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The Uses and Orthography of the Verb “Say” in Andaandi (Nile Nubian)

El-Shafie El-Guzuuli*

1. Introduction

The Andaandi verb *e* has a wide range of uses including the function of a lexical verb, a copula, and a grammatical morpheme combined with other lexical items. In the meta-language English the lexical verb *e* can be rendered as “say, tell,” and the copula *e* as “be.” The different uses depending on its grammatical context and other conditions make its treatment, grammatically as well as orthographically, complicated to the level that many native speakers do not realize that *e* is a verb, especially as *e* is lacking some grammatical functions that are common for other verbs, for instance, the imperative and the future form.

Andaandi (*an-daa-n-di*) “[the language] of my/our home,” is the name applied to the language by its speakers. It is also known by two other terms, 1) the widely used term “Dongolawi,” and 2) the English term “Dongolese.” “Dongolawi” is an Arabic term based on the name of the town of Old Dongola (*tungul*) on the eastern bank of the Nile, which was the centre of Makuria, the famous Christian kingdom that flourished between the 6th and 14th century. “Dongolawi” is also the name for a native of Dongola. The English term “Dongolese” has the same meaning as “Dongolawi,” i.e. it is both the name for a native from Dongola and for the language. In this paper the term Andaandi will be used.¹

* I would like to thank Angelika Jakobi for her continued valuable advice, tips, guidance and discussions. Marcus Jaeger for his inputs, comments and continuous fruitful discussions. Helma Pasch for providing me with her unpublished study “Grammaticalization of the verb *ya* ‘say’ in Zande” which was helpful in improving my understanding of the verb *e* in Andaandi.

1 <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/dgl/>

As for its genetic affiliation, Andaandi is a Nubian language, spoken in the Nile Valley of northern Sudan, roughly between the 3rd cataract south of the town Kerma upstream to the big bend of the Nile near Ed-Dabba. The language most closely related to Andaandi is Kenzi (known by the speakers as *Mattokki*) which is spoken in the Nile Valley of southern Egypt.

Andaandi has an SOV constituent order in transitive clauses and SV in intransitive clauses, that is, the verb is in clause-final position. The words structure is agglutinative, and grammatical morphemes are suffixed to the root rather than prefixed.

Andaandi also has some dialectal variation in different areas and sometimes in the same area. However, these differences are minor and do not have any grammatical or semantical effects. The main feature of these dialectal variations is related to verb roots ending in a vowel after which, e.g. the preterite 1 marker *-ko* may be realized either with a voiced [g], a voiceless [k], or a glottal fricative [h], e.g. *taagon* – *taakon* – *taahon* “he/she has come.”

This paper is based on my competence as an Andaandi mother tongue speaker and on the late Charles H. Armbruster’s Andaandi (i.e. “Dongolese”) grammar and lexicon.² Being the first scholar to devise and elucidate a detailed description of Andaandi grammar, Armbruster has explored the many uses and meanings of the verb *e*. He claims that *e* is used to “(a) express a tendency or an intention, i.e. say, (b) exhibit a tendency or quality, i.e. be, (c) behave according to a tendency or an intention, i.e. act [...]”.³ He also claims that there are many composite verbs consisting of two parts, the inflected verb *e* representing the second part. As the first part is “not in independent use,” in these compounds *e* is used as a device to form new verbs on the basis of onomatopoeic items, e.g. *gurr-e* “rejoice,” lit. “say *gurr*.”⁴

Abdel-Hafiz, in his Kunuzi grammar,⁵ does not consider *e* as a verb. Massenbach, however, recognizes *e* as a verb meaning “say.”⁶ She also mentions the “Kopula,” (i.e. copula) function.⁷ She claims that the future and the participle cannot be formed with the verb *e*,⁸ however, in contrast to her findings, the participle, as we will see, can be formed with the verb *e*. In agreement with her findings, I can confirm that *e* is not used in the future tense (see ex. 25).

Interestingly, Andaandi shares the functional extension of the verb “say” to cover both its use as a copula and as a grammatical

2 ARMBRUSTER, *Dongolese Nubian: A Grammar and Dongolese Nubian: A Lexicon*.

3 ARMBRUSTER, *Dongolese Nubian: A Grammar*, §213.

4 Ibid., §287of.

5 ABDEL-HAFIZ, *A Reference Grammar of Kunuz Nubian*, 1988.

6 MASSENBACH, *Nubische Texte im Dialekt der Kunūzi und der Dongolawi*, p. 184.

7 MASSENBACH, “Eine grammatische Skizze des Dongolawi,” p. 285.

8 Ibid.

morpheme with many other languages in East Africa, as Cohen et al.⁹ have shown.

The focus of this paper is limited to the following contemporary uses of the verb *e*

- ▶ as a transitive utterance verb, rendered in English as “say, tell”;
- ▶ as a copular verb, rendered as “be”;
- ▶ as a grammatical morpheme used to express modal and aspectual notions in combination with three specific verbs, *dol* “want,” *maa* “get tired,” and *daa* “exist, be present.”

By providing a set of examples, for each of the above uses, the paper will show that in Andaandi *e* is used both as a lexical verb and as a copular verb. Both verbs would require a separate entry in the lexicon.

2. The use of *e* as a transitive verb of utterance

This section shows that *e* is inflected like a “normal” lexical verb. That is, *e* takes inflectional endings of the neuter in exx. 1 and 2, of the preterite 1 as in exx. 3 and 4, of the preterite 2 as in ex. 5 and the completive aspect marker *-os*, as seen in ex. 6.

Moreover, it shows that *e* is used as an utterance verb introducing direct speech, that is, the speech in the form said by the original speaker. This is illustrated in ex. 8 and also in previous exx. such as 2 and 4.

āĭ ā2MEΔKI NOΓ EPI.
ay ahmedki nog eri.

1

ay ahmed-ki nog e-r-i¹⁰
1SG Ahmed-ACC go say-NEUT¹¹-1SG
“I say to Ahmed: Go”

ā2MEΔ EKKI IMBEΛ BOOΔ TĀP EN.
ahmed ekki imbel bood taar¹² en.

2

9 COHEN et al., “The grammaticalization of ‘say’ and ‘do.’”

10 Abbreviations used in this paper: 1, 2, 3 - 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person; ACC - accusative; APPL1 - applicative cross-referencing 1st person; APPL2/3 - applicative cross-referencing 2nd and 3rd person; CAUS - causative; COND - conditional; EMPH - emphasis; FUT - future; GEN - genitive; INS - instrumental; LOC - locative; NEUT - neutral (tense/aspect marker -r); PF - perfective; PL - plural; PP - personal pronoun; PL.OBJ - plural object; PRED - predication marker; PT1 - preterite 1 (-ko-r); PT2 - preterite 2 (-s); PTC - participle; Q - question/interrogative; SG - singular.

11 In ABDEL-HAFIZ, *A Reference Grammar of Kunuz Nubian*, p. 130, the verbal suffix *-r* is termed “neutral tense,” since it “may refer to present, past or future.” This term is adopted here and abbreviated as NEUT.

12 According to Rilly, Jakobi, and Jaeger (p.c.), the verb *taar* “come” preserves the final consonant *r* in certain environments, for example, when it is followed by the verb *e*. In other environments this consonant is deleted, as seen in exx. 3 and 4.

ahmed er-ki imbel bood taar e-n
 Ahmed 2SG-ACC stand run come say-3SG¹³
 “Ahmed tells you: Get up come running! / Come quickly.”

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- 3 *āī āwāḏki tokkon tāmen egori.*
*ay awadki tokkon taamen egori.*¹⁴

ay awad-ki tokkon taa-men e-go-r-i
 1SG Awad-ACC NEG.IMP come-NEG.IMP.2SG say-PT1-NEUT-1SG
 “I have told Awad: Do not come”

- 4 *āwāḏ irgi tāwe egon.*
awad irgi taawe egon.

awad ir-gi taa-we e-go-n
 Awad 2PL-ACC come-IMP.2PL say-PT1-2SG
 “Awad have said to you: Come!”

- 5 *āī fāīzagi āwāgi āw ecināo er dāgomoun.*
ay faayzagi ashagi aaw esindo er daagomun.

ay faayza-gi asha-gi aaw e-s-i-n-do
 1SG Faiza-ACC dinner-ACC make say-PT2-1SG-GEN-LOC
er daa-go-mun
 2SG exist-PT1-NEG
 “When I told Faiza to prepare the dinner you were absent”

- 6 *āwāḏ coytte bi wīde tāri epos nogkon.*
awad sutte bi wide taari eros nogkon.

awad sutte bi wide taa-r-i er-os nog-ko-n
 Awad quickly FUT back come-NEUT-1SG say-CPL2 go-PT1-3SG
 “Awad said: I will come back quickly [and] he has gone”

It is worth mentioning that when the suffix *-os* follows the verb *e* the original root-final consonant *-r* reappears. (That is, the same rule, as in the case of *taar* “come,” is applied, see fn. 4).

As mentioned above the verb *e* introduces direct speech. This is illustrated in ex. 8 which answers the question in ex. 7.

¹³ According to ABDEL-HAFIZ, *A Reference Grammar of Kunuz Nubian*, p. 131, the 2SG and 3SG neutral tense marker *-r* is zero.

¹⁴ Dialectal variant: *ekori*.

ለወልል ማሽግ ነ?
awad mingi en?
7

awad min-gi e-n
 Awad what-ACC say-3SG
 “What does Awad say?”

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ለገ ህገ ማሽግ ነ.
ay bi nogiri en.
8

ay bi nog-ir-i e-n
 1SG FUT go-NEUT-1SG say-3SG
 “He says: I will go”

The verb *e* in a multi-verb construction illustrated in ex. 9.

ለወልል ለገ ህገ ማሞን ነ ማሽግ.
awadki ali bi nogmun e wee tir.
9

awad-ki ali bi nog-mun e wee tir
 Awad-ACC Ali FUT go-NEG say tell APPL3.IMP.2SG
 “Tell Awad, say: Ali will not go”

In ex. 9, *e* is part of a multi-verb construction with the semantically similar utterance verb *wee* “tell.” The verbs *e* and *wee* are followed by *tir* “give (to 3rd person)” which in such a construction is interpreted as a grammatical morpheme marking the applicative. Armbruster considers *e wee tir* as a compound verb *ewee tir*.¹⁵ However, if we turn the statement in ex. 9 into a question as in ex. 10, we realize that the interrogative predication marker *te* will be inserted between the verbs *e* and *wee* which shows that they represent separable entities rather than a compound.

ለወልል ለገ ህገ ማሞን ነ ማሽግ ማሽግ?
awadki Ali bi nogmun e te wee tiddi?
10

awad-ki ali bi nog-mun e te wee tir-r-i
 Awad-ACC Ali FUT go-NEG say PRED.Q tell APPL3-NEUT-1SG
 “Do I tell Awad, Ali will not go?”

The verb *e* also takes the negation suffix *-mun* as illustrated in ex. 11.

¹⁵ ARMBRUSTER, *Dongolese Nubian: A Grammar*, §3847.

- 11 ልኻ ልወልልክ ልሙን ልማእንገ ልሆኑ።
ay awadki emun esmaangi eri.

ay awad-ki e-mun esmaan-gi e-r-i
 1SG Awad-ACC say-NEG Osmaan-ACC say-NEUT-1SG

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“I don’t say Awad, I say Osman. / I don’t mean Awad, I mean Osman”

In contrast to Massenbach’s findings, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the verb *e* takes the past participle suffix *-el* as illustrated in ex. 12.

- 12 ከቴ ዐገደ ልኻ ልወልልክ ዐሃሆሞሙን ልሆኑ?
in te ogij ay awadki unyurmun erel?

in te ogij ay awad-ki unyur-mun er-el
 this PRED.Q man 1SG Awad-ACC know-NEG say-PTC.PF
 “Is this the man who said: I do not know Awad?”

The verb *e* also takes the conditional suffix *-gi-r* (var. *-ki-r*) as in ex. 13.

- 13 ልኻ ዐን ልወልልክ ነዐገ ልገዐገሆኑ ቢ ልሙንክወን.
ay on awadki nog egogiri bi moonkon.

ay on awad-ki nog e-go-gi-r-i
 1SG EMP Awad-ACC go say-PT1-COND-NEUT-1SG
bi moon-ko-n
 FUT refuse-PT1-2SG
 “If I had told Awad to go, he would have refused”

The verb *e* also takes the temporal clause marker *-gaal*, as illustrated in ex. 14.

- 14 ልኻ ቢ ነዐገሆኑ ልገዐገላል ልሙንክወን ልኻ ልሙንክወን.
ay bi nogiri erigaal ambaab aygi miirkon.

ay bi nog-ir-i er-i-gaal ambaab ay-gi
 1SG FUT go-NEUT-1SG say-1SG-when my.father 1SG-ACC
miir-ko-n
 prevent-PT1-3SG
 “When I said: I will go, my father prevented me”

We can conclude from this section that the transitive verb *e*, rendered as “say, tell,” can be inflected for all persons in the neuter tense and the past tense in the preterite 1 and preterite 2 forms. It can also take modality markers, such as the negation suffix *-mun*, the aspectual suffix *-os* and the conditional suffix *-gi-r*. It can be used in various contexts with its full lexical meaning and behaves mostly like other ordinary verbs, as we have seen in exx. 1–14.

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3. The use of *e* as a copular verb, rendered as “be”

According to Payne, a copula “is any morpheme (affix, particle, or verb) that joins, or ‘couples’ two nominal elements in a predicate nominal construction.”¹⁶ Before discussing the properties of the copular verb *e*, I provide first the following table 1 illustrating the use of the copular verb *e* with the nouns *kedegir* “assistant farmer,” being a noun ending in a consonant, and *ewratti* “water wheel driver” being a noun ending in a vowel.

pers. pron.		meaning		meaning
<i>ay</i>	<i>kedegir eri</i>	I’m an ass. farmer	<i>ewratti eri</i>	I’m a w.w. driver
<i>er</i>	<i>kedegir-un</i>	you’re an ass. farmer	<i>ewratti-n</i>	you’re a w.w. driver
<i>ter</i>	<i>kedegir-un</i>	he’s an ass. farmer	<i>ewratti-n</i>	he’s a w.w. driver
<i>ar</i>	<i>kedegir-i-n</i> ¹⁷	we’re ass. farmers	<i>ewratti-nci-n</i>	we’re w.w. drivers
<i>ir</i>	<i>kedegir-i-n</i>	you’re ass. farmers	<i>ewratti-nci-n</i>	you’re w.w. drivers
<i>tir</i>	<i>kedegir-i-n</i>	they’re ass. farmers	<i>ewratti-nci-n</i>	they’re w.w. drivers

Table 1. Two
paradigms of *e* as
copular verb

The copular verb *e* is glossed as “be” in all its forms.

αἰ ΚΕΔΕΓΙΡ ΕΡΙ.
ay kedegir eri.

15

ay kedegir e-r-i
1SG ass.farmer be-NEUT-1SG
“I’m an assistant farmer”

¹⁶ PAYNE, *Describing Morphosyntax*, p. 114.

¹⁷ Less common: *ar kedegiri eru*.

- 16 ΕΡ ΚΕΔΕΓΙΡΟΥΝ.
er kedegirun.

er kedegir-un
 2SG ass.farmer-be.2SG
 “You are an assistant farmer”

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The above table and examples clearly show that *e* functions as a copula connecting a subject pronoun with a predicate nominal. In Arabic (the national language of the Sudan), for example, a zero copula is used in such constructions, e.g. *anā sowwāg* “I am a driver.”

The copular verb *e* can be inflected for tense/person and number. In table 1 *e* is inflected for the neutral tense. However, only the 1st person singular form *eri* and with some speakers the 1st person plural form *eru* have the characteristics of a lexical verb, that is, *e* is inflected for tense/aspect, person and number and it is independent, rather than a suffix. The 2nd and 3rd person singular, by contrast, are marked by the invariable suffix *-un* when following a consonant or *-n* when following a vowel. All plural forms are marked by the suffix *-n*.¹⁸ The irregularity of the inflection forms of the copular verbs is not surprising.¹⁹ According to Payne “[c]opular verbs tend to be very irregular. That is, they often exhibit unusual conjugational patterns as compared to the more ‘normal’ verbs in the language.”

The irregularity we see changes to the normal paradigm when the predicate nominal clause is subordinated. This is illustrated in ex. 17 by *e-n*, in exx. 18 and 19 by *e-r-u* and in ex. 20 by *e-r-an*, which are identical to the corresponding forms *e-n*, *e-r-u*, and *e-r-an* of the verb *e* “say, tell.”

- 17 ΕΡ ΚΕΔΕΓΙΡ ΕΝΝ ΙΛΛΑΡ ΕΚΚΙ ΤΕΡΙΓΙ ΤΙΡΚΟΡΑΝ.
er kedegir enn illar ekki teerigi tirkoran.

er kedegir e-n-n illar
 2SG ass.farmer be-2SG²⁰-GEN because
er-ki teeri-gi tir-ko-r-an
 2SG-ACC seed-ACC give2-PT1-NEUT-1PL
 “They gave you the seeds because you are an assistant farmer”

- 18 ΔΡ ΚΕΔΕΓΡΙ ΕΡΟΥΝ ΙΛΛΑΡ ΑΡΓΙ ΤΕΡΙΓΙ ΔΕΝΚΟΡΑΝ.
ar kedegri²¹ erun illar argi teerigi deenkoran.

18 All plural morphemes in Andaandi end in a vowel. The plural suffix *-i* is selected after consonants, the suffixes *-nci*, *-ri*, *-gu/ku* are selected after vowels.

19 PAYNE, *Describing Morphosyntax*, p. 117.

20 The 3SG form of the copular verb is same as the 2SG.

21 When the root is followed by a vowel-initial suffix the previous vowel is often dropped which results in a change of the syllable structure, e.g. *kedegir-i* is realized as *kedegri*.

ar kedegir-i e-r-u-n illar
 1PL ass.farmer-PL be-NEUT-1PL-GEN because
 ar-gi teeri-gi deen-ko-r-an
 1PL-ACC seed-ACC give1-PT1-NEUT-3PL
 “They gave us the seed because we are assistant farmers”

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IP ΕΩΡΑΤΤΙΝΙ ΕΡΟΥΝ ΙΛΛΑΡ ΙΡΓΙ ΤΕΡΙΓΙ ΤΙΡΙΡΚΟΡΑΝ. 19
 ir ewrattinci erun illar irgi teerigi tirirkoran.

ir ewratti-nci e-r-u-n illar
 2PL w.w.driver-PL be-NEUT-2PL-GEN because
 ir-gi teeri-gi tir-ir-ko-r-an
 2PL-ACC seed-ACC give2-PL.OBJ-PT1-NEUT-2PL
 “They gave you the seed because you are water wheel drivers”

ΤΙΡ ΕΩΡΑΤΤΙΝΙ ΕΡΑΝΝ ΙΛΛΑΡ ΤΙΡΙΓΙ ΤΕΡΙΓΙ ΤΙΡΙΡΚΟΡΑΝ. 20
 tir ewrattinci erann illar tirgi teerigi tirirkoran.

tir ewratti-nci e-r-an-n illar
 3PL w.w.driver-PL be-NEUT-3PL-GEN because
 tir-gi teeri-gi tir-ir-ko-r-an
 3PL-ACC seed-ACC give2-PL.OBJ-PT1-NEUT-3PL
 “They gave them the seed because they are water wheel drivers”

In the past tense (both preterite 1 and preterite 2), too, the inflected forms of the copular verb *e* are identical to the corresponding forms of the verb *e* “say, tell” as in exx. 21–4.

ΑΪ ΚΕΔΕΓΙΡ ΕΚΟΡΙ. 21
 ay kedegir ekori.

ay kedegir e-ko-r-i
 1SG ass.farmer be-PT1-NEUT-1SG
 “I was an assistant farmer”

It goes by the same token for the other persons:

ΑΧΜΕΔ ΚΕΔΕΓΙΡ ΕΚΟΝ. 22
 ahmed kedegir ekon.

ahmed kedegir e-ko-n
 Ahmed ass.farmer be-PT1-3SG
 “Ahmed was an assistant farmer”

- 23 ΑΖΜΕΔΚΟΥ ΚΕΔΕΓΡΙ ΕΚΟΡΑΝ.
 ahmedku²² kedegri ekoran.

ahmed-ku kedegir-i e-ko-r-an
 Ahmed-PL ass.farmer-PL be-PT1-NEUT-3PL
 “Ahmed and companions were assistant farmers”

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In a dependent clause *e* appears in the preterite 2 form, just like a “normal” verb, see ex. 24.

- 24 ΑΖΜΕΔ ΚΕΔΕΓΡΙ ΕΣΙΝΔΟ ΑΡΤΙΡ ΑΓΚΟΝ.
 ahmed kedegir esindo aartir aagkon.

ahmed kedegir e-s-in-do aarti-r aag-ko-n
 Ahmed ass.farmer be-PT2-3SG-LOC island-LOC stay-PT1-3SG
 “When Ahmed was an assistant farmer he was staying on the island”

However, as Massenbach already points out, the copular verb *e* is not used to express the future tense; rather, another verb is used. This is the verb *an* “become, say” which is illustrated in ex. 25.

- 25 ΑΪ ΒΙ ΤΟΡΒΑΛ ΑΝΔΙ.
 ay bi torbal andi.

ay bi torbal an-d-i
 1SG FUT farmer become-NEUT-1SG
 “I will become a farmer / I’m going to be a farmer”

Predicate adjectives (in attributive clauses) behave similar like predicate nominals. In fact, as Payne writes, “[p]redicate adjectives are seldom distinct structurally from predicate nominals.”²³

The following table 2 shows that the copula behaves in attributive clauses in the same way as in the predicate nominal clauses. The copula is represented by the suffix *-n* in all forms, except for the 1st person singular, *eri*, where it is identical with the corresponding form of the verb *e* “say, tell.” The copula *-n* after vowels, is realized as *-un* after consonants, e.g. *jagad-un*.

22 When the plural marker *-gu* (after a sonorant, *-ku* after other consonants) is attached to person names it expresses an associative plural, e.g. *Ahmed-ku* “Ahmed and his companions.”

23 PAYNE, *Describing Morphosyntax*, p. 120.

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pers. pron.		meaning		meaning
<i>ay</i>	<i>jagad eri</i>	I’m weak	<i>kombo eri</i>	I’m strong
<i>er</i>	<i>jagad-un</i>	you’re weak	<i>kombo-n</i>	you’re strong
<i>ter</i>	<i>jagad-un</i>	he’s weak	<i>kombo-n</i>	he’s strong
<i>ar</i> ²⁴	<i>jagad-i-n</i> ²⁷	we’re weak	<i>kombo-ri-n</i>	we’re strong
<i>ir</i>	<i>jagad-i-n</i>	you’re weak	<i>kombo-ri-n</i>	you’re strong
<i>tir</i>	<i>jagad-i-n</i>	they’re weak	<i>kombo-ri-n</i>	they’re strong

Table 2. Two paradigms of predicate adjectives

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In subordinate attributive clauses, as in the nominal clauses, the regular forms of the verb *e* are used.

α2ΜΕΔ δαΓαΔ ΕΝΝ ΙΛΛΑΡ ΩΑΚΚΕΚΟΡΑΝ.
ahmed jagad enn illar wakkekoran.

26

ahmed jagad e-n-n illar wakke-ko-r-an
Ahmed weak be-NEUT.3SG-GEN because exclude-PT1-NEUT-3PL
“They have excluded Ahmed because he is weak”

Also, the copular verb *e* is used for predicate locatives, i.e. locational clauses.

αἰ ΙΝΔΟ ΕΡΙ.
ay indo eri.

27

ay indo e-r-i
1SG here be-NEUT-1SG
“I’m here”

αωαΔ ΙΝΔΟΝ.
awad indon.

28

awad indo-n
Awad here-be.3SG
“Awad is here”

ΤΟΡΒΑΛΙ ΜΑΝΔΟΝ6ΙΝ.
torbali mandoncin.

29

torbal-i mando-nci-n
farmer-PL there-PL-be.3PL
“The farmers are there”

24 The 1PL form *eru* is less common: *ar jagadi eru* “we are weak,” *ar kombori eru* “we are strong.”

30 ἈḠΜΕΔ ΧἈΡΤῸΥΜΟΥΝ.
 ahmed khartuumun.

ahmed khartuum-un
 Ahmed Khartoum-be.3SG
 ‘Ahmed is in Khartoum’

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We conclude from this section that the intransitive verb *e*, which is rendered in English by “be” is a copular verb that is used with predicate nominals, predicate adjectives, and predicate locatives. Only in the neuter tense the copula of the 1st person singular (and with some speakers also the 1st person plural) is inflected for tense, person, and number, the other forms of the copula are realized by the invariable suffixes, *-n* after vowels, *-un* after consonants.

4. The verb *e* in combination with *dol*, *maa*, or *daa*

When a lexical verb is followed by *e* plus *dol* “want,” *e* plus *maa* “get tired,” or *e* plus *daa* “exist, be present,” these constructions express distinct modal and aspectual notions as I will show below. In these constructions, *e*, *dol*, *maa*, and *daa* lose some of their functional and semantic properties as lexical verbs. But they also acquire new functions and meanings as complex grammatical constructions. This process is known as grammaticalization.²⁵ In all these constructions *e* will be glossed as “say.”

In contrast to Armbruster,²⁶ who considers *-e dol*, *-e maa*, and *e daa* as compound verbs, I rather conceive them as separate verbs comparable to multi-verb constructions, because these morphemes can be separated by the interrogative predication marker *te*, as illustrated in exx. 33, 39, 41, 46, and 47. So *-e dol*, *-e maa*, and *e daa* are discontinuous morphemes.

4.1. The complex morpheme *-e dol*

When the verb *e* is suffixed to an uninflected verb and followed by the inflected verb *dol* “want” this complex construction expresses an immediate or imminent future, which can be rendered by “to be about to do something.” This is illustrated in the exx. 31 to 37.

²⁵ See JAKOBI & EL-GUZUULI, “Semantic Change and Heterosemy of Dongolawi ed.”

²⁶ ARMBRUSTER, *Dongolese Nubian: A Grammar*, §4021.

- αἶ νογε δολλι. 31
ay noge dolli.

ay nog-e dol-l-i
 1SG go-say want-NEUT-1SG
 “I’m about to be going/I’m about to go/I’m going” 103
- αἶ ιμβελ νογε δολλι. 32
ay imbel noge dolli.

ay imbel nog-e dol-l-i
 1SG stand go-say want-NEUT-1SG
 “I’m about to go.” Lit: “I’m about to stand and be going”
- ἐρ νογε τε δολιν? 33
er noge te dolin?

er nog-e te dol-in
 2SG go-say PRED.Q want-2SG
 “Are you about to go?”
- αἶ νογε δολκορι. 34
ay noge dolkori.

ay nog-e dol-ko-r-i
 1SG go-say want-PT1-NEUT-1SG
 “I have been about to go/I was about to go”
- ἀρου μαν κατρεγι βῶρκιρε δολκον. 35
aru man katregi boorkire dolkon.

aru man katre-gi boor-kir-e dol-ko-n
 rain DEM wall-ACC fall-CAUS-say want-PT1-3SG
 “Rain was about to cause that wall fall down”
- ιν τε κατρε ἀρου βῶρκιρε δολσιν? 36
in te katre aru boorkire dolsin?

in te katre aru boor-kir-e dol-s-in
 this PRED.Q wall rain fall-CAUS-say want-PT2-3SG
 “Is this the wall that the rain was about to cause fall down?”

- 37 IN TE KATPE BŌPE ΔΟΛΕΛ?
in te katre boore dolel?

in te katre boor-e dol-el
 this PRED.Q wall fall.down-say want-PTC.PF
 “Is this the wall that was about to fall down?”

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4.2. The complex morpheme -e maa

When the verb *e* is suffixed to an uninflected verb and followed by the inflected verb *maa*, the complex morpheme *-e maa* expresses the failure to do something or to be unable to do something, as illustrated in exx. 38–43.

- 38 ΔĪ NOΓΕ ΜᾶΡΙ.
ay noge maari.

ay nog-e maa-r-i
 1SG go-say get.tired-NEUT-1SG
 “I become unable to go / to walk / I fail to walk”

- 39 ΕΡ NOΓΕ ΤΕ ΜᾶΝ?
er noge te maan.

er nog-e te maa-n
 1SG go-say PRED.Q get.tired-2SG
 “Are you unable to go / to walk?”

- 40 ΟΔΔΙΝΓΕΔ ΚΑΛΕ ΜᾶΝ.
oddinged kale maan.

oddi-n-ged kal-e maa-n
 sick-3SG-because eat-say get.tired-3SG
 “Because he is sick, he is unable to eat”

- 41 ΚΑΛΕ ΤΕ ΜᾶΓΟΝ?
kale te maagon?

kal -e te maa-go-n
 eat-say PRED.Q get.tired-PT1-3SG
 “Was he unable to eat?”

- 42 ΔΩΔΔ ΔĪΓΙ NOΓΟC Ε ΩĒΡΕ ΜᾶΓΟΝ.
Awad aygi nogos e weere maagon.

Awad ay-gi nog-os e wee-r-e maa-go-n
 Awad 1SG-ACC go-ASP2 say say-NEUT-say get.tired-PT1-3SG
 “Awad was unable to say to me: Please go”

αΡ ΒΑΨΚΙ ΔΟΥΡΕ ΜΑΓΟΡΟΥ. 43
ar baaski duure maagoru.

ar baas-ki duur-e maa-go-ru
 1PL bus-ACC reach-say get.tired-PT1-1PL
 “We were unable to reach the bus”

4.3. The complex grammatical morpheme *e daa*

When an inflected verb is followed by *e* plus the inflected verb *daa* this construction has the reading “suppose, believe, think,” as illustrated in exx. 44–7.

αΪ ΑΖΜΕΔΚΙ ΒΙ ΤΑΝ Ε ΔΑΡΙ. 44
ay ahmedki bi taan e daari.

ay ahmed-ki bi taa-n e daa-r-i
 1SG Ahmed-ACC FUT come-3SG say exist-NEUT-1SG
 “I suppose Ahmed will come”

αΪ ΑΩΔΔΚΙ ΝΟΓΟΚΟΝ Ε ΔΑΓΟΡΙ. 45
ay awadki nogoskon e daagori.

ay awad-ki nog-os-ko-n e daa-go-r-i
 1SG Awad-ACC go-ASP1-PT1-2SG say exist-PT1-NEUT-1SG
 “I thought Awad went away”

ΕΡ ΑΩΔΔΚΙ ΝΟΓΟΚΟΝ Ε ΤΕ ΔΑΓΟΝ? 46
er awadki nogoskon e te daagon?

er awad-ki nog-os-ko-n e te daa-go-n
 1SG Awad-ACC go-ASP1-PT1-2SG say PRED.Q exist-PT1-2SG
 “Did you think Awad went away?”

ΕΡ ΚΑΔΚΙ ΔΑΓΔΔΟΥΝ Ε ΤΕ ΔΑΓΟΝ? 47
er kajki jagadun e te daagon?

er kaj-ki jagad-un e te daa-go-n
 1SG horse-ACC weak-be.3SG say PRED.Q exist-PT1-3SG
 “Did you think the horse is weak?”

When *e* is suffixed to an uninflected verb and followed by the inflected forms of the verbs *dol* “want” and *maa* “get tired” this construction functions as a complex grammatical morpheme with the reading “to be about to do something” and “unable to do something,” respectively.

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When an inflected verb is followed by *e* and the inflected verb *daa* this construction turns into a complex grammatical construction with the reading “suppose, believe, think.”

5. Conclusion

The transitive verb *e*, rendered as “say, tell,” is used as an independent lexical verb that can be inflected for all persons in the present and past tenses. It can also take modality markers, the completive aspect marker, temporal clause marker, and the conditional. It can be used in various contexts with its full lexical meaning and in that it behaves like other lexical verbs. It should be pointed out, however, that *e* is not attested in the imperative and future form.

The verb *e*, rendered as “be,” functions as a copular verb connecting two nominal elements in a predicate nominal construction, in a predicate adjective construction and in a predicate locative construction. The copular exhibits irregular forms of inflection in the neutral tense, where the 2nd and 3rd person forms are marked by the invariable suffix *-(u)n* and all the plural forms are marked by *-n*.

The verb *e* proves to be very productive as a grammatical morpheme in combination with the verbs *dol* “want,” *maa* “get tired,” or *daa* “exist, be present.” These complex constructions express the notions of imminent future, failure, and supposition, respectively.

The examples discussed above are covering the described functions. However, while investigating the verb *e* I have discovered that it may have another function. When attaching to an inflected verb it appears to be used as a purpose clause marker. This function requires an in-depth study in the future.

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