juxtaposition of subject and predicate
(i.e. Zero copula)
- (2) A copula only in non-present tenses.
- (3) A copula (both in present and non-present tenses)

Dixon (2010:162) also mentions that despite many languages showing copula constructions, in some languages the copula verb can be omitted under specific circumstances. In the following section we deal with zero, present, past, future, negative, interrogative and existential copula construction in Tsara.

5.2.1 Zero/present Tense Copula constructions

In Tsara copula construction can be expressed either through copula or juxtaposition in the absence of copula. For instance, in examples (13a and b) there is no copula construction rather juxtaposition, while a copula occurred in example (13c). Thus, the copula in Tsara may or may not be overt.

(13)

- a. **keri taa ʔiffi**
 Kero 1S brother (Elder)
 ‘Kero is my elder brother’
- b. **admasi gofatsa**
 admasu farmer
 ‘Admasu is a farmer’
- c. **keri gofatsa-be**
 keri farmer-COP
 ‘Keri is a farmer’

In the above examples (13a and 13b) Kero and Admasu are the referent that equated to the nominal predicate **ʔiffi** ‘elder brother’ and **gofatsa** ‘farmer’.

In the same examples above, the subjects of the clause in Tsara word order are not restricted but rather flexible. The above copula constructions in example (13a-c) can be presented in different word order as shown below without change of meaning (14a-c).

(14)

- a. **taa ʔiffi keri**
 1S Elder brother Kero
 ‘Kero is my elder brother’

- b. **goḥatsa admasi**
farmer admasu
‘Admasu is a farmer’
- c **goḥatsa-be keri**
farmer-COP keri
‘Keri is a farmer’

Moreover, present tense copula constructions are marked with the copula - **be** suffixed to the predicative noun as it is presented in examples (15a-c) below.

- (15)
- a. **keri-taa ḥiffi-be**
Kero 1S Elderbrother-COP
‘Kero is my elder brother’
- b. **taa ḥiffi keri-be**
1S elder brother kero-COP
‘Kero is my elder brother’
- c. **admasi goḥatsa-be**
admasu farmer-COP
‘Admasu is a farmer’

To sum up: in present tense Tsara copula clauses can be constructed in two ways, either by a zero copula without employing any marker (as in (13a-b and 14a-b) or by using the copula marker as in (15a-c) above. The next section deals with past copula constructions in the Tsara language.

5.2.2 Past Tense Copula constructions

The past copula construction is expressed by **deen-be**, which comprises the existential verb **deen** and the present copula marker **-be**. This form applies to the past tense attributive/equative clauses. Compare the examples below:

(16).

- a. **kana-azi karta-be**
dog-DEF black-COP
‘The dog is black’
- b. **kana deen**
dog EXS
‘There is a dog’
- c. **kana-azi karta deen-be**
dog-DEF black EXS -COP
‘The dog was black’

As can be seen in the above examples (16a), the copula marker **-be** suffixes to the predicate adjective **karta** ‘black’, thus expressing the present tense copula construction, while in example (16b) the existential copula marker **deen** expresses the existential copula construction. Finally, the existential copula **deen** plus the present copula **-be** expresses the past copula construction, as it is demonstrated in example (16c) above. The following additional examples demonstrated past copula constructions.

(17).

- a. **?izi gofatsa deen-be**
3SM farmer EXS-PF
‘He was a farmer.’
- b. **?izi temara deen-be**
3SM student `EXS- PF
‘He was a student.’

c. **nee woፋa deen-be**

2S killer EXS-PF

‘You were a killer.’

According to my informant Kero, in Tsara the past tense copula also uses the form **deʔen-be** as an alternative form of the past copula form, **deen-be** as shown in the examples below:

(18). a. **?iza gozen deʔen-be**

She pregnant EXS-PF

‘She was pregnant’

b. **nee woፋa deen-be**

you killer EXS -Cop

‘You were a killer.’

c. **?izi temara doyi deʔen-be**

3SM.student EXS- COP

‘He was a student.’

The alternative form may be due to dialectal variation, however, this needs further data and investigation. The next section deals with the future copula construction.

5.2.3 Future tense in Copula Constructions

This section deals with the future copula construction. The future tense copula clause is expressed in two ways: by the morpheme **-fer** and the morpheme **-fer** plus the present copula marker **-be** then **-fer-be**. This expresses the future tense copula construction as in the following examples:

(19).

- a. **?iza doktorito-fer-be**
 3FS doctor-FUT-COP
 ‘She will be a doctor’
- b. **barendi do?o--fer-be**
 girl there-FUT-COP
 ‘There will be girls.’
- c. **?iza doctorito-feri-be**
 3FS doctor-FUT-COP
 ‘She will be a doctor’

As can be seen in the above examples (19a) the future tense copula expressed by the morpheme **-feri**, which is suffixed to the noun doctor, while it is also expressed by **-feri-be** as in examples (19b and 19c). If we want to express the future existence of something, it is expressed through the combination of existential copula and future tense copula marker as in the following examples in (20a and 20b) below:

(20)

- a. **taari mas’afa deen-doferi**
 1S book EXS-FUT
 ‘I will have a book
- b. **Taari mas’afa deen- doferi-be**
 1S book-EXS-FUT-COP
 ‘I will have a book.
- c. **barendi do?o-fer-be**
 girl there-FUT_COP
 ‘There will be girls.

As can be seen in the above examples (20a) to express the future existence of something the present copula **-be** is optional in some cases, for instance, in these examples it does not occur after the future marker, while it does occur in example (20b) following the future marker without changing the meaning of the clause. The function of morpheme **-do-** in the future construction is not clear. It may need further investigation. The following section deals with negation Copula construction in Tsara.

5.2.4 Negation in Copula Construction

In this section we mainly discuss negation construction in copula clause of Tsara. The negative copula construction is expressed by the morpheme **-ka/-kaya** following the noun and then it is followed by the present copula morpheme **-be** as shown in the examples below.

(21).

a. **?iza baara-ka-be**

3FS girl-NEG-COP

‘She is not a girl’

b. **?izi mina-kay**

3MS strong-NEG

‘He is not strong’

c. **Kura kaya-be**

donkey not COP

‘There is no donkey’

As presented in the above example (21) negation is expressed through the negation morphemes **-ka** and the present copula marker **-be**, while the negation marker in the existential clause is **-kaya**, which is followed by the present copula **-be** as shown in examples (22a-c) below:

(22)

- a. **nandi kaya-be**
Children NEG-Cop
'There are no children'

- b. **dorsa kaya-be**
Sheep NEG-Cop
'There is no sheep'

- c. **temar-endi kaya-be**
student-PL no-COP
'There is no student.'

As can be seen from the above examples (22a, b) the negative is expressed by the morpheme **-kaya**. Native speakers also use the alternative form **kaya-yi** for negative constructions as shown below:

(23).

- a. **nandi kaya-yi**
Children NEG-COP
'There are no children'

- b. **hari kura kaya-yi**
this donkey NEG-COP
'This is no donkey.'

- c. **taari kura kaya-yi**
1S donkey NEG-COP
'I have no donkey.'

In the above examples (23a-c) the language uses the morpheme **-yi** following negative marker **kaya** as an alternative form of the present copula marker **-be**. In a clause where the copula expresses the property that is associated with the subject the negative suffix **-kay** is suffixed to the predicate nominal, adjectives, or verb as shown (24b-c) below:

(24).

- a. **ʔizi mina-be**
 3MS strong-COP
 ‘He is strong’
- b. **ʔizi mina-kay**
 3MS strong-NEG
 ‘He is not strong’
- c. **taani ʔas’a ʔuΣ-kay**
 1S-NOM water drink-NEG
 ‘I am not drinking water’

As can be seen in the above example (24b) the negative marker **-kay** replaced the present tense copula marker which is presented in example (24a). Thus, the negative marker is suffixed to predicate adjective **mina** ‘strong’ in copula construction.

- (25)
- a. **ʔizi mini deʔen-be**
 3MS strong **EXS**-COP
 ‘He was strong’
- b. **ʔizi mini-do-k’ay**
 3MS strong-EXS-there-NEG
 ‘He was not strong’
- c. **nuuni ʔas’a ʔuf-ka-be**
 1PL-NOM water drink-NEG-PAS
 ‘We did not drink water’

As we have discussed so far, the past tense copula construction is formed with the combination of existential word **deen/deʔen** and the present copula marker **-be**. In example (25b) above to form the negative construction the

negative marker **-k'ay** is suffixed to the predicative adjective **mina** 'strong' following **-do**. Here we can observe that some kind of sound change process has occurred, that is **deʔen** to **do**. It seems that the morpheme **-do** may be the short form of the existential word **deʔen**. In this case we can assume that the front vowel (**e**) changes to (**o**) due to the back feature of velar sound **ʔ**. However, it needs further data and analysis. As it is demonstrated in the above example (c) the present copula becomes a past tense marker when it occurs following negative markers.

The negative marker is present even in verbal construction in the same manner of copula construction as it is shown in the examples (26a-c) below:

(26).

- a. **taani ʔas'a ʔu-kay**
 1S water drink- NEG
 'I am not drinking water'
- b. **nuuni ʔas'a ʔu-ka-be**
 1PL water drink-NEG-COP
 'We did not drink water'
- c. **ʔiza ʔas'a ʔuf-kay**
 3FS water drink-NEG
 'She doesn't drinking water'

As can be seen from the above examples, the negative marker can be either **kay** as in (26a and 26c) or **ka** as in (26b). In this case the negative marker can be **kay** or **ka-**.

5.2.5 Interrogative Copula Constructions

The interrogative marker in copula clause is the morpheme **-a**, which is suffixed to the existential form of the language as shown in the examples (27a-c) below:

(27).

- a. **Koomta neer deen-a**
wife 2S EXS- INT
'Do you have a wife?'
- b. **keeta neer deen-a**
house 2S EXS- INT
'Do you have a house?'
- c. **nazi keetn~ deen-a**
man house EXS-INT
'Is there a man in the house?'

In the past tense the interrogative copula construction may not have any morphological marker, except the higher tone at the end, as shown in the examples below:

(28)

- a. **naazi keetn deen-bé**
man house there-COP
'Was there a man in the house?'
- b. **?ize ?anena deen- bé**
she mother there-COP
'Did she have a mother?'
- c. **Koomta neer deen- bé**
wife you exist-COP
'Did you have a wife?'

In content questions clause there is not any copula verb marker. The content question words and the nominal categories are presented as a sequence of juxtapositions, as shown below:

(29).

- a. **ʔoone ʔizi**
 CONT he
 ‘Who is he?’
- b. **ʔizi ʔoone**
 he CONT
 ‘Who is he’

Copula	Present	Past	Future	negative	Interrogative
equative/ attributive	-bé/-yi	deen- be	ʃeri/ʃeri- be	ka- be/ka-yi	deen-a
existential/ possessive	deen/deʔen	kaya- be/ Kaya- yi			

Fig-3 Tsara Copula and Existential forms

As can be seen in the above examples in (29a and b) both the content question word or the nominal word order can be changed, and it can occur either in the predicate or subject positions. Finally, the copula and existential² construction is summarized in the table below:

6 Summary and conclusion

To sum up, copula constructions in Tsara is described from the definition and structural perspectives of copula in the language. First, the equative, attributive, locative and possessive copula construction is discussed. Attributive clauses qualify the subject in terms of property, colour, strength, while the location relational meaning construction is used in order to state

² Dixon (2012:160) pointed out that a number of languages have special existential marker /there is, this should be

where some entity is located. To express possession the morpheme-**e** is used in prenominal positions. Secondly, Zero copula, non-present/present, past and future, negative and interrogative copula constructions are employed. Among these the zero-copula construction has no copulative verb, but rather copula subject and copula complement. The equative and attributive copula clauses such as the non-present/present, past and future constructions of copula in Tsara have been dealt thoroughly, and is represented by the morphemes **-be/yi**, **deen-be**, **feri/feri-be**, respectively. All the copula morphemes are suffixed to either nouns or adjectives.

In the study, the copula construction in negative and interrogative clauses are also described thoroughly. That means, the negative copula construction is expressed by **-ka-be** or **-ka-yi**, while the interrogative copula clause is expressed by **deen-a**. The existential construction is expressed by **deen/de?en**, while the negative existential construction is expressed or marked by the form **kaya-be/kaya-yi** in the Tsara language. There are some related different forms of negative markers in languages such as **ka-be**, **kaya-be**, and **kay**. These are also suffixed to verbal clauses to express negative clauses. In the past tense, the interrogative copula construction is indicated periodically through a high tone on the copula's final vowel. All the discussions so far, indicate that the Tsara language seems to employ all the copula categories mentioned by Payne (1997: 114ff). That means zero copula, present, past, future copula and further negative and interrogative copula constructions are employed in the language.

In the current study, copula constructions in Tsara is described from the definition and structural perspectives. All the copula forms that we have been discussed so far are suffixed to either nouns or adjectives. In the study the copula construction in negative and interrogative clauses are also dealt thoroughly. Some comparative analysis of copula construction in related languages is needed.

N.B. Abbreviations used in this paper.

Copula Constructions in Tsara - Mulugeta

1 <u>PL</u>	first person plural
1S	first person singular
2 <u>Pl</u>	second person plural
2S	second person singular
3MS	third person masculine singular
3FS	third person feminine singular
3PL	third person plural
ACC	Accusative
COP	Copula
CONT	Content question
DAT	Dative
DEF	Definite
DEM	Demonstratives
EXS	Existential
INT	Interrogative
F	female
FUT	future
INST	instrumental
LOC	locative
M	male
PAS	Past
PL	plural
POS	Possessive

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