



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE STUDIES, AND JOURNALISM AND
COMMUNICATION
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND PHILOLOGY**

COPULA CONSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION STRUCTURE IN MUHER

BY

WORKIE MUSA AREGA

**SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND PHILOLOGY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN LINGUISTICS**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
JULY 2023**

Copula Constructions and Information Structure in Muher

Submitted to: The Department of Linguistics and Philology

**Addis Ababa University
College of Humanities, Language Studies, and Journalism and Communication**

**By
Workie Musa Arega**

**July 2023
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by WORKIE MUSA AREGA, entitled “***Copula Constructions and Information Structure in Muher***” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for doctoral degree in Descriptive Linguistics complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the Examining Committee

External Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Internal Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this Ph.D. dissertation is my own original work; it has not been presented for a degree in any other universities, and all sources and materials used for this study are duly acknowledged.

Workie Musa

July 2023

Addis Ababa University

College of Humanities, Language Studies, and Journalism and Communication

Department of Linguistics and Philology

Confirmation

This Ph.D. dissertation has been submitted for examination with my approval as a dissertation supervisor.

Supervisor's Name: Professor Baye Yimam

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to describe copula constructions and information structure in Muher. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method. Data have mainly been accessed through elicitation by consulting purposively selected Muher native speakers. Both elicitation and recording of free speech and narratives have been employed as major data-gathering tools. Besides, data have been extracted from the Muher corpus compiled by the NORHED project, and some stories in Muher. The linguistic data were presented in three-line interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing. Phonemic transcription is employed by using IPA consistently. This study identified the copular morphemes -n for equation and non-past or -ja for the third person singular feminine, nən- for existential and non-past, and bannə- for past in the affirmative main clause, where nən- and bannə- are followed by MVMs. nən- and bannə have both BE and HAVE interpretations. In their BE interpretation, they are inflected for subject agreement. The predicates that nən- appears with is PPs with a locative function, but bannə- shows up with all predicates i.e. NPs, PPs, and As. In their HAVE interpretation both nən- and bannə are inflected for object agreement. The complement to the present tense copula -n is a noun phrase, prepositional phrase, or adjectival phrase. In negation, the verbs anxən- ‘not become’, jənnə ‘there is no’ and annəbbər ‘didn’t exist’ are used as copula although they are not “true” copulas. Although questions in Muher follow the same structure as declarative clauses, they are constructed using rising intonation and/or with -we. Based on the semantic, morphosyntactic and pragmatic functions, the affirmative present tense copular clauses are equative, predication, specificational, identificational, locative, possessive, and presentational. Muher encodes topic prosodically, lexically, morphologically and syntactically. In Muher, the word order of the direct and indirect objects is relatively free. However, Topic is established in the clause-initial position where a non-subject argument or constituent is fronted via syntactic topicalization. If an NP is mentioned as a subject, it is always the topic sentence initially; salient topics are not overt NPs but only marked by person markers on the verb. Topic-comment sentences are pragmatically and prosodically unmarked for their information structure since the clause-initial constituent is the topic of the clause. Besides, Muher employs various strategies to mark topic. For instance, contrastive topic can be marked morphologically by the morpheme -mma which is commonly an emphatic topic change. Although the functionality of -f in Muher is much wider, it is also used to mark contrastive topic. Syntactically, topic is marked through basic word order change, topicalization (fronting), passivization, cleft constructions, and left and right dislocations. The constituent that becomes a topic through clefting and dislocations are also the element that receives focus. In Muher, focus is prosodically marked by intonation, and lexically by looking at answers for Wh-question words. Morphologically, focus can be marked by using the morpheme -m that subsumes completive, additive, expanding, replacing, parallel, restricting, and selective focus types. Although the basic word order of Muher is SOV, focus can be marked syntactically via basic word order change or scrambling, and by clefting. Focus domain, in Muher, can be the subject of the clause (argument focus), the subject and the predicate (sentence focus), or only the predicate (predicate focus).

Acknowledgment

This dissertation would not have been at its present form if many people and institutions had not been helpful. First and for most, I thank the almighty God for granting me health, wisdom, strength and tolerance in all the processes of this PhD study. He has safeguarded me so that I could accomplish this study.

I am very much indebted to my supervisor Professor Baye Yimam. He taught me different courses in both the MA and Ph.D. linguistics programs from which I have learned a lot. Professor Baye read this study chapter by chapter several times from the inception to its present form. Professor Baye provided me with critical, constructive and valuable comments, suggestions, and guidance which raise the standard of this dissertation. His regular and prompt responses and feedback during the entire process of this study are beyond imagination. He is very caring, helpful, kind and encouraging. Had it not been for his unreserved assistance and proper supervision and guidance, this paper would not have had the present form. All remaining errors are mine.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my mentor, Dr. Awlachew Shumneka, who has been helping, taking care of, and encouraging me from the inception of the idea to conduct this thesis up to now. He was very generous and optimistic in providing me with any information I have been asking him throughout. His patience and understanding tremendously contribute to the success of this thesis. Whenever I ask him to provide me with information, he is always ready to lend me his hand; he has never said no. When I made elicitation, I have been asking him to repeat and repeat now and then, but he has been responding to my questions patiently. Awleshiye, I have no words to thank you with. May God bless you and your entire family! I am also very grateful to Mr. Seifu Alemu who has been one of the key informants and narrators of the Muher-related stories, the origin of the Muher people, and their culture. I am also thankful to my female Muher informants Ajeyet Ambezach Andigizer and Sarem Dendir for their patience and encouragement in teaching, informing and consulting me in their native language.

I thank my spouse, Tadesse W/Gebreal, for his love and support during the course of this Ph.D. study journey. Besides, he always encourages me to work hard. I will never forget the academic debates we used to have when we discussed issues related to this thesis. He has also proofread

the entire thesis and edited the language of the thesis. I am also grateful to my kid, Amnen Tadesse, for her unconditional love. Amnenye, you have been with me all the way through.

I am thankful to those people who have contributed to the successful realization of the present thesis. My special thanks go to Yetwale Mequanint, Teferi Mulugeta, and Elsabet Minas who have been my classmates and intimate friends for their moral support and both the formal and informal discussions we used to have whenever we had the chance to do so. I also would like to thank Dr. Aregaw Maru and Dr. Dereje for sharing me some relevant resources without any reservation.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all academic staff members of the Department of Linguistics and Philology at Addis Ababa University.

Finally, I would like to thank The University of Gondar for offering me a study leave, and Addis Ababa University for giving me the chance to attend my PhD study.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	II
CONFIRMATION.....	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
LIST OF TABLES	XII
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	XIII
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. THE LANGUAGE AND THE PEOPLE	1
1.1.1. The Language	1
1.1.2. The People	2
1.2. THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE GURAGE LANGUAGES	3
1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	4
1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	7
1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	7
1.6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY	8
1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	8
CHAPTER TWO	11
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	11
2.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	11
2.1.1. Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT)	11
2.1.2. Lambrecht’s Theory of Information Structure	12
2.1.2.1. Basic Categories of Information Structure	13
2.1.2.1.1. Presupposition and Assertion.....	13
2.1.2.1.2. Topic and Focus.....	13
2.1.2.2. Types of Topic and Focus.....	14
2.1.2.2.1. Types of Topics	14
2.1.2.2.2. Focus Types.....	14
2.2. BASIC NOTIONS OF COPULA CONSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION STRUCTURE.....	16
2.2.1. The Copula	16
2.2.1.1. The concept of the copula in the theoretical literature.....	16
2.2.1.2. Copular construction strategies.....	19
2.2.1.3. Classifications of the copular clauses (The taxonomic question): Generalities ...	24
2.2.1.4. Copular clauses in some Ethiopian languages	25

2.2.1.5. Conceptualizing the notion of copula in Muher	26
2.2.2. Information structure basic notions	28
2.2.2.1. Focus/Background	31
2.2.2.2. Given/New	32
2.2.2.3. Topic/Comment	33
2.2.2.4. Theme/rheme	34
2.3. PREVIOUS STUDIES	34
2.3.1. Studies on Gurage Languages in General and on Muher in Particular	35
2.3.2. Studies on Copula Constructions.....	37
2.3.3. Studies on information structure.....	40
CHAPTER THREE	44
SALIENT LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF MUHER.....	44
3.1. PHONOLOGY	44
3.1.1. Consonants.....	44
3.1.2. Vowels	47
3.1.3. Gemination in Muher	47
3.1.4. Stress	47
3.1.5. Syllable structure in Muher.....	48
3.1.6. Phonological processes in Muher	48
3.1.6.1. Palatalization process	48
3.1.6.2. Labialization process.....	49
3.1.6.3. Assimilations	49
3.2. MORPHOLOGY	51
3.2.1 Pronouns	51
3.2.1.1. Personal Pronouns	51
3.2.1.2. Possessive Pronouns (suffixes)	52
3.2.1.3. Demonstrative Pronouns	52
3.2.1.4. Reflexive Pronouns in Muher	53
3.2.1.5. Interrogative pronouns	53
3.2.1.6. Indefinite pronouns in Muher.....	54
3.2.2. Nominals	54
3.2.2.1. Adjectives.....	54
3.2.2.2. Nominal Inflections.....	55
3.2.2.2.1. Number	55
3.2.2.2.2. Gender	56
3.2.2.2.3. Definiteness	57
3.2.2.2.4. Case.....	58
3.2.2.3. Numerals	60
3.2.3. Adverbs	60

3.2.4.	Verbs	61
3.2.4.1.	Verb inflection.....	61
3.2.4.2.	Aspect/Tense	62
3.2.4.3.	Copulas in the affirmative declarative clauses in Muher	63
3.2.4.4.	Negation in Muher	65
3.2.5.	Conjunctions in Muher	65
3.3.	SYNTAX.....	66
3.3.1.	Main Clauses.....	66
3.3.2.	Subordinate clauses.....	68
3.3.3.	Questions.....	69
3.3.4.	Compound and complex clauses in Muher	69
3.4.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	70
CHAPTER FOUR.....		72
COPULAR CONSTRUCTIONS IN MUHER.....		72
4.1.	INTRODUCTION	72
4.2.	COPULAR CONSTRUCTIONS IN DIFFERENT CLAUSES	73
4.2.1.	Copular constructions in affirmative main clauses.....	73
4.2.1.1.	The present-tense copula <i>-n</i> and the existential copula <i>nən-</i>	73
4.2.1.2.	The predicational past-tense copula in Muher	80
4.2.1.3.	Muher clauses in the future tenses	85
4.2.2.	Negative and interrogative copular clauses in Muher	88
4.2.2.1.	Negative copular constructions in Muher	88
4.2.2.2.	Interrogative copular constructions in Muher	93
4.2.3.	Copular constructions in Muher subordinate clauses	94
4.3.	NON-VERBAL PREDICATIONS IN MUHER.....	95
4.4.	SUMMARY	98
CHAPTER FIVE		100
TOPIC-COMMENT STRUCTURE IN MUHER		100
5.1.	INTRODUCTION	100
5.2.	TOPIC-COMMENT STRUCTURE IN MUHER	101
5.3.	STRATEGIES OF TOPIC MARKING IN MUHER	106
5.3.1.	Marking topic in canonical word order of Muher.....	106
5.3.2.	Using demonstratives as a topic marker	106
5.3.3.	Marking topic lexically	107
5.3.3.1.	Aboutness Topic.....	107
5.3.3.2.	Marking Topic via Converse Terms.....	111
5.3.4.	Marking Topic Morphologically.....	113
5.3.5.	Marking Topic Syntactically.....	116

5.3.5.1. Topicalization.....	116
5.3.5.2. Passivization.....	120
5.3.5.3. Cleft Constructions.....	121
5.3.5.4. Dislocation Constructions in Muher	122
5.4. FRAME SETTING AND FRAME SETTERS.....	125
5.5. TOPIC MARKING IN COMPLEX CLAUSES	129
5.6. SUMMARY	132
CHAPTER SIX	134
FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS IN MUHER	134
6.1. INTRODUCTION.....	134
6.2. FOCUS MARKING SYSTEM/STRATEGIES IN MUHER.....	134
6.2.1. Completive Focus (Answers to Wh-Questions)	135
6.2.2. Morphological focus marking.....	137
6.2.2.1. The contrastive focus markers <i>-m</i>	137
6.2.2.1.1. Additive focus	137
6.2.2.1.2. Expanding Focus	139
6.2.2.1.3. Replacing (Corrective) focus	140
6.2.2.1.4. Parallel focus.....	141
6.2.2.1.5. Restricting focus	142
6.2.2.1.6. Selecting focus.....	143
6.2.2.2. Assertive focus	143
6.2.2.3. Identificational focus marker <i>-tt</i>	145
6.2.3. Syntactic focus marking.....	147
6.2.3.1. Marking focus by changing canonical word order.....	147
6.2.3.2. Marking focus through cleft constructions.....	148
6.2.3.3. Marking focus via pseudo cleft constructions.....	149
6.2.4. Focus marking adjuncts (words) in Muher	150
6.2.4.1. Focus adjunct <i>k'una</i> ‘only’	151
6.2.4.2. Focus marker <i>bətələj</i> ‘especially’	152
6.2.4.3. Focus adjunct <i>tetərf</i> ‘Even/including’	153
6.2.5. Marking focus using reflexive pronouns	154
6.2.6. Complex focus marking system in Muher	155
6.3. FOCUS DOMAIN (SCOPE OF FOCUS) IN MUHER.....	156
6.3.1. Predicate-focus structure.....	156
6.3.2. Argument-focus structure	157
6.3.3. Sentence-focus structure	158
6.4. SUMMARY	159
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	161
COPULA CLAUSE INFORMATION STRUCTURE IN MUHER	161

7.1. INTRODUCTION	161
7.2. TYPES OF COPULAR CLAUSES IN MUHER	162
7.2.1. Copular clauses based on Semantic criteria	163
7.2.2. Copular clauses based on the morphosyntax of the complement	171
7.2.3. Pragmatic function of copular clauses	173
7.3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COPULA AND DEMONSTRATIVES IN MUHER.....	174
7.4. SUMMARY	177
CHAPTER EIGHT	179
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	179
8.1. SUMMARY	179
8.2. CONCLUSIONS	181
REFERENCES.....	183
APPENDICES	192
APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOUR KEY INFORMANTS	192
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE ELICITED DATA.....	192
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE MUHER PROVERB TEXTS	217
APPENDIX D: MUHER RIDDLES	218
APPENDIX E. TALE OF ΣIFARA DONNΘ.....	220
APPENDIX F: TALES OF A MAN AND A GIRL	233
APPENDIX G: SAMPLE MUHER STORY TEXT	236

List of Tables

Table 1: Consonant phonemes Muher.....	45
Table 2: Vowel phonemes of Muher	47
Table 3: Personal pronouns in Muher.....	51
Table 4: Possessive pronouns (suffixes) in Muher.....	52
Table 5: Reflective pronouns in Muher.....	53
Table 6 : Interrogative pronouns in Muher.....	53
Table 7 : Indefinite pronouns in Muher	54
Table 8: Lexical gender distinction in Muher.....	56
Table 9: Basic numerals	60
Table 10: Subject pronominal affixes	61
Table 11: Object pronominal affixes	62
Table 12: Inflections of copular elements in Muher	64
Table 13: Negative semi-copular element or auxiliary verbs in Muher	65
Table 14: Inflection of the present tense copula – <i>n</i>	73
Table 15: Inflection of the existential copula <i>nən</i> -.....	76
Table 16: Conjugation of the copula <i>bannə</i> with the MVM in the past tense.....	80
Table 17: inflectional paradigm of the negative present tense copula.....	88
Table 18: Conjugations of the negative existential auxiliary <i>jənnə</i>	90
Table 19: Inflection of the negative past-tense copula <i>annəbər</i> -	91
Table 20: Affirmative present-tense copula clauses in Muher	96

List of symbols and abbreviations

//	Phonemic
[]	Phonetic
Ø	Zero Morpheme
1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
ACC	Accusative
AdjP/AP/ADJ	Adjectival Phrase
AdvP	Adverbial Phrase
Agr(s)	(Subject) Agreement
AP	Adjective Phrase
APPL	Applicative
ASSO	Associated
AUG	Augmented
AUX	Auxiliary
BLT	Basic Linguistic Theory
C	Consonant
CAUS	Causative
cf.	Cross Reference
CG	Common Ground
COMP	Complementizer
CONJ	Conjunction
COP	Copula
CVB	Converb
DAT	Dative
DCM	Declarative clause marker
DEF	Definite
DEM	Demonstrative
EXIST	Existential (copula)
EXV	Exclusive
F	Feminine
FOC	Focus
FUT	Future
GEN	Genitive
IFOC	Identificational focus
IMP	Impersonal
IPA	International Phonetics Alphabet
IPFV	Imperfective
IS	Information structure
LOC	Locative
M	Masculine
MVM	Main verb marker
NEG	Negation, Negative
NOM	Nominative
NOMIZ	Nominalizer

NORHED	Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development
NP	Noun phrase
Obj	Object agreement
PARCOP	Particle copula
PART	Particle
PFV	Perfective
PL	Plural
PLF	Plural feminine
PLM	Plural masculine
PP	Prepositional Phrase
POSS	Possessive
PRES	Present
PROCOP	Pronoun copula
PROG	Progressive
PRX	Proximal
PST	Past
Q	Question particle/marker
REL	Relative
SG	Singular
SGF	Singular feminine
SGM	Singular masculine
Subj.	Subject agreement
TOP	Topic
V	Vowel
VIC	Vicinity

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Language and the People

1.1.1. The Language

Muher is one of the Southern 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 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. Hetzron (1972: 119) mixed typological and genetic grouping. Northern Gurage is a typological group, comprising Kistane, Dobbi and Muher based on main verb marking in the imperfective. Genetically, Hetzron (1972), Leslau (1992) and Rose (1996) place Muher within West Gurage. For the present study, Hetzron's (1972: 119) classification based on shared morphological innovations has been employed, for it is the most widely accepted one so far.

The name Muher (*m^wəhir* as the native speakers call it) indicates the name of the people, the place where they live and the language they speak. *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/ədi* '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 *ədi* 'I'. Of the 30 kebele administrative districts of Muher-Aklil, 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. 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 Welk'ite (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 K'abeena and other

Gurage varieties speakers such as Dobbi, Mesqan (although there is a mountain range between Muher and 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.

1.1.2. The People

The Gurage people are culturally, socially, economically and linguistically related to each other. They are well-known for their hard work and trade skills, and hence they are mobile for trading activities. Most Gurage-speaking people are at least bilingual. They speak their mother tongue and Amharic and/or other neighboring languages. There is an ethnic group called Gurage in the Gurage zone and the languages the Gurage people speak are generally called Gurage (Meyer 2009: 2; Endalew 2014: 3). The Gurage people refer to themselves as Gurage and the other Ethiopians also call them by the same name. However, there are some groups or subgroups of people who claimed that they are the only Gurage. For example, the Sebat bet Gurage ‘seven houses of Gurage’, Muher being one of them, commonly refer to themselves as Gurage (Meyer 2011: 1221). Moreover, the term Gurage is used to refer to a geographical area which is located approximately 160km south of Addis Ababa with the borders on River Awash on the north, River Gibe to the west and southeast, and the Rift Valley lakes to the east (Hetzron 1972: 7; Goldenberg 2005: 924; Meyer 2011: 1244).

The Muher people live in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State (SNNPRS) in the north-western part of the Gurage Zone. According to the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency (2013), population projection values of 2017, the total population of Muher and Akill wereda was expected to be 105, 134. Its neighbors are the Dobbi on the southeast, the Wolane on the northeast, the Ezha on the west, and the K’abeena on the northwest. As a result, many of the Muher speakers are bilingual in one of these languages. Hawariat, the capital of the Muher and Aklil Wereda, is situated approximately 207 kilometers south of Addis Ababa or 52 kilometers southeast of Welkit’e. According to the statistical report of the 2007 Census, the population in the Muher and Aklil Wereda is 86,783 (CSA 2007: 76).

The Muher people are mainly Orthodox Tewahido Christians, but there are some Muslims and followers of other religions such as Protestants and Catholics. Like other Gurage people, most of the people of Muher are farmers and hence their livelihood depends on agriculture. The most dominant crop is *Enset* ‘False banana’. They also produce other crops such as barley, maize, pea,

and rear domestic animals and take part in trading. Most Muher youngsters are scattered all over the country where they are engaged in trade activities.

1.2. The Classification of the Gurage Languages

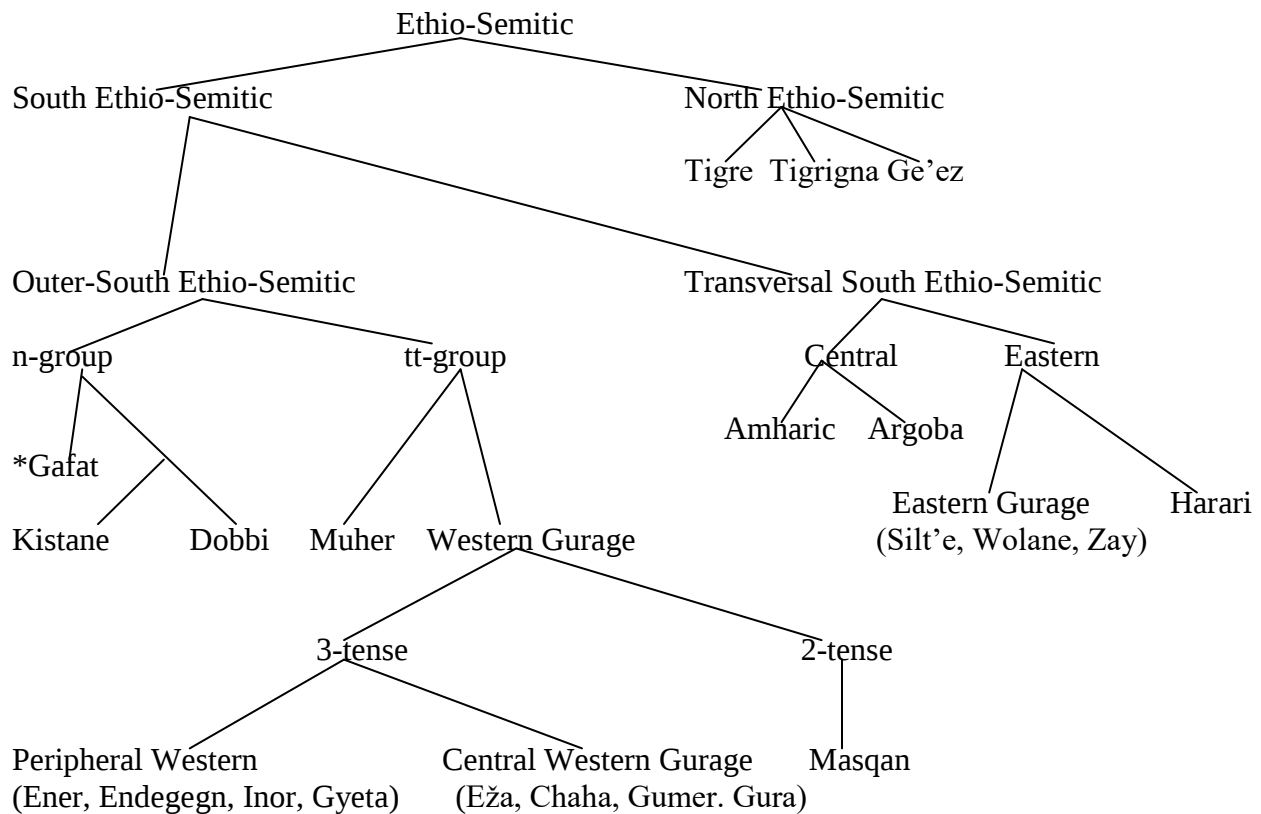
The Gurage languages are members of Ethio-Semitic sub-branch that belong to the Afro-Asiatic language family. Although there seems to be an agreement among scholars in the classification of the Gurage languages as Northern, Eastern and Western, there are a lot of disagreements on the different Gurage languages as to whether they are distinctive languages (Goldenberg 2005:924) or variants. Some claimed that Kistane, Dobbi, Muher and Masqan are distinct languages, while others are varieties since they are mutually intelligible (Hetzron & Bender 1976). While Ullendorff (1955) speaks from Gurage language with no subdivision, Leslau (1969: 96) remains unclear regarding the status of language and variety.

There are also differences in the classification of languages within the three major groups within Gurage. For instance, Leslau (1969: 96) claimed that Muher, Dobbi and Masqan belong to Western Gurage, Soddo being the only representative of Northern Gurage. Hetzron (1972:119) grouped Masqan as a part of Western Gurage, but Muher, Dobbi and Kistane as Northern Gurage. Both scholars provided different justifications for the classification of Gurage in general. Leslau, for example, cites shared phonological, morphological and lexical features as evidence. Hetzron (1977) criticizes this approach and he states that Leslau's use of archaisms and features are attributable to Cushitic influence. Then, Hetzron proposes shared morphological innovations to justify the classifications of Ethio-Semitic. He has, for example, used preserved archaic features like main verb markers to prove the unity within the Northern Gurage branch as a typological group, not as a genetic unit. The issue of the classification of Gurage remains an open question. To this end, Hudson (1996: 1) claims:

The Gurage people and their languages presented unusual problems for research. There are several languages perhaps as many as seven or eight, but often the individuality of these is disguised by a continuum of dialect differences, the differences in culture as well as language, are surprisingly sustained within a relatively small area and with much interaction.

The present study adopted Hetzron's (1972: 119; 1977: 15–24) Ethio-Semitic classification since it is the most comprehensive classification of Ethio-Semitic based on morphological innovations.

The following genealogical tree of the Ethio-Semitic language family adopted from Hetzron (1972: 119) shows the position of Muher in relation to the other Gurage languages and all other Ethiopian Semitic languages.



(Adapted from Hetzron 1972:119; 1977: 15-24)

1.3. Statement of the Problem

There are many studies on the Gurage languages in general; most of which are comparative (cf. Ullendorff 1955; Hetzron 1968, 1969, 1972, 1977; Leslau, 1969; Rose 1997; Tsehay 2008; Meyer 2011 among others). There are also grammatical descriptive works on individual Gurage languages such as Ezha (Tsehay 2001, 2008; Fekede 2002; Aweke 2012; Endalew 2014), Mesqan (Ousman 2015), Wolane (Meyer 2006), Gyeta (Meheretu 2015), Endegegn (Eyasu 2003, Yohannes 2015), Muher (Leslau 1981; Rose 1996, Awlachew 2010, Meyer 2005, 2007a, 2012, 2019, 2022; Aregawi 2020), and Inor (Suter 2007) to mention a few.

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 in general and Gurage languages, in particular, are

comparative and some of them are also descriptive. Muher is one of these under-described languages with regard to focus phenomena and topic and topicalization. According to the Ethiopian Language Research Center (2005: 28), Muher is identified as one of the least-studied languages in Ethio-Semitic language groups in terms of issues such as topic and focus. These works are related to Muher in one way or another. However, in such major works, there is little or no account of the way copula is constructed and information is structured; not even in the morphology studies. Therefore, this dissertation is concerned with the little-researched interface between syntax, morphosyntax and pragmatics in Muher.

Regarding Muher, there are some descriptive studies (Leslau 1981; Rose 1996; Meyer 2005, 2007, 2012; Awlachew 2010; Meyer 2019; Aregawi 2020; Meyer 2022). For instance, Leslau (1981) provided a sketch grammar of Muher with no details of analysis of information structure notions such as focus and topic. Rose (1996) explored the object and present tense markers and *a*-final verb stems complex the grammatically-conditioned allomorphs of Muher. Meyer (2005: 41-59) presented the different functions of the morpheme *jə-* in Muher syntax underscoring that the accusative marking in Muher depends mainly on pragmatics, not on syntax. Awlachew (2010) did on the documentation and grammatical sketch of Muher. In his study on the typology of motion verbs in Muher, Meyer (2007a) identified two types of destinations: stationary and moveable. While the moveable destination is marked by the locative *-ət* ‘place’, the stationary one is morphologically unmarked.

The most recent work is Meyer’s (2019) study on the sketch grammar of the *ədi-bet* variety of Muher in which the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language are very generally described. Meyer (2019: 245) has treated copula construction system and strategies and the notions of information structure such as focus and topic in a section in which he states that the focus marker of Muher are contrastive *-m* and assertive *-f* (Meyer 2019: 250), and he also mentioned that Muher has a Topic-Comment word order (Mayer 2019: 246).

Meyer (2019) has done this work and mentioned that *-m* is a contrastive focus marker in Muher, but he did not show the different contrastive focus types marked by the morpheme *-m*. Besides, Meyer highlighted that the scope of the contrastive focus marker *-m* is individual constituents, but he did not support his claim with adequate evidence. The other gap in Meyer’s (2019) work is that he mentions the morpheme *-f* as an assertive focus marker. However, this paper argues

that *-f* has a wider distribution, and *-f* can also be used as a topic marker or topic setting in questions rendering the meaning “how/what about?”

Aregawi’s (2020) PhD dissertation is another descriptive grammar work on Muher. Aregawi has identified the possible copular verbs in Muher (Aregawi 2020: 190-200), but the discussion is not as such rigorously argued. Aregaw tried to conceptualize the present tense copula *-n* in two ways as a word final suffix attached to nouns and adjectives, and at the same time it is given a free word status (cf. Aregawi 2020: 190). However, I would argue that the MUher present tense copula is a clitic element attached to NPs, PPs, and Aps. Besides, the “negative present tense copula” *anxən-* appears with the affirmative present tense copula *-n*, and the subject agreement suffix is attached to it and glossed as ISG, which I do not agree with (Aregawi 2020: 191). Although Aregawi presented *banno* as the past tense copula in Muher, he claimed that *banno* do not occur with main verb markers (MVMs), but in this thesis I argue that *banno* is inflected for MVM in addition to the subject agreement suffixes that shows person, number and gender. The issue of topic and focus are raised in Aregawi’s (2020: 281-284) descriptive grammar work on Muher, but very weakly presented and argued. For example, topic is expressed only by topicalization in less than half a page (Aregawi 2020: 281). Aregawi (2020: 281-284) also claimed that focus can be constructed only by dislocation and clefting. To Aregawi, “focus is constructed by fronting the constituent which the speaker deems as the most important bit of information for the clause.” However, I argue that fronting is not the only way to encode focus.

Meyer’s (2022) is also a study conducted on ‘the noncausal/causal alternation in Muher’. He conducted his study based on the list of 31 noncausal/causal pairs proposed by Haspelmath (1993). Of these, Meyer (2022) identified only 27 of them in Muher. Most of the data (“two-third”) of noncausal/causal pairs are made of the directed alternation in Muher. The causative strategy is more frequent. In this case, the causative verb in directed pairs is usually marked by the prefix *a-*, and the derived noncausal verb is marked by the mediopassive prefix *tə-*. He has also identified one non-direct alternative *mənnam* ‘fill’, but suppletive and equipollent pairs are similarly frequent. He has mentioned *at-* as indirect causative and the prefixes *in-* and *an-* as non-productive intransitive and transitive derivations. However, he has never said something about copular forms and/or information structure notions such as focus and topic. This would

make the present study (which focuses on copula constructions and information structure in Muher) quite different from Meyer's study.

The above studies show some areas that require further description. Besides, in the descriptive syntax of Muher, many issues have been untouched or have not been treated in-depth. Except Meyer's (2007b) and to a very limited extent Aregawi's (2020) studies that treat the present tense copula in Muher, there is no complete and detailed description and analysis of copula constructions and information structure that shows the interface between syntax, morphosyntax and pragmatics in Muher. Therefore, the present study attempts to make a complete description of copula constructions and analyze in detail the little-researched interface between syntax, morphosyntax and pragmatics in Muher.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to make a thorough description on copula and how copula clause is constructed and information structure notions such as topic and focus is marked in Muher. Specifically, this study attempts to:

1. describe in detail the ways by which copular clauses are constructed in Muher
2. identify the possible copula morpheme (s) in Muher
3. demonstrate the way Muher encodes focus at the level of syntax, morphosyntax, prosody and pragmatics
4. analyze the way Muher forms topic at the level of syntax, morphosyntax, prosody and pragmatics
5. identify the types of copula clause information structures in Muher

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study will be helpful mainly for researchers who want to conduct studies on copula constructions and information structure in other Ethiopian languages since it presents an in-depth analysis of copula constructions and information structure in Muher. Moreover, it can be used for comparative and/or typological and theoretical studies of copula constructions and/or information structure on Ethio-Semitic languages in general and Gurage languages in particular. It may also add further insight to existing knowledge about strategies through which copula is constructed and information is structured. It may also contribute to language planning and mother tongue education in Muher since the present study treats the focus and topic at the level

of syntax, morphosyntax, prosody and pragmatics (use). Finally, it may help identify and preserve the peculiar features of Muher as it is highly affected by language contact phenomena with neighboring languages such as Ezha.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study is limited only to a linguistic description of copula constructions and information structure in Muher. It is not a comparative study. It focuses mainly on the study of the morphological, syntactic and pragmatic aspects of copula and basic information structure notions such as focus and topic. In this study, thematic progression, discourse topic, and other discourse-level phenomena are not described. Although Muher has two varieties, for this paper, data has been collected only from the *anə-bet* variety as opposed to the *ədi-bet* variety. In this study, copular constructions strategies are described. Besides, it is mainly confined only to the description of information structure notions such as Topic-Comment, and Focus-Background expressions in Muher since there is an overlap between information units.

1.7. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method. For the analysis of copula, 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. Besides, some examples are extracted from Muher text corpus compiled for the NORHED project for the analysis of copula and copular clauses although the corpus may not provide the full context. Furthermore, this study employs some oral texts recorded from the key informants. This study also used some sample proverbs, riddles, stories, dialogues, and narratives taken from Awlachew's (2010) study which was conducted for the purpose of Muher language documentation and a grammatical sketch.

For the elicitation, 2 male and 2 female Muher native speakers who are from Hawariat¹ and have good knowledge of Amharic were key informants and have been consulted since the researcher is not a speaker of Muher. These informants are purposively selected because random selection of informants may lead to getting wrong data. Again, these informants are believed to give more information from which data are extracted (cf. Appendix A: information about the informants)

¹ The capital of Muher and Aklil Wereda (district)

I started my fieldwork by eliciting words and sentences from my key informants to get to know the basic structure of Muher in addition to reading published grammar and books such as Leslau (1979a-c) etymological dictionaries of Gurage languages. Throughout the fieldwork, Amharic has been used as the working language since most Muher speakers are bilingual in Amharic. To control second language influence, triangulation method was used. Thus, there was not such a big problem in the communication processes. Then, free-speech texts were recorded. The accuracy of the elicited grammatical data was cross-checked and augmented by using these recorded free speech texts. During the whole fieldwork, I used a combination of both elicitations and free speech recordings to gather the data. The data were used for the description and analysis of copula constructions and information structure in Muher. After the data had been transcribed, translated, checked, and edited, the translation was checked by the assistance of the native speakers who were my key informants as well.

The collected data were transcribed consistently by using the IPA symbols with glosses in English. There are many complex morphophonemic operations in Gurage languages. The linguistic data were glossed based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules by using three-line interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing in three tiers. The first tier is the data line which contains underlying and segmentable morphemes or morpheme boundaries. The second line/tier glosses the grammatical categories of each morpheme. Segmentable morphemes were divided by hyphens in both the data and grammatical glossing lines. The third tier/line is an English literal translation. However, when it is a must to show both the phonetic and phonemic realizations of the data, four-line glossing was used. In this case, the phonetic level is 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. This means the descriptions of copula constructions and information structure in Muher were done in line with its features. The description of the data collected through various methods about copula constructions in Muher was informed according to the tenets of Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT), which argues that it is important to describe each language in its own terms when making grammatical descriptions based on observed linguistic utterances (Dixon 2010; Dryer 2006: 210–211). However, Lambrecht's (1994) theory of information structure has been used in describing and analyzing focus and topic which are the main the information structure notions. This paper

did not use BLT in analyzing the Topic-Comment structure and Focus related phenomena in Muher.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, I shall introduce briefly the theoretical framework(s) that has been used to guide this study. In this study, the Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT) of Dryer (2006) and Dixon (2010), is used in describing copula constructions in Muher. However, Lambrecht's (1994) theory of information structure is used in describing information structure in Muher. Besides, basic notions of copulas and copular construction strategies and the issues of information structure and its notions are thoroughly reviewed and discussed. The classification of copular clauses found in the literature are also reviewed. Finally, previous empirical studies conducted on copula (constructions) and information structure notions, especially focus and topic, are reviewed critically and the point of departure with the present study is indicated.

2.1. Theoretical Frameworks

2.1.1. Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT)

The present study used the Basic Linguistics Theory (BLT) of Dixon (2010) and Dryer (2006) to analyze the copula constructions in Muher. BLT has been used because it supplies and guides those who desire to follow the main issue of linguistics by inductive simplification that contributes to the typological theory (Dixon 2010: 1-3).

A linguist can use BLT flexibly to fit for a particular language. Basic Linguistic Theory, as Dixon claims, does not declare any specific feature present in every language. Instead, the linguist can choose from a range of linguistic elements and parameters which fit the language he/she describes (Dixon 2010: 1-3). Besides, Dixon (2010) states that grammatical descriptions of the language should be made in line with its own feature rather than bringing concepts from other languages.

Therefore, the description of copula constructions in Muher has followed the basic tenets of Basic Linguistic Theory (Dryer 2006: 210-211) which is a cumulative framework that suits the description of the grammar of those languages such as Muher that are not well described. Following BLT, the present study has described how the copula in Muher is constructed by taking into account its peculiar features.

2.1.2. Lambrecht's Theory of Information Structure

In the literature, there are different theories conceptualizing information structure (IS) in which various terms are used to label categories. This thesis, however, employed Lambrecht's theory of information structure which considers information structure as the third part of a tripartite language system, on a par with syntax (grammar consisting of formal structure) and semantics (meaning and its structure). And IS, a third part, has a strong pragmatic consideration Lambrecht (1994: 6–13). This means to conceptualize information structure, Lambrecht's theory integrates function and form by involving syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Lambrecht 1994: 5). This tells that the nature of the relationship between form and function is central to Lambrecht's theory of information structure.

To Lambrecht, information is “That component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexico-grammatical structures in accordance with the mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts” (Lambrecht 1994: 5). He claimed that IS can be found in all types of discourse (spoken and written), and in all types of sentences including request and question (Lambrecht 1994: 55), and all sentences and utterances have information structure (Lambrecht 1994:55).

In the literature, we can find various pairs of information units whose definitions are different. For example, the notion of focus can be defined differently. For instance, Lambrecht (1994: 206) pointed out that focus should be recognized as part of a sentence that contains the most significant information. Different terms are employed to refer to a single pragmatic status (Payne 1997: 267). For instance, terms such as rheme, assertion, and new information have been used by Prague School linguists to refer to focus. Again, Lambrecht's pragmatic presupposition is similar to the functional sentence perspective concept theme. Furthermore, different languages use different strategies in coding basic notions of IS although they are universal categories. In connection with this, Lambrecht (1994:31) states, “What syntax does not code prosody does, and what is not coded by prosody may be expressed by morphology or by the lexicon.” This is to say that while some languages, for example, mark focus by prosodic prominences such as stress or pitch accent, others encode focus through morphosyntactic strategies. Generally speaking, as a component of grammar, IS is “formally manifested in aspects of prosody, in specific

grammatical markers, in the form of constituents in the position and ordering of such constituents in the sentence” (Lambrecht 1994: 6).

2.1.2.1. Basic Categories of Information Structure

According to Lambrecht (1994: 334), IS has three related basic categories. These are propositional content (presupposition and assertion), pragmatic categories (topic and focus), and grammar structure (topic and focus domains). Let us discuss these concepts in detail in light of Lambrecht’s theory of information structure.

2.1.2.1.1. Presupposition and Assertion

Presupposition and assertion are propositions that coexist in the same sentence. Lambrecht’s basic assumption is that every sentence requires a presupposition and, in every utterance, there must be an assertion (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 57-64). The notions of pragmatic presupposition and pragmatic assertion are conceptualized as follows. A pragmatic presupposition is “the set of propositions lexico-grammatically evoked in an utterance which the speaker assumes the hearer already knows or believes or is ready to take for granted at the time of speech” (Lambrecht 1994: 52). Pragmatic assertion, on the other hand, “is the proposition expressed by a sentence which the hearer is expected to know or believe or take for granted as a result of hearing the sentence uttered” (Lambrecht 1994: 52). In other words, what Lambrecht calls pragmatic presupposition is the old information contained or evoked by the sentence, and Lambrecht’s pragmatic assertion corresponds to the new information expressed or conveyed by the sentence (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 52).

2.1.2.1.2. Topic and Focus

Lambrecht (1994) builds his theory of IS on the basic notions of topic and focus, and he devotes it to a thorough discussion of the two concepts with different kinds of topic and focus structures. In Lambrecht’s theory of IS, topic and focus are the two primary information structure notions that referring expressions may have in an utterance. To Lambrecht (1994: 117-8), topic is not the element that comes first in a sentence, but it is “the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about”; i.e., topic is related to aboutness, and a topic must be referential (Lambrecht 1994: 127). A range of phenomena typically used for illustrating the concept of topic is topicalization or left dislocation.

Focus, to Lambrecht (1994: 213), is “the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition”. This means there is a background-focus or old-new information pairing. Focus, is the element of information that is added to the presupposition and cannot be taken for granted at the time of speech (Lambrecht 1994: 206-7). There is a notion called focus structure which is considered the grammatical system that serves to indicate the scope of assertion in an utterance in contrast to the pragmatic presupposition. Lambrecht (1994:222) characterized focus structure as a conventional association of a focused meaning with a sentence form.

In his theory, Lambrecht’s treatment of topic and focus is of particular significance, in light of the vast range of definitions and characteristics associated with these concepts, and that attempts to highlight distributional properties using them.

2.1.2.2. Types of Topic and Focus

2.1.2.2.1. Types of Topics

Based on the position of the topic in a given clause structure, Lambrecht (1994) distinguishes between two types of topics, namely reference-oriented topics and role-oriented topics. Reference-oriented topics are mostly realized by lexically specific phrases in certain structural positions potentially external to the clause in question; the topic element may be positioned out of its syntactic position or dislocated to the right or left position of the clause due to topicalization. Role-oriented topics, on the other hand, are realized by clause-internal pronominals, and this helps illuminate various generalizations concerning topic properties cross-linguistically.

2.1.2.2.2. Focus Types

The major component of Lambrecht’s theory of focus structure is the taxonomy of focus types. He identified three major focus structures: predicate focus structure, argument focus structure, and sentence focus structure.

Predicate focus is universally the unmarked type and coincides with the traditionally recognized ‘topic-comment organization of information in a sentence. Predicate focus structure is sentence construction expressing a pragmatically structured proposition in which the subject is a topic (hence within the presupposition) and in which the predicate expresses new information about

this topic. The focus domain is the predicate phrase (or part of it) (Lambrecht 1994: 226). The second type of focus is argument focus which serves to identify missing arguments for a presupposed open proposition (Lambrecht, 1994: 229–230). A special linguistically codified instance of argument focus is the WH-question in which its constituent serves as the only entity that evokes the set of fillers of the empty argument in the presupposed open proposition, and as such, it instantiates the focus. The third is called sentence-focus structure, which reports an event or presents a totally new discourse and does not make reference to old propositions (Lambrecht, 1994:233). In this structure, the focus extends to the subject and predicate. Sentence focus constructions differ strikingly from predicate focus constructions in that they have no topical subject; the focus domain is the entire sentence. In the pragmatic articulation of focus, both the argument and the predicate are under the scope of the focus domain in sentence focus structure.

There are some other types of focus which include contrastive focus (which occurs post-verbally as the only accented peak), identificational focus, presentational focus and so forth.

In general, in Lambrecht's theory, focus is part of the pragmatic assertion which is, as stated above, the complement of the pragmatic presupposition. In terms of their focus assignment, three different sentence patterns are distinguished (cf. Lambrecht 1994). These are:

1. The topic-comment structure shows predicate focus
2. The identificational pattern indicates argument focus, and
3. The event reporting and presentation pattern displays sentence focus.

Therefore, having considered the above basic tenets of Lambrecht's theory of information structure, this thesis treats topic-related issues such as the type of topics, correspondence of topic and subjection, and topicalization in Muher, an Ethiopian Semitic Language. Besides, the present thesis treats focus-related issues that include types of focus, focus structure and focalization in Muher, the language under investigation. This study is believed to add something to our existing body of knowledge about focus and topic regarding Ethiopian languages in general and Muher in particular since it tries to investigate the very little studied interface between syntax, morphosyntax and pragmatics.

2.2. Basic Notions of Copula Constructions and Information Structure

This sub-section of chapter two discusses the descriptive and theoretical issues raised in the literature regarding the concept of copulas, copular construction strategies, and the various taxonomies of copular clauses or sentences. Besides, information structure-related issues (notions such as topic and focus) that are relevant to this study are reviewed.

2.2.1. The Copula

2.2.1.1. The concept of the copula in the theoretical literature

In the literature, there are several notable differences in how copulas are conceptualized. It is commonly understood that it is difficult to define the concept of the copula. This is due to the diversity and complexity of phenomena associated with the copula, despite the fact that the term "copula" appears in descriptive and theoretical literature (cf. Pustet 2003: 1-2). A copula is said to be semantically empty (Heggie 1988:1; Hengeveld 1992:32; Pustet 2003:5).

A cross-linguistic definition of copulas has been attempted; when a copula is defined, it is presumed that the definition encompasses copulas from a typological standpoint. Despite being present in many of the world's languages, copulas are not universal linguistic categories (Pustet 2003: 1–8). Hengeveld (1992) and Pustet (2003) are the two prominent works on the concept of copulas. In what follows, I present the ideas of both scholars more comprehensively as well as broadly.

Copula is defined by Hengeveld (1992:32) as "a semantically empty" element that plays no significant role in the meaning of the given sentence but serves a "supportive function". He demonstrated this by contrasting the English verbs *remain* and *become*, which are semantically contentful semi-copula, with the English *be*, that is a semantically empty copula as presented in the following examples:

- (1) a. Peter is Happy
- b. Peter remained Healthy
- c. Sheila become Ill

According to Hengeveld, the semi-copulas *remain* in (1b) and *become* in (1c) are not semantically empty (both carry Tense, Aspect and Mood), but the copula *be* (*is*) in (1a) has no semantic content although it carries information about tense. What distinguishes the copula in

(1a) from the semi-copulas in (1b) and (1c) is that it is not part of the predicate, but links the subject NP *Peter* and the complement of the copula AP *happy*. This leads to the conclusion that Hengeveld adopts a semantic definition for copulas by contending that the only "real" copulas are those that are semantically empty.

Pustet's (2003) work is the other significant contribution to the literature on copula. Pustet (2003:5) states, "A copula is a linguistic element which co-occurs with certain lexemes in certain languages when they function as predicate nucleus. A copula does not add any semantic content to the predicate phrase it is contained in." Pustet's definition appears to capture cross-linguistically the features of copular elements. She has also mentioned some of the regularly proposed definitions such as the copula is a linking verb, a hitching post for verbal inflections, or a predicator. Pustet rejects the definition of copula as a linking verb since there are languages such as Tagalog that do not have a linking element (Pustet 2003: 3). She also argues that the definition that states the copula as a hitching post for verbal inflections' does not hold true since there are languages such as Mandarin that has the copula *shi* 'be' which does not take any verbal morphology, but only nouns receive such a copula in predicate position.

A copula is understood as a morpheme or an element that links the subject of a sentence with a predicate. A copula differs from full verbs, which are meaningful and can construct a predicate on their own, in that it occupies the predicate place but lacks meaning on its own (Pustet 2003:6). According to Pustet, semi-copulas and auxiliaries also contribute to the formation of predicate but differ from copulas and full verbs in that they have meaning but do not form a predicate on their own.

In the literature, copulas are said to have the following attributes: a) they have verbal inflection; b) they arise in circumstances where the predicate is non-verbal; c) they are components that connect the predicate and the subject; and d) they are semantically empty. Researchers like Pustet (2003) and Hengeveld (1992), however, do not accept these characteristics of copulas on an equal basis. Hengeveld (1992:32), for example, claims, "A copula enables a non-verbal predicate to act as the main predicate in those languages and under those circumstances in which this non-verbal predicate could not fulfill this function on its own". From Hengeveld's view, it can be understood that the combination of non-verbal predicates is a central issue. By contrast,

Pustet (2003:5) conceptualizes a copula without specifying it as a verb or without combining it with non-verbal predicates. This means Pustet does claim that copulas do not combine with verbs. Rather, she claims that copulas do not contribute any semantic information to the predicate. She also rejects the idea that the copula is an added predicator stated in Hengeveld (1992:32), for this definition is not cross-linguistically applicable.

The term "copula" is used in grammatical descriptions to describe a morpheme that has little independent meaning and whose function is to link other sentence structure parts, typically the subject and complement. A copula may be verbal or non-verbal, and languages may contain more than one copula (Becker 2002: 2) whose distribution is determined by the syntactic properties of a clause (such as tense) or by semantic properties of predicates. Copula, according to Brown and Miller (2013: 112), "is a verb which has no content, but only joins two words or phrases. "be" is a copula in English and other languages employ its equivalent."

Copulas are typically thought of as semantically empty elements by researchers like Pustet (2003:5), Dik (1989:56), Brown and Miller (2013: 112), and Hengeveld (1992:32). It seems that a copula has a supporting function inserted into a phrase structure. Its use as a predication, equational, specificational and/or identificational element is sometimes ambiguous. For example, Heggie (1988:2) argues, "predicative and equative sentences have more similarities syntactically than has heretofore been suspected".

For other potential language-specific research like Muher or non-typological studies on copulas, the semantic definitions of copulas proposed by Hengeveld (1992) and Pustet (2003) appear to be difficult working definitions. Payne (1997:114) argues, "a copula is any morpheme that is used to form nominal clauses in which two nominal elements are conjoined in a predicate nominal construction. The copula marks the clause as a predicate nominal and shows tense, aspect and other information for predication in the given languages."

The above discussions are found in the theoretical literature of the concept of copula by taking into consideration cross-linguistic studies. I will define and conceptualize what a copula is and what it is not in Muher in 2.2.1.5. of this subsection. I also will try to discuss and make clear in 2.2.1.5. what actually a copula vis-à-vis an auxiliary or a regular verb and how the clauses based on these verbs differ.

2.2.1.2. Copular construction strategies

Cross-linguistic variations exist in copular constructions. Different languages use a variety of forms to join the subject of a given clause to its complement predicate, this is because since the concept of copula is not a universal category (Curnow 2000: 2-4; Payne 1997:114). Copular verbs are common in many languages, while some other languages use the simple juxtaposition of the subject and the predicate in a given clause. (Pustet 2003:2). This means many languages of the world use overt copular constructions (employ copular verbs) and others use covert ones by juxtaposing the subject and the predicate.

The most fundamental construction or constructions a language employs to encode meaning are referred to as copula constructions (cf. Girma 2007:151-164; Suter 2007: 193-210). Copula construction strategies used by languages around the world vary greatly. Becker (2002: 2) points out, "the linguistic typology of copulas is quite varied". However, in the literature on copula constructions, there are four copula construction strategies used by languages to encode identity and group membership relations (Payne 1997: 114; Crass et al. 2005: 4-5). These include constructions with verbal copula (which agrees with the subject), particle copula, inflectional copula (i.e. a language "treats the Copula complement as though it were a verb"), and zero copula (no copula appears). Crass et al. (2005: 5 & 11) refer to the latter three (particle, pronoun, and zero copulas) as non-verbal copulas because the languages grouped under these exhibit mixed patterns. Many factors influence the choice of strategy for copular constructions. Based on the strategies they employ, Curnow (2000: 2-4) classifies languages of the world into four groups: verbal copular, particle copular, inflectional copular (i.e. a language "treats the Copula complement as though it were a verb") and zero copular constructions. According to Curnow (2000:2), the choice of copular construction depends on discursive and grammatical elements including tense and aspect, polarity, the status of the clause as main or subordinate, the person of the copula subject, and the semantic relation expressed. Copular constructions can, thus, be described as having a subject, a copula, and a non-verbal predicate (Bently 2017: 2).

Nominal clauses are formed using copula constructions. Payne (1997: 114) classified nominal clauses into three types. The first is distinguished by the presence of zero copulas where there is no a copula element, but the subject and predicate are simply juxtaposed. The copula appears in both the present and non-present tenses in the second group of nominal clauses. The copula in

the final group only appears in non-present tenses. According to Payne (1997: 114–115), there are six different types of copular construction strategies that are used in present and non-present tenses in languages all over the world: zero copula, verbal copulas, pronoun copulas, invariant particle copulas, derivational operation copulas, and copular morpheme or verb in non-present tenses. All the languages of the world do not necessarily use all the proposed strategies.

1. The copula as a verb

The copula joins the two nominals in a predicate nominal construction and has the morphosyntactic behaviors of the verb in a given language. Copular verbs share some properties with other ordinary verbs. Payne (1997:115) argues that copular verbs are semantically empty and a classic example of such verbs is the English *be*, and its equivalent in other languages which shows agreement for person and tense. Universally, copular verbs are characterized as very irregular, belong to the same semantic class and function as auxiliaries in some other constructions (cf. Payne1997:117). They can take NP, PP, AP, or AdvP as a complement.

2. The copula as a pronoun

A pronoun is used to conjoin two nominals in a predicate nominal construction, where the copular pronoun corresponds to the subject nominal. For example, Ge'ez employs a pronoun copula such as *wi?itu* and *ji?iti* (Girma 2007: 151-155) as shown below:

- (2) a. *ʔanə wi?itu məmhir*
 I PROCOP.3SGM teacher
 ‘It is me who is a teacher’ (Girma 2007: 152)
- b. *sošina sənajit ji?iti*
 Sosina beautiful PROCOP. 3SGF
 ‘Sosina is beautiful’ (Girma 2007: 152)

In both (2a), the personal pronoun *wi?itu* is used as a copula which is not inflected at all here. For the 3SGF subject, the copula *ji?iti* is used as shown in (2b); in (3b), the third person personal pronoun functions as copula which is in agreement with the subject. This tells that in Ge'ez, one of the ways of constructing tenseless copular clause is using a lexical pronoun that functions as copula. The pronoun copula in Ge'ez can occur between the predicate and the subject as in (2a). In (2a), a constituent is focused by moving the copula in the medial position. Geez is a predicate

initial language, and its basic order is Predicate-Copula-Subject as in *antä wi?tu kristos* ‘You are Christ’ (Mulusew 2014: 134)

3. The copula as an invariant particle

Some languages employ a unique invariant particle or the same particle regardless of the person, number, and gender of the subject or tense/aspect to join two nominals in a predicate nominal construction. Such a form does not exhibit any of the morphosyntactic properties of verbs such as tense. As illustrated in Ishetu (1989:9) and Crass et al. (2005:19-22), the (Western) Wellega Oromo employs particle copulas *-dha*² and *-ti* since they cannot be inflected for tense, aspect and mood. Consider the following example:

- (3) a. *kun saree-dā*
 this.NOM dog-PARCOP
 ‘This is a dog’
 b. *kuni mana saree-ti*
 this.NOM house dog.GEN-COP
 ‘This one is a dog’s house.’

As shown above, Oromo's copular element distribution is morphologically constrained. When a word or predicate ends in long vowels as in (3a), the copular element */-dā/* is affixed, whereas the particle */-i/* is used after words that end in consonants (Ishetu 1989: 9). Moreover, the copula */-ti/*, as it is first claimed by Ishetu (1989), is employed following possessive pronouns or possessor nouns that finish in a long vowel, as in (3b). Since the copula elements of Oromo do not show number-gender distinction and can be used to construct pragmatically marked and unmarked copular clauses, they are used invariably regardless of person, number, and gender of the subject of the copular clause. Thus, they are particles.

²The zero copula or the vowel *-i* are in complementary distribution with the particle copula *-dā*. These particles are distributed allomorphically so that *-dā* follows long vowels, *-i* follows consonants, and *-ø* following short vowels (cf. Ishetu 1989)

4. The copula as a derivational operation

Some languages form a nominal predicate clause by taking the predicate noun and applying a derivational operation that forms a verb from that noun. The nominal predicate then becomes a verb grammatically, and it can be seen by its position in the clause and the inflection it expresses. This derived verb has all of the verbal properties such as inflected for tense. Thus, it is possible to claim that this kind of copula is morphologically derived. Although Payne (1997: 118) claims that the copula is a derivational operation, I do not understand why this is a copula. This is because the notion that should be expressed in copular constructions is expressed in a verbal clause, so there is no copula at all.

5. The copula as null or zero morpheme

This type of phenomena is analyzed in two ways: (1) null copula and (2) no copula. In (1), there is a copula which does not have phonological form. In (2), there is not copula at all. In this kind of copular construction, two noun phrases are juxtaposed without an overt copular element. This is also called zero or empty copula. The zero copula is phonetically null, and semantically empty. The copula fails to appear in the sentence and only the subject and the complement show up. Geez, for instance, always simple juxtaposition of the subject and the predicate as in the construction in (4).

4 a. *dawit nigus*

Dawit king

‘Dawit is a king’ (Crass et al. 2005:13, see also Girma 2007: 151-152)

b. *māmhir/nāwwiha pawlos*

teacher/tall paul

‘Paul is/was a teacher/tall’ (Mulusew 2014: 133)

In (4a), the noun *nigus* ‘king’ represents the predicate of the copular clause, and there is no overt copula that conjoins the proper noun Dawit and the common noun *nigus* ‘king’. The unmarked order in zero copula constructions is predicate-subject, but the copula seems to be optionally null. The clause in (4b) is constructed by juxtaposing the subject and the predicate nominal without any overt copula morpheme.

6. The copular verb in non-present tenses

Languages that do not employ a copula in present tense predicate nominals always use a copular verb or a morpheme in some tenses, aspects and moods. Copular verbs or morphemes are commonly found in past and future tenses. In connection with this, Payne (1997:115) states, “A Copula may only occur in past tenses and semantically marked predicate nominal clauses and absent in present tense predicate nominals which consists of two juxtaposed noun phrases”

These are the typological constructions of predicate nominals found in all languages, as described by Payne (1997:114–119). Each language may make use of one, two, three, or all of the aforementioned copular construction methods. We will finally see the copula construction methods in Muher based on the Muher data collected through different methods.

According to studies conducted on copula construction strategies of Ethiopian languages such as Crass et al. (2005: 5) work, the presence of a copula in both present and non-present tenses is the most typical type of copula clauses. Verbal copulas demonstrate agreement with the subject by using suffixes, which can have a variety of functions depending on the context (Crass et al. 2005: 5). In other context, they can be employed as object agreement markers or subject agreement markers on non-copula perfective verbs (Crass et al. 2005: 5). Consider the following Muher data:

(5) *ədi mammo-n-k^w*

I Mammo-COP-1s[AgrS]

‘I am Mammo.’

Moreover, they assert that Geez and Tigre use pronoun copula structures despite the fact that other Ethiopian Semitic languages contain verbal copulas (Crass et al. 2005: 5). Crass et al. (2005) labeled each of the six Ethiopian languages according to the four types of copulas they found in each language and came to the conclusion that the present tense copula in Ethio-Semitic languages is based on the morpheme *-n(ə)*, which is in agreement with the present study. However, although they have identified the present tense copula, they did not make clear about the type(s) of copula constructions and they have not shown us the copula in different tenses such as the copula in the past and future, and clause types in Ethio-Semitic languages including Muher. One of the objectives of this research is to address these issues by describing the copula

construction strategies employed by Muher in different tenses and clauses. According to the above typology, my hypothesis about Muher present tense copula is that it may have features of Ethio-Semitic languages, but the way it is constructed may be different. This means as opposed to the present tense copula in Amharic and Geez, for example, which employed independent morphemes, the present tense copula *n-* in Muher is an enclitic element.

2.2.1.3. Classifications of the copular clauses (The taxonomic question): Generalities

Copular clauses are sentence types where the content predicate is not a verb but instead belongs to another category such as AP, NP, or PP (Mikkelsen 2011:1805). 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, predication, 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 although they are not universal. 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 equative clauses, the specificational clause being 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 part, 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 predication clause (identificational + predication) and the equative clause (specificational + equative). When I come to the Muher case, the above copular clause classification may not work

since the taxonomy of copular clauses in Muher will depend on the Muher data. Thus, in chapter seven of this thesis, the Muher copula clause is analyzed based on its own characteristic features without taking into account any theoretical taxonomy.

2.2.1.4. Copular clauses in some Ethiopian languages

Regarding copula clause types, there are few studies conducted in Ethiopian languages in general and Ethio-Semitic languages including Muher in particular (cf. Meyer 2007a & b; Girma 2007; Mulusew 2014; Aregawi 2020). Mulusew (2014), for example, has conducted a study on the syntax of non-verbal predication in Amharic and Geez. He dealt with the copula system of the two languages. He described the predication, identity, and locative copula clauses when he was discussing the Amharic Present tense copula *näw*. This would make Mulusew's work relevant to the present study, for these three copular clause types would be used as a starting point in identifying Muher's copular clause types since both Amharic and Muher are Ethio-Semitic languages. Similarly, Meyer (2007b: 175-192) analyzed the non-verbal predication in East Gurage Languages (Silt'e, Wolane and Zay), and Gannan Gurage Languages such as Kistane, Dobbi, Muher, Mesqan, Chaha and Endegen. Since the aim of his study is the structure of nominal clauses, he discussed the status and positions of the affirmative present tense *-n* in the above-mentioned languages.

These two studies have great importance to the present study in understanding the structure of copula clauses in Ethio-Semitic languages. However, regarding the taxonomy of copular clauses in Muher, Meyer (2007b) did not show clearly the different copular clause types. Besides, Mulusew's (2014) work would have been more important if he had shown clearly if there are or there are no other copular clause types such as equatives, possessives, and specificational in Amharic and Geez. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to identify explicitly the possible copular clause types in Muher.

Girma (2012) has also 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 (6).

- (6) a. *kasa astəməri n-əw [nəw]*
 kasa teacher be-3SGM
 ‘Kasa is a teacher’

- b. *kasa i-bet n-əw*
 kasa in-house be-3SGM
 ‘Kasa is in the house /at home’
- c. *jih kasa n-əw*
 this kasa be-3SGM
 ‘This is Kasa’

Girma calls clauses like (6a) predication copular clause, (6b) locative copular clause, and (6c) presentational copular clause. However, clauses like (6c) 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.

As discussed above, the copula is not a universal element or category. It depends on individual languages. Thus, Higgins's classifications of copular clauses based on English may not exactly fit Ethiopian languages in general and Muher, in particular. Besides, although Amharic, Geez and Eastern and Gunnän Gurage languages (Muher being one of them) are Ethio-Semitic languages, the kinds of copular clauses could be different since they belong to the different Ethio-Semitic language's genetic classifications, and hence different languages. Thus, the types of copular clauses that are found in Muher will be discussed in detail in chapter seven of this thesis.

2.2.1.5. Conceptualizing the notion of copula in Muher

In this thesis, the notion of copula is defined as a semantically empty element (an element that does not have semantic meaning) and is not part of the subject and the predicate of the non-verbal predication clause in Muher. In the present and non-present tenses, Muher employs a copula. This thesis identified *-n*, *nənə-*, and *bannə-* as copular morphemes in the affirmative main clause in Muher. However, in all other contexts, i.e. in subordination, in negation and in future tenses, auxiliary verbs are usually used. The Muher present tense copula *-n* is only used to denote a state of affairs which is true at the moment of the speech event. *-n* is a present tense predication copula, *nənə-* is a present tense existential copula and *bannə-* is the past tense predication and existential copula in Muher.

The subject and/or object agreement system each of the above copular elements employs, and the kinds of predicates they appear with are the two fundamental parameters that make the Muher copulas different. For instance, the present tense predication copula *-n* has an obligatorily

subject agreement suffix, and the predicate can be NPs and APs as in:

7. *aləmu təməri-n-ø/fik'ur-in-ø*
alemu student-COP.PRES-3SGM/fat-COP.PRES-3SGM
'Alemu is a student/fat'

As shown in (7), the complement to the present tense copula *-n* are the NP *təməri* 'student' and the AP *fik'ur* 'fat' and the subject agreement suffix is not overtly seen.

The present tense existential copula *nən-* is marked for subject agreement and it appears only with PPs which has a locative function as in:

8. *ambəzatif bə-bet dən nən-ət/itf-i*
Ambezach LOC-house inside EXIST-3SGMF-MVM
'Ambezach is at home'

In (8), the subject is *ambəzatif* and since Ambezach is a female, the 3SGF subject agreement suffix *-ət/itf* is attached to the existential copula *nən-*. The predicate is *bə-bet dən* 'at home' which is PP which, in turn, shows location.

The past tense copula *bannə*, however, can be used for both predication and existential copula clauses in the past, and has subject agreement suffix. Besides, it appears with all predicates (i.e. NPs, PPs, and APs). Consider the following examples:

9. *nurga təməri/bə-bet dən/fik'ur banno[bannə-ə-u]*
Nurga student/LOC-house inside/fat COP.PST.3SGM [COP.PST-3SGM_{Subj}-MVM]
'Nurga was a student/at home/fat'

As can be seen in (9) the past tense copula *bannə* shows up with the NP *təməri* 'student', the PP *bəbet dən* 'at home', and the AP *fik'ur* 'fat'. This confirms that the past tense copula *bannə-* can show up with all predicates. The subject agreement suffix is *-ə* which is in agreement with the third person singular masculine subject Nurga.

We can conclude that all of the above three copulas are inflected for subject agreement suffix. However, the predication present tense copula *-n* is morphosyntactically different from *nən-* and *bannə*. Morphosyntactically, *-n* is an enclitic element which is suffixed to NPs and/or APs, but lacks MVM and has partly suppletive person index (cf. Table 14). However, *nənə* and *bannə* are

morphosyntactically inflected alike for MVM.

The above three copular morphemes are different from other lexical verbs for the following reasons. First, the copulas *-n*, *nən-*, and *bannə-* occurs only in affirmative main clause. In other clause types, auxiliary verbs are employed. The other difference is that while *-n*, *nən-*, and *bannə-* have only perfective form, lexical verbs have both perfective and imperfective forms as in *srə-m* (buy.PFV.3SGM-DCM) vs *ji-srə-u* (3SGM-buy.IPFV-DCM).

Nevertheless, Muher employs different auxiliary verbs or semi-copulas in other constructions or situations such as in negation, future tense and subordination. For example, the semi-copula verb *anxən-* with subject agreement suffixes can be used to have a negative present tense reading, *jənnə* is used to have a negative present tense existential reading, and the imperfective verb *xən-* with prefixes such as *ti-* or *ji-* and subject agreement suffixes can be used to express future tense in Muher.

Both copular verbs and the semi-copula or auxiliary verbs will be presented and then thoroughly analyzed in Chapter Four of this thesis by taking appropriate data from the *anə bet* variety of Muher.

2.2.2. Information structure basic notions

One of the means that people use to convey messages to others is using language in context and such use is called discourse. Discourse is structured in certain ways to be meaningful so that people understand each other. Speakers create expressions based on linguistic rules and as a result, interlocutors comprehend the expressions and give relevant responses. On one hand, the structure of discourse is related to syntactic rules in which discourse is categorized as being grammatical or ungrammatical (Gee, 1999:29). On the other hand, discourse is pragmatically structured based on the information it carries implying that discourse cannot be judged from the formal features that it has. For example, the object can be preposed to the initial position of a sentence for a particular pragmatic effect (Winkler, 2012:73; Lambrecht, 1994:339). Such word order restructuring is discussed in the scope of information structure (Halliday, 1967:200). Information structure concerns how information in discourse is structured and how a particular syntactic structure is used in a particular context while another structure is avoided (Ward & Birner, 2006:153). The way information is structured in a sentence is the determinant factor for

communication. Besides, Lambrecht (1994:7) contents that rather than dealing with discourse structure, the systematic arrangement of clauses within a discourse is the focus of information structure.

All sentences and utterances have an information structure (Lambrecht, 1994:338). Because different information structure roles such as 'topic' and 'focus' are expressed with different formal devices, information analysis primarily compares allosentence pairings, such as active vs. passive, canonical vs. topicalized, and canonical vs. preposed or dislocated, that are semantically comparable but formally and pragmatically distinct (Lambrecht, 1994:6). However, this does not mean that they do not have a derivational relationship.

The way information is structured varies from language to language. Information can be conveyed by a variety of linguistic systems, including phonology, morphology, syntax, or a combination of these (Zimmermann & Onea 2011: 1658). Phonological or prosodic elements like pitch accent, deaccentuation, and short pauses can be used to encode information structure (Hadian et al. 2013:24). Similar to this, (Dik et al. 1981:42) expresses that prosodic characteristics such as intonation prominence, stress, loud tone, and emphatic accent give focus to linguistic utterances

IS can also be encoded syntactically (Foley & van Valin 1985:284). Syntactically, information structure can be encoded via cleft constructions and canonical word order changes. Regarding this, according to Payne (1997:268), clauses might be "focused" or "focus neutral," with the "focused" clauses expressing a pragmatic meaning. Payne went on to say that Languages typically use certain morpho-syntactic operators to denote various pragmatic functions; these constructions are sometimes known as "focus" or "emphatic devices." (Payne 1997:262).

Based on the syntactic rules of a given language, topic is marked via special constituent orders. Subject, object and verb are the basic syntactic elements in the word order pattern of languages. The arrangement of the word order in a sentence is not random. Instead, words come together to form constituents, which are groups of varying sizes (Kroeger 2005:26). Languages can structure the same information using different sentences (active and passive sentence construction). In such conditions, the NPs indicate different syntactic behavior (Foley and van Valin 1985:284). To mark topic syntactically, special constructions such as constituent movement, topicalization,

and left and right dislocations can also be used. In fact, these are all dislocations from a syntactic position.

Information structure notions are grounded in the phenomenon of information packaging as a response to the communicative needs of interlocutors (Chafe 1976:27; Féry & Krifka 2008:123). According to Erteschik-Shir (2007:1), who links context with information structure, concepts that are understood and unrecognized in a given context play a significant role in defining the linear order of constituents. Erteschik-Shir adds that the information structure of a utterance is determined by the interaction of intonation, morpho-lexical components, and word order.

For discourse coherence, the informational link between the present utterance and a preceding context is important (Ward & Betty 2004: 153). Through this link, the hearer establishes and tracks relationships between the present utterance and the preceding context. These relationships can be shown by distinct linguistic forms such as the definite article to mark the referent of a noun phrase within the discourse model (Ward & Betty 2004:153). Therefore, the listener can easily remember and associate him/herself with appropriate referents from the previous information.

Lehmann (2008:208) reports two aspects of information structure: functional and structural. A functional aspect of information structure has the following sub-domains:

1. presupposition vs. assertion of propositions (known vs. not yet known),
2. identifiability and activation of referents (status of mental representations in the addressee's mind, from active to brand-new unanchored),
3. topic vs. focus status of elements of propositions (predictability vs. unpredictability of relations between propositions and their elements).

However, in the structural aspect of information structure, lexical and grammatical means are used to code the propositions, predications and referents, and grammatical markers are used to show information structure (Lehmann 2008:208).

Utterances are analyzed based on information units or sub-domains that are contained in the IS. What the speaker chooses to encode as a discourse unit is known as an information unit (Halliday 1967:202). There are various terms used to conceptualize information structure. Based

on their function, information structure is divided into information units: focus/background, given/new, topic/comment, theme/rheme ...etc. These terms are called pragmatic statuses (Payne 1997:261; Lambrecht 1997: 117 & 206). Therefore, when we consider information structure, we should take into account these basic categories and/or concepts that reflect how information is usually structured in languages. Some of the commonly used pairs of information units are reviewed and discussed below.

2.2.2.1. Focus/Background

Human language has a universal and distinctive focus/background structure (cf. Krifka 2006: 1). The information structure of a clause or a sentence has an element that is less known or less informative information and another element that is used as a background or old information. Background information refers to the knowledge shared by both the speaker and the hearer, whereas focus is the unshared knowledge. Cheng (2012:495) believes that given information and presupposition may correlate with each other, while focus correlates with assertion. However, new information does not necessarily correlate only with the focused element. Background/presupposition is out of the scope of the focus part, while foreground/focus is in the scope of the focus part.

Focus is one of the clause internal pragmatic functions in any natural language text. These constituents are concerned with the informational status of constituents in a given communicative setting. There are several definitions of focus by different scholars. For example, Krifka (2008: 247) states, “Focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions.” He asserts that the general definition does not indicate the way focus can be marked. However, it can be shown by different means. Early definitions of focus were based on the concept of “new information” that the speaker does not share with the addressee (in contrast to “old information” that both share).

Focus as Lambrecht (1994:213) characterizes is “the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition.” Presupposition is something that the speaker assumes to be the circumstance before the utterance. And, therefore, it is related to the speaker since the utterance is articulated by him/her but not with the properties which are ‘newly’ given constituents of a sentence.

Different languages have different types of focus systems and strategies. Depending on their typological variations, languages show different forms of focalizing devices to mark focus in different sentential structures. Dik (1981: 42) formulates the following as the major devices for signaling focus in actual forms of linguistic expressions.

1. Intonational prominence: stress, high tone, emphatic accent.
2. Special focus markers: Particles that mark off the focus constituents from the rest of a clause.
3. Special constituent orders: Special positions for focus constituents in the linear order of the clause.
4. Special focus constructions intrinsically define a certain distribution of focus over the structure of a clause, such as cleft in pseudo-cleft constructions.

2.2.2.2. Given/New

Givenness is another important category of information structure. Using language, speakers and addressees can comprehend one another. Both are aware of the communicative issue as a result of the shared linguistic context; the hearer is cognizant of some of the information communicated by the speaker. Krifka (2008:262) presents two distinct types of givenness: givenness feature which can be expressed using anaphora and that expressed by grammatical devices. The anaphoric expression can be personal pronouns, clitics and person inflection, demonstratives, and definite articles. The difference between given and new information determines word order (Foley and Van Valin, 1985:286-287). Given information can come before new information in languages with somewhat flexible word order.

The dimension given-new is a typical pair in information structuring. As Halliday (1967) distinguishes their difference, a given information “is offered as recoverable anaphorically or situationally” (1967:211) and the new one is “not being recoverable from a preceding discourse” (1967:204). Similarly, Locke and Angela (2006:240) point out that given information is the information that is provided by the address if it is retrievable to the addressee(s). The information provided serves as background for the new one. Given-new expressions adhere to an information unit structure that is pragmatically unmarked, whereas new-given expressions adhere to an information unit structure that is pragmatically marked. New-given expression corresponds with focus-background information.

2.2.2.3. Topic/Comment

Kirfka (2006:1) and Chen (2009:166) assert the universality of topic-comment structure and its being a unique feature of human language. A speaker usually introduces a topic and then states something about it in a topic-comment word order. What is predicated about the topic is the comment. From a discourse-pragmatic perspective, topic and comment, express new and old information (Burling 1992:246; Kim 2008:10).

Intonation, morphology and syntax play their roles to encode the topic-comment relationship (Gundel 1988:216). The syntactic structure is the most frequent means of encoding a topic-comment structure universally (Gundel 1988:223).

The main distinction between topic and subject is their relation with a predicate; the subject of a sentence has a grammatical relation, but a topic has not. The topic-comment relation is semantic and may or may not be grammatical. That means it is difficult to infer topic-comment meaning out of the syntactic structure solely (Chen 2009:166).

Topic can be defined into two perspectives: discourse topic and sentence topic or clausal topic. The discourse topic mainly concerns discourse understanding and text cohesion (Lambrecht 1994:117). Discourse topic expresses what discourse is all about. Lambrecht restricted the discussion to the sentence topic or the clause topic, and his definition is drawn back to the definition of “subject” in traditional grammar. It says that topic is ABOUT WHAT the sentence is (Lambrecht 1994: 118). He asserts that topic and subject are not necessarily identical from semantic position. “Topics are not necessarily grammatical subjects, and grammatical subjects are not necessarily topics, at least in languages like English”(Lambrecht 1994:118). The problem is that regarding aboutness and relevance, the definitions of topic sometimes do not determine the topic of a sentence in a syntactic structure (Lambrecht 1994:120). For example, in the sentence *The children went to school*, the children is the topic and the syntactic structure of this sentence has nothing to determine this topic, but the discourse context (previous knowledge of the speaker and the addressee) does.

In information structure, topic and comments are units that go together. Topic refers to the object that the speaker is thinking about, and comment refers to what the speaker is thinking about (Krifka 2008: 264f). He further states, “The topic constituent identifies the entity or set of

entities under which the information expressed in the comment constituent should be stored in the CG [Common Ground] content” (2008: 265). For the concept of topic that is conflated with old information, the Prague School prefers the term "theme" (Krifka 2008: 265). Although the topic that can be inferred from the context is typically "old", it is possible to have a 'new' one. Krifka (2008: 266) says that a sentence that has no topic constituent is known as ‘thetic’.

2.2.2.4. Theme/rheme

The concept of theme/rheme is important. Halliday (2014:88) discusses the theme/rheme in terms of the message that a clause contains for the flow of the discourse. To convey that message, the clause uses three lines of meaning: message, exchange and representation. “The structure that carries this line of meaning is known as thematic structure [information structure]” Halliday (2014: 88). Theme plays the role of message in the structure of the clause (Halliday 2014: 83).

The theme is a part of the clause, and the combination of the theme with the remainder (rheme) form of a message (Halliday 2014: 88). Therefore, the relationship of theme and rheme in a clause contributes a lot to understand the message.

Some languages state themes by particles like Japanese and some others by position in a clause like English. In spoken or written English, the thematic status can be indicated as appearing first (Halliday 2014:88).

In information structuring, the speaker/writer selects the theme s/he wants to give emphasis. During this selection, “there can be variation in what is chosen as the thematic element in the clause” (Halliday 2014:90).

The above categories of information structure are not totally different notions as they are separately presented. They share common features. For example, focus and topic share features; some languages use the same phonological and morphological means to mark both topic and contrastive focus (Mereu 2009:2) which is context construable.

2.3. Previous Studies

There are many descriptive studies on Ethiopian languages in general and Gurage languages in particular. However, in the present study only those studies which are relevant to the topics in

question and the language, Muher, will be reviewed. Research works related to Gurage languages including Muher, copula constructions and information structure are considered next.

2.3.1. Studies on Gurage Languages in General and on Muher in Particular

Wolf Leslau and Robert Hetzron are the two prominent scholars who have contributed significant research works on Gurage languages including Muher. For example, Leslau (1981/1992: 117-181) did a sketch grammar of Muher. He has also collected texts from Muher (cf. Leslau 1981). He did a comparative study of the phonology, morphology and lexemes of Gurage languages and other Ethio-Semitic languages. The other contribution of Leslau is that he compared the internal relationship between Muher, Dobbi, and Mesqan on the one hand, and Muher, Dobbi and Kistane on the other. Finally, he came up with the conclusion that Muher, Dobbi and Mesqan belong to a single branch within Western Gurage based on their common morphological features and vocabularies.

Leslau has also compiled a three-volume etymological dictionary of Gurage languages. In Leslau (1979a) the front matter contains some remarks on the main linguistic features of the Gurage languages and their geographical distribution. In the A-Z part (body part) of the dictionary, the lexemes (the head words in Chaha, Endegeñ, Inor, Ezha, Dobbi, Gyeto, Mesqan, Muher, Silt'e, Kistane, Wolane and Zay with their etymologies are listed. The second volume presents the English-Gurage index (Leslau 1979b). The third volume (1979c) provides a comparative Gurage wordlist based on English as the main entry (A-Z) with equivalents in the various Gurage languages. This work is relevant to my work in that it helps me to look up the meaning of some of the Muher words of the data.

The other renowned researcher on Gurage languages is Robert Hetzron. Based on verb morphology and forms of independent pronouns, Hetzron (1972, 1977) indicated the genealogical classification of Ethiopian Semitic languages. Focusing on the phonological, morphological and syntactic features, Hetzron (1975) has written comparative grammatical notes and texts on the different Gurage languages. This helps me to see the salient grammatical features of Muher.

There are also other scholars whose contribution to Gurage languages is worth mentioning. For example, Ullendorff (1955) carried out a study that compared the phonology of Gurage

languages and other Semitic languages. Finally, he came up with twenty-nine consonants and seven vowel phonemes for the entire Gurage languages. This study also has relevance to the present study, for it helped me to understand the phonemic inventory of Muher so that I did not have much more problem when I elicited data from my Muher informants.

While the above general studies on Gurage languages are significant to the present study in pinpointing what has not yet been done, all of them lack an in-depth description of copula constructions and information structure in Gurage languages in general and in Muher specifically.

Regarding Muher, there are some studies such as (Leslau 1981; Rose 1996; Meyer 2005, 2007 and 2012; Awlachew 2010, and Meyer 2019; Aregawi 2020; Meyer 2022). Leslau (1981) provided a sketch grammar of Muher with no detailed descriptions and/or analysis of copula construction and information structure. The most recent work is Meyer's (2019) study on the grammatical sketch of the *ædi-bet* variety of Muher in which the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language are described very generally. However, although Meyer identified the copulas in Muher when he analyzed the verb morphology of the language, he did not show clearly their distribution and use with sufficient data (cf. Meyer 2019: 245). Meyer claims that the word order of Muher is "strictly topic-comment order" (Meyer 2019: 246), which this thesis also confirms, but he has not described in detail all the notions of information structure such as background-focus and old-new. He has also a section that states the focus marker of Muher are contrastive *-m* and assertive *-f*. However, although I agree with Meyer's claim on the contrastive role of *-m*, it would have been better if he has shown as the different sub-categorical functions of the contrastive focus marker *-m* in Muher. I also argue that *-f* has a topic setting function in question besides its assertive focus function. Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill in the gap in the study of Muher information structure notions such as topic and focus.

Another study on Muher is Rose (1996) which explored the object and present tense markers and *a*-final verb stems complex the grammatically-conditioned allomorphs of Muher. Rose attempted to show the functions of the allomorphs as multiple exponents of morphological categories. She also admitted that the classification of the allomorphs of object markers as heavy suffixes (which occur with the 2SGF, impersonal and plural subjects) and light suffixes (which occur with the

other non-2fs singular subjects). These suffixes were identified earlier by Polotsky (1938) and Hetzron (1977: 65).

Awlachev (2010) identified 37 consonant and 9 vowel phonemes that made up the complete phonemic inventory of Muher. He also identified the most common phonological processes such as assimilation. He attempted to describe the noun and verb morphology of the language. He shows that gender and number are lexically marked or by agreement affixes attached to verbs. He identified the morpheme *jə-* marking accusative, genitive and dative cases in Muher (Awlachev 2010: 65). Similarly, Meyer (2005: 41-59) presented the different functions of the morpheme *jə-* in Muher syntax underscoring that the accusative marking in Muher depends mainly on pragmatics, not on syntax. This is because the syntax of Muher is strongly influenced by extra-sentential considerations evolving from pragmatic information on the definiteness and referentiality of the involved NPs.

In his study on the typology of motion verbs in Muher, Meyer (2007a) identified two types of destinations: stationary and moveable. While the moveable destination is marked by the locative *-ət* ‘place’, the stationary one is morphologically unmarked. Prototypical motion/path verbs can occur in main clauses and do not mark their destination morphologically, but prototypical motion/manner verbs only occur in modifying non-finite clauses and marking their destination by prefixes (Meyer 2012: 142). According to Meyer (2012), the majority of Muher nouns lack morphological markers for number, allowing a word to refer to the singular or plural with the same form; a noun can be singular or plural in the same form. The agreement affixes that are attached to the verbs determine number (singular and/or plural) in Muher.

The above studies show some areas that require further description. One area is the way copula is constructed and information is structured in Muher. This requires an in-depth study and the present study is an attempt towards an exhaustive description of copular constructions and information structure in the *anə-bet* variety of Muher.

2.3.2. Studies on Copula Constructions

Copula constructions and information structure have received little attention in descriptive studies of Ethiopian languages. Only a few studies on Ethiopian languages have been done in

these areas, and those that have been done lack thorough descriptions and analysis. Let us begin reviewing those studies conducted on copula constructions in Ethiopian languages.

Crass et.al (2005) is a study on copula constructions in a few selected languages of Ethiopian. With supplementary information from Amharic, Muher, Tigrinya, Argobba, Harari, Kistane, and Wolane, it provides a summary of the present copula constructions in Ethio-Semitic (Ge'ez, Tigre, Zay, and Silt'e) and Cushitic (Wellegga Oromo and K'abeena) languages. Crass, et al. (2005) explored the conjugation of the copula *-n* in a number of Gunnän languages, including Muher, but they did not provide a thorough explanation of how the copula is constructed in these languages. Besides, the study is limited only to the present tense copula *-n*; the study did not investigate copular clauses in different tenses (e.g. past and future) and different clauses (e.g. negative and subordinate) in Muher.

Crass and Ronny (2007) carried out another investigation on copula constructions in Ethiopian languages. This study presented and discussed copula constructions in K'abeena and Libido (Crass 2007: 13-25), Alaaba (Schneider 2007: 53-70), Kambaata (Treis 2007: 71-98), Anfillo (Debela 2007: 119-126), Ge'ez and Tigre (Girma 2007: 151-164), Amharic and Geez (Mulusew 2014), Inor (Suter 2007: 193-210), Muher (Aregawi 2020) and Oromo (Eshetu 2021).

The above studies are important for the current study because they cover copula constructions. Suter's (2007) study is related to the current study in that Suter attempted to describe how copula is constructed and information is structured in Inor, one of the Gurage languages. Regarding Muher copula constructions, Meyer (2007b: 178), in his study on the non-verbal predication in Easter Gurage and Gunnän Gurage languages, attempted to demonstrate a copula construction marker in Muher when discussing affirmative nominal main clauses in the present tense, which are marked by a suffixed copula *-n(ε)* along with other Gurage languages, except Zay “which only juxtaposes subject and predicate nominal but additionally employs focus and declarative clause markers to indicate the main clause” (Meyer 2007b:176). However, he did not fully describe or explain in detail the copula constructions of Muher, for his goal was to compare the non-verbal predication in Easter Gurage and Gunnän Gurage languages.

Mulusew (2014) is one of the studies conducted on copula constructions in Amharic, Muher-related Ethiopian languages (Ethio-Semitic). Mulusew (2014) provided a detailed syntactic

analysis of the copular constructions of Amharic and Geez. He has just presented the underlined reasons for the differences in the copular elements in both languages based on their agreement system and the type of predicate they co-occur. His major claim was that the non-verbal predication system in Amharic and Geez show variations in terms of their copula system and case marking patterns of NPs or APs.

Regarding Amharic, Mulusew (2014: 79-83) argued that the present tense predication copula *nāw* is an impersonal copula that is marked for 3SGM subject and object agreements. The existential copula *allä* and the past tense copula *näbbär* are personal copulas that are marked for object, subject and/or subject and object agreement. *nāw* is marked for an invariable 3MSG subject agreement and can combine with all types of predicates; the copula *allä* and *näbbär* are marked only for subject agreements or subject and object agreement since they behave like personal verbs while *nāw* is impersonal ones.

Mulusew (2014 : 137; 148 & 155) discusses copulaless clauses and the verbal copulas *konä* and *halläwä* of Geez; *konä* and *halläwä* differ in the way they select predicate, agreement and case-marking of NPs and APs. He also discusses pronoun and prepositional copula clauses in Geez. He claimed that, unlike verbal copulas which indicate TAM, pronoun and prepositional copula clauses inherently show predication, identity, location, and possession relationship between the subject and the predicate (cf. Mulusew 2014 188-198). Mulusew (2014: 193-196) argued that pronoun copulas are used when the predication/identity relationship between the subject and the predicate is inherent as opposed to contingent, while prepositional copulas are used when there is an inherent locate-location or possessee-possessor relationship.

The present study has very close similarities with Mulusew's (2014) study in that both studies identified *-n/-ja*, *nənə* and *bannə* in Muher and *nāw* (*n-*), *allä* (*all-*) and *näbbär* in Amharic, for the present tense copula, existential copula and the past tense copula. Muher copulas take subject agreement suffixes (person, number and gender), and the existential and past tense copulas *nənə* and *bannə*, respectively are similarly inflected for the main verb marker (cf. Chapter four of this thesis). The copulas, in Muher, do not have the morphosyntactic properties of verbs, and they do not inflect for tense, aspect and/or mood. Besides, Mulusew ((2014) did not treat the negative counterparts of the above-mentioned copula verbs in Amharic. Furthermore, His analysis seems limited only to simple declarative affirmative main clauses. He did not discuss the non-verbal

predication in Amharic and Geez in interrogative clauses, and questions, and subordinating or complex clauses. As opposed to Mulusew's (2014) study, the present study, however, tried to analyze Muher copula constructions in different clauses types (See Chapter four).

Aregawi's (2020) PhD dissertation is another descriptive grammar work on Muher. Aregawi has identified the possible copular verbs in Muher (Aregawi 2020: 190-200), but the discussion is not as such exhaustive. He also presented the status of the present tense copula -n, yet it is mentioned as a word final suffix attached to nouns and adjectives, and at the same time it is given a free word status (cf. Aregawi 2020: 190). Besides, the "negative present tense copula anxon- appears with the affirmative present tense copula -n, and the subject agreement suffix is attached to it and glossed as ISG, which I do not agree with (Aregawi 2020: 191). Aregawi presented *banno* as the past tense copula in Muher, but he claimed that *banno* do not occur with main verb markers (MVMs). However, I argue that *banno* is inflected for MVM in addition to the subject agreement suffixes that shows person, number and gender.

Therefore, conducting an in-depth study on Muher copula constructions and information structure seems logical, for there is no detailed study on these two areas in Muher.

2.3.3. Studies on information structure

In the descriptive studies of Ethiopian languages, some issues have not been treated thoroughly. One of these issues is information structure. Such studies show there is a topic that calls for attention. There are few studies on focus and topic phenomena in Ethiopian languages. These studies include the syntax of focus and topic in Somali (Saeed 1984), focus system and/or phenomena in Oromo (cf. Baye 1988; Saeed 1989; Taha 1990; Dabala & Meyer 2003; Eshetu 2021; Aynalem 2020). Moreover, a study has been conducted on the copula and copula constructions in six Ethiopian languages: Ge'ez, Tigre, Wellega Oromo, K'abeena, Zay, and Silt'e (cf. Crass et al. 2005).

Baye (1988) described the focus system of Oromo in light of the generative framework of Chomsky (1981, 1986) and Williams (1977) and claimed that focus is a matter of discourse grammar. He has identified three types of focus in relation to the four syntactic categories of Oromo and the focus elements are /-tu/, /hin-/ and /-dā/ in NP, VP and PP, respectively. The

result also shows that when adjectives are focused, they use prosodic features or structural devices such as cleft constructions (Baye 1988: 383).

In his study on the prefix *hin-* in Wellega Oromo, Saeed (1989) described *hin-* as an affirmative and negative focus marker in the verb. He classified focus as affirmative and interrogative. However, he did not mention the types and scope of focus markers and other devices like prominence, word order, and focalizing particles such as */-tu/*.

Taha (1990) described the types, scopes, functions and distributions of focus in Oromo in light of Dik's (1978, 1989) Functional Grammar (FG). The result of his study shows that in Oromo, prosodic prominence, special word order, special focus markers and special constructions are found to be focalizing devices. Assertive, counter-assertive, exhaustive listing, polar, and counter-polar focus types were also defined by Taha. These kinds of focus correspond to the functions of completing, replacing, expanding, reflecting, and parallel focus.

Dabala and Meyer (2003) argued that Wellega Oromo is different from other Oromo varieties in the way focus is marked morphologically. They described the functions and distributions of the focus marking morphemes and their constructions. They have identified *-tu*, *-ti* and *-dha* as focus marking morphemes. Besides, word order changes or accusative marking for certain proper names and pronouns, which are a closed class of human nominals used as strategies for emphasizing particular constituents of a sentence in discourse (Dabala & Meyer 2003: 191). They found out that the distribution and various functions (syntactic and pragmatic) of the focus marking morphemes in Wellega Oromo are complex due to continuous processes of syntactic changes which result in overlapping systems of morphosyntax and pragmatics.

The most recent studies on focus systems in Oromo are Eshetu (2021) and Aynalem (2020). These two recent studies identified as many focus marking morphemes as possible in addition to the focus marking morphemes identified by Baye (1988), Saeed (1989), Taha (1990), and Dabala and Meyer (2003), which were *-tu*, *-ti*, *-dha*, and *hin*.

Eshetu (2021: 105-108) identified and claimed that *-tu*, *-dhaa*, *-tii*, *-uma*, and *-illee*, on one hand, and *-uu*, *-oo*, *hin*, *ni-*, and *-tii*, on the other hand, are contrastive and assertive focus marking morphemes in Oromo, respectively.

Although Eshetu (2021) claims that focus in Oromo can be marked syntactically, morphologically, and prosodically, little attention or coverage is given to the syntactic and prosodic focus marking strategies in Oromo. Moreover, Chapter 5 (pages 27-71 and 77-85), Chapter 6 (pages 88-104), and Chapter 7 (pages 105-114) discussed the same focus marking morphemes in Oromo, and there seem to be unnecessary repetitions and hence full of verbosity. I would argue that these chapters could have been merged and treated in detail. In Eshetu's (2021) study, other focus marking means are treated very little. For example, the syntactic focus marking strategy is discussed only in very few pages (cf. Eshetu 2021: 70-76), and only two pages treated the prosodic means (cf. Eshetu 2021: 76-77).

The most recent work on focus phenomena in Oromo is Aynalem's (2020) PhD dissertation entitled "information structure in Oromo" in which prosodic and syntactic focus marking strategies are relatively treated better than Eshetu's (2021) study, and the other above-mentioned studies. Regarding morphological focus marking strategies, and the kinds of morphemes used to encode focus in Oromo, I could not see any difference between Eshetu's (2021) and Aynalem's (2020) studies. The only difference I observed in these two recent studies is that Aynalem treated the morphemes by giving subheadings and subsections to some of the morphemes.

As can be seen from the above previous studies, almost all attempts emphasize only the functions and distributions of focus marking morphemes and other strategies such as word order. These studies are very relevant for the present study since one of the issues to be treated in the present study is focus which is one of the basic notions of information structuring. However, the above studies do not cover all the issues that must be treated regarding focus as an information structuring notion.

Girma and Meyer (2007) examine the information structure of Amharic sentences with regard to topicalization. Girma and Meyer (2007) argued that the morphemes *-mma* and *-ss* are contrastive topic markers in Amharic although topic is marked by fronting (preposing) a constituent in the clause-initial position. As opposed to previous studies such as Leslau (1995) who claimed that the morpheme *-mm* together with *-mma* and *-ss* is a topic marker, Girma and Meyer (2007: 21-26) argue that the morpheme *-mm* is a contrastive focus marker. This paper will also treat *-mm* as a contrastive focus marker in Muher. The morphemes *-mma* and *-f* are also contrastive topic markers in Muher (cf. Chapter five of this thesis). In this sense, the thesis is in agreement with

Girma and Meyer's (2007) analysis. However, the present thesis analyzes the information structure notions such as topic and focus prosodically, lexically, morphologically, syntactically and pragmatically in addition to *-mma* and *-f*.

Regarding Muher focus and topic phenomena, Aregawi (2020: 281-284) has raised these two issues in his descriptive grammar work on Muher. However, these topics were not exhaustive. For example, the notion of topic as one of the information structure notions is expressed only by topicalization only in less than half a page (Aregawi 2020: 281). In his descriptive work on Muher focus which is outlined to much lesser extent, Aregawi (2020: 281-284) claimed that focus can be constructed only by dislocation and clefting. To Aregawi, "focus is constructed by fronting the constituent which the speaker deems as the most important bit of information for the clause." However, I argue that fronting is not the only way to encode focus. Besides, object fronting can be used to encode topic via topicalization in Muher. Thus, Aregawi's only fronting as a focus marker should be challenged since fronting is not always associated with focus.

What I have learned from the above studies was that they have not treated copula constructions in different tenses and clause types rigorously. Therefore, the present study is different from the above studies in that it treats all the issues related to information structure by integrating the little studied interface between morphosyntax, semantics and pragmatics. Except Girma and Meyer's (2007), and Mulusew's (2014) studies on Amharic and (Geez) and Aregawi's (2020) short description of the issue of Muher focus and topic, most of the previous studies are on focus constructions in Oromo. The present study, however, is conducted to describe copula constructions and information structure in Muher, an Ethio-Semitic language.

CHAPTER THREE

SALIENT LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF MUHER

This chapter presents the salient linguistic features of Muher. Since the genetic classification of Muher is still a matter of discussion or the position of Muher in the genetic and typological classification of Gurage languages is controversial (cf. Leslau 1969:96; Hetzron 1972:119; Rose 1997:5; Meyer 2019: 227), only peculiar phonological, morphological and syntactic features of Muher language are presented. The reason for presenting this grammatical sketch is to enable the readers to understand the examples I am going to present in the main parts of this dissertation (Chapters 4-7). Thus, for this purpose, data are predominantly taken from previous studies on Muher such as Meyer (2005, 2007, 2011, 2019), Awlachew (2010), Rose (1994, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2007), Leslau (1979, 1981, 1997) and Hetzron (1972).

3.1. Phonology

Within a broader Ethio-Semitic context, Muher has many interesting morphophonological issues as opposed to Kistane, Dobbi, and Eastern Gurage varieties (Meyer 2011: 1225). In this section, both the segmental and suprasegmental peculiar features of Muher are described in short. Segmental features such as consonant and vowel phonemes and supersegmental features such as gemination are also described. Besides, this section describes the syllable structure and phonological processes of Muher.

3.1.1. Consonants

The actual phonemic status of the consonant phonemes in Muher is different from other Gurage varieties. For instance, the phonemic status of the glottal stop ʔ is not the same as Muher and Kistane and Dobbi; it is an allophone of *k'* in Muher, but a free variant of *k'* in Kistane and Dobbi (cf. Hetzron 1977: 38). The detailed discussions regarding the different consonant phonemes in Muher are presented below Table 1. Hetzron (1977: 37) and Leslau (1981: 6-9) identified the following consonant phonemes in Muher.

Table 1: Consonant phonemes in Muher

			Place of Articulation					
			Labial	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	(Labio) Velar	Glottal
Manner of Articulation	Stop	VD	b, b ^w	t		g ^j	g, g ^w	
		VL		d		k ^j	k, k ^w	[ʔ]
		EJ		tʰ		kʰ ^j	kʰ, k ^w	[ʔ ^w]
	Affricatives	VD			dʒ			
		VL			tʃ			
		EJ			tʃʰ			
	Fricatives	VD		z	ʒ			
		VL	f, f ^w	s	ʃ	x ^j	x, x ^w	
	Nasal		m, m ^w	n		ɲ		
	Liquid			r, l				
Glides					j	w		

Although the phonemic status of the glottal stop (ʔ) is not clear or uncertain, it occurs as an allophone of /kʰ/. The position of the glottal stop as a phoneme is limited to word-initial position or the word onset (Rose 2007: 1063; Meyer 2011: 1226). The labialized [ʔ^w] is also considered as the allophone of the ejective /k^w/ postvocally. Regarding the consonant /h/, Hetzron (1977:37-38) lists it as an independent phoneme, and the phone [x] is the allophone of /h/ in Muher. Rose (2007: 1063), on the other hand, claims that in the *anə bet* variety of Muher [h] is an allophone of /x/. In this thesis, /x/ is consistently used as an independent phoneme. The phonemes /b/ and /b^w/ have the allophones [β] and [w], respectively. Regarding [β], Hetzron (1977: 37) said that [β] is an allophone of b, not a phoneme in its own right.

In Muher (also in the other Gunnän Gurage languages), labialization frequently occurs with labial, velar and glottal consonants. Besides palatalized velars are unique features of Muher. This means Muher is characterized by the presence of labialized and palatalized consonants such as /k^w, k^w, g^w, x^w, k^j, k^j, g^j, x^j/ which have the four plain surface velar consonants /k, k', g, x/ (Rose 2000: 107). According to Meyer (2011: 1277) and Leslau (1997: 374), the labialized consonant b^w is further weakened to w in the intervocalic position in Muher. Although Ullendorff (1955: 33) generally believed that /b^w, m^w, f^w, x, l/ are not part of the phonemic inventory of Gurage languages, Awlacheu (2010: 13) and all other scholars considered these sounds phonemic in Muher since they can occur word-initially, -medially and -finally as shown in the following data.

- (1) a. *b^wisb^wis* ‘rotten’
 b. *tab^w* ‘may she give (it) to him’
 c. *f^wən f^wə* ‘first growing stages of inset’
 d. *zini f^w* ‘hit (3SGF) him’
 e. *tixə* ‘Child’
 f. *xirrə* ‘forearm’
 g. *alləmət* ‘tongue’
 h. *gəli* ‘cold’
 i. *ləssassa* ‘smooth’

The allophonic distribution between *n*, *l*, and *r* is the other unique characteristic of Muher in which *l* is more prevalent and it occurs geminated or non-geminated although *n* and *r* can be geminated as in *innam* ‘cow’ and *arrət* ‘cut’, respectively. Another basic feature of Muher is that most of the verbs with consonants as the last radical can be palatalized or labialized in the impersonal passive. But when the sonorants /l, r, n/ appear as the last radical in the active form of a verb they are not palatalized or labialized (Biruk 2013: 39). In Muher, /ɲ/ is a marginal phoneme that does not occur word-initially.

The consonant phonemes /p, p', v, s'/ occur only in loan or borrowed words such as *Pagume*, *p'app'as*, and *P'etros* and they are not productive in Muher (Hetzron 1977: 37; Leslau 1981: 9; Rose 1997: 8)

Labialized and palatalized consonants are considered phonemic since they occur word-initially, -medially, and –finally. Besides, they constitute minimal pairs (Awlachew 2010: 13; Rose 1997:8, and Leslau 1981: 9). The following data are taken from Awlachew (2020: 13)

Phonemes	Minimal Pairs
-----------------	----------------------

- | | |
|----|--|
| a. | /k'/ vs. /gi/ as in <i>k'ər</i> ‘horn’ vs. <i>giər</i> ‘name of a place’ |
| b. | /gi/ vs. /ki/ vs. /k'i/ as in <i>figiə</i> ‘treat (2FS)!’ vs. <i>fik'iə</i> ‘go (2FS)!’ vs. <i>fik'iə</i> ‘split (2FS)!’ |
| c. | /g ^w / vs. /k ^w / as in <i>g^wər</i> ‘season’ vs. <i>k^wər</i> ‘saddle’ |
| d. | /k' ^w / vs. /ki/ as in <i>k'^wər</i> ‘navel’ vs. <i>kiər</i> ‘peace’ |

3.1.2. Vowels

The anə-bet variety Muher has nine vowels, namely /i, i, u, e, a, ə, o, ε, ɔ/ (cf. Leslau 1981:8; Rose 1997: 7; Rose 2007: 1063; Awlachev 2010: 14). Although Leslau (1981: 8) claimed only /i/ cannot occur word-initially, Awlachev (2010: 14) argues that it is not only /i/ but also /u/ does not occur on the onset of a word (at the initial position of a word) in Muher (i.e. no word begins with the vowels /i/ and /u/ in Muher). Although Rose (1997: 7) claims that [ε] and [ɔ] are vowels in Western Gurage, Muher has also these two vowels as in /ɛt ‘spider’ and g^wɔ ‘highland’ (cf. Awlachev 2010: 11-12).

Table 2: Vowel phonemes in Muher

	Front	Central	back
High	i	ɨ	u
Mid	e	ə	o
Low	ε	a	ɔ

Meyer (2011: 1229) states, “Beside the plain vowels, the diphthongs ɔa and äⁱ may yield the vowels o (or ɔ) and ε, which occur in a number of Western Gurage languages and in Muher”. However, Meyer (2019: 231) claims that Muher has only seven vowel phonemes without phonemic length distinction /i, i, u, e, a, ə, o/. I think Muher has at least one tense vowel /ɔ/ which is excluded from Meyer’s vowel phoneme chart of Muher as in /ɔ ‘Shewa or Addis Ababa’, sɔst ‘three’ and g^wɔ ‘highland’.

3.1.3. Gemination in Muher

Consonant germination appears to occur in most Gurage varieties, albeit with varying phonemic values and frequencies (Meyer 2011: 1228)./n/ is predominantly germinated /nn/. Gemination is phonemic in that it brings about lexical or grammatical meaning distinction. All plain consonants occur geminated and non-geminated. In Muher, l occurs geminated as in *sälla-m* (arrive:PV:3sm-DCM) ‘he arrived’ and non-geminated as in *ji-sälo* (3sm-arrive:IPV:DCM) ‘he will arrive’ (Meyer 2011: 1227).

3.1.4. Stress

Stress, which frequently falls on the penultimate, is not phonemic in Muher (Meyer 2019: 231).

3.1.5. Syllable structure in Muher

Since onset and coda may permit consonant clusters as in *srəm* ‘buy’ and *ble* ‘bug’, the canonical syllable structure of Muher is (C) (C) V (C) (C). Muher employs the epenthetic vowel [i] to dissolve or break up impermissible consonant clusters or sequences (Meyer 2019:231; see also Awlachev 2010). In the CCV- structure, the second member should be liquids and glides (sonorants).

3.1.6. Phonological processes in Muher

Muher has complex morphophonological processes. The most commonly mentioned phonological processes are palatalization and labialization (cf. Awlachev 2010: 15-16; Meyer 2019: 232-233).

3.1.6.1. Palatalization process

It is one of the main phonological processes in Muher. The suffixed *j* palatalizes alveolar, velar, and glottal obstruents, mainly stem finally (Meyer 2019: 232). Awlachev (2010:15), Rose (1994: 115), and Meyer (2011: 1232) observed the following phonological changes as the result of the palatalization process.

$t > t^j$	$k > k^j$	$s > f$
$d > d^j$	$g > g^j$	$z > ʒ$
$t' > t'^j$	$k' > k'^j$	$x > x^j$

As can be seen above, in Muher, velars and alveolars are palatalized. Hetzron (1972: 193) and Leslau (1981:8) claimed that palatalization is the only indicator of second person singular feminine subject marker in Muher (cf. ax^j in Table 3 of this chapter) and in all Western Gurage languages as in the following examples.

(2) Stem	2SGF.IPFV	2SGF.IMP	Gloss
<i>kft</i>	<i>tikəfitʃ-itt</i>	<i>kiftʃ</i>	‘open’
<i>wrd</i>	<i>tiwərdʒ-itt</i>	<i>wirədʒ</i>	‘go downward’
<i>mlt</i>	<i>timəlɪtʃʼ-itt</i>	<i>miltʃʼ</i>	‘peel’
<i>skk</i>	<i>ti-səkʲkʲ-itt</i>	<i>səkkʲ</i>	‘set upright’
<i>ʒrg</i>	<i>ti-ʒargʲ-itt</i>	<i>ʒargʲ</i>	‘go’
<i>nfkʼ</i>	<i>ti-nəfkʲʲ-itt</i>	<i>nəfkʲʲ</i>	‘break off’

<i>nks</i>	<i>tinəki/-itt</i>	<i>nikʃ</i>	‘bite’
<i>grz</i>	<i>tigərʒ-itt</i>	<i>girədʒ</i>	‘be old’
<i>frx</i>	<i>ti-fərxʲ-itt</i>	<i>frəxʲ</i>	‘be patient’

3.1.6.2. Labialization process

Labialization is one of the phonological processes in Muher along with Western Gurage (Leslau 1981: 9; Awlachew 2010: 15-16; Meyer 2011: 1232-1233). In Muher, the general pattern for labialization and palatalization is that of impersonal (cf. Rose 1996: 212-213). As to Meyer (2019: 232), “suffixed ^w (which represents the non-segmental feature labialization) typically diffuses into a base in which it is realized as labial coarticulation on the first plain non-coronal obstruent or /m/. Thus, $p > p^w$, $b > \beta^w/w$, $\beta > b^w$, $f > f^w$ and/or $m > m^w$ ” Labialization often interacts with palatalization to mark the impersonal form of a verb, but it may also occur in other functions (Rose 1994: 113). Consider the following Muher data taken from Awlachew (2010: 16) (See also Meyer 2019: 1233 for the *ədi bet* variety of Muher).

(3) Personal (plain PFV base)	Impersonal	Gloss
<i>kəffət</i>	<i>kəff^wətʃi</i>	‘open’
<i>nəkkəs</i>	<i>nəkk^wəʃi</i>	‘bite’
<i>dəmməd</i>	<i>dəmm^wədʒi</i>	‘join’

3.1.6.3. Assimilations

Regarding assimilation, *t* is not stable in Gurage (Meyer 2019: 1230). The alveolar stop *t* totally assimilates to the immediately following homorganic coronal consonants (Meyer 2011: 1230) or assimilates to sibilant /s, z/, palatals /ʒ, ʃ, tʃ, tʃʰ/ and dentals /d, tʰ/ (Leslau 1981: 91) and there is also deletion of the vowel /ə/, and the resulting word has geminated consonants as shown in the following examples.

- (4) a. *wə-tə-sal* > *wəssal* ‘to make a cow’
b. *wə-tə-zəbbər* > *wəzzəbbər* ‘to return’
c. *wə-tə-ʃəffən* > *wəʃʃəffən* ‘to cover’
d. *wə-tə-ʒəbbər* > *wəʒʒəbbər* ‘to return’
e. *wə-tə-tʃal* > *wəʃʃal* ‘to be possible’
f. *wə-tə-tʃʰət* > *wətʃʰtʃʰət* ‘to work’

(Awlachew 2010: 16; see also Meyer 2011: 130-131 for the *ədi bet* variety)

However, if the alveolar stop occurs before the velars [*g*, *gʲ*, *k*, *kʲ*] and the palatals [*dʒ*, *ʒ*], partial assimilation will take place (Leslau 1981: 9). Although Leslau (1981: 9) and Meyer (2011: 1231) provided examples of partial assimilation, Awlachev (2010: 16) claims that partial assimilation is non-existent in the *anə-bet* variety of Muher. Awlachev went on explaining that Leslau's /*at-gəddəm*/ 'cause to lie down' and /*at-gʲənnam*/ 'cause to cross' are uttered as [atgəddəm] and [atgʲənnam], respectively, not as *[adgəddəm] or *[adgʲənnam].

Despite Awlachev's claim, Meyer (2011: 1231) argues, "the stop *t* partially assimilates to the following velar plosives *g*, *kʲ* in the way of phonation, i.e. it is voiced *d* preceding *g*, or ejective *tʼ* preceding *kʲ*" and he provides the following examples of partial assimilation for the *ədi bet* variety of Muher.

- (5) /*at-kʼättʼəäm*/ > [atʼkʼättʼəäm] 'facilitate to kill'
 /*at-gäffäräm*/ > [adgʲäffäräm] 'facilitate to leave'

As can be seen in (5), when *t* precedes *kʲ*, it assimilates to *tʼ* and if it is followed by *g*, it assimilates to *d* and becomes more similar to *g* in voicing.

Both Awlachev (2010: 16-17), and Meyer (2011: 1231) stated that nasal /*n*/ assimilates in place of articulation as in *n* > *m*, *n* > *ɱ*, *n* > *ŋ*, and *n* > *ɲ*. Consider the following examples (cf. Awlachev 2010: 17).

- (6) a. *n* > [ŋ] as in /*ankʼwə*/ > [aŋkʼwə] 'egg'; /*zəŋga*/ > [zəŋga] 'thing'
 b. *n* > [ɱ] as in /*kənfər*/ > [kəɱfər] 'lip'; /*anfʷinna*/ > [aɱfʷinna] 'nose'

In (6a), /*n*/ assimilates in place of articulation to /*ŋ*/; here velar assimilation has taken place while labial assimilation has taken place in (6b) since /*n*/ becomes more similar to the labio-dental *f* and *fʷ*, which is [ɱ].

In summary, it is impossible to tell the exact phonemic inventory of Muher, for there are some arguments among scholars on the phonemic status of some (allo)phones. While gemination is phonemic, stress is not phonemic in Muher. The syllable template for Muher is (C) (C) V (C) (C), the second member being liquids. Assimilation, palatalization and labialization are the commonest phonological processes in Muher. It should be noted that what I have done so far is a

sketch summary of the literature. The importance of doing this sketch summary of the phonemes of Muher is that this set of the phonemes is used for the transcription of the data.

3.2. Morphology

Muher is a morphologically complex language. In this section, peculiar morphological features of Muher are presented. Both minor/functional and major word classes of Muher are briefly described.

3.2.1 Pronouns

Pronouns are minor word classes in Muher and they occur on their own to fill the position of a noun in a clause. Pronouns possess the distributional property of noun phrases (cf. Payne 1997: 43).

3.2.1.1. Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns in Muher can be subjects of clauses. Of course, the subject is obligatorily cross-referenced on the verb; the additional use of the personal pronoun is for emphasis.

Table 3: Personal pronouns in Muher³(Leslau 1981: 12; Awlachev 2010: 28)

Person	Singular	Plural
1	<i>anə</i>	<i>iŋna</i>
2M	<i>axə</i>	<i>axim^w</i>
F	<i>ax^j</i>	<i>axima</i>
3M	<i>x^wa</i>	<i>xinnəm^w</i>
F	<i>x^ja</i>	<i>xinnəma</i>

As can be seen in Table 3 above, except for the first person pronouns, the second and third person pronouns distinguish between masculine and feminine gender in both singular and plural numbers. There seems to be an interaction between plural numbers and gender. For instance, -*m^w* indicates masculine gender and plural number as in *axim^w* ‘You (PLM)’ and *xinnəm^w* ‘They (M)’; -*ma* also indicates feminine and plural number as in *axima* ‘you (PLF)’ and *xinnəmw* ‘They (F)’. Besides, the second and third plural masculine pronouns can be used to express honorificity with singular referents (Awlachev 2010: 28; Meyer 2011: 1234).

³ See Meyer (2019:232) for personal pronouns in the ədi bet variety Muher

3.2.1.2. Possessive Pronouns (suffixes)⁴

In Muher, possession is expressed by possessive suffixes as presented in the following table.

Table 4: Possessive pronouns (suffixes) in Muher (Awlachew 2010: 28)

Person	Singular	Plural
1	-əŋŋa	-inna
2M	-axə	-axim ^w
F	-ax ^j	-axima
3M	-wita ⁵	-xinnəm ^w
F	-x ^j ita	-xinnəma

As can be seen in Table 4, with a slight difference between 1SG, the personal pronouns in Table 3 are functioning as possessive pronouns suffixed to nominals, as in *innam-ax^j* ‘your (SGF) cow’ and *innam-axə* ‘Your (SGM) cow’, and their counterparts *innam-xinnəma* ‘Their (PLF) cow’ and *innam-xinnəm^w* ‘Their (PLM) cow’ (cf. Awlachew 2010: 28). Regarding this, Meyer (2011: 1235) points out, “...in the Gannan Gurage varieties [Muher, being one of them], the possessive suffixes closely resemble the personal pronouns...”

3.2.1.3. Demonstrative Pronouns

Muher demonstratives mark spatial contrast between proximal *zi* ‘this’ and distal *za* ‘that’ being the speaker the deictic center (cf. Awlachew 2010: 28; Meyer 2019: 233). Only the plural is optionally marked by the associative plural marking prefix *nə-*. Thus, the plural is *zi-* ‘this’ > *nəzi* ‘these’, and *za* ‘that’ > *nəza* ‘those’, respectively. Meyer (2019: 233) claims, “The 3SGM pronoun functions as demonstrative referring to an entity far from the speaker, but near to the addressee.” Consider the following examples:

- (7) a. *za bet* ‘that house’ vs. *nəza bet* ‘those houses’ (Awlachew 2010: 29)
 b. *zi bora* ‘this ox’ vs. *nəzi bora* ‘these oxen’

⁴ In Muher, possession can also be expressed by the prefix *jə-* attached to the independent personal pronoun as in *jə-anə[janə]* *abba* ‘my father’ **without the suffix**.

⁵ In the ədi-bet variety of Muher it is *h^wita*

3.2.1.4. Reflexive Pronouns in Muher

In Muher, reflexive pronouns are derived from the noun *gəg* Lit. ‘body’ followed by the possessive suffixes (cf. Table 4). Endalew (2014: 74) claimed that the Ezha noun *gəg(m)* is “grammaticalized and rendering ‘self’ when functioning as a reflexive pronoun”.

Table 5: Reflexive pronouns in Muher

Person	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
1	<i>gəg-ənna</i>	‘myself’	<i>gəg-inna</i>	‘ourselves’
2M	<i>gəg-axə</i>	‘yourself’	<i>gəg-axim^w</i>	‘yourselves’
F	<i>gəg-ax^j</i>	‘yourself’	<i>gəg-axima</i>	‘yourselves’
3M	<i>gəg-wita</i>	‘himself’	<i>gəg-xinnəm^w</i>	‘themselves’
F	<i>gəg-x^jita</i>	‘herself’	<i>gəg-xinnəma</i>	‘themselves’

In Muher, all second person and third person plural possessive suffixes are the same as the corresponding personal pronouns.

3.2.1.5. Interrogative pronouns

In content or non-polar question constructions, Muher employs the following most frequently used basic and derived interrogative pronouns.

Table 6 : Interrogative Pronouns in Muher (Awlachew 2010: 30; Meyer 2019: 233)

Basic	Gloss	Derived	Gloss
<i>ma</i>	‘who’	<i>jə-ma</i>	‘whose’
<i>mi?e</i>	‘what’	<i>bəmmi</i>	‘how’
<i>etə</i>	‘where’	<i>jənk’e</i>	‘why’
<i>mət/ɸə</i>	‘when (NPST)’	<i>mət/ɸəna /mət/ɸə-na/</i>	‘when (PST)’

Consider the following example:

- (8) *ma bessa-m?*
 who come.PFV.3SGM-PRF
 ‘Who did come?’

3.2.1.6. Indefinite pronouns in Muher

Muher uses the suffix *-m* with the numeral *att* ‘one’ or the interrogative pronoun *ma* ‘who’ for indefinite pronouns or in combination with *səb* ‘person’ or with *k’e* ‘thing’ (Meyer 2019: 234). Muher employs the following indefinite pronouns.

Table 7 : Indefinite pronouns in Muher

Indefinite Pronoun	Gloss
<i>attim səb</i>	‘nobody’
<i>mannim səb</i>	‘whoever’
<i>attim k’e</i>	‘nothing’
<i>att səb</i>	‘someone’
<i>aʃf səb</i>	‘somebody’

3.2.2. Nominals

Nominals consist of nouns, numerals, and adjectives. Common nouns such as *bet* ‘house’, adjectives such as *biffa* ‘red’ and numerals such as *x^wett* ‘two’ are considered nominals in Muher.

3.2.2.1. Adjectives

In Muher, adjectives are not inflected for the grammatical categories gender and person (Awlachew 2010: 30) as in (9).

- (9) a. *gəllif miss* ‘tall man’
b. *gəllif miʃt* ‘tall woman’

As can be seen in the example *gəllif* ‘tall/long’ is used to modify both masculine and feminine nouns. Adjectives may overtly express plural by reduplication as in *addis-addis* ‘new (PL)’. This is head modifier agreement phenomenon where the agreement is either on the head or on the modifier or on both depending on the typology of the language.

In Muher, animals have special names according to the color of their skins. Consider the following examples taken from Awlachew (2010: 32).

- (10) a. *wet’a* ‘yellow cow’
b. *arək’o* ‘a cow with different color’
c. *dɔng* ‘yellow horse’
d. *gʲila* ‘black horse’

- c. *dama* ‘reddish horse;
- e. *amətf’a* ‘yellowish sheep’
- f. *kəsem^wər* ‘blackish sheep’

Muher uses the suffix *-jə* added to the adjective to form superlative in combination with specificity as in *gəllif* ‘long’ > *gəllif-jə* ‘the longest’; *innis* ‘small’ > *innis-jə* ‘the smallest’ (Awlachew 2010: 32). Besides, the superlative can be expressed syntactically.

3.2.2.2. Nominal Inflections

In Muher, nominal inflection includes number (singular/plural), Gender (masculine/ feminine), and definiteness (indefinite/specific/definite), and case (Awlachew 2010:17; Meyer 2019: 234).

3.2.2.2.1. Number

Number, in Muher, is usually marked not on nominals (nouns), but it is marked syntactically through cross-referencing on the verb (Awlachew 2010: 17; Meyer 2019: 10). Thus, number is not commonly an inflectional feature of Muher noun as shown in (11).

- (11) a. *məkina-we t’əff-ə-m*
 car-DEF break down.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘The car broke down’
- b. *məkina-we t’əff-m^w-m*
 car-DEF break down.PFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘The cars broke down’

In (11) the noun *car* is not marked overtly for number. In (11a), the subject agreement suffix is $\emptyset$, so it can be considered singular, but in (11b), the (subject) agreement suffix *-mu-* is added to the verb, so the noun became plural (cars). There is no singular-plural distinction with these nouns, but they have only a transnumeral form.

Most nouns in Gunnän Gurage languages in General, and Muher in particular, do not usually distinguish between singular and plural numbers (Meyer 2011: 1242). Thus, a single form can be considered singular and plural at the same time without any inflectional affixes added to them to show singular and plural numbers as in *imar* ‘donkey’ vs *imar* ‘donkeys (PL)’. Plural is shown or marked by the agreement suffix added on the verb.

However, some nouns, in Muher, distinguish between singular and plural nouns by using suppletive lexical items (pairs). Consider the following examples (cf. Awlachev 2010: 17; Meyer 2011: 1242).

(12)	Singular	Plural	Gloss
	<i>innam</i>	<i>giz(z)</i>	‘cow/cows’
	<i>miss</i>	<i>gəmmə</i>	‘man/men’
	<i>jidʒdʒ</i>	<i>dəngʲa</i>	‘boy/boys’
	<i>gərəd</i>	<i>gred</i>	‘girl/girls’

Reduplication can also be used to form plural as in (13).

(13)	Singular	Plural	Gloss
	<i>əttəm^w</i>	<i>əttəmm^wit</i>	‘sister/sisters’
	<i>g^wəbbe</i>	<i>g^wəbbabit</i>	‘brother/brothers’

I think these are the only plural nouns that are marked by reduplication.

3.2.2.2.2. Gender

The gender distinction, in Muher, is lexically marked directly on nouns; Muher does not employ overt gender markers that are attached to nouns (Awlachev 2010: 18; Meyer 2019: 234). In Muher, gender is marked grammatically by verb agreement or by using independent personal pronouns as in *x^wa* ‘he’, *x^ja* ‘she’, *axima* ‘you (F)’ and *axim^w* ‘you (M)’. However, a few animate nouns (human and animal) have suppletive feminine/masculine forms.

Table 8: Lexical gender distinction in Muher

(14)	Masculine	Feminine	Gloss
	<i>abba</i>	<i>adot</i>	‘father/mother’
	<i>miss</i>	<i>mi/t</i>	‘man/woman’
	<i>jidʒdʒ</i>	<i>gərəd</i>	‘boy/girl’
	<i>g^wəbbe</i>	<i>əttəm^w</i>	‘brother/sister’
	<i>bora</i>	<i>innam</i>	‘ox/cow’
	<i>magula</i>	<i>wənnad</i>	‘stallion/mare’
	<i>wəfen</i>	<i>g^wəbəz</i>	‘bull/heifer’

In Muher, some animals do not have lexical masculine/feminine lexical or suppletive forms such as the above pairs. These animals employ *təbət* or *wir* to modify masculine nouns and *anissit* for feminine nouns as in (15).

(15)	Masculine	Feminine	Gloss
	<i>təbət fəɲɲək</i>	<i>anissit fəɲɲək</i>	‘male/female goat’
	<i>təbət gijə</i>	<i>anissit gijə</i>	‘male/female dog’
	<i>wir imar</i>	<i>anissit imar</i>	‘male/female donkey’

(Awlachev 2010: 18)

3.2.2.2.3. Definiteness

In Muher, definiteness is marked by the definite suffix *-we* as in the following examples (cf. Awlachev 2010: 19; Meyer 2019: 235).

(16)	Basic noun	Gloss	Definite noun	Gloss
	<i>miss</i>	‘man’	<i>miss-we</i>	‘the man’
	<i>bet</i>	‘house’	<i>bet-we</i>	‘the house’
	<i>gərəd</i>	‘girl’	<i>gərəd-we</i>	‘the girl’

If a noun phrase has an adjective, the definite marker will be attached to the adjective, not to the head noun as shown in (17)

(17)	Basic form	Gloss	Definite noun phrase	Gloss
	<i>ajo jidʒdʒ</i>	‘wise boy’	<i>ajo-we jidʒdʒ</i>	‘the wise boy’
	<i>məlkamma gred</i>	‘beautiful girls’	<i>məlkamma-we gred</i>	‘the beautiful girls’
	<i>dəngəɲɲə səb</i>	‘rich man’	<i>dəngəɲɲə-we səb</i>	‘the rich man’

In Muher, specific reference is expressed either by *att* ‘one’ or reduplication *att-att* ‘some’. Consider the following examples (cf. Meyer 2019: 235) :

- (18) a. *att merrəɲɲə nənə-ə-u [nəno]*
a (one) worker EXIST.PRES-3SGM-MVM
‘There is a worker’
- b. *att-att merrəɲɲə nən-mu-tt*
some worker EXIST.PRES-3PLM-MVM
‘There are some workers’

3.2.2.2.4. Case

Case often indicates a noun's relationship to a verb at the clausal level (Blake 2004). Muher belongs to the group of nominative-accusative languages, where the accusative case is the marked one while the nominative case is not marked (cf. Meyer 2011: 1243). As can be seen in the following examples, the accusative, dative and genitive cases are marked by the morpheme *jə-*, and this could lead to argue that *jə-* could be a general case marker in Muher.

a. Nominative case

There is no overtly realized nominative marker in Muher; there is no morphologically nominative marker (Awlachew 2010: 19; Meyer 2011: 1234). In Muher, the nominative case indicates that the noun functions as the subject of a sentence. Since Muher has an SOV canonical word order, the constituent that occupies the sentence-initial position is the subject of that sentence. Nominative subjects are unmarked as in

- (19) *timerga bəsər bənnə-ə-m*
Timerga meat eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
'Timerga ate meat'

b. Accusative case

In Muher, the accusative case is marked with the prefix *jə-*⁶ when the grammatical direct object or the patient (semantic role) is human and/or definite. Indefinite nouns, on the contrary, are not marked for accusative. Consider the following example (Awlachew 2010: 20)

- (20) *timərga jə-ambəssa-we [jambəssawe] k'ət'ε-nn-(i)m*
Timerga ACC-lion-DEF kill.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}-DCM
'Timerga killed the lion'

c. Dative

The dative case or the grammatical indirect object marker is homonymous with the accusative case or the direct object marker in that both use the morpheme *jə-* as in (21).

- (21) *timərga jə-miʃt-we jə-k'awa firjə lax-ə-na-m*
Timerga DAT-woman-DEF GEN-coffee beans send.PFV-3SGM-3SGF_{Obj}-DCM
'Timerga sent the woman coffee beans'

⁶ Meyer (2005: 10-11) considers the prefix *jə-* to be a marker of a pragmatic constraint with direct object rather than a syntactic constraint.

The noun phrase *jəmi/twe* ‘the woman’ in (21) is cross-referenced in the verb by the morpheme *-na* which refers to a non-direct object (dative case), but the noun phrase *jambəssawe* ‘the lion’ in (20) is referenced by the direct object marker *-nn* in the verb.

d. Genitive

In the genitive case, a noun is subordinated to another noun that it modifies. In Muher, if the modifying noun is genitive, it is marked by the prefix *jə-* as in accusative and dative cases which would tempt to claim that in Muher there is only one case marker. This, therefore, indicates that there is a possessor-possessed relationship between the two nouns as in (22).

- (22) a. *jə-almaz [jalmaz] bet*
 GEN-Almaz house
 ‘Almaz’s bet’
 b. *jə-innam [jinnam] fʷat*
 GEN-cow milk
 ‘Cow’s milk’

In (22a), Almaz is a possessor noun, and *bet* ‘house’ is a possessed entity (noun). Since Almaz is a modifying noun and in the genitive case, the prefix *jə-* is attached to it. In (22b), *innam* ‘cow’ is the modifying noun, and *fʷat* ‘milk’ is the head noun with a possessor-possessed relationship in that order.

e. Locative

Locative case shows a position where an entity is situated. Muher uses the prefix *tə-* ‘from’ and *bə-* ‘in’ as in *bə-bet* ‘in (a) house’ and *tə-bet* ‘from (a) house’. The locative case markers denote a locative relation in combination with a postposition. Consider the following examples (Awlachew 2010: 21):

(23)	Locatives	Gloss	Example	Gloss
a.	<i>bə...dən</i>	‘inside’	<i>bə-sat in-dən</i>	‘inside a box’
b.	<i>bə...fʷe</i>	‘on/above’	<i>bə-bet-fʷe</i>	‘on a house’
c.	<i>tə...aŋkʼj ə</i>	‘behind’	<i>tə-bet-aŋkʼj ə</i>	‘behind a house’
d.	<i>tə...jift jift</i>	‘in front of’	<i>tə-bet-jift jift</i>	‘in front of a house’
e.	<i>tə...mε</i>	‘beside’	<i>tə-bet-mε</i>	‘beside a house’

3.2.2.3. Numerals

Numerals can be either cardinal or ordinal. Meyer (2019: 237) states, “Muher has a decimal number system. The teens are formed from *asər*” (Meyer 2019: 237) or *assirə* (Awlachew 2010: 34), “plus the digits usually preceded by *-(ə)m*” as in *assirəmətt* ‘eleven’ and *assirəmx^wett* ‘twelve’. The ordinal numerals, in Muher, are formed from the cardinal ones to which the suffix *-əḥḥa* is attached as in *att-əḥḥa* ‘first’, *sost-əḥḥa* ‘third’...etc (Awlachew 2010: 33). Consider the following basic numerals of the *anə-bet* variety of Muher.

Table 9: Basic Numerals⁷ (cf. Awlachew 2010: 34)

Digits	Gloss	Decimals	Gloss
<i>att</i>	‘one’	<i>assir</i>	‘ten’
<i>x^wett</i>	‘two’	<i>x^wija</i>	‘twenty’
<i>sost</i>	‘three’	<i>sasa</i>	‘thirty’
<i>arbət</i>	‘four’	<i>arba</i>	‘forty’
<i>ammist</i>	‘five’	<i>amsa</i>	‘fiftyforty’
<i>siddist</i>	‘six’	<i>silsa</i>	‘sixty’
<i>səbət</i>	‘seven’	<i>səba</i>	‘seventy’
<i>simm^wit</i>	‘eight’	<i>semane</i>	‘eighty’
<i>zət’ə</i>	‘nine’	<i>zət’əna</i>	‘ninety’
		<i>bək’i</i>	‘hundred’
		<i>xum</i>	‘thousand’

3.2.3. Adverbs

According to Awlachew (2010: 32), Muher has adverbs that specify the time of the verbal action, but the language lacks place and manner adverbs. The following are the most common time adverbs in Muher.

(24) <i>axuḥḥa</i> ‘now’	<i>nəgə</i> ‘tomorrow’	<i>tamiḥḥa</i> ‘yesterday’
<i>mi/ət</i> ‘evening’	<i>jorar</i> ‘afternoon’	
<i>tibə</i> ‘morning’	<i>ək^wk^wa</i> ‘today’	

⁷ See Meyer (2019: 238) for the basic numeral systems of the *adi-bet* variety of Muher

3.2.4. Verbs

3.2.4.1. Verb inflection

Verbal inflection distinguishes between perfective, imperfective and jussive conjugations with a specific subject index (Meyer 2019: 239; Awlachev 2010: 21). One set of suffixes is used with the verbs in the perfective aspect, while verbs in the imperfective aspect and the jussive mood use another set consisting of prefixes and suffixes (cf. Rose 2004: 25). Consider the following paradigm.

Table 10: Subject pronominal suffixes⁸(Awlachev 2010: 22)

Person	Perfective verbs		Imperfective verbs	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1	-x ^w	-nə-	ə-	n-...nə
2M	-xə-	-xim ^w -	t-	t-...m ^w
2F	-x ^j	-xima-	t-	t-...ma
3M	-ə	-m ^w -	j-	j-...m ^w
3F	-tʃtʃ	-ma	j-	j-...ma

Affirmative main clause verbs in the perfective and imperfective aspects are followed by declarative clause markers (DCM). For perfective verbs, the DCM is always the suffix *-m* which usually occurs verb-finally, but for the imperfective verbs, it is *-t*, *-i* or *-u/-w* (Awlachev 2010: 22). Consider the following examples.

- (25) a. *anə jə-sarem bə-m^wəxir aʒʒə-x^w-nna-m*
 I ACC-Sarem LOC-Muher see.PFV-1SG_{Subj}-3SGM_{Obj}-DCM
 ‘I saw Sarem at Muher’
- b. *timərga dinnitʃtʃa ji-bɛ-u*
 Timerga potato 3SGM-eat.IPFV-DCM
 ‘Timerga eats potato’

Clause (25a) has a perfective verb, so the declarative clause marker suffix *-m* is added to the verb *aʒʒə* ‘see’, but in (25b), the declarative clause marker suffix *-u* is added to the imperfective verb *bɛ* ‘eat’.

⁸ See also Meyer (2019: 239) for the ədi-bet variety of Muher

Table 11: Object pronominal affixes (Awlachew 2010: 23; Rose 1996: 206; Meyer 2019: 240)

Person	Perfective		Imperfective/Jussive/
	Light	Heavy	Imperative
1SG	-e	- <i>n(n)</i>	-e
1PL	-(<i>ə</i>) <i>nə</i>	- <i>nnə</i>	- <i>ənə</i>
2SGM	- <i>nnaxə</i>	- <i>kkə</i>	- <i>xə</i>
2SGF	-(<i>nn</i> -) <i>ax^j</i>	- <i>kk^j</i>	- <i>x^j</i>
2PLM	-(<i>nn</i> -) <i>axim^w</i>	- <i>kkim^w</i>	- <i>xm^w</i>
2PLF	-(<i>nn</i> -) <i>axima</i>	- <i>kkima</i>	- <i>xma</i>
3SGM	- <i>nn/-w</i>	- <i>j/-^w/-u/(-k^j)</i>	- <i>w^j/-nn</i>
3SGF	- <i>nna</i>	- <i>ja/-wa/(-k^ja)</i>	- <i>a/-nna</i> (Rose 1996:260)
3PLM	- <i>nn-əm^w</i>	-(<i>j</i>) <i>əm^w/-(w)əm^w/ (k^jəm^w)</i>	- <i>əm^w/-nnəm^w</i>
3PLF	- <i>nn-əma</i>	-(<i>j</i>) <i>əma/- (w)əma/ (k^jəma)</i>	- <i>əma/-nnəma</i>

The following examples show the use of object pronominal suffixes in Muher. The perfective pronominal suffixes -e- in (26) and -*n(n)*- in (27) are 1SG light and heavy object markers, respectively. In (28), the 3SGF light object pronominal suffix -*a* is used in the imperfective.

- (26) *bə-aʒʒ-nn* *aʒʒ-e-m* *bə-lək-u* *ebb-e-m*
when-see.IPFV-3SGM_{Obj} see.PFV-1SG_{Obj}-DCM when-send.IPFV-3SGM_{Obj} refuse.PVF-1SG_{Obj}-DCM
‘When I saw him, he saw me, but when I sent him, he refused’
- (27) *axim^w* *baj* *bɛ-xim^w-n(n)-(i)m*
you(PLM) refuse say.PFV-2PLM-1SG_{Obj}-DCM
‘You (PLM) refused me’
- (28) *ab-a [aba]*
give.2SGM-3SGF_{Obj}
‘Give (it) to her’

3.2.4.2. Aspect/Tense

Muher verbs in the indicative occur in perfective and imperfective aspects. We have said that the affirmative main clause verbs in the perfective aspect are obligatorily followed by the suffix -*m* (Awlachew 2010: 24). Consider the following conjugation of affirmative verbs in the perfective aspect.

(28)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1	<i>bənnə-xu-m</i>	<i>bənnə-nə-m</i>
	2M	<i>bənnə-xə-m</i>	<i>bənnə-xim^w-m</i>
	2F	<i>bənnə-x^j-m</i>	<i>bənnə-xima-m</i>
	3M	<i>bənnə-ə-m</i>	<i>bənnə-m^w-m</i>
	3F	<i>bənnə-ətʃf-m</i>	<i>bənnə-ma-m</i>

The following example indicates that the perfective aspect shows that the action is completed.

- (29) *timərga bəsər bənnə-ə-m*
 Timerga meat Eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Timerga ate meat’

Affirmative main clause imperfective verbs are also obligatorily followed by main verb markers such as *-u*, *-i* and *-tt*. Consider the conjugation of the affirmative imperfective verb in the main clause.

(30)	Person	Singular	Plural	Gloss
	1	<i>ə-ef-u [anə efu]</i>	<i>n-ef-nə-u</i>	‘I am/we are walking/will walk’
	2M	<i>t-ef-u</i>	<i>t-ef-m^wi-tt</i>	‘You are walking/will walk’
	2F	<i>t-ef-tt</i>	<i>t-ef-ma-tt</i>	‘You are walking/will walk’
	3M	<i>j-ef-u</i>	<i>j-ef-m^w-itt</i>	‘He is/They are walking/will walk’
	3F	<i>t-ef-i</i>	<i>j-ef-ma-tt</i>	‘She is/They are walking/will walk’

3.2.4.3. Copulas in the affirmative declarative clauses in Muher

Muher present tense copulas display irregularities in their morphosyntactic features (Awlachew 2010: 46-48; Meyer 2011: 1234-1248; Meyer 2019: 245). Muher employs different copular forms and/or elements that are inherently marked for tense and subject and of copula clauses.

The present tense predicationalequational copula in Muher is *-n*, except for the 3SGF, in which it is *-ja*. The existential copula in the present tense is *nənə-*, and the copula in the past tense is *bənnə-*. These copulas predominately occur in affirmative main clauses; in other clause types, they are replaced by supplementary verbs (cf. Meyer 2019: 249). The complement to the present

tense copula *-n/-ja* can be NP, AdjP and PP. The inflectional paradigm of the copular elements in the affirmative main clause is presented below.

Table 12: Inflections of copular elements in Muher

Person	Present tense		Past Tense
	Predicational	Existential ⁹	
1SG	<i>-n-x^w</i>	<i>nən-x^w-i</i>	<i>bannə-x^w-i</i>
2SGM	<i>-n-xə</i>	<i>nən-xə-u [nənəxo]</i>	<i>bannə-xə-u [nənəxo]</i>
2SGF	<i>-n-x^l</i>	<i>nən-x^l-tt</i>	<i>bannə-x^l-tt</i>
3SGM	<i>-n-∅</i>	<i>nən-ə-u [nəno]</i>	<i>bannə-ə-u [nəno]</i>
3SGF	<i>-ja</i>	<i>nən-t/t/-i</i>	<i>bannə-t/t/-i</i>
1PL	<i>-n-nə</i>	<i>nən-nə-u[nənəno/nənno]</i>	<i>bannə-nə-u[bannəno]</i>
2PLM	<i>-n-xim^w</i>	<i>nən-xim^w-tt</i>	<i>bannə-xim^w-tt</i>
2PLF	<i>-n-xima</i>	<i>nən-xima-tt</i>	<i>bannə-xima-tt</i>
3PLM	<i>-n-əm^w</i>	<i>nən-m^w-tt</i>	<i>banni-m^w-tt</i>
3PLF	<i>-n-əma</i>	<i>nən-ma-tt</i>	<i>banni-ma-tt</i>

Table 12 clearly shows that the existential verb *nən-* and the past tense copula *bannə* Muher are followed by the main clause marker (MVM) allomorphic variants *-i*, *-u*, and *-tt*, and hence they inflect alike. The 3SGM MVM *-u* replaces *-i* on verbs ending in a front vowel.

In negative constructions, the present tense copula, the existential copula and the past tense copula assume their respective suppletive forms. The present and past tense copula elements, in Muher, use the same negative marking morpheme *an-* which is prefixed to them as regular verbs do. Thus, the present tense negative copula is *an-xənə [anxənə]* ‘he/she/you/we/they is/are not’, while the past copula is *an+nəbər [annəβər]* ‘I/she/he was not/you/we/they were not’. The negative of the verb of existence in Muher is invariably *jənnə*. Consider the following paradigm of the negative copular elements in Muher.

⁹ See Meyer (2019: 244) for the *ədi-bet* variety of Muher.

Table 13: Negative semi-copulas or auxiliary verbs in Muher (cf. Meyer 2019: 245)

Person	Present	Past	Existential
1SG	<i>anxən-x^w</i>	<i>an-nəbər-x^w</i>	<i>jənnə-x^w</i>
2SGM	<i>anxən-xə</i>	<i>an- nəbər-xə</i>	<i>jənnə-xə</i>
2SGF	<i>anxən-x^j</i>	<i>an- nəbər-x^j</i>	<i>jənnə-x^j</i>
3SGM	<i>anxən-ə</i>	<i>an- nəbər-ə</i>	<i>jənnə-ə [jənnə]</i>
3SGF	<i>anxən-ət/tf</i>	<i>an- nəbər-t/tf</i>	<i>jənnə-t/tf</i>
1PL	<i>anxən-nə</i>	<i>an- nəbər-nə</i>	<i>jənnə-nə</i>
2PLM	<i>anxən-xim^w</i>	<i>an- nəbər-xim^w</i>	<i>jənnə-xim^w</i>
2PLF	<i>anxən-xima</i>	<i>an- nəbər-xima</i>	<i>jənnə-xima</i>
3PLM	<i>anxən-əm^w</i>	<i>an- nəbər-əm^w</i>	<i>jənnə-əm^w</i>
3PLF	<i>anxən-əma</i>	<i>an- nəbər-əma</i>	<i>jənnə-əma</i>

3.2.4.4. Negation in Muher

The primary negative markers are *an-/a-*. Muher uses these markers as prefixes in the perfective, imperfective, and jussive/imperative forms (cf. Awlachev 2010: 27s; Meyer 2011: 1238; Meyer 2019: 250). Consider the following examples:

(35) Perfective	Imperfective	Jussive	Gloss
<i>an-dəbe</i>	<i>a-j-dəbi [edəbi]</i>	<i>a-j-dibi [edibi]</i>	‘he didn’t/doesn’t add/let him not add’
<i>an-bərərə</i>	<i>a-j-bərr [ebərr]</i>	<i>a-j-birər [ebirər]</i>	‘he didn’t/doesn’t fly/let him not fly’
<i>an-səbərə</i>	<i>a-j-səbir [esəbir]</i>	<i>a-j-sibir [esibir]</i>	‘he didn’t/doesn’t break/let him not break’

As can be seen above the negative marker *a-* in the imperfective and jussive assimilates with the 3SGM subject pronominal prefix *j-* to result in *e* (i.e. *a* merges with *j-* to be(come) *e*) (Awlachev 2010: 27; Meyer 2019: 250).

3.2.5. Conjunctions in Muher

Muher uses the prefix *tə-* ‘and’ or the suffix *-m* ‘and’ as coordinating conjunction, *wem* ‘or’ as disjunctive conjunction, *t/in* ‘but’ as adversative conjunction and *banxənə* ‘except’ as exclusive conjunction (Awlachev 2010: 34-35). Consider the following examples taken from Awlachev (2010: 34-35).

- (36) a. *timərga-m sarem-m anə-m innimge bərut/tʃʼa ni-ef-nə -u[nefno]*
 Timerga-CONJ Sarem-CONJ I-CONJ always quickly 1PL-go.IPFV-1PL-DCM
 ‘Timerga, Sarem and I always walk quickly’
- b. *mərfa tə-ləmma tə-wəlde ahuyɲa ji-ef-m^w-tt*
 Mersha CONJ-Lemma CONJ-wolde now 3PL-walk.IPFV-3PLM_{Subj}-MVM
 ‘Mersha, Lemma, and Welde are walking now.’
- c. *ək^wk^wa sarem wem timerga ji-bəsa-m^w-tt*
 today Sarem or Timerga 3SGM-go.IPFV-3PLM_{Subj}-MVM
 ‘Today, Sarem or Timerga will come’
- d. *anə bəssa-xu-m x^wa tʃʼin an-bəsa-ø*
 I come.PFV-1SG-DCM he but NEG-come.PFV-3SGM
 ‘I came, but he didn’t come’
- e. *x^wa banxəne x^ja an-bəsa-ət/tʃʼ*
 he except she NEG-come.PFV-3SGF
 ‘Except him, she didn’t come’

Each of the clauses in (36) employs different conjunction markers. The clauses in (36a) and (36b) contain the coordinating conjunctions *-m* and *tə-* ‘and’, respectively. Clause (36c) has the disjunctive conjunction *wem* ‘or’. The adversative conjunction *tʃʼin* ‘but’ is used in clause (36d). Finally, *banxənə* ‘except’ is used as exclusive conjunction in clause (36e).

3.3. Syntax

3.3.1. Main Clauses

The basic/canonical order of constituents in Muher clause is Subject-Object-Verb (SOV), in which modifiers (adjectives, relative clauses and genitive) preceding the head noun (cf. Hetzron 1977: 114; Lesalu 1981: 47; Awlachev 2010: 44; Meyer 2011: 1249; Meyer 2019: 246). The following examples illustrate this.

- (37) *ax^j bəsər bənnə-x^j-m ba*
 You(SGF) meat eat.PFV-3SGF-DCM AUX.PST
 ‘You (SGF) had eaten meat’
- (38) *timərga jə-mi/t-we jə-k’awa firjə lax-ə-na-m*
 Timerga DAT-woman-DEF GEN-coffee beans send.PFV-3SGM-3SGF_{Obj}-DCM

‘Timerga sent the woman coffee beans’ (Awlachew 2010: 44)

The order of the constituents in (37) is Subject-Object-Verb and in (38), it is Subject-Indirect Object-Direct Object-Verb. Regarding this, Leslau (1981: 47) states, “The order of a principal sentence is: Subject-Direct/Indirect Object complement-Verb.” Meyer (2005:16, 2019:246) explains that the main verb in Muher occurs in the final position of a sentence, but the word order (Subject-Object or Object-Subject) cannot be usually determined by morphosyntactic consideration, but by pragmatics and definiteness of the phrases.

The most basic word order of Muher is SOV, but this can be changed to OSV if the object is relatively more definite than the subject. This could be the reason that Meyer (2019: 246) argues “... a definite (known) argument has to precede an indefinite (new) argument regardless of their syntactic functions”. Consider the following example:

- (39) a. *bora gətʃə aʒʒ-ə-m*
ox hyena See.PFV-3SGM-DCM
‘An ox saw a hyena’
- b. *jə-gətʃə-we bora aʒʒ-ə-nn-im*
ACC-hyena-DEF ox See.PFV-3SGM-3SGM_{Obj}-DCM
‘As to the hyena, an ox saw it’ (Meyer 2019: 246-247)

In sentence (39a), *bora* ‘ox’ is the subject, and *gətʃə* ‘hyena’ is the object, which makes the word order of the constituents Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). In sentence (39b), on the other hand, the object *gətʃə* ‘hyena’ (with the definite marker *-we* and the pragmatically conditioned *jə-*) became relatively more definite than the subject *bora* ‘ox’. This would alter the SOV word order to OSV (*gətʃə-bora* + verb).

Thus, Muher is a verb-final language with strict Topic-comment order regardless of syntactic functions. Besides, the canonical word order of sentence constituents Muher follows is more or less the common Ethio-Semitic SOV, but this structure can be affected by pragmatic or discourse contexts such as encoding information structure notions like topic and focus (cf. Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis; Awlachew 2010: 41; Meyer 2019: 246-247).

While *-u*, *-t(t)*, and *-i* are restricted to imperfective verbs in Muher, they occur with perfective and imperfective forms in Kistane and Dobbi (cf. Meyer 2011: 1249). An obligatorily MVM predominates a declarative main clause, especially with affirmative imperfective verbs (cf. Meyer 2019: 248).

3.3.2. Subordinate clauses

In subordination, predicates lack obligatorily tense and main verb markers (MVM), but are inflected for person and aspect/mood (Meyer 2019: 248). Muher forms subordinate clauses by using the morphemes *t(ə)-*, *b(ə)-*, and *j(ə)-*, which are attached to the subordinate verb (Rose 2004:41). Consider the following examples taken from Awlache (2010: 45-46).

- (40) a. *abba-əŋŋa* *ti-t'əra-e* *anə* *bəsər* *ə-bɛ* *banno*
 father-POSS.1SG when-call.IPFV I meat 1SG-eat.PFV AUX.PST
 ‘When my father called me, I was eating meat’
- b. *bə-ʃə* *bə-bəssa-xə* *merra* *ə-kərrəs-u*
 LOC-Addis Ababa if-come.IPFV-2SGM work 1SG-start.IPFV-DCM
 ‘If you come to Addis Ababa, I will start work’

It has been said that the basic order of constituents in Muher main clause is subject-object-verb. But in complex sentences such as (40) above, subordinate clauses precede main clauses; adjectives and relative clauses precede their heads (cf. Meyer 2011: 1249).

Relative clause predicates typically are simple indicative verbs. Relative clauses, in Muher, lack overt subordinate conjunction; only affirmative perfective verbs begin with the morpheme *jə-* as in (41) (cf. also Leslau 1981: 15; Meyer 2019: 249-250).

- (41) *jə-merra* *jə-fəkka* *səb* *k'əli-ʔe-n*
 DAT-work REL-go.IPFV people few-thing-COP.PRES
 ‘The people who go to work are few’

The relative clause usually occurs in cleft sentences in which the constituent precedes the equative copula is focused or contains new information as in (42):

- (42) *jə-merra-n* *jə-bəssa-x^w*
 DAT-work-COP.PRES REL(LNK)-come.PFV-1SGObj
 ‘It is for work that I came’

3.3.3. Questions

In the *anə-bet* variety of Muher, questions are similar to declarative and imperative clauses, but they have a distinct rising intonation (↗) clause-finally. In addition to this, polar questions can optionally end with the suffix *-we* and followed by a rising intonation as in (43a). However, content wh-questions use *ema* ‘who’, *min* ‘what’, *miʔe* ‘when’ etc. as in (43b).

- (43) a. *wəlde tamijna bəssa-ø-m banno- (we)?*
 Wolde yesterday come.PFV-3SGM-CVB AUX.PST-Q
 ‘Did Wolde come yesterday?’
- b. *ək^wk^wa k’awa ma srə-m?*
 today coffee who buy.PFV-Q
 ‘Who bought coffee today?’

3.3.4. Compound and complex clauses in Muher

Compound sentences, in Muher, are constructed without an overt conjunctive such as *-m* or *tə-*. Instead, converbs are used with the morpheme *-m* or *-mtanna* (short form *-mta*) (Awlachev 2010: 48; see also Meyer 2019:248). Consider the following examples:

- (44) a. *bə-miss-x’ita mərrərə-t/tf-m bə-g^wənda tənne-t/tf-m*
 by-husband-POSS.3SGF become angry.PFV-3SGF-CVB LOC-ant sit.PFV-3SGF-DCM
 ‘She became angry with her husband and sat on ant’
- b. *miss-we lik’k’e gərrəmə-nni-mtanna zi gərəd*
 man-DEF very admire.PFV-3SGMObj-CVB this girl
awak’i jə-bε-m
 wise 3SGM-say.PFV-DCM
 ‘The man was surprised and said that she is clever’ (Awlachev 2010: 48)

A complex sentence, in Muher, consists of a main clause and a subordinate clause as shown in the following illustrative examples.

- (45) *x’la wəfit/t’/ə ti-ti-fət/’ ti-dərs-i*
 she millstone while-3SGF-grind.IPFV 3SGF-sing/dance.IPFV-3SGF
 ‘While she is grinding with a millstone, she is singing’

3.4. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to highlight the linguistic features that characterize Muher. It should be noted that this chapter does not have any aim to make a grammatical description of Muher, but it is to lay a background (foundation) for the detailed analysis of the subsequent chapters (Chapters 5-8).

Some coarticulated labialized and palatalized consonants are phonemic and result from morphophonological processes. Some singleton consonants (b, x) have allophones (β, h). Some consonants can be changed, weakened, fricativized, deleted, etc. The phonemic status of the glottal stop (ʔ), in Muher, is not clear. Gemination is phonemic in Muher, while stress is not. The basic syllable structure of Muher is (C) (C) V (C) (C).

Person pronouns in Muher can be used as possessive suffixes on nominals. There is no overt number and gender marker in Muher on nominals; number and gender can be marked by agreement suffixes on the verb or by cross-referencing on the verb. However, some nominals mark number and gender by using suppletive lexical forms. Definiteness in Muher is marked by the definite suffix *-we*. In Muher, adjectives may overtly express plural by reduplication as in *addis addis* ‘new (PL)’. Verbal inflection, in Muher, distinguishes between perfective, imperfective and jussive conjugations with subject and object agreement suffixes. The main verb marker (MVM), in Muher, is a clausal status suffix that obligatorily attaches to certain main verb predicates. Muher has non-verbal copulas *-n* (PRES), *nənə* (EXIST), and *bannə* (PST), which usually occur in affirmative main clauses. The declarative clause marker (DCM) *-m* is used with perfective verbs, whereas *-tt*, *-i*, and *-u* are used with imperfective verbs.

Syntactically, Muher is a verb finally language with strict Topic-Comment word order. Muher is a Semitic language whose basic word order is SOV, but this word order can be changed for a number of reasons such as information structure or pragmatic notions like focus and topic. For instance, the non-subject constituent can be fronted for topicalization. In the basic structure, Muher has an unmarked Subject-Object-Verb order. An obligatory MVM should be attached to the declarative main clause (usually with affirmative imperfective verbs). However, in subordination, predicates do not necessarily have tense markers and MVM. In Muher, relative clauses lack subordinating conjunction, but their predicates consist of a simple indicative verb; only affirmative perfective verbs begin with the linker *jə-*. Negation in Muher is marked by *an-*

/a-, whereby *a-* merges with *j-* to *e-*. Questions are structurally identical to declarative clauses and commands, but they have a distinct rising intonation sentence-finally. The morpheme *-we* can optionally be used at the end of the clause to make it a question.

CHAPTER FOUR

COPULAR CONSTRUCTIONS IN MUHER

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the different copulas in different clauses of Muher. In this thesis, the notion of copula is defined as a semantically empty element and is not part of the subject and the predicate of the non-verbal predication clause in Muher. The copula is used to specify or describe who someone or what something is. In the present and non-present tenses, Muher employs a copula. This thesis identified *-n*, *nənə-*, and *bannə-* as copular morphemes in the affirmative main clause in Muher. The Muher present tense copula *-n* is only used to denote a state of affairs which is true at the moment of the speech event. *-n* is a present tense predication copula, *nənə-* is a present tense existential copula and *bannə-* is the past tense predication and existential copula in Muher.

Nevertheless, Muher employs different auxiliary verbs or semi-copular verbs in other constructions or situations such as in negation, future tense and subordination. For example, the semi-copula verb *anxən-* with subject agreement suffixes can be used to have a negative present tense reading, *jənnə* is used to have a negative present tense existential reading, and the imperfective verb *xən-* with prefixes such as *ti-* or *ji-* and subject agreement suffixes can be used to express future tense in Muher.

The subject and/or object agreement system each of the above copular elements employs, and the kinds of predicates they appear with are the two fundamental parameters that make the Muher copulas different. For instance, the present tense predication copula *-n* has an obligatorily subject agreement suffix, and the predicate can be NPs and Aps. The present tense existential copula *nən-* is marked for subject agreement and it appears only with PPs which has a locative function. The past tense copula *bannə*, however, can be used for both predication and existential copula clauses in the past, and has subject agreement suffix. Besides, it appears with all predicates (i.e. NPs, PPs, and APs).

The above three copular morphemes are different from other lexical verbs for the following reasons. First, the copulas *-n*, *nən-*, and *bannə-* occurs only in affirmative main clause. In other clause types, auxiliary verbs are employed. The other difference is that while *-n*, *nən-*, and

bannə- have only perfective form, lexical verbs have both perfective and imperfective forms as in *srə-m* (buy.PFV.3SGM-DCM) vs *ji-srə-u* (3SGM-buy.IPFV-DCM).

4.2. Copular constructions in different clauses

4.2.1. Copular constructions in affirmative main clauses

Muher employs different copular forms in different tenses and indexes the subject. There are copulas in main and subordinating clauses. In the affirmative main clause, the copular *-n* is used in the present tense, *nənə-* in existential and *bannə-* in the past tense..

4.2.1.1. The present-tense copula *-n* and the existential copula *nənə-*

According to Meyer (2007b:176), a state of affairs that is true at the time of the speech event is indicated by a present-tense copula in affirmative main clauses in the present tense. In clauses where subject markers are added to the perfective verbs, the copula *-n* agrees with the subject. In other words, the copula complements the subject of affirmative main clauses in person, number, and gender. This is shown in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Inflection of the present tense copula *-n*

	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
1	<i>-n-x^w</i>	‘I am’	<i>-n-nə</i>	‘We are’
2 M	<i>-n-xə</i>	‘You are’	<i>-n-xim^w</i>	‘You are’
2 F	<i>-n-x^j</i>	‘You are’	<i>-n-xima</i>	‘You are’
3 M	<i>-n-ø</i>	‘He is’	<i>-n-m^w</i>	‘They are’
3 F	<i>-ja</i>	‘She is’	<i>-n-ma</i>	‘They are’

Table 14 shows that all the present copula *-n* is inflected for all persons, with the exception of the third person singular feminine, which has a suppletive copular form *-ja*.

The present copula *-n* occurs only in affirmative main clauses, and it can be attached to the nominal predicate complements; the copula is an enclitic element which is suffixed to nominal categories such as nouns and adjectives. Consider the examples in (1):

- (1) a. *anə təmari-n-x^w*
 I student -COP. PRES- 1SG
 ‘I am a student’

- b. *gərəd-we malkamma-ja*
 girl.SG-DEF beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘The girl is beautiful’
- c. *deng^ja-we za-(mm)-n-m^w*
 boy.PL-DEF there-(FOC)-COP.PRES-3PLM
 ‘The boys are over there’
- d. *bet-wita wərja-ʔe[k’e¹⁰]-n-ø*
 house- POSS.3SGM new-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘His house is new’
- e. *bet-x^jita wərja-ʔe-n-ø*
 house-POSS.3SGF new-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Her house is new’

The present copula *-n* is attached to a noun as in (1a), an adjective as in (1b) and (1d) and an adverb as in (c). *-n* is encliticized to *təmari* ‘student’ in (1a) and the first person subject marker *-x^w* is attached to it; that is to *-n*. The word order of (1a) is NP NP Copula; the copula is encliticized onto the preceding element to show agreement in person, number, or gender. In (1b) and (1c), the suffix *-n* is attached to the adjectival complement *malkamma* ‘beautiful’ and the locative deictic *za* ‘there’, which is an adverb of place, respectively. In (1d), the adjective *wərja* ‘new’ is suffixed with the copula *-n*, while the noun *bet* ‘house’ is marked with a third person singular masculine possessive clitic. (1e) is the same as (1d), except *bet* ‘house’ which is marked by the third person singular feminine possessive clitic *x^jita*. Furthermore, take note of how the suppletive 3SGF copula *-ja* in (1b) is cliticized to the predicates, and how the subject agreement marker *-(ə)m^w* in (1c) is suffixed to *za* ‘there’.

As shown in (2a) below, the third person singular feminine present tense copula is *-ja*, but the copula in (2b-2d) is *-n*.

- (2) a. *x^ja gəllif gərəd-ja*
 she tall girl.SG- COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘She is a tall girl’

¹⁰ Generic *k’e* (with the post-vocalic allomorph *ʔe*) ‘thing’ is a grammaticalized element that serves as an on-specificity marker. It typically attaches as dummy to headless nominal modifiers and relative clauses, but may also specify the semantics of the attributive modifier (cf. Meyer 2019: 235).

- b. *x^wa gəllif jidʒ-n-ø*
 he tall boy.SG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘He is a tall boy’
- c. *xinnəm^w gəllif deng^ja-n-m^w*
 they tall boy.PL-COP.PRES-3PLM
 ‘They are tall boys’
- d. *jə-innam k’ər-wita a-j-rəz-n-ø [e¹¹rəzin]*
 POSS-cow horn-POSS.3SGM NEG-3SGM-become heavy.IPFV-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘The horn of a cow is not heavy to itself’

Contrary to (2a), which uses the 3SGF copula *-ja*, (2b) uses the copula *-n*, that is additionally defined by the subjects *x^ja* "she" and *x^wa* "he," as well as the nouns *gərəd* ‘girl’ and *jidʒ* ‘boy’, respectively. The copula agrees with the subject in person, number and gender. The predicate nominal clause includes the feminine lexical noun *gərəd* ‘girl’ in addition to the suppletive 3SGF copula *-ja*. The lexical term *x^ja* is used as the marker for the feminine. The difference between (2a) and (2c) is visible in that in (2c) the subject is the third person plural masculine pronoun *xinnəm^w* whose nominal predicate has the suppletive plural noun *deng^ja* ‘boys’ of *jidʒ* ‘boy’; otherwise it is the same. In (2d), the copula *-n* is attached to the negated verb *rəz* ‘become heavy’. The subject agreement suffix is *ø* which represents the 3SGM. In Muher, inanimate and most animate nouns like *innam* ‘cow’ take 3SGM agreement suffixes even if they have a biologically female gender (cf. Meyer 2019: 234).

A copula may appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a clause, depending on the language. In light of this, Muher is a verb-final language in which the copula often follows the predicate nominal complement, independent of the kind of suffixes attached to it. Consider the following examples.

- (3) a. *zi adot-əŋŋa-ja*
 this mother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘This is my mother’

¹¹ In Muher, the negative marker *a-* in the imperfective and jussive assimilates with the 3SGM subject pronominal prefix *j-* to result in *e* (i.e. *a* merges with *j-* to be(come) *e*) (cf. Awlachev 2010: 27; Meyer 2019: 250).

- b. *kʲin zəga-n-ø əgɪr dəŋəŋnə-n-ø*
 buttock poor-COP.PRES-3SGM leg rich-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘To sit idle is to be poor; to work is to be rich’ [Lit. Buttock is poor, but leg is rich]

As can be seen in (3a), the predicate nominal *adot* ‘mother’ is followed by the first person possessive pronominal suffix *-əŋŋa* and this, in turn, is followed by the third person feminine plural present-tense copula *-ja*. If the possessor is in the first person plural, the possessive suffix *inna* can be used to render (3) *zi adotinnaja* ‘this is our mother’. In (3b), the copula *-n* is attached to its adjective complements *zəga* ‘poor’ and *dəŋəŋnə* ‘rich’ and followed by 3SGMSubj *ø*, which implies that there is no overt subject agreement suffix to 3SGM.

Another present-tense copula in Muher indicates the existence of a reality in which a subject is found. The morpheme for this existential copula is *nən(ə)-*. *nən(ə)-* is inflected for all persons, just like the present copula *-n*, and it appears before the MVMs, that are elements which show up themselves in matrix affirmative clauses.

Existential and past tense affirmative main clause predicates must have an obligatory clausal-status suffix known as the main verb marker (MVM) (Meyer 2019: 244). The affirmative existential and past tense copulas *nənə*-(EXIST) and *bannə*-(PST), respectively, are suffixed with the MVM. The inflectional paradigm of the affirmative existential copula *nənə*- is presented in the following table.

Table 15: Inflection of the existential copula *nən-*

	Existential copula	Glossing
1SG	<i>nən-xʷ-i</i> [nən ^w i]	‘There I am; I exist’
2SGM	<i>nən-xə-u</i> [nənnxo]	‘There you are; you exist’
2SGMF	<i>nən-xʲ-tt</i> [nən ^j itt]	‘There you are; you exist’
3SGM	<i>nən-ə-u</i> [nəno] ¹²	‘There he is; he exists’
3SGF	<i>nən-ətʃtʃ-i</i> [nənətʃtʃi]	‘There she is; she exists’
1PL	<i>nən-nə-u</i> [nənno]	‘There we are; we exist’
2PLM	<i>nən-ximʷ-tt</i> [nən ^w ximitt]	‘There you are; you exist’

¹² The final vowel /-o/ in [nəno] and [nənno] is obtained by the combination of ə and u, where u is the MVM.

2PLF	<i>nən-xima-tt</i> [<i>nənximatt</i>]	‘There you are; you exist’
3PLM	<i>nən-m^w-tt</i> [<i>nənm^witt</i>]	‘There they are; they exist’
3PLF	<i>nən-ma-tt</i> [<i>nənmatt</i>]	‘There they are; they exist’

Table 15 shows that the MVM has three allomorphs: *-i*, *-u*, and *-tt*; like in the *ədi*¹³ *bet* variety (cf. Meyer 2016:7; 2019: 144), in the *anə bet* variety of Muher, when the morpheme ends in *-ə* the morph *-u* is suffixed. Furthermore, it is indicated that the MVM *-tt*, does not exclusively refer to the feminine gender, but it also refers to the second and third plural masculine existential declarative main clauses. Rose (1996: 219-222), however, analyzes the above main verb marks as present tense markers. Consider the following examples.

- (4) a. *get'e bə-kifil dən nən-əff-i*
 Get'e LOC-room inside EXIST-3SGF-MVM
 ‘Gete is inside the room’ [Gete is at room]
- b. *bə-m^wəxir wəba nən-ə-u* [*nəno*]
 LOC-Muher malaria EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There is (exists) malaria in Muher’
- c. *xinnəma nən-ma-tt*
 they EXIST-3PLF-MVM
 ‘They (F) are present’
- d. *bə-gibi-we dən liɖe əffə nən-ə-u*
 LOC-compound-DEF inside big tree EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There is a big tree inside the compound’

The examples in (4a) to (4c) demonstrate how the affixes appear before the MVMs and how the existential copula is inflected for person, number, and gender. For instance, in (4a), the feminine marker *-əff-* is followed by the MVM *-i*, indicating that the existential copula *nənə-* agrees with the third person singular feminine subject *Gete*, and hence marked for subject agreement. The 3SGF subject marker, however, is dropped in the predication present tense copula and always

¹³ Depending on the form of 1SG independent personal pronoun, Muher has two varieties: the *anə bet* and *ədi bet*, (Hetzron 1977: 5). The inhabitants of Muher Aklil woreda or the area around Hawaryat speak the *anə-bet* variety, whereas the residents of Meqorqor speak the *ədi-bet* variety.

marked by the suppletive *-ja*. This could be because of the type of predicate they appear with. For instance, *-ja* appears with NP and AP as in (1b), (2a), and (3b), but the existential *nənə* appears with PP expressing the presence of something or someone at a certain location. The MVMs cannot be used in negative main clauses; they are attached only to the existential copula *nənə-* and past tense copula *bannə* in affirmative main clauses.

The third person masculine subject in (4b) is indicated by the suffixes *-ə* and MVM *-u*, which are added to the existential copula *nənə-*. The copula *nənə-*, in (4c), has the third person plural feminine marker *-ma*, which is followed by the MVM *-tt*. The morpheme *-tt* is not a feminine marker; if it had this grammatical function, it could not have been suffixed to the second and third person masculine paradigm as in *nənə-m^w-tt* ‘You (SGM) exist’ and *nənə-xim^w-tt* ‘they (PLM) exist’.

The presence/absence of some particular and indefinite referents in Muher is indicated by *att* ‘one’ or its reduplicated form *att-att* ‘some’ or *k’əli* ‘some’ as in (5).

- (5) a. *att merrəŋŋə nənə-ə-u[nəno]*
 one worker EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There is a worker’
- b. *att-att oʒa merrəŋŋə nən-m^w-tt*
 one-one (some) lazy worker EXIST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘There are some lazy workers’
- c. *k’əli merrəŋŋə nən-m^w-tt*
 some worker EXIST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘There are some workers’

att ‘one’ expresses the specific and definite reference *merrəŋŋə* ‘worker’ as in (5a). As presented in (5b), when an adjectival modifier, such as *oʒa* ‘lazy,’ is attached to an indeterminate referent, the reduplicated form *att-att* ‘some’ is used. When there is simply a noun, as in (5c), the existential copula (the 3PLM existential copula *nənəm^w-itt* ‘They exist’, in this case) accords with the term *k’əli* ‘some’. Nouns such as *merrəŋŋə* ‘worker’ do not inflect for number in Muher. The singular and plural nouns are unmarked. To indicate whether these nouns are singular or plural, no apparent morphemes are suffixed to them. Number in Muher is determined by the subject agreement suffixes.

Let's have a look at the following two examples in (6) that exhibit the existence/presence of a particular object of reference in order to better understand the behavior of the existential copula in the *anə bet* variety of Muher.

- (6) a. *bə-zəbərga bet x^wett gred nən-ma-tt*
 LOC-Zeberga house two girl.PL EXIST-3PLF-MVM
 ‘There are two girls in Zeberga’s house’
- b. *bə-dənəza dibir bizə zangjəra nən-m^w-tt*
 LOC-deneza forest many monkey EXIST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘There are many monkeys in Deneza forest’
- c. *abba-wita tə-adot-wita nən-m^w-tt*
 father-POSS.3SGM CONJ-mother-POSS.3SGM EXIST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘His father and mother are alive’

The copula *nən-* is followed by *-ma*, which, in turn, is followed by the MVM *-tt* for third person feminine plural as in (6a). The number of references is specified by the cardinal number *x^wett* ‘two’. The presence of a specific reference is represented by *bizə* ‘many’ which is the quantifier in (6b), and it generally implies the subject's existence is actual. In (6a) and (6b), the copula *nənə-*, which indicates the MVM *-tt*, affirms the presence of the subjects *gred* ‘girls’ and *zangjəra* ‘monkeys’, respectively. In (6c), the verb of existence *nənə* is followed by the 3PLM subject agreement suffix *-m^w* since the clause has the compound subject *abbawita tə-adotiwita* ‘his father and mother’. Clause (6c) shows the presence of some individuals denoted by the NP subject. We can conclude that the copula *nənə-* conveys an existential meaning.

The plural marking suffixes *-ma* and *-m^w* can also be used as gender marking morphemes. *-ma* and *m^w* denote the second and third plural feminine and masculine, respectively; this would make them to be portmanteau morphemes.

We have observed so far that the equative copula morphemes *-n* and *-ja* ‘be’ (cf. 1-3) and the existential copula *nən-* ‘exist’ (cf. 4-6) are used in affirmative declarative main clauses in the present tense with subject agreement suffixes.

However, the present tense existential copula *nən-* can be marked for object agreement suffix when it has VERB TO HAVE or possessive interpretation. This means possession in the present

tense can be expressed by the verb of existence *nəno* followed by object pronominal suffixes denoting the possessor (cf, Leslau 1981: 17). Consider the following examples:

- (7) a. *jə-x^wa arbet bet nənə-nn-tt*
 POSS-he four house have.IPFV.3SGM_{Obj}-MVM
 ‘He has four houses’
- b. *jə-almaz [jalmaz] deng^ja nənə-nna-tt*
 POSS-Almaz boy.PL have.IPFV.3SGF_{Obj}-MVM
 ‘Almaz has boys’

As can be seen in (7) above, the possessive verb or the verb to HAVE *nənə-* are suffixed with the object agreement suffixes *-nn* as in (7a), and *-nna* as in (7b) in which both of them are inflected for the MVM *-tt*. In what follows, I present and discuss copular constructions in the past tense.

4.2.1.2. The predicational past-tense copula in Muher

In Muher, past-tense copular clauses are expressed by using a variety of syntactic and semantic structures. For predicational and existential copula in the past, Muher employs the copula *bannə-* (or its short or reduced form *ba*). As shown in Table 16, *bannə-* appears mainly in affirmative perfective conjugation.

Table 16: Conjugation of the copula *bannə* with the MVM in the past tense

	Perfective Verb		Gloss
1SG	<i>bannə-x^w-i</i>	[<i>bannəx^wi</i>]	‘I was’
2SGM	<i>bannə-xə-u</i>	[<i>bannəxo</i>]	‘You were’
2SGF	<i>bannə-x^j-tt</i>	[<i>bannəx^jitt</i>]	‘You were’
3SGM	<i>bannə-ə-u</i>	[<i>banno</i>]	‘He was’
3SGF	<i>bannə-ɸɸ-i</i>	[<i>bannəɸɸi</i>]	‘She was’
1PL	<i>bannə-nə-u</i>	[<i>bannəno</i>]	‘We were’
2PLM	<i>bannə-xim^w-tt</i>	[<i>bannəxim^witt</i>]	‘You were’
2PLF	<i>bannə-xima-tt</i>	[<i>bannəximatt</i>]	‘You were’
3PLM	<i>bannə-(ə)m^w-tt</i>	[<i>bannim^witt</i>]	‘They were’
3PLF	<i>bannə-(ə)ma-tt</i>	[<i>bannimatt</i>]	‘They are’

Table 16 depicts that the past tense copula *bannə-*, like the present tense existential copula *nənə-*, is consistently inflected for subject agreement, followed by MVMs. The allomorphs of the main verb marker (MVM) are *-i*, *-u*, and *-tt*. MVMs are also used in some other Gurage varieties such as Kistane and Zay.

The aforementioned paradigm seems to be lexicalized units because it is difficult to distinguish clearly between person, number, and gender over the entire paradigm. Consider the following examples.

- (8) a. *ebna*¹⁴ *təməri* *bannə-x^w-i*
 last year student COP.PST-1SG-MVM
 ‘Last year, I was a student’
- b. *deng^ja-we* *bə-bet* *dən* *banni-m^w-tt*
 boys-DEF LOC-house inside COP.PST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘The boys (children) were in the house’

The past-tense copula *bannə-* appears in affirmative main clauses, where it is inflected for subject agreement in nominal clauses (cf. Table 16). *bannə-* is inflected for the MVM *-i* that comes after the first-person singular subject marker *-xu* as shown in (8a). The copula *bannə-* in (8b) is used in accordance with the MVM *-tt* and the third person plural masculine subject marker *-m^w*. The copula *bannə* in clause (8a), is used to indicate predication, and in clause (8b), it is used to make the clause existential copular clause. Thus, like Amharic which uses *näbbär-* for both predication and existential copula (cf. Mulusew 2014: 77-78), Muher also employs *bannə-* for predication and existential copula in the affirmative main clause. The copula *bannə-* shows suffixes in agreement with the subject.

However, when *bannə* is used with another verb, it functions as an auxiliary, not a copular function to convey remote past tense, which does not exhibit subject agreement but always occurs in the 3SGM default form *banno*. In this case, *bannə-* can optionally be substituted by its reduced form *ba* without any change in meaning; the speaker chooses *bannə-* when he/she speaks slowly, but *ba* in fast speech. Thus, in the affirmative declarative clause, past perfect is marked by the copula *bannə* when it has auxiliary function as in (9).

¹⁴ In the *anə-bet* variety of Muher *emna* is unknown.

- (9) a. *taməŋŋa ji-bəsa bannə-ə-u [banno]*
 yesterday 3SGM-come.PFV AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘He had come yesterday’
- b. *ax^j bəsər bənnə-x^j-m ba*
 you meat eat.PFV-2SGF-CVB AUX.PST
 ‘You (F) had eaten meat’
- c. *ʃifara donnə ji-boj ba*
 Shifara Donne IMP.3SGM-say.IPFV AUX
 ‘He was called Shifara Donne’

As shown in (9), the past auxiliary *banno* in (9a) and its reduced form *ba* in (9b) and (9c) indicate the past distance and render the same reading and both forms are normal in Muher. The distinction between *banno* and *ba* is that *banno* is used in slow speech, whereas *ba* is the reduced form and is used in quick and connected discourse.

Muher expresses past habitual action by using the auxiliary *banno* as presented in (10):

- (10) *ti-bəssa bannə-ə-u[banno]*
 3SGF-come.PFV AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘She used to come’

banno, in (10), is employed as a past-tense auxiliary verb with the covert third person singular feminine subject *x^ja* to express past habitual action without any subject agreement. It appears as *nənət/tfi* in non-past existential sentences. *banno* can signify past tense or unreal action in addition to it is used as the past auxiliary verb in nominal clauses. Consider the following example:

- (11) a. *miss-we dabbo ji-srə-ə bannə-ə-u [banno]*
 man-DEF bread 3SGM-buy.IPFV-3SGM AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘The man had bought/ used to buy/would have bought bread’
- b. *jə-bəsa-m^w-we abgaz sibat bə-gura mədər*
 REL-come.PFV-3PL (H)-DEF Abgaz Sibhat LOC-left place
tonna-m^w-m banno ji-wuj-t
 sit.PFV-3PL (H)-CVB AUX.PST 3SGM-say.PFV-3SGMObj
 ‘The one who came and called Abgaz Sibhat was said to have sat down at the left side’

In a nutshell, *bannə* functions as a past-tense copula in affirmative nominal clauses in which it inflects for subject agreement as in (8) above. When *bannə* is combined with another verb, it is a past-tense auxiliary and it does not show subject agreement, but invariably occurs in the 3SGM default form *banno* as in (8-11).

Continuous or habitual action in the past is expressed by the imperfective verb in conjunction with the past auxiliary *bannə*-, as in (12).

- (12) *kibre adarə-xⁱita ti-bε bannə-ə-u[banno]*
 Kibre lunch-GEN.3SGF 3SGF-eat.IPFV AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘Kibre was eating her lunch’

As opposed to an event, state, or activity that is occurring right now, the past tense copula *banno* can be used to describe an event, a state, or an activity that occurred in the past. (13) is an example of this.

- (13) *jə-ebna jə-dengⁱa-əŋŋa wit’t’et tə-zindirə-we jə-alf banno*
 GEN-last year GEN-boys-1SG.POSS result from-thisyear-DEF REL-better COP.PST.3SGM
 ‘Last year’s result of my children was better than this year’s’
 ‘My children’s result of last year was better than this year’s’

Example (13) shows that the speaker is contrasting his children's academic performance between the current year and the one before it, noting that the more recent year was more successful. The copula *banno* in this instance points to the previous year.

The predication present tense copula *-n* is morphosyntactically and semantically different from *nənə* and *bannə*. Morphosyntactically, *-n* lacks MVM and has partly suppletive person index, and semantically it lacks meaning, so it is used as a linker. However, *nənə* and *bannə* morphosyntactically inflect alike for MVM. This means, in the non-past, we have the present copula *-n* that indicates equative relations between a subject and a complement as in (14) below.

- (14) *timərga gəbəre-n-ø*
 Timerga-farmer COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Timerga is a farmer’

In (14), the present tense copula *-n* links the subject (Timerga) and the complement *gəbəre* farmer’. In (14) the copula *-n* is used to denote a situation as it exists at the moment of speech.

Regarding this, Meyer (2007b: 176) stated that the state of events that is true at the time of [the speech event] is indicated by a present tense copula. It should be noted that the present-copula *-n* is used only in affirmative main clauses.

As opposed to the *adi bet* variety which employs *jinə*, the *anəbet* variety uses the copula *nən-* to indicate the existence of some entity or activity that is true of the subject.

- (15) *bə-gibi-we* *dən* *liʔə* *ət/t/ə* *nənə-ə-u* [*nəno*]
 LOC-compound-DEF inside big tree EXIST.PRES-3SGM-MVM
 ‘In (side) the compound, there is a big tree’

In (15), the inflection of the existential copula *nəno* for the main verb marker asserts the existence of a big tree which is the subject of the clause. The basic word order in Muher is SOV as in *gərədwe bəbet dən nənət/t/i* ‘The girl is in the house’ or *liʔə ət/t/ə bəgibe nəno* ‘There is a big tree in the compound/big tree is in the compound’. The subject of (14) is *liʔə ət/t/ə* ‘big tree’, and its basic position should be clause initially. However, in (15) it has a dislocated structure, and this kind of word order is common in Muher to show topic. *liʔə ət/t/ə* ‘big tree’ is dislocated to the clause-medial position. (14) and (15) illustrate that in the present tense two copulas are identified: equative as in (14) and existential as in (15).

However, in the past tense, Muher employs a single copula, *bannə-* for both equative and existential clauses. Consider the two examples in (16)

- (16) a. *timərga* *gəbəre* *bannə-ə-u*
 Timerga farmer COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘Timerga was a farmer’
 b. *timərga* *bə-zi* *bannə-ə-u*
 Timerga LOC-here COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘Timerga was here’
 c. *bə-gibi-we* *dən* *liʔə* *ət/ˈt/ˈə* *bannə-nə-u* [*banno*]
 LOC-compound-DEF inside big tree COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There was a big tree inside the compound’

The basic position of the locative postpositional phrase is clause-initially. The distinction between (14) as equative copular clause and (15) as an existential clause on the one hand and

(16) on the other is that in the past tense, neither the existential copula *nəno* nor the present tense copula *-n* is used. A single copula *banno* was employed in the past. This implies that the copular complementary distribution is dictated by the tense type. One might assume that a single copula, which I assumed to be *-n*, could appear in several circumstances and forms.

As in the verb *nənə* which the HAVE interpretation in (7), the past tense copula *bannə-* has HAVE interpretation. In this context, *bannə* will be inflected for object pronominal suffixes as in (17) below:

- (17) a. *sarem x^wett tixə bannə-*nn*-tt*
 Sarem two child have.PST-3SGF_{Obj}-MVM
 ‘Sarem had two children’
- b. *abgaz sibat səbətt tixə bannə-*nn*-tt*
 Abgaz Sibat seven child have.PST-3SGM_{Obj}-MVM
 ‘Abgaz Sibat had seven children’

As depicted in (17), the object pronominal suffixes are added to *bannə* to have possessive interpretation. The object in (17a) is Sarem which has the 3SGM object marker *-nn*, but since the object of (17b) is a masculine entity (i.e. Abgaz Sibat), the object pronominal suffix is the 3SGM *-nn*.

4.2.1.3. Muher clauses in the future tenses

Muher expresses the future tense in different ways. Although Hetzron (1977: 85) calls *ətin* an “imminent future” construction, I would argue that what he presented as a single suffix consists of two elements, namely: *-ət* which is a vicinity marker and the present tense copula *-n* which are attached to imperfective verbs. These morphemes can be employed to signify an intended action that will take place after the moment of utterance like the Amharic planned activity *libəla nəw* which is congruent with Hetzron’s “imminent future” (cf. Hetzron 1977: 85). Consider the following examples:

- (18)¹⁵ a. *x^ja bəsər ti-bə^j-ət-in*
 she meat 3SGF-eat.IPFV-VIC-COP.3SGM
 ‘She is about to eat meat’
- b. *ax^j m^wəxir t-fək^j-ət-in*
 you(F) Muhir 2-go.IPFV.SGF-VIC-COP.3SGM
 ‘You (F) are about to go to Muher’
- c. *x^wa bəsər ji-bε-ət-in*
 he meat 3SGM-eat.IPFV-VIC-COP.3SGM
 ‘He is about to eat meat’

The vicinity marker *-ət* and the present tense copula *-in* are suffixed to the imperfective verb stems *bε* ‘eat’ and *fəka* ‘go’ to denote what is called ingressive aktionsart (kind of action) which is coming or likely to happen very soon. In all the above examples, it is not easy to locate exactly the future tense marker and subject agreement morphemes are prefixed to the imperfective verbs.

Future tense can also be expressed in Muher when the imperfective verbs are combined with habitual adverbs. Consider the following examples.

- (19) a. *anə nəgə ə-bəsə-ə-u*
 I tomorrow 1SG-come.IPFV-3SGM-i
 ‘I will come tomorrow’
- b. *anə bə-k^wirb m^wəxir ə-fəka-ə-u*
 I LOC-soon Muhir 1SG-go.IPFV-3SGM-MVM
 ‘I will go to Muher soon’
- c. *x^wa ahuyṇa ji-fəka-ə-u*
 he now 3SGM-go.IPFV-3SGM-MVM
 ‘He will go now’

¹⁵The Muher examples in (18a-c) have the Amharic equivalents *iss^wa siga litibəla nəw*, *antfi wədə muher litihedzi nəw* and *issu siga libəla nəw*, respectively.

The examples in (19) indicate that Muher explicitly uses habitual adverbs such as *nəgə* ‘tomorrow’, *k’wirb* ‘soon’ and *ahuyṇa* ‘now’ to express the future tense. The Muher clauses *əfəko* ‘I will go’, *jifəko* ‘he will go’, *tifəko* ‘you (M) will go’ and *nifəkano* ‘we will go’ are counterparts of the Amharic *ihedalləhu*, *jihedall*, *tihedalləh* and *innihedallən*, respectively.

Future tense in Muher can further be expressed by using the auxiliary verb *xən-* prefixed by subject markers and suffixed by MVMs, and the predicate can be both NPs and PPs as in (20).

- (20) a. *x^wa təmari/bə-bet-dən ji-xən-u*
 he student/LOC-house-inside 3SGM-become.IPFV-MVM
 ‘He will be a student/at home’
- b. *xinnəm^w təmari/bə-bet-dən ji-xən-m^w-tt*
 they student/LOC-house-inside 3PLM-become.IPFV-3PLM-MVM
 ‘They will be students/at home’
- c. *sarem təmari/bə-bet-dən ti-xən-i*
 Sarem student/LOC-house-inside 3SGF-become.IPFV-MVM
 Sarem will be a student/at home’

As can be seen in (20), to express the future tense, the Muher semi-copular imperfective verb *xən-* is used together with the imperfective marker *ji-* and *ti* and *xən-* is followed by main verb markers *-u*, *-tt* and *-i*. Besides, the three examples depicts that the predicate for *-xən-* are the NP *təmari* ‘students’ and the PP *bə-bet dən* ‘inside the house/at home’. However, the negative counterparts of the clauses in (20a-c) are constructed by the negative prefix *a(t)-*, and *xən-*, but the main verb marker cannot be suffixed to it. Consider the following examples:

- (21) a. *x^wa təmari a-j-xən[exən]*
 he student NEG-3SGM-become.IPFV
 ‘He will not be a student’
- b. *xinnəm^w təmari a-j-xən-m^w [exən^w]*
 they student NEG-3SGM-become.IPFV-3PLM
 ‘They will not be students’
- c. *sarem təmari at-xən*
 Sarem student NEG-become.IPFV
 ‘Sarem will not be a student’

In examples (21a)-(21c), the semi-copular (auxiliary) verb *xən-* is negated by *e-* and *at-*. In Muher, the primary conjugations are negated by *an/at-/a-* as in (21a), but *a-* merges with *j-* to yield *e-* which is a negative marker at the phonetic level as in (21a) and (21b). In Muher, there is never a main verb mark in negation. This is why in all the examples in (21), *xən-* is not suffixed with the main verb markers *-u*, *-i* and *-tt* as opposed to the affirmative construction in (20).

4.2.2. Negative and interrogative copular clauses in Muher

4.2.2.1. Negative copular constructions in Muher

Several types of semi-copular or auxiliary verbs are employed in negative copular constructions in different tenses such as the negative predication present tense semi-copular verb *anxən-* ‘am/is/are not’, the negative present tense existential verb *jənnə* ‘there is/are not’ and the negative predication and existential past tense copula *annəbbər-* ‘was/were not’. Main verb markers cannot be used in negative existential and past tense copular clauses.

a. The negative present tense semi-copular verb *anxən-*

In negation, the present tense predication copula *-n* is replaced by the the negative present tense verb *anxən-* which is formed by the combination of the negative marking morpheme *an-* and the existential semi-copula *xən-* (which is like the Amharic *honə* ‘become’) to yield *anxənə-* which, in turn, is inflected for subject agreement as presented in Table 17 below.

Table 17. Inflectional paradigm of the negative present tense copula

	Negated form	Gloss
1SG	<i>an-xən-x^w</i>	‘I am not’
2SGM	<i>an-xən-xə</i>	‘You are not’
2SGF	<i>an-xən-x^j</i>	‘You are not’
3SGM	<i>an-xən-ə</i>	‘He is not’
3SGF	<i>an-xən-ət/tf</i>	‘She is not’
1PL	<i>an-xən-nə</i>	‘We are not’
2PLM	<i>an-xən-xm^w</i>	‘You are not’
2PLF	<i>an-xən-xma</i>	‘You are not’
3PLM	<i>an-xən-m^w</i>	‘They are not’
3PLF	<i>an-xən-ma</i>	‘They are not’

Table 17 depicts that the morpheme *-xən-* is prefixed with the negative marking morpheme *an-*, producing *anxən-* followed by the subject agreement suffixes. The following examples conceptualized the issue.

- (22) a. *x^wa malkamma an-xən-ə*
 he handsome NEG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘He is not handsome’
- b. *x^ja malkamma an-xən-ətʃtʃ*
 she beautiful NEG-COP-3SGF
 ‘She is not beautiful’
- c. *lik’k’e bəsər wəbja mam^wə-ʔe an-xən-ə*
 many meat eating good-thing NEG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Eating a lot of meat is not good’

Examples (22a), (22b) and (22c) shows that the negative in the present tense is marked by the morphemes *an-* and *-xənə* (i.e., *anxənə* ‘not be’). This implies that in negation, the negated verb *xənə-* ‘become’ is used instead of the present tense copula *n-*. To understand it more, compare (22c) to the affirmative present tense copular clause given in (23).

- (23) *bəsər wəbja mam^wə-ʔe-n*
 meat eating good-thing- COP.3SGM
 ‘Eating meat is good’

In (23), the affirmative main clause's present tense copula *-n* is suffixed to the adjectival predicate complement *mam^wə* ‘good’. Its negative counterpart is presented in (24a) and further exemplified in (24b) by using the negated verb *anxən-*.

- (24) a. *bəsər wəbja mam^wə-ʔe an-xən-ə*
 meat eating good-thing NEG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Eating meat is not good’
- b. *jə-abba-ax^j fərəs an-xən-ə*
 POSS-father-POSS.2SGF horse NEG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘It is not your father’s horse’

- (25) *waga-we bə-bet dən an-xən-m^w*
 cattle-DEF LOC-house inside NEG-COP.PRES-3PLM
 ‘The cattle are not inside the house’

As can be seen in (24) and (25), *anxənə* is used to show the predication negative main clause in the present tense. As shown above, *anxən-* can be used with the subject agreement suffixes *-ə* and *-m^w*. In summary, in the present tense affirmative main clauses, Muher uses the copula *-n*. In negative clauses such as (24) and (25), the copula *anxənə* is used.

b. The negative present tense existential auxiliary verb *jənnə*

I have discussed that in the *anə bet* variety of Muher, *nənə-* is the existential copula morpheme in the present tense affirmative main clause. Now, I will show that the lexical auxiliary verb *jənnə* ‘there is no’ is the negative counterpart of *nənə-*; */jənnə/* and the negative marking morpheme *an-* cannot be used together. Consider the following Muher riddle that contains both present tense existential copulas *nən-* and the negative counterpart auxiliary verb *jənnə*. The two verbs have an existential meaning.

- (26) *xiwət jənnə en nən-ə-u*
 life there is no eye EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There is not life, (but) there are eyes’ [lit. There is eye]

As can be seen in (26), the subordinate existential verb *jənnə*, which shows the absence of life, is used as a negative counterpart of *nən-*, which shows the presence of eyes, not possession. The solution for the riddle is *injera*. Thus, *jənnə* and *nənə* are expressing the absence and presence of something. Table 18 presents the whole paradigm of *jənnə* for person, number, and gender.

Table 18: Conjugations of the negative existential auxiliary verb *jənnə*

	Negative existential copula	Gloss
1SG	<i>jənnə-x^w</i>	‘I do not present’
2SGM	<i>jənnə-xə</i>	‘You do not present’
2SGF	<i>jənnə-x^j</i>	‘You do not present’
3SGM	<i>jənnə-ə</i>	‘He does not present’
3SGF	<i>jənnə-ətʃtʃ</i>	‘She does not present’
1PL	<i>jənnə-nə</i>	‘We do not present’

2PLM	<i>jənnə-xim^w</i>	‘You do not present’
2PLF	<i>jənnə-xima</i>	‘You do not present’
3PLM	<i>jənnə-m^w</i>	‘They do not present’
3PLF	<i>jənnə-ma</i>	‘They do not present’

Table 18 shows that the person, number, and gender agreement suffixes come after the existential negative auxiliary verb *jənnə*; *jənnə* shows subject reference with the subject pronominal suffixes.

- (27) a. *bə-m^wəxir wəba jənnə*
 LOC-Muher malaria there is no
 ‘There is no malaria in Muher’
- b. *deng^ja-we bə-bet dən jənnə-m^w*
 boy.PL-DEF LOC-house inside no exist-3PLM
 ‘The boys are not inside the house’ [They boys do not exist inside the house]

Clause (27) asserts that the present tense existential negative auxiliary is *jənnə*. The default *jənnə* as in (27a) only applies to the third person, but the subject pronominal suffix is *-m^w* which is in agreement with *deng^ja* ‘boys’ is used for the third person plural subject as in (27b).

c. The negative past tense copula *annəbbər-*

As discussed in 4.2.1.2, Muher encodes affirmative copular clause in the past-tense by using the morpheme *bannə-*. On the other hand, in the negative past tense clauses, Muher employed the auxiliary *nəbbər* ‘he lived’ and the negative marking morpheme *-an* is suffixed to it. Let us consider the inflections of the negative past-tense copula *annəbər*.

Table 19: Inflection of the negative past tense copula *annəbər-*

Person	Negative Past Tense Copula	Gloss
1SG	<i>an-nəbər-x^w</i>	‘I was not present’
2SGM	<i>an-nəbər-xə</i>	‘You were not present’
2SGF	<i>an-nəbər-x^j</i>	‘You were not present’
3SGM	<i>an-nəbər-ə</i>	‘He was not present’
3SGF	<i>an-nəbər-ət/tf</i>	‘She was not present’

1PL	<i>an-nəbər-nə</i>	‘We were not present’
2PLM	<i>an-nəbər-xim^w</i>	‘You were not present’
2PLF	<i>an-nəbər-xima</i>	‘You were not present’
3PLM	<i>an-nəbər-m^w</i>	‘They were not present’
3PLM	<i>an-nəbər-ma</i>	‘They were not present’

Table 19 shows the conjugation of the negative past tense copula *annəbər* with subject agreements suffixes. Consider the following examples:

(28) a. *təmari an-nəbər-x^w [annəβərəxu]*

student NEG-AUX.PST-1SG

‘I was not a student’

b. *bə-m^wəxir an-nəbər-ə*

LOC-Muher NEG-live.PFV-3SGM

‘He was not in Muher’

c. *za jidʒdʒ b-j-bəsa bə-bet səb jənnə*

that boy when-3SGM-come.PFV LOC-house person NEG.EXIST

‘When that boy came, there is no person in the house’

In (28a), the main verb of existence or presence *nəbər* ‘was/were’ is used with the negative marker prefix *an-* to construct negation. In (28b), however, the negative marking morpheme *an-* is suffixed to the verb *nəbər* ‘live’. The subjects are not overtly stated in (28), but they can be understood from the subject agreement suffixes *-x^w* (28a), and *-ə*. In fact, in Muher, the negative marker is the prefix *an-* which can also be attached to perfective verbs as in (29).

(29) *axə bə-səʔat an-bəsa-xə*

You(M) on-time NEG-come.IPFV-2SGM

‘You did not come on time’

In (29), the negative morpheme is only *an-*, which is attached to the perfective main verb *bəsa* ‘come’. In both (28) and (29), the negative marker is *an-*. However, in (28), *annəbər* is used as a negative copula in both predicational (cf. 28a) and existential (cf. 28b) past tense clauses. Besides this, the negated lexical item *nəbər* can be used as a negative existential copula. Consider the following example:

- (30) *abba-x^jita* *tə-adot-x^jita* *bə-bet* *dən*
 father-POSS.3SGF CONJ-mother-POSS.3SGF LOC-house inside
*an-nəbər-m^w-m*¹⁶
 NEG-live.PFV-3PL-DCM
 ‘Her father and mother were not in the house’

The clause in (30) can have two readings. One of the readings of *nəbər* could have an existential interpretation, and in the second reading, *nəbbər* could be the main verb; in both readings, the negative marker is *an-*. Otherwise, the propositional meaning of (30) is the same.

4.2.2.2. Interrogative copular constructions in Muher

In Muher, although questions in Muher follow the same structure as declarative main clauses, questions are constructed using rising intonation and/or with the morpheme *-we* and rising intonation; what differentiates questions from declarative clauses is that questions end in a distinct rising intonation, and/or are marked by the morpheme *-we* attached to the clause-final constituent as presented in the following examples.

- (31) a. *miss-we* *dəngənpə-ʔe-n-ø*
 man-DEF rich-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘The man is rich?’
- b. *miss-we* *dəngənpə-ʔe-n-ø-(we) (ʔ)*
 man-DEF rich-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM-Q
 ‘Is the man rich?’
- c. *ʃifara* *donnə* *etə-n*
 Shifara Donne where-COP.PRES
 ‘Where is Shifara Donne?’
- d. Question: *gurage* *bə-etə-n* *jə-tnəssa*
 Gurage LOC-where-COP.3SGM 3SGM-stand.PFV
 ‘Where is Gurage originated from?’

¹⁶ The morpheme *-m* is used as declarative clause marker in the perfective aspect. It is syntactically different from the focus marker *-m*; it usually occurs with clause *final* constituents, which is usually a perfective verb since the basic word order of Muher is SOV. The focus marker *-m* is attached to nominals as in *ababə-m* ‘also Abebe’. *-m* as a contrastive focus marker will be discussed in chapter six.

Answer:	<i>gurage</i>	<i>bə-wanna-nnət</i>	<i>bəssa-m</i>	<i>ji-wuj</i>	<i>bə-ertira</i>
	Gurage	by-main-NOMIZ	come.IPFV-CVB	3SGM-say.PFV	LOC-Eritrea
	<i>kiflā xagər</i>	<i>bə-akalə guzay</i>	<i>bə-wuj</i>	<i>mədər</i>	<i>tənəssa-m</i>
	sub-city	bə--Akale Guzaj	LOC-say.	place	stand.PFV-DCM
‘Gurage is mainly said to be originated from a place called Akale Guzaj in Eritrea Province’					

In the affirmative declarative main clause as in (31a), the present tense copula-*n* is used. Although (31b) has the same structure as (31a), the way (31b) is said is substantially different in that (31b) is said with rising intonation towards the end of the clause. Forming questions is also possible by adding the definite marker *-we* to the present tense copula *-n* and raising the intonation at *-we*. In (31c) and (31d), the present-tense couplar element *-n* is attached to the wh-question word *etə* ‘where’. Unlike the polar questions in (31a) and (31b) which require a simple Yes/No response, the interrogative copular clause in (31c) and (31d) need a content response (i.e. the place where Shifara Donne is now, and the origin of the Gurage people). The clause in (31d) demands wider response than the rest of the clauses in (31).

The morpheme *-we*, which was a definite marker in (31a& b) as in *miss-we* ‘the man’, and thus portmanteau morpheme, can also be used to indicate a question if it is suffixed to the past-tense copula *banno* and said with rising intonation as presented in (32).

- (32) *abbonəf tamənjna bəsa-tfiti-m bannə-ə-u-we* (↗)? [*banno-we?*]
 Abonesh.F yesterday come.PFV-3SGF-CVB COP.PST-3SGM-MVM-Q
 ‘Did/had Abonesh come yesterday?’

Clause (32) has a rising intonation at the end of *-we*. There is no distinction between questions with simply rising intonation and questions with both rising intonation and *-we*. In polar questions like (31b) and (32), the question marking suffix *-we* is added to the present and past tense copulas *-n* and *banno*, respectively, and spoken at the end of each clause with rising intonation.

4.2.3. Copular constructions in Muher subordinate clauses

In subordination, Muher usually employs auxiliary verbs, and the construction diverts to a semicopular clause. The semi-copula *xənə-* which shares some properties of other copulas, and the existential copula *nən-* can be used in subordinate clauses in Muher. To introduce

subordinate clauses, the morphemes *tə-*, *bə-* and *jə-* can be prefixed to perfective stems *t-*, *b-* and *j-* are morphemes that are related to imperfective inflections (cf. Rose 2004: 41). In Muher, the subject may not be overtly seen in the construction, but subject agreement suffixes can tell us the subject. Consider the following examples.

- (33) a. *təmari bə-xən-xə mam^wə-ɖe wat'ina*
 student if-become.PFV-2SGM good-thing to study
 ‘If you are a student, you must study well’
- b. *bə-bet dən jə-nən-ət/tf-we gərəd əttəm^w-əŋŋa-ja*
 LOC-house inside REL-EXIST-3SGF-DEF girl sister-POSS.1SG-COP.3SGF
 ‘The girl who is inside the house is my sister’
- c. *g^wəbəz jə-xən-ə-ət mam^wə wit't'et a-bəssa-ø-m*
 clever REL-become.PFV-3SGM-VIC good result CAUS-come.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Since he is clever, he scored good result’
- d. *bə-zi bet jə-nəbbər-ə-we arəga bann-ə-u [banno]*
 LOC-this house REL-AUX.PAST-3SGM-DEF Arega COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘It was Arega who was in this house’ [The one who was in this house was Arega]

As noted above, the subordinate markers *bə-* and *jə-* are used to introduce the subordinate copular clause in (33a), (33b), and (33c). (33a) is a conditional copular clause in which the semi-copula *xənə* ‘become’ is used. (33b) is a relative clause introduced by *je-* and the existential copula *nənə* ‘exist’ is used in the same subordinate clause. The 3SGF copula *-ja* is also used in the main clause of (33b). The semi-copula *xənə* ‘become’ is used in the subordinate part of the clause in (33c), where *jə...ət* is a marker of reason clause. In (33d), the relative clause *bəzi bet jənəbbərwe* ‘who was in this house’ is indicated by the same copula, *nəbbər*. The relative clause in (33d) is introduced by the particle *jə-*. The copular clause is still the main clause, modified by the subordinate clause. In summary, a copular subordinate clause is constructed in each of the examples in (33) with the morphemes *jə-*, *bə-* and *ti-* and with the semi-copular elements such as *xənə* ‘become’ and the existential copula *nənə* ‘there is/are’.

4.3. Non-verbal predications in Muher

Non verbal predication has different meanings depend on the school of thoughts that different scholars follow. However, in this paper nonverbal predications has directly linked to

copular construction. Regarding this, Hengeveld (1992: 26) argues that non-verbal predication “can be expressed through copular constructions.” In non-verbal predications, “copulas have an auxiliary role and hence they do not have any semantic content” (Hengeveld 1992: 25). In Muher, the morpheme *-n* is used as a copula with non-verbal predicates in the present-tense affirmative main clauses. Although what I have been discussing up to now is about non-verbal predication of copular clauses, the affirmative present tense copula clauses in Muher was not clearly indicated. Thus, the following Table summarizes the Muher present-tense copula *-n* in a non-verbal predicate.

Table 20: Affirmative present-tense copula clauses in Muher

	Non-verbal predicate (Student-COP-Agrs)	Gloss
1SG	<i>təmari-n-x^w</i>	‘I am a student’
1PL	<i>təmari-n-nə</i>	‘We are students’
2SGM	<i>təmari-n-xə</i>	‘You are a student’
2SGF	<i>təmari-n-x^j</i>	‘You are a student’
2PLM	<i>təmari-n-xim^w</i>	‘You are students’
2PLF	<i>təmari-n-xima</i>	‘You are students’
3SGM	<i>təmari-n</i>	‘He is a student’
3SGF	<i>təmari-ja</i>	‘She is a student’
3PLM	<i>təmari-n-(ə)m^w</i>	‘They are students’
3PLF	<i>təmari-n-(ə)ma</i>	‘They are students’

As shown in Table 20 above, the copula *-n* agrees in person, number and gender with the subject, except in the 3SGM, which has a suppletive counterpart *-ja* for 3SGF subject. Copular constructions such as the above in which the copula follows a non-verbal predicate is a noun, adjective or PP. In such non-verbal predicate constructions, the predicate determines many issues such as the numbers and kinds of obligatory constituents in the predications (cf. Hengeveld 1992: 29).

The selection criteria and restrictions of the terms used as subject NPs are highly affected by the predicate in a non-verbal predicate construction, not by the present-tense copula *-n* as in (34).

- (34) a. *za miss dāngəɣɣnə-ʔe-n-ø*
 that man rich-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘That man is rich’
- b.¹⁷ *za bet dāngəɣɣnə-ʔe-n-ø*
 that house rich-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘That house is rich’

As can be seen above, the property *dāngəɣɣnə* ‘rich’ cannot select *bet* ‘house’ in (34b) for semantic reasons as only humans have the property of being *dāngəɣɣnə* ‘rich’. Both sentences are predicated on the present-tense copula *-n*, which is not a determining factor for the selection of arguments. As opposed to (34a) whose reference is ‘that man’, the reference of (34b) is not the literal *bet* ‘house’, the inhabitants (the people) in that house as in the Amharic greeting *bətot/tf dāhna walat/tfihu* (Lit. ‘Houses, good afternoon), where *betot/tf* refers to the residences (the people).

According to Hengeveld (1992: 29), the valency of a non-verbal predicate is also a fundamental factor in determining the number of obligatory constituents in the predication. Muher is not an exception in this respect as the following examples illustrate:

- (35) *zi mət’af mam^wə-ʔe-n-ø*
 this book good-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This book is good’
- (36) a. **zi mət’af j-alf-k’e-n-ø [jalfk’en]*
 this book 3SGM-be_better.IPFV-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This book is better’
- b. *zi mət’af tə-za-we mət’af j-alf-k’e-n-ø*
 this book from-that-DEF book 3SGM-be_better.IPFV-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This book is better than that one (that book)’

In (35), there is only one argument. This is because the adjective *mam^wə* ‘good’ is a one-place predicate. However, the Muher word *j-alf* ‘3SGM-be_better.IPFV’ which is the comparative

¹⁷ Constructions such as (30b) are metaphorically possible to refer to the wealth of the family or the owner (s).

form of *mam^{wə}* ‘good’ requires two arguments. One of them is *zi mət’af* ‘this book’, and the other *za met’af* ‘that book’. Although the construction in (36a) is structurally well-formed sentence, the comparative predicate lacks an obligatory complement to make the statement become more acceptable and meaningful to the hearer. If not, the hearer may ask questions such as ‘better than which book?’ Pragmatically, (36a) can be used if the context of the utterance is clear. But the non-verbal predicate in (36b) satisfies the required number of arguments which the comparative adjective *alf* ‘be_better’ requires.

Although the same copula is used in (35) and (36a), the number of arguments in a non-verbal predicate is determined by the predicate of each example. The predication in (35) describes a state of affairs regarding the attributes of the book.

In summary, the predicate in a non-verbal predicate construction determines the selectional restriction on argument terms and the number of such arguments, which are not determined by the copula. Being a semantically empty category, the copula has just a linking function in that it makes no independent contribution to the meaning of the clause. The copula lacks content, but carries agreement that refers to the subject.

4.4. Summary

The copulas in the *anə bet* variety of Muher are formed by the morphemes *-n* (equation, non-past), *nənə-* (existential, non-past), and *bannə-* and *ba* (PST). These copulas are intrinsically marked for tense and index the subject. Except in the 3SGF, where it is *-ja*, person markers come after the present tense copula (*-n*), which is a clitic element affixed to nouns and adjectives. Both the existential and past tense copulas *nənə-* and *bannə-* are inflected for MVMs in the same way. The past copula *bannə* can be use for the predication and existential clause in the past. These copulas are typically restricted in affirmative main clauses, but in other types of clauses, semi-copular verbs such as *xənə* and auxiliary verbs are usually used in their place. In the future tense, there is no copula in Muher although future tenses can be expressed by different ways such as the suffixes *-ət* and *in* attached to the imperfective verb to denote ingressive aktionsart.

The affirmative present tense copula is replaced in negation by the semi-copula *xənə-* ‘be come’ with the negative marking morpheme *an-*, which results in the negative present tense copula *anxənə-*. *jənnə* ‘there is not’ is the present tense negative form of the existential verb *nənə-* and it

denotes subject reference by way of the subject pronominal suffixes of verbs in the perfective aspect. For the past tense negative the copula *annəbbər-* is used. Questions are formed by using prosodic features such as rising intonation and/or with the morpheme *-we* that is attached at the end of a clause. The structure of questions and main clauses in Muher have the same structure. However, unlike statements, questions are said with rising intonation clause-finally.

The morphemes *t(ə-)*, *b(ə-)*, *j(ə-)* are used to introduce subordinate clauses in Muher. The affirmative relative clause with the perfective verb is marked by *jə-*.

In Muher, the morpheme *-n* functions as a copula with non-verbal predicates in the present tense. In a non-verbal predicate construction in Muher, the predicate is the main factor that determines the selection and restriction of the terms and the number of obligatory constituents. The copula has no semantic role in a non-verbal predication. The copular constructions in Muher may have the following form. Subject + Adjective/Noun+ Copula as in *gərədwe məlkammaja* ‘The girl is beautiful’ and *anə təmarinxu* ‘I am a student’, where the copula could be predicational existential, presentative, equative or replaced by other auxiliary verbs.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOPIC-COMMENT STRUCTURE IN MUHER

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the Topic-Comment structure of Muher. In Muher, a clause has a topic (given) and a comment (new information) about the topic. The topic-comment structure is a language universal issue; it is among the fundamental pragmatic articulations of clause structure (Andrews 2007:148; Krifka 2006:1). Topic-comment is concerned about how information is internally organized. The concept of topic-comment structure is associated with “what the utterance is about” and “what the speaker says about it”, respectively (cf. Von Heusinger 1999:30). This means syntactic structure turned into pragmatic (use) structure. Similarly, Lambrecht (1994: 118 & 120) states that topic is the pragmatic category that has the defining feature of “aboutness”. As it is presented in this chapter, some topics in Muher can be the focal element as in cleft constructions. This means in cleft constructions, topic and focus can overlap.

Muher is, syntactically, a verb-final language with strict Topic-Comment word order, and the subject-object order is unmarked. However, a definite (known) argument has to precede an indefinite (new) argument, regardless of their syntactic function (Meyer 2019: 246). Therefore, in the default SOV structure, the subject is the topic and the predicate is the comment. Consider the following illustrative example.

- (1) *ambəzat/tʃ wəzgəb-we kəffətət/tʃum*
Ambezach door-DEF open-3FS-3SGM.ACC-DCM
‘Ambezach opened the door’

In (1), *Ambezach* is the topic of the clause, followed by *wəzgəb-we kəffətət/tʃum* ‘opened the door’, which is the comment, and the verb *kəffətət/tʃum* occurs at the final position of the clause. Topic-comment sentences like (1) are syntactically and prosodically unmarked with respect to their information structure since they usually maintain the basic/default word order of Muher, which is SOV.

In the following sections, topic marking strategies in Muher are discussed. Topic in Muher can be marked prosodically, lexically, using converse terms, morphologically and syntactically (basic word order change, clefting, passivization, topicalization, dislocations, etc.). In what

follows, the Topic-Comment structure in Muher are presented and discussed in detail using Lambrecht's (1994) theory of information structure which considers topic as a pragmatic phenomenon.

5.2. Topic-Comment Structure in Muher

On the syntactic level, the topic is an argument that usually preposed to a clause-initial position. Muher, structurally, follows Topic-Comment word order; the topic is preposed to the initial position of the clause, and the comment usually comes at or near the end of the clause as shown in the following example.

- (2) *kəbbədə bet asrə-ə-m*
 Kebbede house sell.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 'Kebbede sold a house'

The clause in (2) has a typical topic-comment structure. In clause (2), one can easily identify the topic (what is talked about) and the comment (what is said about). The topic is *Kebbede*, which functions as the syntactic subject and it is placed at the beginning of the clause. This is because *Kebbede* is the person about which something is said. The comment is *bet asrə-ə-m* 'sold a house' (what is said about the topic *Kebbede*) that comes almost at the end of the clause. The topic 'Kebbede' functions as the syntactic subject of the clause in (2); it presents the individual (*Kebbede*) that the sentence is predicated on. This means the clause in (2) has a strictly topic-comment order, and the Subject-Object-Verb (*Kebbede-bet-asrə*) order is also syntactically unmarked for IS; the initial position is associated with the subject in the syntax. In this case, the subject and the topic can conflate. Lambrecht (1994: 131-132) calls clauses of this type, topic-comment sentences (sentence topic) in which the grammatical subject is used as the topic of the clause or the sentence structure is unmarked for information structure which is interpreted without context. However, discourse topic has more to do with discourse understanding and text cohesion than with the grammatical form of sentences (Lambrecht 1994: 117).

Muher speakers interpret canonical SOV sentences such as (2) with the absence of contextual or prosodic clues; the syntactic subject in clause (2) is the unmarked topic, and this fact suggests that the topic-comment structure is the unmarked pragmatic sentence articulation (cf. Lambrecht 1994:132). Topic-comment sentence structure in (2) above is characterized by the presence of a

focus accent, which is pitch, on *bet* ‘house’, and low pitch prominence¹⁸ on the topic noun *Kebbede*.

To identify the topic and comment of a clause in Muher, a question-answer pairing strategy or mini-dialogue (cf. Folay 2007: 403) plays an important role by creating a linguistic context for the question. As Lambrecht (1994: 120-121) states discourse context access is required to distinguish topic [from a comment]. The topic element is associated with the question “what about X?”, where x is the topic of the clause. In Muher the morpheme *-f* is used to mean “what about...”), and it distinguishes the aboutness of topic from the comment expression as shown in the following mini dialogue.

- (3) a. *mərga tʃʼamma sirə-ə-m*
 Merga Shoes buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Merga bought shoes’
- b. *nurga-f*
 Nurga-what about
 ‘What about Nurga?’
- c. *nurga tʃʼamma an-sirə, x^wa libs sirə-ə-m*
 Nurga Shoes NEG-buy.PFV he cloth buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Nurga did not buy shoes; he bought cloth’

In the Muher canonical structure like (3a), the clause follows a topic-comment pattern. The topic of (3a) is the noun *Merga*, which is the aboutness topic of sentence topic that usually overlaps with the subject of the canonical structure (SOV). The topic of (3c), however, is *Nurga* which is the response to the question clause in (3b) in which the morpheme *-f* is attached to *Nurga* to change the topic; the suffix *-f* is used here to change topic. The subject pronoun (constituent) *x^wa* ‘he’ in (3c) that refers back to the current topic of discourse does not need to be a linguistic topic itself because it is a pronoun that refers to the proper noun *Nurga*. In Muher, the topic of the clause overlaps with the grammatical subject of basic declarative clauses, which is an SOV. This is why in both clauses, the subject and the topic roles conflate with each other (cf. Andrews

¹⁸Low pitch prominence is not a necessary condition for topic marking (Lambrecht 1994: 121). Note also that stress, like Amharic (cf. Alemayehu Haile 1987), is not phonemic in Muher although it frequently falls on the penultimate syllable (cf. Meyer 2019: 23) and tone is not also a feature of Muher.

2007: 149). The noun *Nurga* is forced to be a contrastive topic of the response clause in (3c) by the interrogative clause in (3b), for *Nurga* is used to shift the topic from *Merga*. It is possible to say that *Merga* and *Nurga* are different types of topic; *Merga* in (3a) is a non-contrastive (aboutness) topic and *Nurga* is a contrastive topic.

In the unmarked pragmatic articulation as in (3a) the subject “*Merga*” is a topic and the predicate *tf’amma sirəm* ‘bought shoes’ is the comment. There is an inherent relationship between topic and the pragmatic presupposition; this relationship motivates the use of the question-answer test as in (3b) as a way of determining the topic of a sentence such as *Nurga* in (3c). The Muher topic marking morpheme *-f* is suffixed to *Nurga*, which in turn, makes the noun *Nurga* to be a contrastive topic of the response clause in (3c). Thus, *-f* introduces sentence topics in question-answer pairs and elliptical constructions as in *axəf* ‘how about you?’.

Sentence topic and discourse topic are not the same. Sentence topic refers to the entity, person, or thing about which the information in the clause is conveyed. Andrews (2007: 149) claims that in many languages of the world [including Muher], the subject grammatical relation is correlated with the topic function; sentence topic and subject can overlap. Discourse topic, on the other hand, has more to do with discourse understanding and text cohesion than with the grammatical form of sentences. In Muher, sentence topic can be constructed from simple NP or conjoined NPs as shown in (4) below.

- (4) a. *ləmma axuŋŋa tə-zəbərga-ge bəssa-ə-m*
 Lemma now with-Zeberga-with come.IPFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Lemma comes with Zeberga now’
- b. *zəbərga axuŋŋa tə-ləmma-ge bəssa-ə-m*
 Zeberga now With-Lemma-with Come.IPFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Zeberega comes with Lemma now’
- c. *ləmma-m zəbərga-m axuŋŋa bəss-mu-m*
 Lemma-CONJ Zeberga-CONJ now Come.IPFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘Lemma and Zeberga come now’

Although the information in clauses (4a) and (4b) are structured differently, their basic information is the same. However, clauses in (4a) and (4b) are more preferably used to talk about *Lemma* and *Zeberga*, respectively. The basic declarative clauses in the above examples follow

the Muher Topic-Comment structure, but the topics are different. Clause (4a) is structured to talk about *Lemma*, whereas clause (4b) is more appropriate to talk about *Zeberga* in the basic clause of Muher since they are the subjects of each clause.

In the above clauses the grammatical subject of each clause conflates with the topic, and the predicates conflate with the comment. Thus, *Lemma* is the subject and topic of clause (4a), and *Zeberga* is the subject and topic of clause (4b). *Lemma* and *Zeberga* are also the grammatical subject and topic of clause (4c). The comments (or the predicates) of clauses (4a) and (4b) are *təzəbərgage bəssam* ‘comes with Zeberga’ and *təlemmage bəssam* ‘comes with Lemma’, respectively.

In pragmatically unmarked constructions for information structure such as (2), (3a), and (4a-c) above, the Topic-Comment structure is the same as given-new information (cf. von Heusinger 1999: 31).

The clause in (4c) has a conjoined subject (i.e. *Lemma* and *Zeberga*). The two nouns are conjoined (can be substituted by the subject pronoun *they*) and function as a linguistic topic of clause (4c). Clause (4c) is talking about the conjoined topic (*Lemma* and *Zeberga*) that is subject to topicality.

So far, sentence topics that convey information about an entity, person, and thing have been discussed. Sentence topics can also be used to show contrastive topics. Contrastive topics usually are about more than one referent so the topics can also be multiple. Consider the following example:

- (5) a. *dengʷa-axə* *etə-n* *ji-nəbir-m^w*
 sons-POSS.2SGM where-COP.PRES 3PL-live.IPFV-3PL
 ‘Where do your sons live?’
- b. *workʷu* *ji-nəbir* *bə-xawarijat* *mammo* *tʃʷin* *tə-wəlkʷitʷe* *fəka-ø-m*
 Worku 3SGM-live.IPFV LOC-Hawariat Mammo but to-Welkite go.PFV-DCM
 ‘Worku lives in Hawariat, but Mammo went to Welkite’
- c. *dengʷa-əŋŋa* *ji-nəbir-m^w* *bə-ʃɔ-n*
 sons-POSS.1SG 3PL-live.IPFV-3PLM LOC-Shewa (Addis Ababa)-COP.PRES
 ‘My sons are living in Addis Ababa’

Sentence Topic can be either aboutness (which contains a single subject or a sentence initial constituent used as the subject of the clause) or contrastive topic (i.e. topics that have multiple topics or are about more than one referent). Thus, the subject of the response clause in (5b) is contrastive topic, for the speaker provided various answers depending on the place where his/her sons live. Topic and foci can be interpreted contrastively, and contrastive topics and contrastive focus are non-aboutness topics. Regarding this, Krifka (2006: 33) claims that contrastive topics “do not constitute an information packaging category in their own right, but represent a combination of topic and focus.”

The question clause in (5a) presupposes that the speaker knows that the addressee has sons, but he does not know where these sons live. In (5b), the responder answers by marking contrastive topic via topicalization. The response clause has contrastive topics, namely *Worku* and *Mammo* who live in different places. In clause (5c), however, both of his/her sons live in the same place, *ʃə* ‘Shewa (Addis Ababa)’, and hence the addressor responded to the question with a conjoined subject or simple topic noun phrase *dengʲənnə* ‘my sons’ or with its proform ‘they’.

The response clause in (5b) has two foci and two contrastive topics. The contrastive topics are the NPs *Worku* and *Mammo*, whereas the *Hawariat* and *Welkite* are the foci of the clause which are marked by prosodic features (high pitch or rising accent). This means there is no overt focus marking element, but prosodically marked on *Hawariat* and *Welkite*. The contrastive topic is marked by fronting and deaccenting phonologically. Example (5b) shows that the sons live in different places. It is this variation of the places where the sons reside that brings the contrastive sense in clause (5b). Clause (5c), on the other hand, has only one non-contrastive topic and focus which are aboutness topic and new information focus, respectively. The topic and the focus of (5c) are *dengʲa* ‘sons’ and *ʃə* ‘Addis Ababa’ in that order.

What brings the contrastive sense in clause (5b) is the differences in the places the sons live. Since a single clause with a contrastive topic cannot give all the required information, the contrastive topics in (5b) are used as a strategy of incremental answering or information (cf. Krifka 2006: 33). As the topics are overlapped with the subject in (5b), the contrastive topics *worku* and *mammo* are unmarked for information structure.

5.3. Strategies of Topic Marking in Muher

To determine the topic of a given clause, several things should be taken into account. For example, the context, the communicative intention of the speaker in making the statement and the state of mind of the addressee with respect to the referent are important factors (Lambrecht 1994: 120). In the canonical word order of Muher, subjects are the topic. However, Muher employs various strategies to mark topic. In this subsection, different topic marking strategies are discussed.

5.3.1. Marking topic in canonical word order of Muher

In the default word order of Muher, the topic marker is the clause initial position in which the subject noun serves as a topic of a clause as in (6).

- (6) *ʒəx^wən-we k'it'e ji-bɛ-w*
Elephant-DEF leave 3SGM-eat.IPFV-3SGM
'The elephant eats leave(s)'

The clause in (6) follows the canonical word order of Muher (Subject-Predicate/Topic-Comment), where *ʒəx^wən-we* 'the elephant' is the subject or the topic, and *k'it'e jibɛw* 'eats leaves' is the predicate or the Comment. In (6), the definite marker *-we* is attached to the noun *ʒəx^wən* 'elephant', where the NP *ʒəx^wən-we* 'the elephant' becomes known or given, and thus the topic of the clause in (6) is *ʒəx^wən-we* 'the elephant' which appears in (6) in the clause-initial position. Thus, the subject NP *ʒəx^wənwe* 'the elephant' is the topic of clause (6).

5.3.2. Using demonstratives as a topic marker

The use of Muher demonstratives such as *zi* 'this', *za* 'that', *nəzi* 'these' and *nəza* 'those' can mark the information as given. This means the NP that contains the DEM can be a topic of a given clause. The demonstratives in (7) involve the speaker (or some other person) as a deictic center. They are anchored in the speech situations and can be accompanied by a pointing gesture. The role of the demonstratives at this level is to specify the nouns as given. Consider the following examples:

- (7) a. *zi zang^jarə ef-ə-m banno*
this monkey go.PFV-3SGM-CVB AUX.PST
'This monkey had walked'

- b. *jə-zi bet baləbet ambəzat/t/-ja*
 GEN-this house owner Ambezach-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘The owner of this house is Ambezach’

The proximal demonstrative *zi* ‘this’ in (7a) is used to make the NP *zi zangʲərə* ‘this monkey’ as a given or old information. Thus, *zi zangʲərə* ‘this monkey’ is the topic of the clause in (7a). The clause in (7b) is derived from a structure where the possessor Ambezach is comment and ‘this house owner’ is the possessed topic. [Amb. [this house owner] be], where the possessed NP is topicalized. The possessor (i.e. Ambezach) is higher in the above syntactic structure, which follows from its higher thematic/semantic role. Thus, the noun phrase *jəzi bet baləbet* ‘The owner of this house’ is new information (topic), whereas the noun phrase *Ambezach* is new information and unknown to them, and hence it is the comment.

5.3.3. Marking topic lexically

In Muher, topic can be marked lexically through aboutness tests such as *asrəm* ‘sold’ and *tə-asrəm* ‘was sold’ and converse terms such as *ab-* ‘give’ *tək’əbε-* ‘receive/take’. The topic of a clause is not necessarily the element that comes first in a sentence, but it is “the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about (Lambrecht 1994: 117-18). To evaluate the topic status of an element, “as for tests” and “aboutness tests” are used (cf. Levinson 1983: 390). Besides, I will describe how topic is marked lexically via converse terms.

5.3.3.1. Aboutness Topic

In this section, topic is analyzed in terms of or in relation to aboutness (The topic of a sentence is the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is ABOUT). In Muher, topic can be encoded by the most dominant topic type called *aboutness* as presented below.

- (8) *gʷənda bə-afər[bafər] dən ji-nəbir-u*
 ant LOC-soil Inside 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM
 ‘Ant lives inside soil’

In (8), the NP *gʷənda* ‘ant’ is the subject of the clause, while the VP *bafər dən jinəbiru* ‘lives inside soil’ is the predicate. *gʷənda* is referentially active, and this is not a “new” unit of information since the proposition *jinəbiru* and its following constituents are not found in the discourse, and the speaker chooses to add relevant information to the NP subject *gʷənda*. Since

this proposition provides information that is required by the NP *g^wanda*, and talks about it, then it is an aboutness topic hinging on meaning and communicative context and speaker's choice.

The essence of topic in terms of the pragmatic concepts of aboutness and relevance entails that it is not always possible to determine the topic of a sentence based on the syntactic structure of that sentence alone. There are sentence constructions in which neither their grammatical relations nor their basic word order is necessary to indicate the topic status of the subject of that sentence. There could be different possible contexts to talk about the topic of a given clause, but one of the contexts can be the best candidate to be the topic of a given clause. Consider the following Muher canonical subject-predicate structure:

- (9) *ambezat/tf wəzɡəb-we kəffətə-t/tf-u-m*
 Ambezach door-DEF open.PFV-3SGF-3SGMObj-DCM
 'Ambezach opened the door'

In the unmarked or basic syntactic structure of a clause like (9), the subject and the topic conflate. In Muher declarative sentences with the basic word order, sentence topic normally overlaps with the grammatical subject whereas the comment overlaps with the predicate complements (cf. Andrews 2007: 149). Thus, Ambezach is the subject and topic of clause (9). However, the grammatical subject does not necessarily conflate with the subject or vice versa. Since Ambezach is mentioned as a subject NP, she is always the topic. Silent topics are not overt NPs, but only marked by person markers attached on the verb. Besides, we need to understand the context, the communicative intentions of the speaker in making the statement, and the state of mind of the addressee concerning the referent in question (cf. Lambrecht 1994:120).

The clause in (9) can have the following three possible allosentences by embedding the statement expressed in it in different discourse contexts:

- a. What did Ambezach do? Ambezach opened the DOOR.
- b. Who opened the door? AMBEZACH opened the door.
- c. What happened? AMBEZACH opened the DOOR.

Based on the above three contexts, it is only in context (a) that the NP subject Ambezach is a topic. This is because in context (a) the proposition evoked by the verb phrase *wəzgəbwe kəffətət/ɪfʊm* ‘opened the door’ is about the referent AMBEZACH. In context (a), the statement expressed in (9) has the intention of increasing the addressee’s knowledge about *Ambezach*. Ambezach is the ground of the sentence in (a) which is a presupposed material in which Ambezach corresponds to the shared beliefs of the speaker and the hearer of the sentence before it is uttered. Thus, the capitalized constituent (The DOOR) is the focus of the sentence and Ambezach is the topic. It pragmatically asserts about Ambezach that she opened the door. In information structure terms, the topic-comment sentence is preferable to the term subject-predicate sentence (Lambrecht 1994: 121).

Semantically speaking, sentences (b) and (c) have different contexts which prevent the subject NP from being topical. The subject NP Ambezach in the response clause of (b) has a topical status. The semantic interpretation of (b) is that : who X [X opened the door], where X is subject-topic and the VP ‘opened the door’ is the comment, and this VP is syntactically the predicate. The WH-elements are proforms of the NP subject-topic variable. Since they ask for new information, that information could also be focused on. Thus, in (b) Ambezach is a focus element and the topic about which a question is asked. The function of the response clause in (c), however, is to inform the addressee of an event involving Ambezach as a pragmatic participant. Although the semantics of (c) can be interpreted as: what X, X event, [Amb caused X to happen], where Amb is subject and topic again, the pragmatics of the statement in (c) is not construed to convey information about Ambezach. Lambrecht (1994: 124) used the term EVENT-reporting to refer to the pragmatic function of sentences such as (c). The pragmatic presupposition required by the response in (c) is simply that something happened. Topic-comment sentences such as (9) are pragmatically and prosodically unmarked with respect to their information structure since the clause initial constituent is the topic of the clause. Therefore, in unmarked constructions of Muher clauses, the topic is the subject of the sentence as in (10).

- (10) *kəbbədə jə-anə [janə] mət’af a-fəka-ø-m*
 Kebbēde GEN-I book CAUS-take.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Kebbēde took my book’

The clause in (10) follows the canonical or basic word order in Muher, which is SOV, and hence the construction is unmarked. So (10) is a syntactic structure for the proposition: there is X, and X is Kebede; there is Y, and Y is a book, such that [X [Y took]] where X is topic-subject by virtue of its structural position relative to everything else in the structure, where everything else is a comment. In this case, the subject of clause (10) is Kebede which is also the topic of the clause. In clauses such as (10), the topic and the subject of the clause are the same noun Kebede.

A clause usually has a topic and a theme (comment) about the topic. The new information or the theme can be the comment, and it usually comes at or near the end of the clause in Muher as in (11).

- (11) a. *aləmu t'e asrə-ə-m*
 Alemu sheep sell.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 'Alemu sold sheep'
- b. *t'e-we tə-asrə-m*
 sheep-DEF PASS-sell.PFV-DCM
 'The sheep (It) was sold '

In (11), it is possible to identify the topic of the clause (i.e. what is talked about), and the comment (i.e. what is said about it). Example (11a) is a Topic-Comment structure that yields unmarked Subject-Object order. The topic of the clause in (11a) is *Alemu*, who is the person about which something is said. The rest part of the clause (i.e., *t'e asrəm* 'sold sheep') can be taken as the comment that states something about the topic (i.e., Alemu). The new information is the VP, *t'e asrəm* '(He) sold sheep' and it is the focused constituent in the structure (since comment usually conflates with focus) with predicate focus structure and the noun *t'e* 'sheep' is the focused piece of this new information.

In (11b), the new information is the agent postpositional phrase *bə-aləmu* 'by Alemu', while the patient subject *t'e* 'sheep' is the topic since *t'e* 'sheep' is the entity about which something is predicated. As can be seen in (10b), the object noun *t'e* 'sheep' is moved to the subject or topic position and is marked for definiteness (-*we*). However, this does not mean that it cannot be

impersonal or indefinite; we can say *t'ə tə-asrəm* 'sheep was sold' as in the Amharic *bəg tarrədə* 'sheep is slaughtered'.

5.3.3.2. Marking Topic via Converse Terms

Languages employ various means or strategies of packaging or structuring and expressing the same event (Foley 2007: 364-365). For example, the use of converse terms is one of the means of marking a topic. Converse pairs show oppositeness or contradiction in terms of their meaning relations. Regarding this, Saeed (2003: 67) stated that converses are terms that describe a relation between two entities from alternative viewpoints. The English pairs of words give/take, buy/sell, student/teacher, employee/employer, and trainee/trainer, for example, are converse of one another. The existence of one member of the pair presupposes the co-existence of the other member (cf. Crystal 2008: 114). Muher employs some converse terms or pairs of lexical items that describe a relation between two entities from alternative viewpoints and conveys a similar meaning. In Muher, converses can be realized via verbs, nouns and adpositions as shown in the following examples.

- (12) a. *aləmu jə-almaz [jalmaz] sit'ota ab-ə-nna-m*
 Alemu for-Almaz gift give.PFV-3SGM_{Subj}-3SGF_{Obj}-DCM
 'Alemu gave Almaz a gift/present'
- b. *almaz kə-aləmu [kaləmu] sit'ot'a tək'əbε-ətft/-im*
 Almaz from-Alemu gift receive.PFV-3SGF-DCM
 'Almaz received/took a gift from Alemu'

In (12b), the same pre-posing or fronting of x, where x is non-topic, is employed as in the passive constructions above. In clause (12), the same message is encoded from different perspectives by using a converse predicate or verb as one of the strategies used in structuring information in Muher. The converse verbs *abə* 'give' and *tək'əbε* 'receive/took' are used to mark information structure lexically through converse. The lexical options in clauses (12a) and (12b) describe the relationship between two entities from alternative viewpoints and result in different topics. This is due to the fact that converse terms reveal a kind of oppositeness or contradiction in relation to their meaning. The existence of one of the pairs presuppose the existence of the other pair; the existence of *ab-* 'give' make readers/listeners to assume *tək'əbε* 'receive'

Although (12a) and (12b) express the same basic event and have the same central meaning, they are structured differently in relation to their syntactic and information structures. The clauses in (12a) and (12b) are structured distinctively because of the verbs *ab-* ‘give’ and *tək’əbε* ‘receive/took’, respectively. With *ab-* ‘give’, the giver of the gift (i.e. Alemu) is the subject and hence the topic of clause (12a); with *tək’əbε* ‘receive/took’, the recipient of the gift (i.e. Almaz) is the subject, and hence the topic of clause (12b). In Muher, the subject of the clause is the most topical NP element. As can be seen in (12) above, verbs in converse relation change the order of NPs without changing the basic meaning of the clauses. In Muher, it is possible to say *abənnam* ‘he gave her’ and *tək’əbεt/ṭim* ‘she received’, but there is no form for **tə-abəjam* or *tə-awujam* ‘be given’ as in the Amharic *təsətt’əṭṭf* ‘was given’. The converse terms are used to construct structures that basically convey the same meaning from various perspectives and set different topics for the clauses. Thus, the role of the converse terms is that they will be bring a non-subject constituent into the clause initial position which would make the constituent the topic of the clause.

Converse relations can also be observed between nouns in Muher to structure information semantically or pragmatically in different ways as in (13).

- (13) a. *maritu jə-wərk’inəf adot-ja*
 Maritu GEN-Worknesh mother-COP.3SGM. PRES
 ‘Maritu is Worknesh’s mother’ [Maritu is the mother of Worknesh]
- b. *wərk’inəf jə-maritu gərad-ja*
 Worknesh GEN-maritu girl-COP.3SGM. PRES
 ‘Worknesh is Maritu’s daughter’ [Worknesh is the daughter of Maritu]

In (13a) and (13b), the lexical terms (nouns) *adot* ‘mother’ and *gərad* ‘girl/daughter’ are in converse relations describing *adot/gərad* from alternative viewpoints. The clause in (13a) and (13b) convey the same basic meaning because they are paraphrases of each other, but they structured the information differently. The two clauses are strictly structured in the form of Topic-Comment sentence type which coincides with the Subject-Predicate grammatical structure of the clauses. The clauses in (13a) and (13b) state about Maritu, and Worknesh, respectively. Thus, the topic of clause (13a) is Maritu, and clause (13b) is Worknesh.

Muher also employs converse postpositions to encode information structure notions such as topic by changing the order of the given constituents. Muher shows relational oppositions between and among things, objects, or entities located between vertical and/or horizontal spaces. Muher converse locatives such as *jiftət* ‘front’ and *ankʲə* ‘back’ are used to compare things or entities that precede and/or follow so that they can encode information structure differently. Consider the following examples:

- (14) a. *məbrat bə-aləmu [baləmu] jiftət kʷəmə-tʃf-m*
 Mebrat LOC-Alemu in front of stand.PFV-3SGF-DCM
 ‘Mebrat stood in front of Alemu’
- b. *aləmu bə-məbrat ankʲə [aŋkʲə] kʷəmə-ø-m*
 Alemu LOC-Mebrat back stood.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Alemu stood at the back of Mebrat’

The converse terms *jiftət* ‘front’ and *ankʲə* ‘back’ in (14) are nominal in their syntactic categories, but their function is locative. The position where *Mebrat* and *Alemu* stood is described in relation to the position of *Alemu* and *Mebrat*, respectively. The variation of the positions of *Alemu* and *Mebrat* lead to different ways of information packaging. The clauses in (14a) and (14b) are different in relation to their Topic-Comment articulation. Thus, the topic of clause (14a) is *Mebrat*, whereas the topic of clause (14b) is *Alemu*.

In summary, by changing the order of the information units of clauses, converse terms such as converse nouns, verbs and adpositions bring Topic-Comment structure changes. In all the above declarative clauses that are constructed around the converse verbs, nouns and prepositions, the sentences strictly follow the Muher Topic-Comment structure, and hence the topic is the sentence-initial constituent.

5.3.4. Marking Topic Morphologically

Muher can mark the topic of a clause morphologically. For example, aboutness or sentence topic can be encoded via the discontinuous morpheme *jə...kʰe* with the sense ‘about’, and the element that allows the morpheme *jə...kʰe* is the topic of the clause as shown in (15).

- (15) a. *anə jə-səb-kʰe wəzəŋɡʲ an-fə*
 I GEN-people-thing to talk NEG-want.IPFV
 ‘I don’t want to talk about my people’

- b. *jə-timhirt-inna-ʔe* *ni-zəŋɡ^j-nə-u* [*nizəŋɡ^jno*]
 GEN-education-POSS.1PL-thing 1PL-talk.IPFV-1PL_{Subj}-DCM
 ‘Let us talk about our education’

As can be seen above, both clauses are overtly marked by the morpheme *jə...k’e* ‘about’ which is employed to encode the sentence topic. The elements that allow the discontinuous morpheme *jə...k’e* in (15a) and (15b) are *səb* ‘people’ and *timhrit* ‘education’, respectively; they are the topic of each clause. The speaker in (15a) is informing his/her hearer that he/she does not want to talk about people; the speaker in (15b) suggests his/her friends just talk about their education, not about other things. Thus, the forms *səb* ‘people’ and *timhrit* ‘education’ are sentence topics since they are marked by *jə...k’e* ‘about’. In Muher, the “tell me about test or aboutness test” is used for identifying a topic. The elements that took the morpheme *jə...k’e* ‘about’ are topics; this morpheme marks aboutness or a non-contrastive topic.

However, contrastive topic in Muher can be marked by the morpheme *-mma*. In Muher, the morpheme *-mma* is used as a contrastive topic marker. The scope of *-mma* is restricted only to a certain element within it or phrasal constituents of a clause to which it is suffixed as shown below.

- (16) Speaker 1: *nurga an-bəssa,* *axə* *bəssa-xə-m?*
 Nurga NEG-come.PFV.3SGM You (2SG come.PFV-2SGM-DCM
 Nurga did not come; did you come?
 Speaker 2 *anə-mma* *bəssa-xu-m*
 I-TOP come.PFV-ISG-DCM
 ‘REGARDING ME/AS FOR ME, I came’

The morpheme *-mma* indicates a contrastive topic, which is commonly an emphatic topic change, and here it emphasizes the personal pronoun *anə* ‘I’ in (16a), and its scope is limited only to this element. It should be noted here that emphasis in this case, does not mean pragmatic focus. This means the scope of *-mma* is only the phrasal constituent of a clause to which it is suffixed. In order to show this, there should be at least one preceding sentence such as the clause by speaker 1. This kind of contrastive topic has the role of contrasting, and hence it is called a contrastive topic marker. Suffixing *-mma* adds pragmatic function to the personal pronoun *anə*

‘I’. For instance, in the discourse, the most important constituent in speaker 2 of (16) is the speaker himself which is denoted by the personal pronoun *anə* ‘I’ which is marked as known or old information. The speaker would not use *-mma* if *anə* ‘I’ were not introduced into the discourse by speaker 1 before he/she utters the clause by speaker 2 of (16a). *-mma* do not introduce new information in the discourse context. Therefore, the constituents *anə* ‘I’ that is marked by *-mma* is the topic, not focused constituent (cf. Girma and Meyer 2007: 19-36, for Amharic topic and topicalization).

Although the functionality of *-f* is much wider, Muher employs the morpheme *-f* to mark contrastive topic as in (17a) and non-contrastive topics as in (17b).

- (17) a. *anə bənnə-xu-m axə-f*
 I eat.PFV-1SG-DCM You-TOP
 ‘I eat; how about you?’
- b. Speaker 1: *nə-timərga bəssə-m^w-m we*
 ASSO.PL-timerga come.PFV-3PLM-DCM Q?
 ‘Did Timerga and his companion(s) come?’
- Speaker 2: *xinnəmu-f an-bəssə-m^w*
 they-TOP NEG-come.PFV-3SGM
 ‘As to them/Regarding them, they didn’t come.’

As can be seen in (17a) above, the contrastive topic that is expressed by the morpheme *-f* is attached to the second person masculine pronoun *axə* ‘you’. The speaker expresses what he/she did, but he/she is not sure if the addressee has done the action of eating. Thus, he/she wants to assure that the entity being expressed by the pronoun *axə* ‘you’ did the action (of eating). In (17b), the phrase *nətimərga* ‘Timerga and his companion (s)’ is introduced into the discourse, and it is referred by the *xinnəmu* ‘they’ by speaker 2 in (17b). The subject pronoun *xinnəmu* ‘they’ uttered by speaker 2 in (17b) is co-referenced with the already mentioned NP *nətimərga*, and hence it has a background information. Thus, it is possible to claim that *xinnəmu* ‘they’ in (17b) is the topic of the clause said by speaker 2. As opposed to its function as contrastive marker in (17a), *-f* cannot be a contrastive marker as shown in speaker two of (17b) since it does not change with regard to the question in (17b) of speaker 1. The second speaker explicitly

answers the question with topic maker *-f* in that Timerga and his associates, which was co-referenced by *xinnamu* ‘they’, did not come although they were expected to come.

In (17), the morpheme *-f* which renders the meaning ‘*how about/what about*’ does not introduce a constituent that contains new or focused information in the discourse. The definition of topic as the given or presupposed information in a sentence presupposes that the constituents marked by the morphemes *-f* in the above clauses are topics.

For example, the response for (17a) would be *anamma*.

Constituents marked by the morphemes *-mma* and *-f* have an “as for” reading and are interpreted as contrastive topics. Despite this function, *-mma* and *-f* are different in the way they convey pragmatic information. While a clause that is marked by *-mma* has high emotional implications, a clause with *-f* does not have this emotional feeling. Moreover, *-mma* can occur only in declarative clauses as in (16), but *-f* can occur with interrogative as in (17a) and declarative as in the response clause of (17b).

5.3.5. Marking Topic Syntactically

It has been already said that the basic syntactic structure or word order of Muher is SOV. However, it can also have scrambling word order to mark a given clause pragmatically or to structure information. Muher encodes topics syntactically through basic word order change, topicalization, passivization, cleft constructions, and dislocations (left and right dislocations). The order of constituents within a VP is NP + V, and the constituents that are subject to displacement or topicalization are the non-subject constituents of the basic clauses. In what follows, I discuss each of them in detail by taking examples from the Muher data.

5.3.5.1. Topicalization

Syntactic topicalization is a phenomenon where non-subject constituent appears as a topic in a basic order. In Muher, the word order of the direct and indirect objects is relatively free. However, fronting a constituent before the subject can affect the way the information is structured. Grammatical subjects and topics do not always conflate each other. Regarding this, Lambrecht (1994: 118) states, “Topics are not necessarily grammatical subjects, and grammatical subjects are not necessarily topics.” In Muher, for example, non-subjects may act as topics in topicalization constructions, and subjects may act as non-topics.

Muher has unusual word order for specialized functions such as topicalization. Topicalization is a grammatical term that is “commonly used with reference to syntactic constructions in which an object noun phrase or non-subject element appears in clause-initial position before the subject” (Taylor 1995: 163). In Muher, a non-subject constituent is marked as a topic expression via fronting or topicalization, or preposing. When a non-subject element in a sentence is highlighted, it is preposed, yielding a variation in the default word order to make it more prominent to be a topic (prominence is not necessarily the same as topic/focus). Regarding this, Kroeger (2005:197) points out that word order variation frequently makes one part of the clause more prominent than the other.

Topic is established in clause initial position where non-subject argument is fronted via topicalization as in (18a). Moreover, in Muher the object can be fronted before the subject of the clause. For example, the contrastive topics in are marked via the fronting of the direct object as in (18b).

- (18) a. *ambəzat/ʈf mət'af nənə-nna-tt*
 Ambezach book have.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}-MVM
 ‘Ambezach has a book’
- b. *k'awa an-səʈf' /aj i-səʈf'-u*
 coffee NEG-drink.IPFV tea 1SG-drink.IPFV-DCM
 ‘Coffee, I don’t drink; tea I do (drink)’

In (18a) the non-subject constituent Ambezach appears as a topic, but it is not a subject; it is rather an object, as it is cross-referenced by the third person singular feminine object agreement suffix *-nna*. This is what syntactic topicalization by fronting means.

Clauses such as (18b) are normal structures with known subject, but this clause has a pragmatically marked structure. Because of the topicalization process, the linear arrangement of the declarative clause (i.e, the basic word order of Muher, SOV) is altered or changed to mark information structure (sentence topic) in Muher. The topic in (18b) does not overlap with the subject. In the surface structure, the subject of (18b) is clearly marked as 1SG, but the same clause has two contrastive topics: *k'awa* ‘coffee’ and */aj* ‘tea’ which are moved to the clause-initial position for topicalization. The subject of the second part of the contrastive clause is clearly shown by the morpheme *i-*. The two clauses in (18a) place special contrast on the object

argument fronting. The contrast is contained in a single structure in which a category of drink has been evoked. The clauses in (18b) are pragmatically marked via object fronting by deviating from the canonical word order of Muher. Knowing the default or canonical word order of a given language helps to identify the pragmatically marked word order of that language to encode information structure notions like topic and focus (Kroeger 2005:198-199). The topical non-subjects are made into a topic through a topicalization strategy in which “a non-subject constituent is marked as a topic expression by being placed in the sentence-initial position normally occupied by the topical subject” (Lambrecht 1994: 147). Thus, the entire sentence in (18b) is a surface structure where the subject is null for an independent reason. The topicalized object is not in the subject position, but just fronted for topicalization. I assume an underlying representation of a type [NP [NP V]].

The referential status of *k’awa* ‘coffee’ and *faj* ‘tea’ are both identifiable; the former (*k’awa*) is active while the latter is situationally accessible for both the speaker and the hearer.

In Muher, object fronting as a topicalization process is common. Non-core-arguments of a verb can be topicalized. It is in this kinds of structures where topic and focus can overlap as in (19) and (20) below:

- (19) a. *jə-bet kiraj bə-addis aba[baddis aba] widd-in-ø*
 GEN-house rent LOC-Addis Ababa expensive-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘House rent is expensive in Addis Ababa’
 b. *bə-addis aba [baddis aba] jə-bet kiraj widd-in-ø*
 LOC-Addis Ababa GEN-house rent expensive-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘In Addis Ababa, house rent is expensive’
- (20) a. *aləmu-m kəbbədə-m bə-irfa samit ekəs-m^w-im*
 Alemu-CONJ Kebbede-CONJ LOC-farm week stay.PFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘Alemu and Kebbede stayed on farm for a week’
 b. *bə-irfa aləmu-m kəbbədə-m samit ekəs-m^w-im*
 LOC-farm Alemu-CONJ Kebbede-CONJ week stay.PFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘On farm, Alemu and Kebbede stayed for a week’
 c. *samit-n aləmu-m kəbbədə-m bə-irfa sinəbət-m^w-im*
 week-for Alemu-CONJ Kebbede-CONJ LOC-farm stay.PFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘For a week, Alemu and Kebbede stayed on farm’

The copular complement prepositional phrase [*baddis aba*] ‘in Addis Ababa’ in (19a) is fronted and topicalized in (19b) for pragmatically motivated reasons. The clauses in (19a) and (19b) mean the same proposition “House rent is expensive in Addis Ababa.” though they are in different syntactical forms or they have different word orders. Besides, they are different in the way they structure information. What happens to the basic (i.e. SOV) word order is that the subject conflates with the topic as in clause (19a). However, this word order variation happens to topicalize the non-subject argument for a pragmatic reason. The clause in (19b) is topicalization construction. The locative phrase [*baddis aba*] ‘in Addis Ababa’ becomes a topic that is marked via changing the canonical word order of Muher.

By the same token, the locative phrases *bəirfa* ‘on a farm’ and *samit-n* ‘for a week’ are topicalized in clauses (20b) and (20c), respectively although they are non-core arguments. They are at the same time focal elements in the clauses. Both (20b) and (20c) have a deviant word order from the clause in (20a). The clauses, in (20), state or structure information differently. While (20a) is pragmatically neutral and maintains the basic word order of Muher (SOV), (20b) and (20c) are pragmatically marked by topicalization.

Topicalization, in Muher, helps to signal a sentence topic or givenness and the constituent that is placed in the initial position represents given information. Consider the following example:

- (21) a. *səjfu jə-za miss a-j-wəd-ø-n*
 Seifu ACC-that man NEG-3SGM_{Subj}-like.IPFV-3SGM_{Obj}-ACC
 ‘Seifu does not like that man’
- b. *jə-za miss səjfu a-j-wəd-ø-n*
 ACC-that man Seifu NEG-3SGM_{Subj}-like.IPFV-3SGM_{Obj}-ACC
 ‘That man, Seifu does not like’
- c. *ambi-we t’e-we bənn-ə-nn-m*
 cabbage-DEF sheep-DEF Eat.PFV-3SGM_{Subj}-3SGM_{Obj}-DCM
 ‘The cabbage, the sheep ate.’

Both the canonical and the non-canonical clauses in (21a) and (21b), respectively convey the same propositional message (meaning) although they are informationally structured in different ways. Clause (21a) maintains the Muher basic word order and hence syntactic, whereas (21b) is

topicalized or non-basic structure which is said with some prosodic feature to make the clause pragmatically marked as topic. The noun *Seifu* is the topic element of clause (21a), but the topic of clause (21b) is the noun phrase *za miss* ‘that man’ which is marked by fronting for topicalization. *za miss* ‘that man’ in (21a) was in the object position, but becomes the clause initial constituent about which the statement is made, and hence the topic in (21b). The clause in (21b) is object fronting construction and it appears before the subject by deviating from the unmarked SOV order of Muher. In (21a) the subject coincides with the topic. The topicalized phrase *za miss* ‘that man’, in (21b), stands for someone who has already been known by the interlocutors based on the ongoing discourse.

The non-subject constituent *ambi-we* ‘the cabbage’ in (21c) is a topicalized element in which a new topic is introduced. Although topic is usually associated with the subject of a sentence, non-subject arguments can be topicalized and indicated by object agreement markers such as the third person singular masculine object agreement suffix *-nn*. In (21c), the subject is *t’ewe* ‘the sheep’, and the object is *ambiwe* ‘the cabbage’ which is now become the topic of the clause.

5.3.5.2. Passivization

Passivation is one of the means of restructuring sentence constituents. Muher employs passive constructions to convey new information which can be placed in the initial position of a passive construction as in (22).

- (22) a. *zebarga jə-kəbbədə a-talələ-n-ø-m*
 Zeberga ACC-Kebbede CAUS-cheat.PFV-3SGM-ACC-DCM
 ‘Zeberga cheated Kebbede’
- b. *kəbbədə tə-talələ-ø-m*
 Kebbede PASS-cheat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Kebbede was cheated’
- (23) a. *almaz k’awa asrə-tft/-m*
 Almaz coffee sell.PFV-3SGF-DCM
 ‘Almaz sold coffee’
- b. *k’awa-we tə-srə-m*
 coffee-DEF PASS-sell.PFV-DCM
 ‘The coffee was sold’

While clauses (22a) and (23a) are active constructions, the clauses in (22b) and (23b) are their counter-passive constructions, respectively. The patient *Kebbede* is followed by the by-agent phrase *by-Zeberga* in the passive construction (22b). The non-subject patient *Kebbede* in (22a) is promoted to the subject of the sentence in (22b).

Clause (23b) is identified from clause (23a) morphosyntactically via the alteration of word order and the prefixation of the Muher passive morpheme *bə-* and the suffixation of the definite marker *-we*. Morphologically, the subject of the passive construction becomes definite (with *-we*), and the passive marker *tə-* is prefixed to the transitive verb *asrə* ‘sell’ and *bə-* is attached to the agent noun. Syntactically, the active and passive constructions in (23) have different subjects and topics. Although clauses (23a) and (23b) have the same propositional (basic) meaning, they are structured differently from the point of syntax and information structure. The noun *Almaz* is the topic of the unmarked (basic) clause (23a), but the NP *k’awawe* ‘the coffee’ is the topic of clause (23b). What is common to passivization and dislocation (left dislocation) or fronting is that they change a non-subject NP element into an explicit topic via preposing or moving a topic element to an initial position outside the syntactic boundary of the sentence (cf. Foley 2007: 418 & 443).

In clauses (22) and (23), the noun phrases are pragmatically redistributed in a way that makes them conform closely to the expectation that the topic (old information) comes in the front position in Muher clauses.

5.3.5.3. Cleft Constructions

In clefting, some element in a sentence is moved from its basic syntactic position into a separate clause to be the topic of that clause or to have the status of topic-hood. A topic can be formally distinguished from a comment. In Muher, cleft construction plays an important role in rendering topic syntactically. Cleft construction changes the structure of information and is one means of syntactic topic marking. The basic sentence constituents like Subject, Object and Verb in Muher can be restructured through cleft construction to produce various pragmatically marked structures as in (24):

- (24) a. *timərga bəsər bənnə-ø-m*
 Timerga meat eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Timerga ate meat’

- b. *bəsər jə-bənnə-we timərga banno*
 meat REL-eat.PFV-DEF Timerga COP.PST
 ‘It was Timerga who ate (the) meat’ / ‘The one who ate meat was Timerga’
- c. *timərga jə-bənnə-n-we bəsər banno*
 Timerga REL-eat.PFV-3SGM.ACC-DEF meat COP.PST
 ‘It was meat that Timerga ate’

The three clauses are constructed in different ways although they have the same propositional meaning. Clauses (24b) and (24c) are the cleft forms of the strictly TOPIC-COMMENT structured clause in (24a). The topic of clauses (24a) and (24b) is the same NP, which is Timerga, whereas the topic for (24c) is *bəsər* ‘meat’. It is possible to argue that the NP in the cleft could also be focused elements of the clauses. In the cleft constructions (24b) and (24c), the relativizer *jə-* is placed before the transitive verb *bənnə*. In this sense, we could say that clefts are relativized clauses. Since the clause in (24a) maintains the basic word order of Muher (i.e. SOV), it is pragmatically unmarked for information structure, and the topic and the subject of the clause coincide with each other as in $[[timərga]_{TOP} [bəsər bənnam]_{COMMENT}]$. Clauses (24b) and (24c) are constructed using syntactic and morphological means of information structuring. They are semantically equivalent propositions, but they differ in relation to information structure; the above pragmatically marked and unmarked clauses are used in different contexts. Since topic is a constituent about which the clause is made, the topic of (24a) and (24b), therefore, is *Timerga*, but the topic of (24c) is *bəsər* ‘meat’. In clause (24a-b), we are talking about Timerga which can be a possible answer for the question “Who ate the meat?”, and *bəsər* ‘meat’ (24b) is an eligible candidate to be the answer for the question “What did Timerga eat?”

5.3.5.4. Dislocation Constructions in Muher

Dislocation is the positioning of a sentence or clause constituent outside the syntactic boundary of the given sentence or clause (Payne 1997: 273). Muher information structure can be encoded syntactically by right and left dislocations of constituents. In Muher, dislocation usually occurs more in spoken form than written form. Dislocated nouns (phrases) or elements are set off from the main clauses prosodically by a short pause in speech and by a comma (punctuation) in writing to show the nouns move to clause-initial position and become contrastive topics due to

topicalization. Dislocated constructions change the default word order of Muher sentences to mark topic as shown in the following examples.

- (25) a. *aləmnəʃ kitf^wə bənnə-t/tf-m*
 Alemnesh kitfo eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Alemnesh ate kitfo’
- b. *kitf^wə-we aləmnəʃ bənnə-t/tf-u-m*
 Kitfo-DEF Alemnesh eat.PFV-3SGFSubj-3SGMObj-DCM
 ‘The kitfo, Alemnesh ate it’
- c. *aləmnəʃ bənnə-t/tf-u-m kitf^wə-we*
 Alemnesh eat.PFV-3SGFSubj-3SGMObj-DCM kitfo-DEF
 ‘Alemnesh ate it, the kitfo’
- (26) a. *anə bijə an-bɛ*
 I k’ocho NEG-eat.IPFV-
 ‘I don’t eat k’ocho’
- b. *bijə-we anə an-bɛ*
 k’ocho-DEF I NEG-eat.IPFV
 ‘The k’ocho, I don’t eat (it)’
- (27) a. *anə jə-aləmu [jaləmu] an-wəddin*
 I ACC-Alemu NEG-like.IPFV
 ‘I don’t like Alemu’
- b. *anə jə-x^wa an-wəddin jə-aləmu [jaləmu]*
 I ACC-he NEG-like.IPFV ACC-Alemu
 ‘I don’t like him, Alemu’

The clauses in (25a), (26a) and (27a) maintain the basic word order of Muher, which is an SOV structure. However, the non-basic clausal structures in (25b and 25c), (26b) and (27b) show that there is a reordering of the constituents or dislocation which is determined by extraNPs that are set off from the clauses prosodically by short pauses in speech and by a comma in writing. These clauses deviate from the canonical (basic) word order of Muher for a pragmatic purpose, which is to encode topic.

In (25b) and (25c), the direct object is dislocated to the beginning (left dislocation) and the end positions (right dislocation) of the clauses, respectively. The dislocated direct objects are substituted by the resumptive pronoun¹⁹ “it” represented by the object pronominal suffix *-u* which is construed as co-referential with the detached lexical constituent. By changing the basic word order of the clause in Muher, we can have different information structures. One of the elements (constituents) of the clause (*kitfo*, in this case) is more prominent than the other constituents in the same clause; one portion of a given clause will be marked more prominent than another if the word order is changed (cf. Kroeger 2005: 197). Intuitively, both sentences in (25b and (25c) are felt to mainly convey information about *kitfo*. Thus, the topic of (25b) and (25c) is *kitfo*.

The clause in (26b) has a non-canonical word order of Muher. *Kocho* is dislocated from its normal position (i.e., Subject + *kocho* + Verb, where *kocho* is a direct object) to the clause-initial position to be the topic of the clause. The constituent *kocho* occurs outside the clause boundary and the dislocation occurs to the left. This kind of dislocation is called left dislocation. Like clefting, the left dislocation is used to emphasize or define a topic. As can be seen in (26b), the dislocated element is separated by a comma in writing and a pause in spoken forms from the rest of the clause. The place of the dislocated element, *kocho*, is occupied by a presumptive pronoun *it* in (26b). Thus, the left dislocated constituent *kocho* is used to define a topic, and hence it is the topic of the clause in (26b). It emphasizes that *kocho* is the topic of interest. Lambrecht (1994: 181-184) called such a left-dislocated constituent a topic.

Lambrecht (2001: 1050) identifies four parameters for determining a dislocation (detachment) construction: extra-clausal position of a constituent (an obligatory criterion to qualify as an instance of dislocation), possible alternative intra-clausal position, pronominal co-indexation, and special prosody.

In clause (27b), the constituent *Alemu* that is set off from the preceding clause by pause or comma is the dislocated element and the dislocation occurs outside the clause boundary to the right. The non-subject NPs (constituents) get right dislocated to encode topic. Right dislocation usually occurs with a clarifying afterthought. *anə jə-x^wa anwəddin* ‘I don’t like him’ is a coherent

¹⁹ A word applied in grammatical investigation to stand for a constituent or construction which repeats or in some means restate the meaning of a prior constituent (Crystal 2008: 415)

sentence in Muher, but *Alemu* is added afterward to clarify who the person is. The NP *Alemu* could be the object of the clause as in *I don't like Alemu*. The position of the object argument (i.e., *Alemu*) is occupied by a co-referential pronoun $x^w a$ 'him' within the clause. There is a co-referential relationship between the proper noun *Alemu* and the resumptive pronoun $x^w a$ 'him' cataphorically. Although the exact discourse function of the two dislocation constructions and the difference between them is a matter of ongoing debate, in this paper, right dislocation and left dislocation are treated as topic-marking constructions (Payne, 1997:274; Locke and Angela 2006:233; Crystal 2008: 274; see also Lambrecht 1994). Thus, *Alemu* is dislocated and placed at the end of the clause to mark topic pragmatically.

According to Foley (2007:418), topicalization, and left and right dislocations are clause external information packaging devices. Unlike passivization, dislocations are not normally marked in the predicate. Hadian *et al.* (2013:24) show that passivization alters the unmarked IS of a sentence to mark IS. Topicalization and left dislocation and clefting are superficially alike, in moving a topic element to an initial position outside the syntactic boundary of the sentence. However, unlike topicalization, left dislocation fills the canonical position from which the topicalized element is moved by a pronoun or a full lexical noun phrase (Foley, 2007:443).

In summary, in Muher, the topic of a given clause can be independent of the syntactic subject. Topic is realized by left dislocation followed by a short pause at the left periphery of a clause. Therefore, clauses (25b) and (26b) are left dislocation constructions where the NPs *kitfo* and *kocho* are brought to the initial position of each of the clauses and established the sentence topic. Left dislocation is a structure that can introduce new topics into the discourse. On the contrary, in clauses (25c) and (27b), the core arguments *kitfo* and *kocho* respectively are moved or dislocated to the clause-final position and become new information as part of the comment.

5.4. Frame Setting and Frame Setters

Frame setting is one of the basic issues to be discussed in sentence topics. Féry (2007: 168) states, "a frame setting topic gives a frame in which the remainder of the sentence is to be interpreted." Krifka (2007: 46) also said that frame setters show overall information about a person by systematically restricting the language in some ways. Frame setters are a phenomenon of topic languages (cf. Féry 2007: 168) such as English. English, for example, uses frame setters like *Health wise/As for his health*, regarding X, in terms of Y, etc that set the frame in which the

following expression should be interpreted. To have an explicit frame setter, there must exist or be an alternative view to be chosen or considered among other aspects for which other predications might hold (Krifka 2007: 46). Framesetters and left dislocation seem similar because both of them come at the initial position of a given clause. However, while left dislocated constructions change the default word order of Muher sentences to mark topic, frame setters introduce the topic of the clause which usually comes immediately after the framesetters. The dislocated constituent will become the topic of the clause, but framesetters cannot be the topic of the clause they appear with.

Muher uses the following words or expressions as frame setters that determine the frame in which the alternative view is interpreted.

- (28) a. *bə-birr timərga tə-nida jalfu*
 by-birr Timerga from-Nida better than.3SGM
 ‘By money/In terms of money, Timerga is better than Nida’
- b. *bə-nibrət mark’os tə-fik’rəmarijam e-jalf*
 by-wealth Markos from-Fikremariam NEG-better than.3SGM
 ‘Concerning wealth, Markos is not better than Fikeremariam’

The adverbials *bəbirr* ‘in terms of money’, and *bənibrət* ‘regarding/concerning wealth’ are frame setters that set the frame in which the expressions that follow should be interpreted. The frame setters in (28) specify the situation dimensions. The topic of (28a) is Timerga, whereas the topic of (28b) is Markos that are described by the frame setters *bəbirr* and *bənibrət* based on only the qualities mentioned in each clause. The frame setters delimit the scope of the sentence topic. This means the frame setters indicate that the information actually provided is restricted to the particular dimensions specified in (28a) and (28b). Thus, Timerga is described contrastively with Nida only with his money. By the same token, Markos is described contrastively with Fikremariam in his wealth.

Besides the above frame setters, Muher employed derived expressions like the morpheme *jə* ‘as’ plus independent pronouns such as *anə* ‘I’ as frame setters. These kinds of frame setters usually occur in discourse initial contexts. In the *as-for* test, the referent of the putative topic expression occurs in the pre-sentential position as the complement of the expression *as for*. Lambrecht (1994: 152) claims, “The *as-for* construction is thus a subtype of the detachment or dislocation

construction.” The as-for phrase can only be used in this topic-establishing function. Consider the following example

- (29) *jə-anə [janə] jə-anə-xəma [janəxəma] widdeta-n jalfu*
 as-I as-I-FOC love-COP.PRES better
 ‘As for me, love is better [than...]’

In (29), the speaker is expressing the importance of love from his/her point of view. The sentence topic of (29) is the noun *love*. Love is contrastively marked with a covert topic like money or hate which could make clause (29): *As for me, love is better than money/hatred*.

However, it is not logical to think that all sentences can be divided into Topic-Comment or Subject-predicate constituents. There are occasions in which some kinds of sentences such as emotive, imperative, or elliptical may not be divisible into information units. In this case, words or expressions such as Yes, No, or Okay can replace the entire clause whose content is recovered from the context. Consider the following pro-sentences²⁰ and elliptical expressions:

- (30) X: *wəlk’it’e ti-fəka mət/ə-n*
 Welkite 2SGM-go.IPFV when-COP.PRES
 ‘When do you go to Welkite?’
 Y: *ji-bəsa-we wirsənbət*
 REL-come.IPFV-DEF Sunday
 ‘The coming Sunday’
- (31) **Merga:** *ma-nn-i biru-we jə-a-fəka-n [jafekan]*
 who-COP.PRES-3SGM money-DEF REL-APPL-take.PVF-ACC
 ‘Who took the money?’
Aberash: *wərk’u*
 ‘Worku’
- (32) **Amanuel:** *igga-we tiru-n-ø?*
 water-DEF clean-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Is the water clean?’
Arega: *oj!*
 ‘yes’

²⁰ The term refers to words and expressions such as yes, no, okay, etc that replace the entire clause whose content is recoverable from the context.

Muher clauses, of course, are usually decomposed into subject and predicate or topic and comment in their neutral syntactic structure. Each of the above questions has its own topic and comment. As can be seen in the response clauses of (30-32), however, Muher has clauses that do not overtly show subject-predicate or topic-comment dichotomy. It is not easy to segment the pro-sentence responses in (30), (31) and (32) into topic-comment articulation. The response pro-sentence in (30Y) states only new information. The elliptical response clause in (31) cannot be divided into information units since it contains only the proper noun *Worku* who conveys only new information. In all the responses to the clauses in (30-32), background information is deleted. This is because it can be recovered from the linguistic context of the interrogative clauses mentioned above.

The pro-sentence word '*Worku*' in Abrash's response replaces the sentence '*Worku took the money*'. By the same token, the pro-sentence form *oj* 'yes' replaces the content: *oj, iggawe tirun* 'Yes, the water is clean'.

In addition to emotive, imperative, or elliptical sentences that cannot be decomposed as topic-comment or subject-predicate, event-reporting sentences do not have topic (Lambrecht 1994:124-126). For example, weather verbs lack topics, for they all are new clauses. Lambrecht explains the difference between event-reporting sentences and topic-comment sentences at length. Eventive clauses introduce a whole event and contrast with topic-comment sentence structure in this way (Féry 2007: 164).

Event reporting sentences, in Muher, constitute a formal category only in the case of certain intransitive sentences containing predicates such as rain, melt, blow, boil, etc. The following Muher clauses are instances of eventive clauses that do not have a clear topic.

- (33) a. *ji-zənb-ə-u*
 3SGM-rain.IPFV-IMP.3SGM-DCM
 'It is raining'
- b. *ji-fəl-ə-u*
 3SGM-boil.IPFV-IMP.3SGM-DCM
 'It is boiling'

- c. *ji-nəfs-ə-u*
3SGM-blow.IPFV- IMP.3SGM-DCM
'It is blowing'
- d. *ji-k'əlt'-ə-u*
3SGM-melt.IPFV- IMP.3SGM-DCM
'It is melting'

The event-reporting sentences in (33) are formally indistinguishable from Subject-Predicate (Topic-comment) sentences with pronominal or inflectional subjects. Each sentence in (33) is taken and reports a single event. All the event reporting sentences in (33) are not a predication about the pronoun *it*. A subject-predicate structure is used in each sentence to express a proposition that, logically speaking, has no "true" subject as in other personal verbs which has a true subject, and hence no predicate. All the sentences in (33) are non-referential and they do not have clear Topic-comment articulation or structure. This is because the impersonal verbs take only grammatical subject, and do not represent an action or a state about a specific person, thing or place. The subjects of the actions are not clearly stated, and thus it is impossible to identify the topics of the clauses. Clauses (33a) and (33c) describe weather conditions, and clauses (33b) and (33d) express states of a matter as boiling and melting. Based on our general knowledge and different contexts, we might say that the topic entity can be identified, for example, as *rain*, *water*, *wind*, and *ice* or *metallic substance* in clauses (33a-33d), respectively. However, the topic expression in each clause is explicitly unidentifiable since the clause initial position lacks true subject, but has grammatical subject. The function of each of the clauses in (33) is to inform the addressee of an event and it is construed as conveying information about the grammatical subject.

5.5. Topic Marking in Complex Clauses

In the preceding subsections of this chapter, what has been presented and discussed was topic-comment structures based on simple declarative clauses of [NP [NP V]] order. In this subsection of the chapter, I discuss what topic markings are like in Muher complex clauses that are formed from a dependent clause and a simple independent clause. Consider the following examples:

- (34) a. *jə-tʃaxa-we jidʒ bəzi bə-m^wəxir ji-nəbir-u*
 POSS-Chaha boy here LOC-Muhir 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM
 ‘The boy from Chaha lives here in Muher.’
- b. *axuŋna m^wəxir ni-bɛ-nə-we m^wəxirjə ji-buj*
 now Muhir 1PL-say.IPFV-1PL-DEF Muhiriye 3SGM-say.IMP
jə-abgaz sibat att-we tixə-n-ø
 POSS-Abgaz Sibhat one-the child-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘The one we called Muher now is said to be Muhiriye who is one of the children of Abgaz Sibhat’

The complex sentences in (34a) and (34b) contain dependent and independent clauses, but are derived from two different, but related clauses. For example, the complex clause in (34a) can be illustrated within the sequence of the sentences in (35).

- (35) a. *jidʒ-we jə-tʃaxa-ʔe-n-ø [jetʃaxaʔen]*
 boy-DEF POSS-Chaha-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘The boy is from Chaha’
- b. *jidʒ-we bəzi bə-m^wəxir ji-nəbir-u*
 boy-DEF here LOC-Muhir 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM
 ‘The boy lives here in Muher’

In both (35a) and (35b), the constituent that is licensed to be a topic is the subject NP *jidʒwe* ‘the boy’. The focus rule applies to ‘Chaha’ in (35a) and to Muher in (35b), which are elements in the focus domain. In the canonical structure of clause (35a), the subject is *jidʒ-we* ‘the boy’, and the constituent that is placed in the clause-initial position is licensed to be the topic of the clause. The same is true in (35b) in that the subject NP *jidʒ-we* ‘the boy’ is the topic. However, also both (35a) and (35b) have the same topical element, they are different in their predicate; (35a) has non-verbal predicate while the predicate is verbal in (35b).

Despite the clear topic element in (35), the possible candidate to be the topic of the sentence in (34) is the entire subject NP *jə-tʃaxawe jidʒ* ‘the boy from Chaha’ rendering the information structure in (36).

- (36) *jə-t/əxa-we jidʒ bəzi bə-m^wəxir ji-nəbir-u*
 POSS-Chaha-DEF boy here LOC-Muhir 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM
 ‘[The boy from Chaha]_{TOP} lives [here in Muher]_{FOC}’

The way (36) is derived is by processing it as two separate sentences. Syntactically, they are both simple clauses; the first is derived from the subordinate IS of the subject as shown in (37).

- (37) *jidʒ-we jə-t/əxa-ʔe-n-ø jidʒ-we bəzi bə-m^wəxir ji-nəbir-u*
 boy-DEF from-Chaha-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM boy-DEF here LOC-Muhir 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM
 ‘[The boy]_{TOP} [is from Chaha]_{FOC} [The boy]_{TOP} lives [here in Muher]_{FOC}’

The same information structure (IS) is assigned as a subordinate IS to the subject of (36), and renders (38).

- (38) *[[jidʒ-we]_{TOP} [jə-t/əxa]_{FOC}]_{TOP} [bəzi bə-m^wəxir ji-nəbir-u]_{FOC}*

Generally speaking, the constituent that functions as the subject NP of Clause (34) is qualified as a topic of the clause. In addition to clauses that contain definite noun phrases, complex clauses that contain indefinite noun phrases with its anchored brand new referent is acceptable as shown in (39).

- (39) *gəllif gunnän jə-annə-na-we gərəd məlkamma-ja*
 long hair POSS-have.IPFV-3SGFObj-DEF girl Beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘[A girl with a long hair]_{TOP} [is beautiful]_{FOC}’

The NP *gəllif gunnän jə-annə-na gərəd* ‘a girl with long hair’ is formally indefinite, and the predicate *məlkamma-ja* ‘is beautiful’ is stative, but it is more acceptable than a subject NP with indefinite article and stative predicates as in (40).

- (40) **gərəd məlkamma-ja*
 girl beautiful-COP.3SGF
 ‘A girl is beautiful’

In Muher, structures like (40) whose subject NPs with an indefinite article cannot occur with stative predicates such as *məlkamma* ‘beautiful’

The difference in acceptability between (39) and (40) is predicated by the Topic Acceptability Scale²¹. Adding the phrase *gəllif gunnän jannənnə* ‘with a long hair’ to the indefinite NP *gərəd* ‘a girl’, it is possible to reduce the unspecified set of all girls in the context of the speech participants to the smaller set of girls with a long hair. Due to this, the referent becomes more identifiable, and hence becomes a topic of clause (39). Therefore, the topic of clause (39) is the NP subject *gəllif gunnän jannənnə gərəd* ‘a girl with a long hair’, and the focus element is *məlkammaja* ‘is beautiful’, which is represented as follow:

- (41) *gəllif gunnän jə-annə-nna-we gərəd məlkamma-ja*
long hair POSS-have.IPFV-3SGFObj-DEF girl beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF
‘[A girl with a long hair]_{TOP} [is beautiful]_{FOC}’

5.6. Summary

Muher is a verb-final language with an SOV canonical syntactic structure, and it strictly follows Topic-Comment word order. In Muher, although sometimes topic and subject may coincide if the subject-object order is unmarked with respect to information structure, “topic” and “subject” cannot always be conflated. If an NP is mentioned as subject, it is always the topic sentence-initially; salient topics are not overt NPs but only marked by person markers on the verb. However, it should be noted that topics are not necessarily grammatical subjects, and grammatical subjects are not necessarily topics. The Muher data revealed that non-subjects may act as topics in topicalization constructions, and subjects may act as non-topics in accent-initial clauses. Therefore, since topic is also a pragmatic phenomenon, it is sometimes impossible to determine the topic status of a constituent in a clause based on the syntactic structure of that clause alone. This is partly because of the definition of topic in terms of the pragmatic concepts of aboutness and relevance. Understanding the discourse context in which the clause or the sentence is embedded and knowing if the proposition is pragmatically construed as being about the entity can help to determine the topic status of an entity. Therefore, this study tries to show Topic-Comment structure of Muher from a pragmatic point of view, not merely from a syntactic or clause structure point of view.

²¹ is meant to account only for differences in sentence acceptability which are due to differences in the mental representations of topic referents in a discourse.

Generally speaking, Muher encodes topic prosodically, lexically, morpho-syntactically, and pragmatically. Specifically, topic is marked in Muher by using word order change, demonstratives (such as *zi* ‘this’, *za* ‘that’, *nəzi* ‘these’, and *nəza* ‘those’), lexically through aboutness tests and converse terms, morphologically by the morpheme *jə...k’e* ‘about’, and syntactically through basic word order change, topicalization, passivization, cleft constructions, and dislocations (left and right dislocations).

Muher employed sentence topic framesetters such as *bə* + nominals as in [*bədigət*] ‘by growth’ and the morpheme *jə* ‘as’ as in *jə-anə* ‘as to me’. All Muher clauses or sentences such as emotive, imperative, and/or elliptical sentences may not be divided into topic-comment or subject-predicate constituents or informational units. Besides, Muher eventive clauses that contain event reporting verbs take only grammatical subject, and do not have true subject. Thus, it would be difficult to talk about the topic of the clause.

CHAPTER SIX

FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS IN MUHER

6.1. Introduction

Before analyzing focus phenomena in Muher, it is good to recap the definition of information structure (IS, hereafter) given by Lambrecht (1994). Information structure is “that component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs that are paired with lexico-grammatical structures in accordance with mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts” (Lambrecht 1994:5). According to (Lambrecht 1994: 6) presupposition and assertion, identifiability and activation, and topic and focus are the three most important categories of information structure.

Focus, as one of the information structure notions, is often defined as the element of an utterance which is considered pragmatically new (Kalinowski 2015:2). Focus is defined as “The semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition” (Lambrecht 1994: 213). It is a semantic-pragmatic category. According to Polinsky (1999:574), focus is defined “as the element of information wherein the presupposition and assertion differ from each other”. Although the term focus can be defined very differently by different scholars, in this chapter, focus refers to the part of the sentence that contains the main information update; that is not presupposed (Lambrecht 1994: 226-244). In Muher, focus can conflate with comment although it is not always the case.

This chapter is devoted to focus and focus-related issues in Muher following the theoretical framework of Lambrecht (1994). More specifically, this chapter deals with focus-marking strategies (prosodic, morphological, syntactical, lexical and focus-marking particles). Besides, this chapter describes focus structure which is a grammatical system that shows the scope of assertion in an utterance in contrast to the pragmatic presupposition. The focus structure or the scope of focus in Muher is analyzed based on the three taxonomy of focus structure types identified by Lambrecht (1994:226-233) as predicate, argument and sentence-focus structures.

6.2. Focus marking system/strategies in Muher

Focus marking is often described as a process operating only on the pragmatic level of grammar although it may possess morphosyntactic properties (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 213). For Hyman and

Watters (1984), however, focus marking is not only limited to pragmatics, it also represents an inherent part of the syntax. Different languages have different types of focus systems and use different strategies for differentiating them. Focus domain can be assigned to a constituent by a variety of grammatical means which include intonation and stress (prosodically), special morphemes (morphologically), (special) ordering of constituents (syntactically), placement, answering to content questions, and special focus markers such as particles (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 224, Hyman and Waters 1984: 238, Dik et. al. 1981:52). Muher uses all of the above focalizing strategies or devices in different forms. In Muher, intonational prominence can signal focus, and contrastive focus with its subtypes and assertive focus types are attested. Besides, cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions are used as types of focus construction strategies in Muher to fill in the hearer's knowledge gap.

6.2.1. Completive Focus (Answers to Wh-Questions)

One of the common ways of finding out how focus is linguistically marked, in Muher, is to look at answers to the content questions which contain Wh-words such as *miʔe* 'what' and *ma* 'who'. This kind of focus system is used when the focus information is meant to fill in a gap. This is observed in Wh-word questions; questions involving interrogative pronouns (words) show peculiarities and restrictions concerning focus marking. Consider the following examples.

(1) a **Awulachew:** *zəbərga miʔe bənnə-ə-m?*

Zeberga what eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

'What did Zeberga eat?'

Seifu: *kitf^wə bənnə-ə-m*

kitfo eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

'KITFO' [He ate kitf^wə]

b. **Question:** *jə-zi bet ab/baləbet ma-nn-i*

GEN-this house owner who-COP.PRES-3SGM

'Who is the owner of this house?'

Answer: *jə-zi bet ab/baləbet ambəzat/tf-ja*

GEN-this house owner Ambezach-COP.PRES.3SGF

'The owner of this house is AMBEZACH'

In (1a), the element KITFO in Seifu's response replaces the question word *mi?e* 'what' is in focus since KITFO is the part of the sentence that provides the information update. This means in the answer (response) clause, focus is assigned to KITFO which shows that this information is meant to fill in the information gap in the above contextual situations. Seifu's answer involves completion and hence it is called the completive focus. In Muher, the focused element, as in KITFO, is usually marked by the main accent of the sentence in (1a). This can be seen in Siefu's answer, where KITFO is in focus. Kitfo, therefore, represents the information needed to fill in the gaps in (1a). The intonational prominence of KITFO shows that it is salient or focused.

The question clause (Q) presupposes the answer clause (A) in (1b). The subject of the response clause is the focal noun AMBEZACH; the phrase *jəzi bet baləbet* 'the owner of this house' conveys only background information. In (1b), the proper name AMBEZACH carries information that is triggered by the question word *ma* 'who'. Such kinds of focus are termed information focus. This indicates that the part of the response clause analogous to the question word is given emphasis, and hence carries focus but the rest parts of the response clause are used as background information. In the answer clause, the focus on AMBEZACH is to signal that this particular information is meant to fill in the gap required by the question word.

In Muher, questions are usually used to make a distinction between focus-background information. The part of the response clause that answers the question word carries the focus information, whereas the rest part of the clause conveys background information as in (2) below.

- (2) a. *wəlk'it'e jə-fəkka-we ma-nn-i*
 Welk'it'e REL-go.PFV-DEF who-COP.PRES-3SGM
 'Who is the one that/who went to Welk'it'e?'
 b. *wəlde banno wəlk'it'e jə-fəkka-we*
 Welde COP.PST Welk'it'e REL-go.PFV-DEF
 'It was Welde who went to Welk'it'e'

The response clause in (2b) presupposes the interrogative clause presented in (2a). The Answers to a wh-word question show focused constituents. The subject of (2b) is *Welde* who is the focal element (noun). However, clause (2b) is a cleft construction in which there is a word order change due to the cleft construction to focalize the noun '*Welde*' that was introduced

(backgrounded) by the information in (2a). The relative clause in (2b) is just to provide background information. The part of the response clause (i.e. *Welde*) that responds the question word (i.e. *ma* ‘who’) carries the focus information. Thus, *Welde* is the focal noun and the topic of the clause in (2b) in which topic and focus overlap.

6.2.2. Morphological focus marking

The most widely used focus markers in Muher are the contrastive morpheme *-m* which can be used to select, expand, restrict, replace and parallel focus elements. The Identificational focus marker *-tt* is also attested in Muher. Let us discuss these morphological focus markers in detail.

6.2.2.1. The contrastive focus markers *-m*

Contrastive focus ‘represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold’ (Kiss 1998: 246). Contrastive focus usually emphasizes a given constituent that is considered to be part of the common knowledge between interlocutors (Payne 1997: 269). Contrastive focus is involved when the speaker wants to correct the presupposed background knowledge or the common knowledge of the hearer (addressee). (Krifka 2007: 33) claims, “The typical use of contrastive focus is corrective, but it can also be additive, as in A: *John wants coffee*. B: *MAry wants coffee, TOO*.” In Muher, the contrastive focus marker *-m* can be used to mark focal elements in different ways. Hyman and Watters (1984:242) use the label contrastive focus as a general term that subsumes several subcategories, like additive, selective, expanding, restricting, replacing and parallel focus. These different types and levels of contrastive relations are discussed below.

6.2.2.1.1. Additive focus

Additive focus markers convey meanings that show the addition of something. The Muher additive focus marker convey the meaning *too* and *also*. For example, *-m* can be used to mark an individual constituent as in (3).

- (3) a. *betasəb nənə-nna-tt bet-m məkina-m*
 family have.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}-MVM house-FOC car-FOC
 ‘She has a family; she has also a house and a car.’
- b. *timərga-m bərut/ˈtʃʰa ef-ə-m*
 Timerga-FOC quickly go.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Also Timerga walked (went) quickly.’

The additive focus marker suffix *-m* in (3a) gives focus only to the individual constituents *bet* ‘house’ and *məkina* ‘car’. This means the scope of *-m* is on the individual constituent. The *-m* in *betim* ‘also house’ and *məkinam* ‘also car’ carry new information and also stand in contrastive relation with *betəsəb* ‘family’ at the time of the discourse. Of course, the clause in (3a) seems ill-formed structure for the speaker added *betim* and *məkinam* after he has made the clause *betəsəb nənənnat* ‘she has a family’. The clause would have the Muher canonical word order if it was structured as: *betəsebim betim məkinam nənənat*. As shown in (3b), the focus marker *-m* is attached to the noun *Timerga* to make it a focal element and to strengthen the restriction imposed on the subject of the clause to perform the action. Theoretically, one constituent ought to be focused on every structure. However, without the focus marker *-m*, the clause *timərga bərutf’ɬ’a efəm* ‘Timerga walked/went quickly’ will be just a simple clause that does not have any particular focal element or constituent unless a wh-word question such as ‘who walked quickly?’ may be constructed. The clause *timərga bərutf’ɬ’a efəm* would be a good response to the question ‘who walked quickly?’

When numerals modify a head noun, the focus morpheme is suffixed to the modifying numeral but not to the noun. Besides, indefinite in Muher can also be derived (formed) by using the contrastive focus marker *-m* as in (4) below.

- (4) a. *att-m səb an-bəsa*
 one-FOC man NEG-come.PFV
 ‘Nobody came’ [Even a single person did not come]

As can be seen in (4), *-m* is attached to *att* ‘one’ rendering the indefinite nobody. The focus morpheme *-m* is attached to the numeral *att* ‘one’ which is a modifier of the noun *səb* ‘man’; the focus marking morpheme *-m* cannot be attached to the noun *səb* ‘man’ as in the Amharic *and səwm alajjəhu!*

The contrastive focus marker *-m* can be used to mark additional information or to expand information, and has the meaning ‘also/even’. Consider the following examples:

- (5) a. *almaz-m məlkamma-ja*
 Almaz-FOC beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘Also Almaz is beautiful’

- b. *anə-m zəŋga-we lik'k'e as-asəbe-m*
 I-FOC issue/matter-DEF big CAUS-worry.PFV-DCM
 'I am also worried by the issue/Even I am worried by the issue.'
- c. X: *jə-agəŋŋə-x^w-kkə-ət lik'k'e sə^j-ə-e-m [sɛ^jem]*
 GEN-find.PFV-1SG_{Subj}-2SGM_{Obj}-VIC²² big Feel_happy.PFV-3SGM_{Subj}-1SG_{obj}-DCM
 'I felt very happy because I met you'
 Y: *anə-m lik'k'e sə^j-ə-e-m [sɛ^jem]*
 I-FOC big feel_happy.PFV-3SGM_{Subj}-1SG_{obj}-DCM
 'I also felt very happy' [Even I felt very happy]
- d. *jə-bulle angət t-i-tf'əllif-inn jə-anə-m angət jə-tf'əlləf*
 GEN-dove neck if-3SGM_{Subj}-cut.IPFV-3SGM_{Obj} GEN-I-FOC neck 3SGM-cut.JUS
 'If the dove's neck is slit, let my throat also slit'

In all the examples in (5), the additive focus marking morpheme *-m* is attached to the noun *Almaz* (5a) and the pronoun *anə* 'I' (5b), the verb [*sɛ^jem*] 'feel happy' (5c), and *anə* 'I' (5d) to emphasize the entity selected out of the possible alternative entities. *-m* is used to mark additional information as in (5a), and to expand the information mentioned by the first speaker on the ongoing discourse as in (5b) and (5c). The conditional clause in (5d) states that if the first condition or action happens, the second will also follow. This means the second action 'let my throat also slit in addition to the slitting of the dove's neck.

6.2.2.1.2. Expanding Focus

In this type of focus, the speaker assumes that the addressee has a correct piece of information, but that information is not complete. The speaker knows that there is at least a piece of information that is also old to the addressee. The focus marking morpheme *-m* in Muher has an equivalent meaning with the English focus particle 'even/also' (it seems with additive focus, but here the information is extended, not added) based on the ongoing discourse in a given situation it suffixed to the focused element as in (6).

- (6) a. *an-xən-ə bet mekina-m nənə-nna-tt*
 NEG-become.IPFV-3SGM house car-FOC have.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}-MVM
 'Not only a house, she has even/also a car.'

²² GEN...VIC = Reason clause marker

- b. *ʃim-imm-wita* *m^wəxiriɟə* *jə-nəbbər-we* *m^wəxir*
 name-FOC-POSS.3SGM Muhiriye REL-COP.PST-DEF Muhir
at-bəɲɲ-m^w-m
 CAUS-call.IPFV-3PL-DCM

‘The one whose name was Muherye, made it to be called Muher’

The focus marking particle *-m* in (6a) is used to mark *məkina* ‘car’ and *məkina* receive focus. This could be another instance of additive focus. The morpheme *-m* is expanding information, and hence it is an expanding focus marker. For instance, (6a) can be interpreted as both the speaker and the listener have already known that she has the house which is old/given information. What the addressee does not know is whether she has a car or not. Now, the speaker is telling the addressee new information which is “she has also a car”. Thus, the focus element in (6a) is the noun *məkina* ‘car’ since it is the new information introduced during the conversation. By the same token, the focus marker *-m* is suffixed to the noun *ʃim* ‘name’, which made it the focus element in (6b). The name Muherye is used to expand new information, and hence expanding focus.

6.2.2.1.3. Replacing (Corrective) focus

In this kind of focus, the speaker presumes that the addressee possesses some wrong information that needs to be replaced or substituted by the correct information. In so doing, two steps are involved: rejection followed by a correction. In Muher, such kinds of focus phenomena are attested as in (7).

- (7) **Speaker 1:** *timərga* *bet* *sr-ə-m*

Timerga house buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM

‘Timerga bought a house’

- Speaker 2:** *anxənə,* *məkina-n-ə* *jə-sr-ə-m*

not car-COP.PRES-3SGM REL-buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM

‘No [he did not buy a house], it is car that he bought’

- (8) *ʃəɲɲək’* *anxənə* *t’e-n*

goat not sheep-COP. 3SGM

‘It is not goat; it is sheep’

The presence of a distinct prosodic feature on *məkina* ‘car’ and on *t’e* ‘sheep’ and the cleft construction in (7) focalize them, respectively. For instance, speaker 2 of (7) uses a short pause immediately after uttering *anxənə* which is marked by a comma in its written form. In this kind of information structuring, two distinct steps are involved. The first step is rejecting the incorrect information *bet* ‘house’, and *fənnək* ‘goat’ in (7) and (8), and presenting the correct information *məkina* ‘car’ and *t’e* ‘sheep’. The speakers in (7) and (8) assume that the addressees have wrongly referred to the entities as *bet* ‘house’ and *fənnək* ‘goat’ and the speakers in (7) and (8) are telling the addressee that he/she possesses wrong information and providing him/her with the correct information by stating ‘he bought a car’, and *t’en* ‘sheep’.

The above structures show that replacing focus involves distinctive steps of removing the constituent carrying the incorrect information. In (7), *bet* ‘house’ is substituted by the correct information *məkina* ‘car’; in (8), the wrong information *fənnək* ‘goat’ is replaced by the correct information *t’e* ‘sheep’. In both (7) and (8) rejection is realized by *anxənə* ‘it is not’ and the correction is made by the stress on the replaced NPs. Again, “car” in (7) is contrastively focused because it explicitly disagrees with the filler of the same slot (i.e. house) in the cleft sentence uttered by speaker 2. In (7), the focus alternative includes a proposition that has been proposed in the immediately preceding common ground. This leads to a corrective interpretation since the context of the proposition is different. The same is true in the case of *t’e* ‘sheep’ and *fənnək* ‘goat’ in (8) above.

6.2.2.1.4. Parallel focus

Another pragmatic use of focus is in highlighting parallels in interpretations. When two pieces of information are contrasted within one linguistic expression, this is called parallel focus. Consider the following example:

- (9) *ləmma* *bəsər* *bənnə-m* *timərqa* *tʃ’in* *dabbo* *bənnə-ø-m*
 Lemma meat eat.PFV-DCM Timerga but bread eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Lemma ate meat, but Timerga ate bread’

Clause (9) has both contrastive topic and contrastive focus. Each of the underlined NPs has either a topic status or a focus assigned to it by the internal relation of the contrasted pairs conjoined by *tʃ’in* ‘but’: *ləmma bəsər* ‘Lemma meat’, but *timərqa dabbo* ‘Timerga bread’, whose function

is parallel. The sentence initial constituents Lemma nd Timerga are the topics of the compound sentence, and hence they are contrastive topics. The focus elements are the NPs *bəsər* and *dabbo*. The focused NPs do not necessarily reject or correct anything in the pragmatic function of the addressee's expression as replacing focus does. In (9), both clauses evoke the set $\{b\grave{a}nna(x)(y)\}$, where x, y are elements of ENTITY(*bəsər* and *dabbo*). In this kind of focus, the whole clause can be affected. In (9), focus is assigned to the two constituents (*bəsər* and *dabbo*) which are contrasted by *t/ʔin* 'but' and hence it brings the two NPs to be contrastive focus.

6.2.2.1.5. Restricting focus

In this type of focus, antecedently given or presupposed information is restricted to one or more values among a set. In other words, this type of focus is used to make the addressee aware of a delimitation of the utterance to the constituent in focus as shown in (10):

- (10) A: *zebərga jidʒ-wita bet-m məkina-m srə-no-m*
 Zeberga son-POSS.3SGM house-FOC car-FOC buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}-DCM
 'Zeberga bought his son a house and a car'
- S: (a) *zebərga jidʒ-wita bet an-srə-no*
 Zeberga son-POSS.3SGM house NEG-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}
jidʒ-wita jə-srə-no məkina k'una-n
 son-POSS.3SGM REL-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj} car only.FOC-COP.PRES
 'Zeberga did not buy his son a HOUSE. It was only CAR that he bought for his son'
- (b) *anxənə jə-srə-no məkina k'una-n*
 no REL-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj} car only-COP.PRES.3SGM
 'No, it was only CAR that he bought for his son'

The response clauses in (10) contain the restricting focus which corrects the presupposed information of A. In this case, one of the values²³ of X (where X= house and car) is explicitly indicated as in (10a) or implicitly as in (10b) and rejected as incorrect. The rejecting focus constituent, which is not a house, corrects the presupposed information of A in that at least one value of X is rejected as incorrect.

In the response clause (10a), the speaker first rejects the incorrect value explicitly and then he/she restricted the presupposed information to one correct value (i.e., a car). In the response

²³ is meant any referent, verb action or state, truth value, etc.

clause (10b), the speaker provides the correct value of the presupposed information by rejecting the incorrect value implicitly.

6.2.2.1.6. Selecting focus

This type of focus is marked when an item from a set of possible values is selected and marked. Consider the following example:

- (11) Askal: *gʷəbbe-xə* *ʃə-n* *we wəlk'it'e-n* *ji-nəbir*
 brother-2SGM.POSS shewa-COP.PRES or Welk'ite-COP.PRES 3SGM-live.IPFV
 'Does your brother live in Shewa (Addis Ababa) or in Welk'ite'e?
 Seifu: *gʷəbbe-əŋŋa* *ji-nəbir* *wəlk'it'e-n*
 brother-1SG.POSS 3SGM-live.IPFV Welk'ite-COP.PRES
 'My brother lives in Welk'ite'e' [It is in Welk'ite'e that my brother lives]

In (11), S selects one item or place (Welk'ite'e) among a presupposed set of possible values which are *ʃə* or *Welk'ite'e* (i.e. the presupposition is your brother lives in X, where X= *ʃə* 'Addis Ababa' or *Welk'ite'e*). The selective focus in (11) involves a contrast between the information chosen (i.e. *Welk'ite'e*) and the information rejected (i.e. *ʃə*). The response clause *gʷəbbəŋŋa jinəbir wəlk'it'en* 'My brother lives in Welk'ite', not in Shewa (Addis Ababa) shows that there is a rejection of "My brother lives in Addis Ababa" in selecting "My brother lives in Welk'ite" (i.e. rejection of Addis Ababa in selecting Welk'ite). The selected NP receives stress and hence it is focused and becomes the value of X. This may be called selection by contrast; selected in favor of another is contrastive of some kind.

What makes restricting and selective focus types similar is that both types of focus have a rejection of one of the presupposed information. However, in restricting focus, the speaker knows that the addressee possessed wrong information in which the correct one is going to be accepted and the incorrect one will be rejected. In selecting focus, the addressee is not sure about which one is correct, X or Y. The speaker gives an answer to alternative questions (X or Y?), and he/she responds X or Y. If the speaker selects X, then Y will be rejected; if he/she selects Y, then X will be rejected.

6.2.2.2. Assertive focus

According to Hyman and Watters (1984: 239), the assertive focus is assigned to a constituent of a sentence or of an entire sentence against neutral background information of interlocutors (the

speaker and the hearer). As opposed to contrastive focus, assertive focus marker asserts a part of an utterance without presupposing any particular background.

Neutral background to Hyman and Watters means “the slot occupied by the focused element(s) is judged by the speaker, not to have been assigned any conflicting value by the listener (Hyman and Watters 1984: 239). The speaker assumed a neutral background in different contexts. One of which is when the hearer (addressee) asks the speaker a question, and the answer then will be the constituent that receives focus since it is the information update or new information signaled by the *wh*-words which, in turn, require new information as in (12).

- (12) a. X: *mət'af-we ma abə-nn-axə-m?*
 book-DEF who give.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}-2SGM-DCM?
 ‘Who gave you the book?’
 Y: *zəbərga*
 Zeberga
 ‘Zeberga’
- b. Mother: *birhanu mik'e abə-nn-axə-m?*
 Birhanu what give.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}-2SGM-DCM
 ‘What did Birhanu give you?’
 Daughter: *birhanu jə-anə [janə] iga ab-ə-e-m*
 Birhanu for-I water give.PFV-3SGM-1SG_{Obj}-DCM
 ‘Birhanu gave me WATER.’

The *Wh*-word *ma* ‘who’, in the question clause of (12a), indicates that the speaker requests a value for the subject slot. In the response clause of (12a), speaker Y provides the utterance “Zeberga”, where Zeberga is a new piece of information and assertively focused since the *WH*-question of speaker X in (12a) explicitly indicated no conflicting value has been assigned in the subject position.

In (12b), the first speaker (the mother) seeks a value for the object slot. In the response clause, the daughter responds with the utterance *birhanu janə iga abəm* ‘Birhanu gave me WATER.’ where ‘water’ is assertively focused. The focused element (i.e. water) occupies the slot of the object position without any conflicting value by the hearer. This means that the daughter judges that there is no relevant previous context that leads her to assume a preexisting conflicting value

in the focus slot (i.e. the object position). Thus, in Muher, responses for wh-words/questions are new information, and hence they are a constituent which are under the scope or the domain of focus. Since both *Zeberga* and *iga* ‘water’ are arguments, the focus is on these constituents, the type of focus is termed as argument focus.

6.2.2.3. Identificational focus marker -tt

Identificational focus is a constituent that bears or represents a subset of the set of contextually given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold (Kiss 1998: 245). In Muher, the focus marking morpheme *-tt* is used as an identificational focus. When the Muher proximal demonstrative *zi* ‘this’ is the complement to the copula it is marked by the suffix *-tt* for identification. The demonstrative *zi* ‘this’ as a complement to the copula is only marked by the suffix *-tt* if it is used as a pronoun. This means, in Muher, *-tt* is limited only to demonstratives and personal pronouns and to the complement position in non-past affirmative copula clauses. Sentences such as (13) will not be acceptable without *-tt*. Consider the following examples.

- (13) a. *jə-wəlde jidʒ zi-tt-n*
GEN-Welde son PRX.DEM-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM
'Welde's son is this (here)'
- b. *birtuk^wan-we zi-tt-n*
orange-DEF PRX.DEM-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM
'The orange, here it is!'
- c. *tammajɲa jə-odə-x^w-kkə-ət zi-tt-n*
yesterday GEN-say.PFV-1SG_{Subj}-2SGM_{Obj}-VIC PRX.DEM-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM
'What I told you yesterday, here it is!'

As can be seen in (13) above, the focus marker *-tt* is suffixed to the demonstrative pronoun *zi* to focus the hearer's attention toward the entity being expressed or referred to in the ongoing discourse. In all the three examples, the syntactic position of *-tt* with the demonstrative pronoun *zi* as predicate nominal of affirmative present tense copular clause will make it (*-tt*) as a focus marker. No other element can take it. For instance, its suffixation to proper names yields ungrammatical expressions as in **zi zəbərga-tt-n*; the correct form should be *zi zəbərga-n* 'this is Zeberga'.

In (13a), the *-tt* is used to identify who Welde's son is and the demonstrative *zi* is used as complement to the Muher present tense copula *-n*. Thus, *-tt* is an identificational focus marker since it makes a distinction between Welde's son from another's son(s). The focus marker *-tt* is usually followed by a copular element such as *-n* and *-ja*. Therefore, it functions as a focus marker.

In (13b), the construction *zittin* is used as a direct replay to a question for a particular item *birtuk^wan* and involves displaying the item. The speaker gives more emphasis to the item being considered. In the presentative construction such as (13b), the speaker presents the referred entity *birtuk^wan* 'orange' only by uttering the deictic presentative expression *zittin*.

In constructions such as (13c), it is possible to infer that the speaker finds an item or entity he/she was looking for; if the speaker wants to present what he/she told or mentioned yesterday to the addressee, he/she uses the presentative expression *zittin* 'here it is!' that has the identificational focus marker *-tt*. The discontinuous morpheme which is used as a reason clause marker is *jə...ət*. In the copular clause in (13c) in which in addition to the proximal demonstrative *zi*, the identificational focus marker *-tt* and the copula *-n* occur. Pragmatically, the emphasis put on the referent occurs in the copular clauses.

In all the above examples, the demonstrative pronoun *zi* is used as a predicate nominal of affirmative present tense copular clauses and *-tt* is used as an identificational focus marker in (13a-c).

The basic (neutral) word order of the NP, in Muher, is DEM > (ADJ) > NOUN, but the constructions in (13) are cleft constructions since the speaker in each of the clauses in (13) above wants to give emphasis to which son is old (13a), orange (13b), and what the speaker told to the addressee.

The identificational focus marker *-tt* is not only used with deictics as shown in (13a-c), but also with nominal or adjectival complements. For example, when personal pronouns are used as complement to copula clauses, they are pragmatically marked by the identificational marking focus morpheme *-tt* as in (14).

- (14) *zi bora jə-srə-nn x^wa-tt-n*
 this ox REL-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj} he-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘The one who bought this ox is he’ (with pointing)

In (14), the personal pronoun *x^wa* ‘he’ is used as complement to the copula clause. *-tt* is suffixed to it to have a pragmatically motivated meaning. When the speaker utters, he/she complement/supplement his speech with a pointing gesture. As I have discussed in example (13) above, the morpheme *-tt* can only be attached to personal and demonstrative pronouns. The clause in (14) will remain ungrammatical without the focus marking morpheme *-tt*. We cannot say, for example, **zi bora jəsrənn x^wan*.

6.2.3. Syntactic focus marking

Muher appears to have some means of marking focus syntactically. Although the basic word order of Muher is SOV, focus can be marked syntactically via basic word order change or scrambling, and by cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions. There is the possibility of rearranging word order that is deviant from the basic one to mark focus. In what follows, these issues will be discussed in detail.

6.2.3.1. Marking focus by changing canonical word order

A focused element can be placed in its basic (canonical) slot or position which is usually following the subject or removed from its normal position and dislocated somewhere else. Muher marks focus by changing its basic word order as in (15).

- (15) a. *zəbərga kitf^wə bənnə-m*
 Zeberga kitfo eat.PFV-DCM
 ‘Zeberga ate kitfo’
 b. *kitf^wə zəbərga bənnə-ø-m*
 kitfo Zeberga eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Kitfo, Zeberga ate’
 c. *zi bet jə-srə-nn x^wa-tt-n*
 this house REL-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj} he-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘The one who bought this house is he’

The clause in (15a) follows the basic word order of Muher, which is an SOV and strictly TOPIC-COMMENT order. In this case, *Zeberga* is the topic since it is the sentence initial constituent,

and *kitfo* is the focus element. However, the clause in (15b) deviates from the default word order and is structured by pragmatically motivated word order; the normal (canonical) word order is violated and the word order of clause (15b) becomes OSV where there is short pause after *kitf^wə*. The focal element *kitf^wə* is dislocated from its normal position and placed in the clause-initial position for the purpose of focus. A short pause is used to distinguish the focus element from the old information. *kitfo* is new information because it is an answer to the information question “What did Zeberga eat?”. Thus, in the non-canonical sentence such as (15b), the word order is restructured (postposed).

In clause (15c), the initial constituent *bet* is marked by the demonstrative *zi* which would make it definite and hence it is a common or given information. In example (15c) the subject is marked, and *zi bet* is the topic of the clause. It might be difficult to talk about focus position in (15c), but the focus marker is normally only associated with the subject that is “he”. Therefore, the focus is only on the copula complement *x^wa* ‘he’. Had it been in a neutral construction, the subject pronoun “he” would have been in its normal position. However, for the purpose of focus, it is dislocated from the subject position to the copula complement position since copula clauses such as (15c) do not have an object.

6.2.3.2. Marking focus through cleft constructions

As in topic, focus can also be marked by manipulating the word order through clefting. This means focus is structurally expressed in the form of cleft construction. Cleft construction reorganizes the content of a single clause into two interrelated parts. The role of this kind of construction is to focus on an element that is considered to be new information. Consider the following information:

- (16) a. *bəjjənə taməŋŋa jə-gəg-wita libs srə-ə-m*
 Beyene yesterday for-self-POSS.3SGM cloth buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Beyene bought a cloth for himself yesterday’
- b. *bəjjənə banno taməŋŋa jə-gəg-wita libs jə-srə*
 Beyene COP.PST yesterday For-self-POSS.3SGM cloth REL-buy.PFV
 ‘It was Beyene who bought a cloth for himself yesterday’
- c. *taməŋŋa banno bəjjənə jə-gəg-wita libs jə-srə*
 yesterday COP.PST Beyene for-himself-POSS.3SGM cloth REL-buy.PFV

‘It was yesterday that Beyene bought a cloth for himself’

The basic sentence in (16a) and the cleft sentences in (16b) and (16c) have the same central meaning. However, the way each of the clauses in (16) structures information is different. The clause in (16a) is structured by sticking to the Muher basic word order in which the subject constituent *Beyene* is the topic, but the scope of focus is on the entire clause, and thus (16a) has a sentence focus. On the contrary, the sentences in (16b) and (16c) are cleft constructions that are typically constructed to focus an element in each clause. The effect of the cleft structure is to focus on one element (new information) which precedes the copular element if there is any copular element and this shows the flexibility of focus position in Muher. The noun *Beyene* and the adverb of time *taməŋŋa* ‘yesterday’ received focus as a result of the cleft constructions in examples (16b) and (16c), respectively. The focus structure in (16b), for instance, is argument-focused since (16b) is the inverse predication counterpart of the clause in (16a).

In Muher, the focal elements are shifted from their basic (canonical) syntactic positions and occur in a copula complement position, for the complement of the copula (“Be”) is not an object as in ‘It was Beyene’ and ‘It was yesterday’ in which *Beyene* and *yesterday* are complement to the copula. What is happening is that an independent clause is turned into a dependent one. The cleft is derived from the independent clause. The core argument *Beyene* in (16b) and the non-core argument *taməŋŋa* ‘yesterday’ (with adverbial function) in (16c) are focused by clefting. It should be also noted that the focused elements *Beyene* in (16b) and *taməŋŋa* ‘yesterday’ in (16c) are moved out of the given clauses and form new clausal structures predicated of a copula to which the given clause becomes a complement.

In summary, the interpretation of (16b) and (16c) is triggered by the cleft construction. The clause in (16b) says that nobody else, but *Beyene* bought a cloth for himself yesterday, while (16c) says that not on other days, but yesterday *Beyene* bought a cloth for himself.

6.2.3.3. Marking focus via pseudo cleft constructions

In Muher, information can also be structured through pseudo-cleft constructions. In pseudo-cleft constructions, background information appears first followed by new information; the constituent that receives focus comes towards the end of the clause. In Muher, as opposed to the (simple) cleft construction (It-cleft) which is structured as focus-background relation, in pseudo

cleft (Wh-cleft) construction information is structured in the form of background-focus pair or relation since the analysis of topic and focus are not based on the principle of BLT. Consider the following example.

- (17) a. *timərga bəsər bənnə-ø-m*
 Timerga meat eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Timerga ate meat’
- b. *timərga je-bənnə-ø-n jə-nəbbər-we bəsər banno*
 Timerga REL-eat.PFV-3SGM-ACC REL-live.PFV-DEF meat COP.PST
 ‘What Timerga ate was meat’

The clause in (17a) follows strictly the TOPIC-COMMENT structure which is the basic word order of Muher, whereas (17b) is a non-canonical pseudo cleft construction. The clause in (17a) is neutral or pragmatically unmarked, for it follows the canonical word order of Muher. The pseudo cleft clause in (17b) is pragmatically marked, and *bəsər* ‘meat’ is identified as new information via pseudo cleft. As can be seen in (17b), the old information precedes the new information which is placed toward the end of the clause. The pseudo-cleft clause above introduces a new topic into the discourse.

In Muher, the difference between cleft and pseudo cleft constructions is that cleft sentences begin with “It is/was...REL pronoun” as in (16b-c), but in the pseudo cleft constructions the relative clause appears in the initial position in a headless form such as “what I like best is orange” (cf. Lambrecht 2001: 467). Although they are different in this regard, (17b) is logically an equivalent sentence to the cleft kind of sentence. The clauses in (17a) and (17b) convey almost the same propositional message, but they may not be used in the same communicative context. Unlike (17a), the clause in (17b) is pragmatically marked, for it deviates from the basic word order of Muher. The noun *bəsər* ‘meat’ in (17b) is identified as new information through the pseudo cleft construction, and hence the focus element of clause (17). However, had it been simple cleft construction, the structure of (17b) would have been *bəsər banno timərga jəbənnam* ‘It was meat that Timerga ate’ in which the focus element comes first and the background next.

6.2.4. Focus marking adjuncts (words) in Muher

A focus adjunct is a syntactic role that accompanies an element that is focused and that expresses various meanings related to the focus element. In English, adjuncts like *only*, *also* and *even* are

the most typical focus markers. However, many languages also have adjuncts for contrastive focus and other kinds of focus that do not have an additive, exclusive or scalar function. Muher applies focus adjuncts. Muher focus adjuncts such as *k'una* ‘only’, *bətələj* ‘especially’, *titərf* ‘even’ and *k'unam* (*k'unam*) ‘never’ which can be used to mark focused-element in a given clause and emphasize the meaning of the clause for semantic reasons as shown in the following Muher data.

6.2.4.1. Focus adjunct *k'una* ‘only’

In Muher, *k'una* ‘only’, which has a basic meaning ‘single’, is a lexical focus marker or focus sensitive morpheme that is used to mark various elements of a given clause. *k'una* induces an exclusive reading. The copular morpheme *-n* or *-ja* is usually suffixed to *k'una* as shown in (18) below.

- (18) a. *kəbbədə k'una-n t'əlla ji-sətf'*
 Kebede only-COP.PRES t'ella 3SGM-drink.IPVF [REL]
 ‘It is only Kebede who drinks t'ella (local wine)’
 b. *kəbbədə t'əlla k'una-n ji-sətf'*
 Kebede t'ella only-COP.PRES 3SGM-drink.IPVF [REL]
 ‘It is only t'ella that Kebede drinks’

In the cleft construction such as (18a), Kebede is emphasized by the focus adjunct *k'una* ‘only’ which only marks Kebede who then becomes new information, and thus becomes the constituent that receives focus. The idea of (18a) is that the person who drinks the *t'əlla* is only Kebede, not somebody else. Thus, the noun Kebede is the focal element of the clause in (18a). In (18b), however, Kebede is old information because the *k'una* ‘only’ modifies only the noun *t'əlla* which made the focal element shift from Kebede to *t'əlla*. It can be concluded that the interpretation of the clause is determined by the position of the focus adjunct *k'una*; the meaning of (18a) is different from the pragmatic meaning of (18b) due to the position of the focus adjunct. Thus, constituents that have been identified by syntactic (grammatical) features at the level of sentence grammar are realized with pragmatic features at the level of discourse grammar.

One may argue that it is the cleft construction that brought the focus construction, not by *k'una* ‘only’. However, *k'una* ‘only’ will survive and function as a focus marker in a non-cleft constructions as in *kəbbədə k'una t'əlla sətf'tf'am* ‘Only Kebede drank t'ella’ and *kəbbədə təlla*

k'una sət/tf'am ‘Kebede drank only *t'əlla*’. In these two examples, the meaning of the clauses changes as the focus marker *k'una* is adjoined to different elements: *Kebede* and *t'əlla*, respectively.

The focus adjunct *k'una* ‘only’ makes some clauses negative restrictive clauses as shown in the following examples.

- (19) a. *səlam k'una-ja jə-aləmu [jaləmu] libs ti-srə-n-o*
 Selam only-COP.PRES.3SGF for-Alemu cloth REL-buy.IPFV-APPL-3SGF
 ‘It is only Selam who buys cloth for Alemu’
- b. *səlam jə-aləmu [jalemu] k'una-n libs ti-srə-n-o*
 Selam for-Alemu only-COP.PRES.3SGM cloth REL-buy.IPFV-APPL-3SGF
 ‘It is only for Alemu that Selam buys cloth’
- c. *səlam jə-alemu libs k'una-n ti-srə-n-o*
 Selam for-Alemu cloth Only-CIP.PRES.3SGM REL-buy.IPFV-APPL-3SGF
 ‘It is only cloth that Selam buys for Alemu’

All the clauses in (19) are restricted by the focus adjunct *k'una* ‘only’. The proper noun *Selam* in (19a), the phrase *jalemu* ‘for Alemu’ in (19b) and the noun *libs* ‘cloth’ in (19c) are given emphasis and become focal elements. The focal element and the meaning of each clause in (19) are determined again by the position of the focus particle *k'una* ‘only’ which is characterized by its positional variability. Syntactically, *kuna* ‘only’ occurs in the adverbial position and adnominal position, and it adjoins to non-argument such as the AP. All of the clauses marked for focus in (19) are nouns, and hence the focus domain is known as argument-focus. How argument and non-argument (predicates focus) focus constructions are derived will be discussed in detailed domains in section 5.3. In this section, the purpose is to mention *kuna* ‘only’ as the focus marker lexical word in Muher.

6.2.4.2. Focus marker *bətələj* ‘especially’

Muher also employs the focus marker *bətələj* ‘especially’ to mark a constituent to be a focal element or to assign a focus domain to an element in a given clause based on the communicative situation and the focus structure. The element *bətələj* ‘especially’ is used to particularize or intensify various elements of a given clause. Consider the following examples:

- (20) a. *bətələj anə jə-ʔigir zəba an-wəddin*
 especially I of-leg road NEG-like.IPFV.1SG
 ‘Especially I, don’t like going on foot/traveling long distances on foot’
- b. *dəmmak’ k’ələm an- wəddin bətələj biffa*
 Dark color NEG-like.IPFV.1SG especially RED
 ‘I don’t like dark color, especially red’

The above two examples show that focus can be switched to different elements of clause based on the position of the focus marker. In (20), the focus particle *bətələj* ‘especially’ is used to intensify and emphasize the pronoun *anə* ‘I’ in (20a) and the word *biffa* ‘red’ in (20b). In both examples, *bətələj* ‘especially’ is added to the already existing structure to express the feeling of the speaker emphatically. It is also used to specify the element that is emphasized in the clause. In (20) the focus domain is varied based on the position of the focus marker particle. In (20a), for example, the focus is on *anə* ‘I’. However, in (20b), the scope of the focus marker is only on *biffa* ‘red’ and this is an example of a predicate-focus domain/structure in which the scope or the domain of the focus is on the predicate. This is because *biffa* ‘red’ restricts the phrase *dəmmak’ k’ələm* ‘dark color’ although (16b) is a reduced form of the NP *biffa k’ələm* ‘red color’. Thus, the focus marker *bətələj* ‘especially’ is used in an existing structure to express particular various elements of a sentence feeling accompanied by short pause.

6.2.4.3. Focus adjunct *tetərf* ‘Even/including’

Muher also uses the focus adjunct *tetərf*, which has an English equivalent meaning ‘even’. Consider the following example.

- (21) *zi-we dabbo tetərf²⁴ bənnə-ø-m*
 this-DEF bread FOC eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘He ate even this bread’ [He ate everything including this bread]

In (21), the focus adjunct *tetərf*, which is an optional or structurally dispensable part of the clause, but which adds some extra meaning to it, is used to highlight the focus phrase *zi dabbo* ‘this bread’. Clause (21) tells me that the definite *-we* can function as an exclusive marker as in the Amharic *jihijjaw* ‘this exclusive’. The clause in (21) describes an event that can be

²⁴ The Muher focus particle *tetərf* has the Amharic equivalent *sajik’ar* as in *kəbadda sajik’ar mət’t’ituwal*

described as “eating” involving the arguments *ziwe dabbo* ‘this bread (EXV)’ and *x^wa* ‘he’²⁵ related in a particular way. *x^wa* ‘he’ is the one who is doing the eating and *ziwe dabbo* ‘this bread (EXV)’ is the one being eaten. The two arguments are the participants and the verb *bænna* ‘he ate’ describes the character of the event, and hence the predicate. When it is figured out what is going on in the conversation (in the discourse), the interpretation (implication) of the clause in (21) is that he has eaten this bread besides or including other edible things. Moreover, of the food under consideration, bread was the least expected (likely) food to be eaten by the addressee. The speaker, therefore, is paying particular attention to *zi dabbo* ‘this bread’ by using the Muher focus marking adjunct *tetərf*. The focus type in (21) is argument focus structure, and the other implied arguments are serving as background to the new information.

6.2.5. Marking focus using reflexive pronouns

In Muher, reflexive pronouns are formed by the word *gəgg* ‘body/self’ followed by possessive suffixes such as *-əŋŋa*, *-axə*, *-ax^j*, *-wita*, *-axim^w*, *-axima*, *-xinnəm^w*, and *-xinnəma*. A referential noun or an intensifier pronoun together with a co-referential noun or pronoun emphasizes the entity referred to by the pronoun or noun as in (22).

- (22) a. *anə jə-gudaj-we bazəna-n-xu*
 I for-issue-DEF new-COP.PRES-1SG_{Subj}
 ‘I am new to the issue’
- b. *anə gəg-əŋŋa jə-gudaj-we bazəna-n-xu*
 I body-POSS.1SG for-issue-DEF new-COP.PRES-1SG_{Subj}
 ‘I myself am new to the issue’

Let us discuss the role of reflexive pronouns as a focus marker by comparing the interpretation of the clauses in (22a) and (22b). In (22a), no constituent is under the scope of focus since the entire clause is old or given information. However, the reflexive (emphatic) pronoun *gəgəŋŋa* ‘myself’ in (22b) encodes focus by giving emphasis or intensity to the personal pronoun *anə* ‘I’. The idea of (22b) is that it is the already mentioned personal pronoun that is affected by the state of affairs indicated by the predicate in clause. This must be extra-focus marking and one needs to know the context. As opposed to (22a), the reflexive pronouns *gəgəŋŋa* added to the personal pronoun *anə*

²⁵ which is covertly expressed by the zero morpheme

‘I’ makes it restricted; this kind of focus is termed as restricted focus, and since the pronoun is the focal element, the focus domain is argument focus structure.

Some Ethiopian languages may allow the use of reflexive pronoun alone in subject position. For example, in Amharic we have *rased mat’t’ahu* ‘I came myself’, in which *rased* ‘myself’ is in the subject position, but we can overtly see the Amharic first person subject agreement suffixes *-hu* which, in turn, presupposes the existence of a covert subject *ine* ‘I’. However, the emphatic pronoun *gəgəŋna*, in Muher, has no independent status in clause (22b) since it stands as appositions to its antecedent; it is used to mark the subject pronominal. The personal pronoun *anə* ‘I’ and its corresponding reflexive (emphatic) pronoun is grammatically parallel and has the same referent; they are co-referenced governed by syntactic principles. This means the emphatic pronouns do not make new information, but encode emphasis on the already stated information. As can be seen above, there is no variation in the positioning of the reflexive. its position relative to the pronoun is immediately after its antecedent (pronoun), which is *anə* ‘I’. It is put immediately after the antecedent pronoun to have the same semantic and grammatical function.

6.2.6. Complex focus marking system in Muher

Muher sometimes marks focus by using a complex focus morpheme *k’unam* that is constructed by the combination of the contrastive focus marking morpheme *-m* and the lexical focus marking morpheme *k’una* ‘only’ which results in the English equivalent ‘when-so-ever/what-so-ever’ which is polarity feature of intensity. It is also possible to use the reduplicated form *k’unam k’unam*. The following example illustrates this.

- (23) a. *k’una-m* *tə-gəŋŋ-wita-t* *a-j- zəbbər [ezəbbər]*
 single(FOC)-FOC to-country-POSS. 3SGM-to NEG-3SGM-return.IPFV-3SGM
 ‘He will never return (come back) to his country’
 b. *k’una-m* *k’una-m* *k^was* *a-j-tʃ^wot [etʃ^wot]*
 FOC-FOC FOC-FOC ball NEG-3SGM-play.IPFV
 ‘He will never never play (foot) ball’

The complex morpheme *k’unam* appears to mark the entire clause in both (23a) and (23b). Since the structure in (23) is not a topic-comment structure, and the clause is not a VP-accented clause that usually is interpreted as having topic-comment structure, the clause cannot have the VP or V

as its scope of focus. The complex focus marker-*m* occurs with the temporal adverb *k'una* like the Amharic መቼም አይመጣም. The speaker believes that the action or the state of the affairs mentioned in (23a) and (23b) will have zero probability to happen or being performed. The speaker encodes the focus emphatically, and this kind of focus is sometimes called the emphatic focus. In so doing, he/she uses the emphatic complex focus marker *k'unam* as in (23a) and its reduplicated form *k'unam k'unam* as in (23b).

6.3. Focus domain (Scope of focus) in Muher

Focus has a particular domain called focus domain structure. Focus structure is the association of a particular information structure with a particular morpho-syntactic or intonational domain (Lambrecht 1994: 222). As it has already been said in the introduction section, focus is “the semantic component of pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition” (Lambrecht 1994: 213). The domain of focus can be either on the entire clause or on a particular phrase constituent of a clause (Lambrecht 1994: 222; Dik et al. 1981: 52). The point to be discussed in this section is whether the focus is assigned to an individual constituent of a clause or the clause as a whole. Moreover, in this section, I will deal with the pragmatic articulation of asserted propositions.

In what follows, the different types of focus domains (structures) in Muher are described. The focus domain, in Muher, can be the subject of the clause (argument focus), the subject and the predicate (sentence focus), or only the predicate (predicate focus).

6.3.1. Predicate-focus structure

In the predicate-focus structure, the predicate or the verb phrase is the focus and the subject is the presupposition (topic) along with any other topical elements (Lambrecht 1994:226). Consider the following example.

- (24) a. *wəʃən-əɣɣa tə-səbbərə-m*
 pot-POSS.1SG PASS-break down.PFV-DCM
 ‘My pot was broken DOWN’
- b. **Question:** *sarem bet an-srə-t/tf-we*
 Sarem bet NEG-buy.PFV-3SGF-Q
 ‘Didn’t Sarem buy a house?’

Answer: *srə-ət/ɪ̄-m* ↘
 buy.PFV-3SGF-DCM
 ‘She bought’ [Sarem bought a house]

In (24a), *wəʃənəŋna* ‘my pot’ is a topic and the comment is *təsəbbərəm* ‘broken down’. In canonical word order of Muher, the sentence initial position is the topic and the comment conflates with the focus. Having this in mind, the element that receives focus in (24a) is *təsəbbərəm* which is the verb phrase; if the focus were on the argument (the subject or the object), the structure would be *jəma wəʃən təsəbbərəm?* And the response would be *wəʃənəŋna*. Thus, the focus domain is the predicate which is universally the unmarked type. Again, (24b), the focalized element is found in the response (Answer) clause, which is *srə/ɪ̄m*. The syntactic constituent in (24b) is identified with the help of the intonation pattern in the spoken discourse between the interlocutors. This means *srə/ɪ̄m* ‘she bought’ is a predicate that is focalized by a high speech (accented). The predicate in (24b) is characterized by supra-segmental features which is intonation (↘). What was not known by the first speaker was that if Sarem bought a house or not. The message conveyed by the response clause of (24b) is that Sarem has already bought a house. The subjects *wəʃənəŋna* ‘my pot’ in (24a) and Sarem in (24b) are the presuppositions, and the predicates (the VPs) *təsəbbərəm* and *srə/ɪ̄m* are the focal elements, respectively. Thus, in the unmarked Topic-comment (subject-predicate) structure, the predicate is the focus, and the subject is the presupposition. This kind of focus domain is called predicate-focus structure.

6.3.2. Argument-focus structure

I have shown in the preceding sections this notion, but not in its own right and in detail. Thus, focus can also be assigned to the argument of a given sentence besides to predicate. In Muher, argument focus structure is attested in identificational sentences. Argument focus structure is invoked when a single argument in the structure corresponds to the question word since question words such as *ma* ‘who’, *mik’e* ‘what’, *etə* ‘where’, *jəma* ‘whose’, *bəmmīn* ‘how’, and *jənk’e* ‘why’ and their responses usually result in argument focus constructions. Consider the following examples:

- (25) A: *mət'af-we ma abə-n-xə-m?*
 book-DEF who give.PFV-3SGMSubj-2SGM-DCM
 'Who gave you the book?'
 B: *zəbərga*
 Zəbərga
 'Zeberga' [Lit. Zeberga gave me the book]
- (26) Abonesh: *ək^wa bə-mik'e bəssa-xə-m*
 today by-what come.PFV-2SGM-DCM
 'How did you come today?' [lit. 'By what did you come today?']
 Timerga: *ək^wa jə-bəssa-xu bə-abtobus-n [bəbtobusin]*
 today REL-come.PFV-1SG by-bus-COP.PRES
 'How did I come today is by bus' [By what I came today is by bus]

In (25a), there is a missing argument for the presupposed open proposition presented by speaker A. The presupposition is that someone gave a book to a certain referent (represented by “you” in the question clause). Speaker B asserts that the person who gave the book was Zeberga which is the focus constituent and an argument in its own right. Thus, since the scope of the focus is on the NP *Zeberga*, the focus domain is argument focus. The interrogative structure in (26) is not cleft, suggesting that it is neutral with regard to the feature associated with the argument. This is easily identified with the assistance of intonation in spoken discourse. The argument focus is used to identify the missing argument Zeberga for a presupposed open proposition that states someone has given a book to the speaker (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 229-330).

6.3.3. Sentence-focus structure

Sentence-focus structure reports an event or presents a totally new discourse that does not have reference to old information (Lambrecht 1994: 233). In sentence-focus structure, focus extends to the subject and predicate; focus is assigned to the entire domains as shown below.

- (27) *zang^jəra-we bə-dibr dən j-ef-ø-u*
 monkey-DEF LOC-forest inside 3SGM-walk.IPFV-3SGM-DCM
 'The monkey walks in the forest'

In sentence (27), topic is assigned to the subject NP *zang^jarə-we* ‘The monkey’, but the scope of the focus domain is the entire clause. All of the elements of the clause are included in the domain and background information is lacking. In (27), there is not any presupposed information and no specific constituent is assigned focus; no specific emphasis is given to any particular element. Clause (27) has event reporting articulation, and hence the entire clause is focused. In sentence focus structures such as (27), both the argument and the predicate are new and thus in the scope of the focus. Clause (27) is not a statement about an entity; it rather, characterizes a situation as a whole and topic expression is non-existent. All sentences presumably involve at least one focus, but they do not always possess a topic (Bender and Song 2012: 332) although (27) has its own topic which is also the subject of the clause. While argument and predicate focus structures are used to identify a referent (entity) and comment on the topic respectively; sentence focus is used for reporting an event or presenting a new discourse referent. Although NP and VP are not equally marked, and there is a hierarchy of focus marking, the entire clause (an XP) is focused. The entire clause is headed or marked by tense/aspect, a functional category projecting a phrase. That could be assigned focus as it introduces new information out of the blue or with little presupposition about the participants and their actions. In (27), the entire clause “The monkey walks in the forest” is in the scope of focus. Hence, the focus domain is called sentence-focus structure.

6.4. Summary

In this chapter, different ways of focus constructions in Muher have been identified, analyzed and discussed. Specifically, Muher encodes focus prosodically, morphologically, syntactically, and by using focus adjuncts. Prosodically, Muher encodes focus by using an intonation pattern. Morphologically, Muher employed the contrastive focus marking morpheme *-m* with its various functions and identificational focus marking morpheme *-tt*. Syntactically, focus can be marked by cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions, and by changing the canonical word order of the language. Besides, focus can be marked by focus marking adjuncts and words such as *k’una* ‘only’, *bətaləj* ‘especially’, *tetərɸ* ‘even’. Muher constructs complex focus phenomena by using expressions such as *k’unam*, and its reduplicated form *k’unam k’unam* that has the English equivalent word ‘never’. Furthermore, Muher marks focus using reflexive pronouns, which are formed from the morpheme *gəg* ‘body/self’ suffixed by possessive suffixes (possessive pronominal suffixes) such as *-əŋŋa*, *-axə*, *-ax^j*, *-wita*, *-axim^w*, *-axima*, *-xinnəm^w*, and *-xinnəma*.

Intensifier is not necessarily the same as focus. This study also identified three focus domain types in Muher: predicate-focus structure, argument-focus structure and sentence-focus structure. While the argument-focus and the sentence-focus structures are analyzed as marked focus structures, the predicate focus structure is analyzed as unmarked for its focus articulation. As Lambrecht (1994: 296) states, the status of the predicate as the unmarked focus domain correlates with the status of the topic-comment structure as the unmarked pragmatic articulation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COPULA CLAUSE INFORMATION STRUCTURE IN MUHER

We have identified and discussed in chapter four the different copular morphemes in Muher used in affirmative main clause and in other clause types. When we discuss the copulas in Muher, we have highlighted some of the copular clauses, but with very scanty evidence and discussion. The copular clauses in Muher should be treated in its own right. Therefore, in this chapter, I present the different types or classification of the present tense copular clauses in Muher in line with their functions in structuring information, specifically focus and topic markings. Muher has copula clauses that have syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features, and these features of copula clause information structure have been discussed thoroughly in this chapter.

7.1. Introduction

Copular clauses are minor sentence types whose predicate complements are not main verbs, but some other categories such as noun phrases (NP), prepositional phrases (PP), or Adjectival phrases (AP) (Mikkelsen 2011: 1805). Dixon (2002: 1) points out that copular subject and copular complements with copula verb are the two core arguments that are found in copular clauses. However, I argue that the predicate or the copular complement in Muher is not necessarily an argument. This is because AP and PP can also be complements to the present tense copula in Muher as in *sarem malkammaja* ‘Sarem is beautiful’, where the complement of the copula is the adjective *malkamma* ‘beautiful’. In the literature, various types of copula clauses are identified. The typological classification of copular clauses stems from Higgins (1979) who proposed a four-way division of copular sentences namely, 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 who have taken data from other languages and proposed different copula clause taxonomies. For example, Mikkelsen (2005: 118-130) identified predicational, equative and specificational copula clauses and disregarded identificational as independent copula clause types. She categorized the so-called identificational copula clauses as equative or specificational. While Heycock and Kroch (1999) treated the specificational clause type under equatives, den Dikken (2006), merged the two copula clause types and label both as specificational. den Dikken

(2006:77-79) claims that the predication clause is the only underlying copular clause construction, and specificational and predication are just surface types of copular clauses in English.

The above controversies on the taxonomic question of the copula clause entail that languages such as Muher should be studied based on the peculiar features of the language in question. Thus, the copula clauses found in Muher should not necessarily match English copula clause types identified by Higgins (1979) and other scholars such as Heycock and Kroch (1999), Mikkelsen (2005) and den Dikken (2006) who have taken data from other languages. This chapter, therefore, tries to describe the copular clause types of Muher without taking into account any specific theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars such as Higgins (1979); the analysis was made by focusing only on the inherent copular clause features of Muher based on the data obtained from Muher native speakers, free speech texts, and short stories. This is because Ethio-Semitic languages in general and Gurage languages, in particular (Muher being one), may show many features that contradict English and other non-Ethio-Semitic languages regarding copula constructions such as the use of different copular morphemes. For example, Amharic has three copular verbs: *nəw*, *allə* and *nəbbər* in which the first two are used in the present tense, and the later indicates the past tense. This chapter, therefore, describes the different types of the present tense copular clauses in Muher in line with their information structures.

Muher has copular clauses that have morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic features. In this chapter, equational, specificational, predication, identificational, locative, possessive and presentational copular clauses have been presented in detail. These types of copular clauses in Muher are described based on (1) the semantics of the relation between the subject and the copula complement (i.e. equational/identificational, predicative and specificational), (2) based on the morphosyntax of the complement (locative, possessive), and (3) based on the pragmatic function of the copular clause (presentatives).

7.2. Types of Copular Clauses in Muher

Copular clauses in Muher can be classified based on their semantic, morphosyntactic and pragmatic criteria or parameters. The following sub-sections deal with each of these in detail.

7.2.1. Copular clauses based on Semantic criteria

Muher copular clauses can be described or classified as equational, identificational, predicational and specificational based on the semantics of the relation between the subject and the copula complement of the copular clause. In Muher, there is a copular clause that consists of a copular subject and a predicational predicate or predicate complement which specifies the subject with suffixes appearing on the copula as in (1).

- (1) a. *gərəd-we malkamma-ja*
girl-DEF beautiful-COP.3SGF
‘The girl is beautiful’
- b. *ambəzatf lik’[li?] əttəm^w-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 *ambəzatf* ‘Ambezach’, respectively which are referential NPS. The complement in (1a) is an adjective AP, (i.e. *malkamma* ‘beautiful’, which specifies the referential subject *gərəd-(we)* ‘the girl’ with some attributes. The copula complement in such a clause as (1a) ascribes the property of being *malkamma* ‘beautiful’ to the referential 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 *malkamma* ‘beautiful’ structured with the copula *-ja* which is encliticized onto it. Similarly, the complement of (1b) is NP which indicates that Ambezach is an older sister. Clause (1b) has the word order feature of the predicational copular clause in which the noun subject usually precedes the description which is the comment. This means in (1b), the subject NP Ambezach denotes an individual and the adjectival (copula) complement NP ‘my elder sister’ defines the subject Ambezach. This is semantically formulated as: there is an individual x (ambezach) and that x has the property of being a member of a certain family, and hence shows membership.

The clauses in (1) are pragmatically unmarked predicational copula clauses with a presentational focus whose basic communicative function is to introduce a referent into discourse. 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. This means the predication copular clause in (1b) tells us something about the referential subject which is an aboutness topic.

In the basic word order of Muher copula clauses, copula morphemes such as *-n/ja* and *nənə* are restricted to a position following the predicate complements, although they may appear in medial position for pragmatic purposes such as encoding focus and topic through simple and pseudo cleft constructions (cf. examples (16b-c) and (17b) of chapter 6). The copula complement can be an AP, DP or NP. As shown in the following copula clauses, the existential verb *nənə* in (2a) appears with the PP to express the location of *wagawe* ‘the cattle’.

- (2) a. *waga-we bə-bet dən nən-m^w-tt*
 cattle-DEF LOC-house inside EXIST.PRES-3PLM-MVM
 ‘The cattle are inside the house’
- b. *zi miss jə- m^wəxir -akilil-k’e-n-ø*
 PRX man GEN-Muher-Akilil-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This man is from Muher-Aklil’

The subject in (2a) is ‘the cattle’ which is referential and the PP *bebet dən* ‘inside the house’ is structurally related to the copula expressing location, and hence the PP functions as an adjunct. In (2b), the property of being from a specific place called Muher-Aklil is ascribed to locative source of a certain person denoted by *zi miss* ‘this man’. Again, the property is a feature of the man in (2b), at the time of the speech event. The basic word order of pragmatically unmarked predication copula clauses in Muher is [NP + AP/PP/NP +COP], where the initial NP is the subject and, the rest is the VP in which AP/PP/NP are complements. The copula clause in (2a) seems equivalent to existential sentences ascribing to the location to the subject referent.

In addition to predication and specificational copular clauses, Muher has a clause that involves two expressions denoting the same referent. This kind of copular clause is termed in the literature as equative or equational (cf. Mikkelsen 2005: 118-122; Mikkelsen 2011: 1805-1810; see also Higgins 1979 and Haycock and Kroch 1999). In Muher, the equative copula clause equates the referent of the copula subject and the complement of the present tense copula copular verb *-n* and *-ja* having the same referent. The examples in (3) equate the present tense copula subject NP with the copula complement.

- (3) a. *zəwditu adot-əŋŋa-ja*
 Zewditu mother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘Zewditu is my mother’
- b. *x^wa abəra-n-ø*
 he Abera-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘He is Abera’

In (3a), the copula *-ja* agrees with the 3SGF subject. The copular clause in (3a) equates the subject constituent (i.e. *Zewditu*) to the complement, *adot* ‘mother’ which is further specified and followed by the clitic-*əŋŋa*. The referents of the two referential NPs are identical. The subject is a proper noun, *Zewditu* that is equated to the complement NP, *adot* ‘mother’. The speaker in (3a) thinks that the hearer does not know that the copula subject and the copula complement are the same individual or referent. In this case, (3a) is understood as the person you know (by the name) Zewditu is also my mother. In (3b), the referent of the copula subject NP, that is *x^wa* ‘he’, and the copula complement NP *Abera* are the same. The function of the copula element is to equate the referents of the two expressions.

The clause in (3b) 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 *x^wa* ‘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. The equative copular clauses in (3) involve predicate inversion; the underlying predicate can be promoted to the subject position. Regarding this, Mikkelsen (2011: 1808) states “like coordination, equatives seem to require two elements of the same type and to allow the two to occur in either order.” In both (3a) and (3b), the background information precedes the focus.

Some scholars such as den Dikken (2006) argue that no copula clause in any language is truly equative. On the contrary, Heycock and Kroch (1999) claim that equatives are productive clause types. Equatives in Muher have some interface with other copula clause types such as possessive and identificational clauses. For instance, the equative copula clause in (3a) has an interface with the possessive copula clause. This is because as possessive copular clauses often invoke kinship

and other interpersonal relationships such as being a mother and a son or a daughter. The senses *Zewditu* and *adotəŋna* ‘my mother’ have the same referent which, in turn, makes the clause equative/identificational). The same clause also shows a possessor-possession (possessed) relationship in that the speaker possesses *Zewditu* as his mother (his possession). Besides, the Muher equative copula clause in (3b) 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 *x^wa 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, in Muher, is the typical characteristic feature of the identificational copula clause.

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^wa* ‘he’, *x^ja* ‘she’ and *ax^j* ‘you’. Pronouns and demonstratives are deictics, and thus specifiers of arguments, which and only which can be subject or object by virtue of their being referential. Thus, in this paper equative copula clauses are treated independently although they display similarities with other types of copular clauses. The copula subjects of the canonical copular clause in (3) are old information (topic) while the copula complements are new ones (comment).

In the *anə bet* variety of Muher, the copular clauses that are constructed to specify who someone or what something is. This type of copular clause does not describe something about the person or entity. The predicate complement of specification clauses is usually a referential noun as opposed to a predication clause whose complement is predicative. Consider the following examples.

- (4) a. *jə-zi bora baləbet zəbərga-n-ə*
 GEN-this ox owner Zeberga-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘The owner of this ox is Zeberga’
 b. *zəbərga jə-zi bora baləbet-n-ə*
 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 (4) serve to give information about the predicate NPs. Clauses (4a) and (4c) have the word order characteristics of specificational construction in which the definite description precedes the name. 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 insight, clauses (4a) and (4c) are derivatives of a structure of the type in (4b). While the clause in (4b) is typically predication copular clause, the clauses in (4a) and (4c) are specificational types. Thus, we can say that specification clause is an inverted predication. One may think that since (4a) and (4b) are just reverse or inverted constructions, they would be equational clauses. However, I do not believe that reversibility of constructions should be taken for granted to determine the status of any give clauses as equational.

The difference between predication and specificational clauses should be clear. Unlike predication clauses, in specificational clauses, the constituent in the subject position provides a variable *x*, where *there is an x such that x is the owner of this ox* in (4a) and *the administrator of Hawariate* in (4c) and the copula complement constituents provide values *for that x, where x is Zeberga* (4a) and *Wolde* (4c). The value is new information or the focus and the variable part is old information or topic (Mikkelsen 2005).

The clause in (4a) 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. In this sense, it is possible to say that a specificational sentence is akin to question-answer pairs, where the value provides the answer to the question contained in the variable. The complement NP in (4a) is the proper noun, Zeberga which is a referential noun. The clause in (4a) is topicalized since the canonical structure of Muher has Possessor-possessed relation, but (4a) has fronting the possessed entity to the sentence initial position which makes it to be the topic of the clause. (4b) is the underlying form of (4a) in that (4b) is, semantically,

formulated as NP (Zeberga) be the possessor of this ox. The clauses in both (4a) and (4b) are genitive constructions of the possessor and possessed NPs in an equative relationship, but both have specificational readings. 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; instead it is subsumed under the equative copula clause. However, in Muher, specificational and equative copular clauses are different based on the referential status of the copula subject of each clause. To this end, I would argue that the subject of the specificational copula clause in Muher is non-referential, but the subject of the equative clause is referential NP (for details see Mekkelsen 2005: 64-86). The non-referential status of the specificational clause such as (4a) and (4c) stems from the use of *it* in a tag question for pronominalization as opposed to predication and equational clauses in which gendered pronouns such as *she* or *he* can be used and this shows that the subject is referential. Besides, in specificational copula clauses, the subject is the topic and the predicate is the focus (presentational focus).

The copular clause in (4c) specifies who is administering the specific district, Hawariat; it is not talking about the administrator or *Wolde*. In (4c) 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.

The value Zeberga in (4a) above provides an answer to a question. Specificational clauses such as (4a) and (4c) are often used to answer explicit WHquestions. Thus, the clause *jəzi bora baləbet zəbərgan* ‘the owner of this ox is Zeberga’ provides an answer to the question ‘who is the owner of this ox?’ Specificational clauses such as (4c) seem to be the same as equatives NP be NP. However, in this dissertation, the analysis of the taxonomy of copular clauses in Muher treats specificational and equational copular clauses separately.

In this thesis, specificational copular clauses in Muher are inverted predication structures. This would mean that clause (4a) is a specificational copular clause that has the inverse word order or structure of the predication copular clause in (4b).

The specificational copular clauses in (4) specify who the owner of the ox is in (4a), and the administrator of Hawariat in (4b). The clauses in (4) 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 structured could be different.

Higgins (1979: 153, 234) claims that the subject of specificational sentences is not referential. He also argues that the VP of the specificational clause does not predicate a property of the subject referent; the subject introduces a variable. I would argue that this is not true of all specificational clauses in Muher. It is referential in all cases. The difference is the movement that fronts one of the NPs for pragmatic effects. In Muher, there are specificational clauses that can be reversed and the subject NP becomes referential as in (5).

- (5) 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 can be changed for different purposes such as for topicalization and focus. As can be seen in (5) above, the copula complement NP in (5a) is turned up and became a subject NP in (5b). The semantics in (5b) is Zeberga owns Ox and the syntax shows this by making *Zeberga* a possessor subject, and in (5a) for reasons of topicalization, the possessed NP which is *ox* gets fronted to become the topic of the clause. In (5b), the subject NP, *Zeberga*, is referential. Thus, I would argue that clause (5a) is a non-basic specificational copular clause, but clause (5b) is a basic specificational copular clause in Muher.

In Muher, identification copular clause can also be formed by involving a demonstrative pronoun or a noun phrase modified by a demonstrative determiner in the subject position. This means the identificational copula clause is characterized by its use of demonstrative pronoun or phrase as a subject of the copula clause. Consider the following Muher data.

- (6) 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-∅*
 PRX eye-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This is an eye’ [This part of the body is an eye]
- c. *zi abəra-n-∅*
 PRX Abera-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This is Abera [This man is Abera]’

As can be seen in (6a) through (6c), 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 (6), 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 (6b), for example, is constructed to teach one of the sense organs *en* ‘eye’; (6c) 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 (6a-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: 49-50 and 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 totally 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.

- (7) a. *bəsər-we jə-bənnā-n zəbərğa-n-ø*
 meat-DEF REL-eat.PFV-3SGMObj Zeberga-COP.PRES-3SGM
 'The one who ate the meat is Zeberga'
- b. *zəbərğa bəsər bənnā-ø-m*
 Zeberga meat eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 'Zeberga ate (the) meat'

In clause (7a), the noun (NP) *Zeberga*, which identifies the missing argument in a presupposed open proposition, is a referring expression. Clause (7a) is an instance of a WH-cleft or pseudo cleft) construction. The topic of (7a) is *Zeberga* since it is synonymous with the basic Muher copula structure in (7b). Therefore, in the topic-comment reading, (7a) is a simple identificational copular clause in which the subject *bəsərwe jəbənnān* 'the one who ate the meat' refers to an identifiable individual and in which *Zeberga* is a non-referring predicate nominal.

7.2.2. Copular clauses based on the morphosyntax of the complement

In terms of the morphosyntactic features of the copula complements, copular clauses in Muher can be possessive and locative.

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 (8).

- (8) *məsfin gwəbbe-ənnā-n-ø [gwəbbejnan]*
 Mesfin brother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 'Mesfin is my brother'

The copular clause in (8) can be understood that *Mesfin* has the property of being in a fraternal (brotherhood) relationship with me which is predication. 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 (8) is equational because the referent *g^wəbbeyna* ‘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 (8) can be understood as the person that the addressee knows as Mesfin is also my brother. The information structure in (8) follows a background-focus pattern.

A copula construction whose complement is a genitive NP also expresses possession in Muher. In this kind of copular clause, there is a possessor-possession relation as shown in (9).

- (9) a. *nəzi mət’af jə-aləmu-ʔe-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 copula in (9a) and (9b) is *-n* and the tense is present tense and the genitive (possessive) marker morpheme is *jə-* attached to the possessor Alemu. *baləbet* is a lexical possessive noun. In (9a), the possessed (i.e, *nəzi mət’af* ‘these books’) occurs as the subject of the verb. The copula *-n* agrees with the subject *nəzi mət’af* ‘these books’ in number. In (9b), the possessor NP comes before the possessed NP and the two are linked by the copula that projects the VP.

The clause in (9b) asserts that the copula subject ‘Alemu’ and the copula complement *nəzi mət’af baləbet* ‘the owner these books’ have the same referent, and this would make the possessive copular clause in (9b) very closely similar to identificational copular clauses. This kind of example shows the interface between possessive and equative copular clauses. The basic copular clause in (9b) has the word order old-new information structure, but in the non-basic clause in (9a), the information is structured as old-new order. This is because the proximal deictic expression *nəzi* ‘these’ presupposes the books are known or old information, but the owner of these books is not known, and thus new to the addressee.

The phrases preceding the copula are complements of three types: locative, attributive and equative. For example, as shown in (10), Muher has clauses that show the location of a certain entity.

- (10) *tixə-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 (10) indicates the location of the child, i.e. *bəbet dən* ‘inside the house’ is PP with a locative function. As in the Amharic *allä*, the Muher existential copular verb *nən-* has no complement, but appears with the PP *bəbet dən* which, in turn, is an adjunct to express location. The Muher copular clause in (10) seems equivalent to what McNally (2011: 1830-1848) calls an existential sentence which expresses a proposition about the existence or the presence of something or someone.

7.2.3. Pragmatic function of copular clauses

In syntax, there are no such things as single-word sentences, but we may have utterances of single words. Based on the pragmatic function of copular clause, we have presentative copula clause. Thus, to express pragmatic meaning, Muher uses demonstrative presentative deictic by uttering the expressions *zix* with zero-copula as in (11a) or *zimminzi*, a presentative constructions consists of DEM-FOC-COP (DEM) as in (11b).

- (11) a. *zix*
 this.
 ‘Here it is!’
 b. *zi-mmi-n(-zi)*
 DEM-FOC-COP (-DEM)
 ‘Here it is!’

In (11), the speaker presents the entity to the addressee by uttering a single word *zix* or *zimminzi* ‘Here it is’ simultaneously without using a pointing gesture. Thus, the demonstratives in (11) are demonstrative identifiers. Thus, presentational demonstrative expressions are used pragmatically to express presentational copular clauses in Muher. If someone was given a 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.

- (12) *zix bet/bora-axə*
 this (PRX) house/ox-POSS.2SGM
 ‘Here is your house/ox’

The examples in (11) and (12) are utterances in discourse; they are not in syntactic structures. The speaker in (12) uses a pointing gesture to indicate the entity being mentioned by the proximal deictic expression *zix* without the copula morpheme. The two clauses use a covert copula. Thus, it is possible to say that when we have constructions like (11) and (12), we express pragmatic meaning.

In summary, identifying the taxonomic classification of copular clauses in Muher is not an easy task. This is because the different copular clauses in Muher are described based on different criteria: semantic relations, morphosyntactic, and pragmatics functions of the constituents in the copular clauses.

7.3. 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 set 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 determiners*, *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 (Diessel 1999: 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).

In Muher, 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, demonstrative identifiers in identificational clauses with the present tenses copula *-nare* are described. In Muher, demonstratives are part of a copular clause as in (13)

- (13) a. *zi-xinnəm^w jə-zəbərga deng^ja-n-(ə)m^w [deng^janəm^w]*
 this-3PLM GEN-Zeberga son.PL -COP.PRES-3PLM
 ‘These ones are Zeberga’s sons’
- b. *zi-we liʔi g^wəbbe-əŋŋa-n-ø*
 this-DEF elder brother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This one is my elder brother’

In (13a), 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 *zi xinnəm^w* ‘these ones’ is further specified by possessive clitics *jə-* which is attached to Zeberga, where [these] [of Zeberga children] [are] [if Zeberga] needs a head noun which is here [children], so Zeberga is not a head noun on its own. In (13a), 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 (13b). In the non-basic possessive copular clauses such as (13b), the information is structured with new vs old word order.

The speaker in (13a) above is showing ‘Zeberga’s sons’ by distinguishing them from the other person’s sons. The predicate of the identificational copula clause in (13a) 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., *zi xinnəm^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 (13a), the predicate coincides with the comment, and the background information precedes the focus.

By the same token, the proximal demonstrative ‘*zi*’ in (13b) co-occurs with the third person masculine possessive clitics and the present tense copula *-n* is attached to *liʔi g^wəbbeŋŋa* ‘my elder brother’. The referent of *ziwe* is the NP *liʔi 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 (13) and represents demonstrative identifiers (cf. Diessel 1999: 79) since *zi* occurs in the copular clause.

Generally speaking, the NPs *jəzəbarga deng^{am}* ‘Zeberga’s sons’ and *li?i g^wəbbeŋna* ‘my elder brother’ carry focus in clauses (13a) and (13b), 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 (14)

- (14) *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 (14) the proximal demonstrative *zi* ‘this’ is used as the complement of the copular clause, and *jəkəbbədəbet* ‘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 (14) 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 predicate 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 (14), 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:

- (15) *zi bet jə-kəbbədə-?e-n-ø [jəkəbbədə?en]*
 this house GEN-Kebede-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This house is Kebede’s. [This is Kebede’s house]’

In (15), the demonstrative is part of the subject NP as a specifier of the noun *bet* ‘house’ and has a deictic reference. The morpheme *-tt* in (14) does not exist in (15) since the construction does not show any focus on a particular entity. This is because *-tt* is sensitive to the words class (personal pronouns and demonstratives) used as predicate nominal of affirmative present tense

copular clause, so it is a predicate marker. The demonstrative *zi* in (14) which serves as a copula complement is different from the demonstrative *zi* in (15) in that it is used as a demonstrative identifier and part of the subject of the copular clause in (15).

The copular clause in (13-15) 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.

7.4. Summary

In this chapter, the typology of copula clauses in Muher are identified and analyzed accordingly. The analysis was made by describing the Muher data with its 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 paper mainly focused on the pragmatic features. The predicate complement of Muher copula clauses are such categories as noun phrases, adjective phrases, or prepositional phrases, but not verbs. In Muher, different types of copula clauses are identified and described based on the semantics of the relation between the subject and the copula complement as equational/identificational, predicative and specificational. Locative and possessive copular clause types are in terms of the morphosyntax of the complement. Finally, this thesis identifies Muher presentative copular construction based on the pragmatic function of the copular clause.

However, the structure underlying specificational and equative copular clauses is the same as that of predication, but equative copular clauses can involve predicate inversion, i.e., the underlying predicate can promote to the subject position. There are also arguments in the literature on the treatment of specificational copular clauses and equatives as one or two independent clauses. Semantically, specificational copular clause in Muher involve equations involving two NPs, but the difference between them is not only the referential status of copula subjects of each clause but also along some pragmatic dimensions which is information structure units such as focus and topic.

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 copular clause with the predicate marker *-tt* 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 seven copula clause types are identified in Muher, some of the copula clause types seem to be overlapping. Therefore, the question of what kind of and how many copula clauses are there in different Ethiopian languages and what are their defining properties should deserve an in-depth investigation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1. Summary

This thesis provides an in-depth description of how copula is constructed and information is structured in Muher, a Semitic language spoken in central Ethiopia and belongs to the *Gunnän* Gurage language cluster within Outer South Ethio-Semitic. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method. Data have mainly been accessed through elicitation by consulting purposively selected 2 male and 2 female Muher native speakers. These informants were purposively selected because random selection may lead to wrong data in cases where participants may have limited information on the issues raised. In this case, both elicitation and recording of free speech and narratives have been employed as major data-gathering tools. Besides, data have been extracted from the Muher corpus compiled by the NORHED project. The linguistic data were presented in interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing based on the Leipzig glossing rules by using three-line glossing. Phonemic transcription is employed by using IPA consistently.

This thesis is organized into eight chapters including this chapter. The first chapter focused on the language, the people and the area, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, methodological issues, and the limitation of the study. The second chapter presents the theoretical frameworks adopted for this study, and basic notions of copula and copula constructions strategies, and information structure notions such as topic-comment, focus-background. Besides, copular clause types found in the literature have been reviewed. Previous studies on copula constructions and information structure notions were also critically reviewed. In the third chapter, the basic features of Muher have been highlighted by concentrating on its salient phonological, morphological and syntactic features.

Chapter four analyzes copula constructions in Muher. In affirmative main clauses, Muher employs the copular morphemes *-n* (equation, non-past), and *-ja* (for the 3SGF), *nənə-* (existential, non-past), and *bannə-*(PST) and they are inherently marked for subject agreements. It was also found that *nən-* and *bannə-* are followed by MVMs. In negation, the present tense copula is replaced by the verb *anxən-* ‘not be (come)’. The negative verb of existence is *jənnə*

‘there is no’ which indicates subject reference with the subject pronominal suffixes of verbs in the perfective aspect. *annəbər-* is used for both negative predication and existential copular clauses. In Muher, the structure of questions is the same as the structure of main clauses, but questions are formed using prosodic features such as rising intonation and/or with the morpheme *-we*.

The fifth chapter describes topic-comment structure in Muher. Muher is a verb-final language with an SOV canonical syntactic structure, and it strictly follows Topic-Comment word order. In Muher, topic and subject may coincide if the subject-object order is unmarked with respect to information structure, “topic” and “subject” cannot always be conflated. The Muher data revealed that non-subjects may act as topics in topicalization constructions, and subjects may act as non-topics in accent-initial clauses. It is sometimes impossible to determine the topic status of a constituent in a clause based on the syntactic structure of that clause alone. Understanding the discourse context in which the clause or the sentence is embedded and knowing if the proposition is pragmatically construed as being about the entity can help to determine the topic status of an entity. Muher encodes topic prosodically, lexically, morphologically, and syntactically. Specifically, Topic is marked in Muher by using the definite marker *-we*, demonstratives (such as *zi* ‘this’, *za* ‘that’, *nəzi* ‘these’, and *nəza* ‘those’), lexically via aboutness tests and converse terms, morphologically by the morpheme *-jə*, and by the contrastive topic markers *-mma* and *-f* and syntactically through basic word order change, topicalization (fronting), passivization, cleft constructions, and dislocations (left and right dislocations). Muher employed sentence topic frame setters such as *bə-* + nominals as in [*bədigət*] ‘by growth’ and the morpheme *jə* ‘as’ as in *jə-anə* ‘as to me’. All Muher clauses or sentences such as emotive, imperative, and/or elliptical sentences cannot be divided into topic-comment or subject-predicate constituents or informational units. Besides, Muher eventive clauses that contain event reporting verbs do not have a clear topic.

Chapter six of the thesis describes the nature of focus phenomena and focus constructions in Muher following the theoretical framework of Lambrecht (1994) in which information structure is considered as sentence grammar. More specifically, this paper addressed prosodic, morphological and syntactic, focus marking strategies and predicate, argument and sentence focus structures (domain) in Muher. The result of the study showed that focus domain, in Muher,

can be the subject of the clause (argument focus), the subject and the predicate (sentence focus) or only the predicate (predicate focus). In Muher, focus is marked prosodically by pitch accent, and lexically by looking at answers for Wh-questions words. Morphologically, focus can be marked by using contrastive focus marker *-m* that subsumes completive, additive, expanding, replacing, parallel, restricting, and selective focus types, and the identificational focus marking morpheme *-tt-*. Although the basic word order of Muher is SOV, focus can be marked syntactically via basic word order change or scrambling, and by cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions.

In chapter seven of this thesis, the present tense copular clauses in Muher were identified and analyzed accordingly. Copular clauses are minor sentence types in which their predicates are not verbs, but some other categories such as AP, NP, or PP. The result revealed that the affirmative present tense copular clauses in Muher are constructed by the copula *-n* (or *-ja* for 3SGF). This study identified equative, predication, 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.

8.2. Conclusions

This study provided a detailed analysis of Copula constructions and information structure in Muher. This thesis discussed that Muher employs the copula *-n*, *nənə*, *bannə* for affirmative main clause and *anxənə*, *jənnə*, and *annəbbəre* for negative main clauses in the non-past and past tenses. The data have also shown that Muher marks focus and topic by different means such as prosodically, lexically, morphologically and syntactically. For example, while Muher uses *-mma* to mark contrastive topic, *-m(m)* can be used to mark contrastive focus. In unmarked or basic structure subject usually conflates with topic and the predicate conflates with focus. The subject is the initial constituent in a pragmatically unmarked clause and it is interpreted as a topic. If another constituent occupies the sentence-initial position preceding the subject, it is that

constituent that is understood as topic. This phenomenon is called topicalization where non-subject constituent becomes the topic of the clause. Basic word order change, cleft constructions, fronting, dislocations, and the use of special morphemes are used to mark topic and focus. This study also identified predicational, equative, specificational, identificational, possessive, and locative copular clause information structures in Muher.

This study focuses only on copula constructions and information structure in Muher by analyzing simple clauses, but some areas remain tasks for future research. These include

1. The connection between focus and copula, as stated in the literature, is explained in terms of grammaticalization process. Therefore, this thesis calls for an in-depth investigation if Muher copulas can truly grammaticalize into focus markers.
2. Further study on the information structure of Muher compound and complex clauses should be conducted.
3. This study attempted to analyze how copula is constructed and information is structured in Muher language alone. Thus, comparative or typological studies among Gurage languages and/or with other languages of Ethiopia should be conducted on how copula is constructed and topic and focus are marked.
4. The taxonomic classification of copular clauses in Muher still needs further investigation although this thesis shows more than six copular clause types.

References

- Andrews, Avery. 2007. The Major Functions of the Noun Phrase. In Timothy Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, Vol. I, 132-223. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Aregawi Maru. 2020. Descriptive Grammar of Muher. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (PhD Thesis)
- Aweke Tsegaye. 2012. Deixis in Ezha. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (MA Thesis).
- Awlachew Shumneka. 2010. Documentation and grammatical sketch of Muher. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (MA Thesis).
- Aynalem Girma. 2020. Information Structure in Oromo. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (PhD Dissertation).
- BayeYimam. 1988. Focus in Oromo. *Studies in African Linguistics*, 19(3).356-384.
- Becker, Misha. 2002. English has two copulas. *Current Work in Linguistics* 7(2): 1-26.
- Bender, Emily & Song, Sanghoun. 2012. Individual Constraints for Information Structure. *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar*.
- Bentley, Delia. 2017. Copular and existential constructions.
- Biruk Kediru. 2013. Forms and functions of impersonal passive in Muher. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (MA Thesis).
- Blake, J. (2004). *Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Brown, K., & Miller, J. 2013. *Cambridge dictionary of linguistics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Burling, Robbins. 1992. *Patterns of Language Structure, Variation and Change*. London: Academic Pressing INC.
- Central Statistics Authority (CSA). 2010. *Summary and Statistical Report of 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex*. Addis Ababa: UNFPA.
- Central Statistics Authority (CSA). 2013. *Population Projection of Ethiopia for All Regions at Wereda Level from 2014 – 2017*. Addis Ababa.
- Chafe, Wallace. 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects and topics. In Charles N. Li (ed.), *Subject and topic*, 27–55. New York: Academic Press.
- Chen, Po-Ting. 2009. Topic and topic-comment structures in first language acquisition of Mandarin Chinese. In Yun Xiao (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st North American conference on Chinese linguistics*, 165-177. Smithfield, Rhode Island: Bryant University.

- Cheng, Shufang. 2012. A Short Analysis of Information Structures of English Sentences. *Academy Publisher*. 2(3), 492-497.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1986. *Knowledge of Language, its Nature, Origin and Use*. New York: Praeger.
- Crass, Joachim, Girma A. Demeke, Ronny Meyer & Andreas Wetter 2005. *Copula and Focus Constructions in Selected Ethiopian Languages*. Leipzig: ULAP.
- Crass, Joachim. 2007. Copula constructions in K'abeena and Libido. In Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer(eds.), *Deictics, Copula, and Focus in the Ethiopian Convergence Area*, 13-25. Köln: Rüdiger Köpper Verlag
- Crass, Joachim & Ronny Meyer (eds.). 2007. *Deictics, Copula, and Focus in the Ethiopian Convergence Area*. Köln: Rüdiger Köpper Verlag.
- Crystal, David. 2008. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (6th edn.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Curnow, Timothy Jowan. 2000. Towards a cross-linguistic typology of copula constructions. In J. Henderson (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 1999 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society*, 1–9. Perth: Australian Linguistic Society.
- Dabala Goshu & Ronny Meyer. 2003. Focus phenomena in Wellega Oromo. *Afrika und Übersee*, Band 86, 161-171.
- Debela Goshu. 2007. Copula constructions in Anfillo. In Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer (eds.), *Deictics, Copula, and Focus in the Ethiopian Convergence Area*, 119-126. Köln: Köpper
- den Dikken, Marcel. 2006. *Relators and Linkers. The Syntax of Predication, Predicate Inversion, and Copulas*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Diessel, Holger. 1999. *Demonstratives: Form, Function, and Grammaticalization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Dik, Simon. 1978. *Functional Grammar*. Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company.
- Dik, Simon. 1980. Cleft and pseudo-Cleft Construction: in *Studies in Functional Grammar* 210-229
- Dik, Simon. 1989. *The Theory of Functional Grammar: The Structure of the Clause*. Foris Publications.
- Dik, Simon, Maria E. Hoffman, Jan R. de Jong, Sie Ing Djiang, Harry Stroomer, & Lourens de Vries. 1981. Perspectives on functional grammar. In T. Hoekstra, H. Van der Hulst & M.Mortgat (eds.), *On the typology of focus phenomena*, 41– 74, Dordrecht: Foris.
- Dixon, R.M.W. 2002. Copula Clauses in Australian Languages: A Typological Perspective. *Anthropological Studies*. 44 (1), 1-36.

- Dixon, R.M.W. 2010. *Basic Linguistic Theory, Vol. 1: Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dryer, Matthew. 2006. Descriptive Theories, Explanatory Theories, and Basic Linguistic Theory. In Felix Ameka, Alan Dench, Nicholas Evans (eds.), *Catching Language. The Standing Challenge of Grammar Writing*, pp. 207–234. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Endalew Assefa. 2014. Descriptive Grammar of Ezha: A Central West Gurage Language. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (Ph.D. Dissertation).
- Erteschik-Shir, Nomi. 2007. *Information Structure: the Syntax-Discourse Interface*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Eshetu Tadesse. 2021. Focus and Copula in Oromo: A Typological Study across Six Dialects. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (Ph.D. Dissertation).
- Ethiopian Language Research Center. 2005. *The Ethiopian Languages*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Eyasu Nega. 2003. The Morphology of Endegan. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (MA Thesis).
- Fekede Menuta. 2002. Morphology of Ezha. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (MA Thesis).
- Féry, Caroline. 2007. Information Structural Notions and the Fallacy of Invariant Correlates. In Féry Caroline, Gisbert Fanselow, Manfred Krifka (eds). *The Notions of Information Structure. Interdisciplinary Studies on Information Structure. Working Papers of the SFB 632* (6). 13-55.
- Féry, Caroline & Manfred Krifka. 2008. Basic notions of information structure. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 55 (3–4). 243–276.
- Foley, Willam. 2007. A typology of Information Packaging in the Clause. In Timothy Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, (I). 362-446. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foley, Willam & JR. Van Valin. 1985. A typology of information packaging in the clause. In Timothy Shopen (ed.), *Language typology and syntactic description, Vol. I*, 282-362. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gee, J. P. 1999. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Girma, A. Demeke. 2007. Copula constructions in Ge'ez and Tiger. In Ronny Meyer, A. Wetter and J. Crass (eds.), *Deictics, Copula, and Focus in the Ethiopian Convergence Area*, 151-164. Köln: Rüdiger Köpper.

- Girma A. Demeke. 2012. A Diachronic Analysis of Copular Constructions in Amharic. *Journal of Afroasiatic Languages (Jaal)* 5:1. 105-152.
- Goldenberg, Gideon. 2005. Gurage. In Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 2. 924–928. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Gundel, Jeanette. 1988. Universals of topic-comment structure. In Michael Hammond et al.(eds.), *Studies in syntactic typology*, 209-239. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hadian, Bahram, Tavangar-Rizi Manoochehr & Mohammed Amouzade. 2013. A functional analysis of the passive structure in Persian. *International Journal of Linguistics* 5(4). 22-37.
- Halliday, Michael. 1967. Notes on transitivity and theme in English: Part 2. *Journal of Linguistics* 3(2). 199–244.
- Halliday, Michael. 2014. *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th edn.). London and New York: Routledge.
- Hatim, Basim. 1997. *Communication across Cultures Translation Theory and Contrastive Text Linguistics*: University of Exeter Press.
- Heggie, Lorie. 1988. *The Syntax of Copular Structures*. University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA (Ph.D. dissertation).
- Heller, Daphna. 2005. *Identity and Information. Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects of Specificational Sentences*. Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ (Ph.D. dissertation).
- Hengeveld, Kees. 1992. *Non-verbal Predication: Theory, Typology, and Diachrony*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hetzron, Robert. 1968. Main Verb Markers in the Northern Gurage. *Journal of International African Institute* 38 (2). 156–172.
- Hetzron, Robert. 1969. *The Classification of the Ethiopian Semitic Languages*. Santa Barbara, California: University of California (unpublished).
- Hetzron, Robert. 1972. *Ethiopian Semitic: Studies in Classification*. Cambridge: Manchester University Press.
- Hetzron, Robert. 1975. The t-converb in Western Gurage. *Afro-Asiatic Linguistics* 2, 15-26.
- Hetzron, Robert. 1977. *The Gunnän Gurage Languages*. Naples: Instituto Orientali di Napoli.
- Hetzron, Robert & Bender, M. 1976. The Ethio-Semitic Languages: In Bender, M. et al (eds.) *Language in Ethiopia*, 23-33. London: Oxford University Press.
- Heycock, Caroline. 1994. *Layers of Predication. The Non-Lexical Syntax of Clauses*. New York: Garland.

- Heycock, Caroline & Anthony Kroch. 1999. Pseudocleft connectedness. Implications for the LF interface level. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30, 365–397.
- Higgins, Francis Roger. 1979. *The Pseudo-Cleft Construction in English*. London: Routledge.
- Hudson, Grover. 1996. Introduction. In Grover Hudson (ed.), *Essay on Gurage Language and Culture*, 1-7. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Hudson, Grover. 2013. *Northeast African Semitic: Lexical Comparisons and Analysis*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Hyman, Larry & John Watters. 1984. Auxiliary focus. *Studies in African Linguistics* 15(3). 233-273.
- Ishetu Kebede. 1989. The verb to be in Oromo. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (M.A. Thesis).
- Kalinowski, Cristin. 2015. *A typology of focus encoding in African languages*. New York: University of Buffalo.
- Kim, Taeho. 2008. Subject and Object Marking in Conversational Korea. The State University of New York (PhD Dissertation).
- Kiss, Katalin É. 1998. Identificational focus versus Information focus. In *Language*. 74 (2). 245-273.
- Krifka, Manfred. 2006. The Origin of Topic/Comment Structure, Predication, and Focusation: In *Asymmetric Bimanual Coordination. Nascent Language Conference*. Rockefeller Bellagio, Italy. [Amor.cms.hu.berlin.de/.../Bimanual Coordi...](http://amor.cms.hu.berlin.de/.../Bimanual_Coordi...)
- Krifka, Manfred. 2007. Basic Notions of Information Structure. In Féry Caroline, Gisbert Fanselow, Manfred Krifka (eds.), *The Notions of Information Structure: Interdisciplinary Studies on Information Structure, Working Papers of the SFB 632*, Vol. 6, 13-55. Universitätsverlag Potsdam.
- Krifka, Manfred. 2008. Basic notions of information structure. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 55(3–4). 243–276.
- Kroeger, Paul. 2005. *Analyzing grammar: an introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus and the Mental Representations of Discourse Referents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lehmann, Christian. 2008. Information Structure and Grammaticalization. In María José López Couso & Elena Seoane Posse (eds.), *Theoretical and empirical issues in grammaticalization 3*, 207–229. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1969. Toward a Classification of the Gurage Dialects. *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14: 96-109.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1979a. *Etymological Dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopia). Volume 1 Individual Dictionaries*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

- Leslau, Wolf. 1979b. *Etymological Dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic). Volume-II: English-Gurage Index*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1979c. *Etymological Dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic). Volume-III: Etymological Section*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1981. *Ethiopians Speak: Studies in Cultural Background. Part IV. Muher*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1992a [1968]. Is there a Proto-Gurage? In: Wolf Leslau (ed.), *Gurage Studies: Collected Articles*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 226-245.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1992b [1982]. The Jussive in the Gurage Dialects of Muher and Masqan. In: Wolf Leslau (ed.), *Gurage Studies: Collected Articles*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 538-550.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1995. *Reference Grammar of Amharic*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1996. The Position of Gyeto. *Israel Oriental Studies* 16: 231–250.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1997. Chaha (Gurage) Phonology. In Alan S. Kaye (ed.), *Phonologies of Asia and Africa*, 1: 373–98. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Levinson, Stephen. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Locke, Philip & Angela, Dowling. 2006. *English Grammar: A University Course* (2ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Mathesius, Vilém. 1983 [1928]. Functional Linguistics. In J. Vachek (ed.), 121-142.
- McNally, Louise. 2011. Existential Sentences. In Klaus von Heusinger, Claudia Maienborn and Paul Portner (eds.), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, 33 (2) 1829–1848. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Meheretu Adnew. 2015. *Descriptive Grammar of Gyeta*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (Ph.D. Dissertation)
- Mereu, Lunella (ed.). 2009. *Information structure and its interfaces*. Berlin. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2005. The morpheme *yə-* in Muher. *Lissan: Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 19(1). 40–63.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2006. *Wolane: Descriptive Grammar of an East Gurage Language (Ethiosemitic)*. Köln: Köppe.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2007a. Self-agentive motion verbs in Muher. *APAL* 5. 127-144.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2007b. Non-verbal predication in East Gurage and Gunnän Gurage languages. In Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer (eds.), *Deictics, copula and focus in the Ethiopian convergence area*, 177-194. Köln: Köppe.

- Meyer, Ronny. 2009. The Quotative Verb in Ethiosemitic Languages and in Oromo. In Joachim Crass and Ronny Meyer (eds.), *Language Contact and Language Change in Ethiopia*, 17–42. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2011. Gurage. In Stefan Weninger (ed.), *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, 1220–1257. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2012. Number in Muher: on the Interaction between nominal and verbal morphology. *Journal of Afro-Asiatic Languages (JAAL)* 5(1). 1–42.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2014. Finiteness in Gurage Languages. In Meyer, Ronny, Yvonne Treis, and Azeb Amha (eds.), *Explorations in Ethiopian Linguistics: Complex Predicates, Finiteness and Interrogativity*, 225–258. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2019. Gurage (Muher). In John Huehnergard & Na’ama Pat-El (eds.), *The Semitic Language*, 227–256. London: Routledge.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2022. The noncausal/causal alternation in Muher (Ethiosemitic). In Dom, Sebastian, Leora Bar-el, Ponsiano Kanijo & Malin Petzell (eds.), *The noncausal-causal alternation in African languages. Linguistique et Langues Africaines (special issue)*, 8(2).
- Mikkelsen, Line. 2005. *Copular Clauses. Specification, Predication and Equation*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Mikkelsen, Line. 2011. Copular Clauses. In Klaus von Heusinger, Claudia Maienborn and Paul Portner (eds.), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, 33 (2) 1805–1829. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Mulusew Asratie. 2014. The Syntax of non-verbal predication in Amharic and Geez. The Netherlands: LOT (Ph.D. Dissertation).
- Ousman Shafi. 2015. Descriptive Grammar of Mesqan. Addis Ababa: Addis Abab University (PhD Dissertation).
- Payne, Thomas. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax. A guide for field linguists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Polinsky, Maria. 1999. Review of Lambrecht 1994. *Language* 75(3). 567–582.
- Polotsky, Hans. 1938. Etudes de grammaire gouraguc. *Bulletin de la Societe de linguistique de Paris* 39: 137–175
- Pustet, Regina. 2003. *Copulas: Universals in the Categorization of the Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Rose, Sharon. 1994. The Historical Development of Secondary Articulation in Gurage. In Kevin E. Moore, David A. Peterson, and Comfort Wentum (eds.), *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, – Special Session on Historical Issues in African Linguistics February 18–21, 112–24. Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistic Society.
- Rose, Sharon. 1996. Allomorphy and morphological categories in Muher. In Grover Hudson (ed.), *Essays on Gurage language and culture: dedicated to Wolf Leslau on the occasion of his 90th birthday*, 205–227. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Rose, Sharon. 1997. Theoretical Issues in Comparative Ethio-Semitic Phonology and Morphology. McGill University (Ph.D. Dissertation).
- Rose, Sharon. 2000. Velar Lenition in Muher Gurage. In *Lingua Posnaniensis* 42: 107–116.
- Rose, Sharon. 2004. *Cheha (Gurage) Morphology*. San Diego: University of California.
- Rose, Sharon. 2007. Muher Language. In Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. 3:1063–1064. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Rothstein, Susan 1995. Small clauses and copula constructions. In: A. Cardinaletti & M. T. Guasti (eds.), *Small Clauses*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 27–48.
- Saeed, John. 1984. *The syntax of focus & topic in Somali*. Hamburg: Buske (Ph.D. Dissertation).
- Saeed, John. 1989. The prefix *hin-* in Wellega Oromo. Second Congress on Cushitic and Omotic Languages paper presented at Turin 1–8.
- Saeed, John. 1997/2003. *Semantics* (2nd edition). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Schneider-Blue, Gertrud. 2007. The Copula in Alaaba (HEC). In Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer (eds.), *Deictics, Copula, and Focus in the Ethiopian Convergence Area*, 53–70. Köln: Köpper.
- Schwabe, Kerstin & Susanne Winkler. 2007. On Information Structure, Meaning and Form: Generalizations across Languages. In Kerstin Schwabe & Susanne Winkler (eds.), *On Information Structure, Meaning and Form*, 1–29. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Suter, Rafael. 2007. Copula Constructions and Information structure in Inor. Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer (eds.), *Deictics, copula, and focus in Ethiopian convergence area*, 193–210. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Taha Yassin. 1990. The Focus System in Oromo: a Functional Grammar Approach. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (M.A. Thesis).
- Taylor, John. 1995. *Linguistic Categorization Prototypes in Linguistic Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Treis, Yvonne. 2007. Copula in Kambaata. In Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer(eds.), *Deictics, Copula, and Focus in the Ethiopian Convergence Area*, 71-98. Köln: Rüdiger Köpper.
- Tsehay Abza. 2001. Noun Morphology of Ezha. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (BA Thesis).
- Tsehay Abza. 2008. Comparative Morphology of Ezha, Kistane and Muher. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (MA Thesis).
- Ullendorff, Edward. 1955. *The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia: A Comparative Phonology*. London: Taylor's Foreign Press.
- von Heusinger, Klaus. 1999. *Intonation and Information Structure*. Habilitationsschrift. University of Konstanz.
- Ward, Gregory & Birner Betty. 2004. Information structure and non-canonical syntax. In Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.), *The handbook of pragmatics*, 153–174. Malden: Blackwell.
- Williams, E. 1977. Discourse and logical form. *Linguistic Inquiry* 8: 101-131.
- Winkler, S. 2012. The Information Structure of English. In M. Krifka & R. Musan (eds.), *Expression of Information Structure* (pp. 71–94). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Yohannes Adgeh. 2015. The Grammar of Endegan. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (Ph.D. Dissertation).
- Zimmermann, Malte and Edgar Onea. 2011. Focus marking and focus interpretation. *Lingua* 121(11). 1651–1670.

Appendices

Appendix A: Background Information about the Four Key Informants

S. No.	Name	Sex	Age	First Language	Other Language Spoken	Educational Background	Place
1	Dr. Awlachew Shumenka	M	52	Muher	Amharic Bilingual	PhD	Addis Ababa
2	Ato Seifu Alemu	M	60	Muher	Amharic Bilingual	Teacher and history narrator	Hawariat
3	Ajeyet Ambezach Andigizer	F	53	Muher	Amharic Bilingual	House wife	Hawariat
4	Sarem Dendir	F	32	Muher	Amharic Bilingual	Teacher	Hawariat

Appendix B: Sample elicited data

1. *anə təmarin^w*

anə təmari-n-x^w

I student -COP. PRES- 1SG

‘I am a student’

2. *gərədwe məlkammaja*

gərəd-we məlkamma-ja

girl.SG-DEF beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF

‘The girl is beautiful’

3. *deŋg^jawe zamminim^w*

deng^ja-we za(mm)-n -m^w

boy.PL-DEF there (FOC)-COP.PRES-3PLM

‘The boys are over there’

4. *betwita wərjaʔen*

bet-wita wərja-ʔe-n-ø

house- POSS.3SGM new-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM

‘His house is new’

5. *x^ja gəllif gərədja*

x^ja gəllif gərəd-ja

she tall girl.SG- COP.PRES.3SGF

- ‘She is a tall girl’
6. *x^wa gəllif jidzin*
x^wa gəllif jidz-n-ø
 he tall boy.SG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘He is a tall boy’
7. *zi adotəŋŋaja*
zi adot-əŋŋa-ja
 this mother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘This is my mother’
8. *get’e bəkifildən nənəfffi*
get’e bə-kifil-dən nən-əfffi-i
 Get’e LOC-room-inside EXIST-3SGF-MVM
 ‘Gete is inside the room’ [Gete exists inside the room]
9. *bəm^wəxir wəba nəno*
bə-m^wəxir wəba nən-ə-u
 LOC-Muher malaria EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There is (exists) malaria in Muher’
10. *xinnəma nənmat*
xinnəma nən-ma-tt
 they EXIST-3PLF-MVM
 ‘They (F) are present’ [They exist]
11. *bəgibiwe dən liɔjə əffjə nəno*
bə-gibi-we dən liɔjə əffjə nənə-ə-u
 LOC-compound-DEF inside big tree EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There is a big tree inside the compound’
12. *att merrəŋŋə nəno*
att merrəŋŋə nən-ə-u
 one worker EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There is a worker’
13. *att-att oza merrəŋŋə nən^witt*
att-att oza merrəŋŋə nən-m^w-tt
 one-one (some) lazy worker EXIST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘There are some lazy workers’

14. *bəzəbərga* *bet* *x^wett* *gred* *nən matt*
bə-zəbərga *bet* *x^wett* *gred* *nən-ma-tt*
 LOC-Zeberga house two girl.PL EXIST-3PLF-MVM
 ‘There are two girls in Zeberga’s house’
15. *bədənəza* *dibir* *bizə* *zang^jərə* *nənm^witt*
bə-dənəza *dibir* *bizə* *zang^jərə* *nən-m^w-tt*
 LOC-deneza forest many monkey EXIST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘There are many monkeys in Deneza forest’
16. *eβina* *tə mari* *bannəx^wi*
ebna *tə mari* *bannə-x^w-i*
 last year student COP.PST-1SG-MVM
 ‘Last year I was a student’
17. *deng^jawe* *bəbetdən* *bannəm^wit*
deng^ja-we *bə-bet-dən* *banni-m^w-tt*
 boys-DEF LOC-house- inside COP.PST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘The boys (children) were in the house’
18. *taməŋŋa* *jibəssa* *banno*
taməŋŋa *ji-bəsa* *bannə-ə-u*
 yesterday 3SGM-come.PFV AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘He had come yesterday’
19. *ax^j* *bəsər* *bənnax^jm* *ba*
ax^j *bəsər* *bənnə-x^j-m* *ba*
 you meat eat.PFV-2SGF-CVB AUX
 ‘You (F) had eaten meat’
20. *tibəssa* *banno*
t-bəssa *bannə-ə-u*
 3SGF-come.PFV AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘She used to come’
21. *missiwe* *dabbo* *jisrə* *banno*
miss-we *dabbo* *ji-srə* *bannə-ə-u*
 Man-DEF bread 3SGM-buy.IPFV AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM

- ‘The man had bought/ used to buy/would have bought bread’
22. *kibre* *adarəxʲita* *tibəj* *banno*
kibre *adarə-xʲita* *ti-bəj* *bannə-ə-u*
 Kibre lunch-GEN.3SGF 3SGF-eat.IPFV AUX.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘Kibre was eating her lunch’
23. *jəβina* *jədəngʲaŋna* *witʼtʼət* *təzindirəwe* *jalf* *banno*
jə-ebna *jə-dengʲa-əŋna* *witʼtʼət* *tə-zindirə-we* *jə-alf* *banno*
 GEN-last GEN-boys- result from-this year- REL- COP.PST.3SGM
 year 1SG.POSS DEF better
 ‘Last year’s result of my children was better than this year’s’
 ‘My children’s result of last year was better than this year’s’
24. *timerga* *gəbəre-n*
timərga *gəbəre-n*
 Timerga-farmer COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘Timerga is a farmer’
25. *bəgibiwe* *dən* *liʔə* *ətʃtʃə* *nəno*
bə-gibi-we *dən* *liʔə* *ətʃtʃə* *nənə-ə-u*
 LOC-compound-DEF inside big tree EXIST.PRES-3SGM-MVM
 ‘In (side) the compound, there is a big tree’
26. *timərga* *gəbəre* *banno*
timərga *gəbəre* *bannə-ə-u*
 Timerga farmer COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘Timerga was a farmer’
27. *timərga* *bəzi* *banno*
timərga *bə-zi* *bannə-ə-u*
 Timerga LOC-here COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘Timerga was here’
28. *bəgibiwe* *dən* *liʔə* *ətʃʼtʃʼə* *banno*
bə-gibi-we *dən* *liʔə* *ətʃʼtʃʼə* *bannə-nə-u*
 LOC-compound-DEF inside big tree COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘There was a big tree inside the compound’

29. *x^ja bəsər ti-bə^j-ət-in*
 she meat 3SGF-eat.IPFV-VIC-COP.3SGM
 ‘She is about to eat meat’ [she will eat meat very soon]
30. *ax^j m^wəxir ti-fəka-ət-in*
 you(F) Muhir 2SGF-go.IPFV-VIC-COP.3SGM
 ‘You (F) are about to go to Muher’
31. *x^wa bəsər ji-bə^j-ət-in*
 he meat 3SGM-eat.IPFV- VIC-COP.3SGM
 ‘He is about to eat meat’
32. *anə nəgə ə-besa-ə-u*
 I tomorrow 1SG-come.IPFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘I will come tomorrow’
33. *anə bə-k^wirb m^wəxir ə-fəka-u*
 I LOC-soon Muhir 1SG-go.IPFV-DCM
 ‘I will go to Muher soon’
34. *x^wa ahunna ji-fəka-u*
 he now 3SGM-go.IPFV-DCM
 ‘He will go now’
35. *x^wa məlkamma an-xən-ə*
 he handsome NEG-be(come).IPFV-3SGM
 ‘He is not handsome’
36. *x^ja məlkamma an-xən-ət/tf*
 she beautiful NEG-be(come).IPFV-3SGF
 ‘She is not beautiful’
37. *bizə bəsər wəbija mam^wə-ɾe an-xən-ə*
 many meat eating good-thing NEG-be(come).IPFV-3SGM
 ‘Eating a lot of meat is not good’
38. *bəsər wə-bja mam^wə-ɾe-n*
 meat eating good-thing- COP.3SM
 ‘Eating meat is good’

39. *bəsər wəbija mam^wə-ʔe an-xən-ə*
 meat eating good-thing NEG-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Eating meat is not good’
40. *waga-we bə-bet dən an-xən-m^w*
 cattle-DEF LOC-house inside NEG-COP.PRES-3PLM
 ‘The cattle are not inside the house’ [The cattle do not exist]
41. *bə-m^wəxir wəba jənnə*
 LOC-Muher malaria there is no
 ‘There is no malaria in Muher’
42. *deng^ja-we be-bet dən jənnə-m^w*
 boy.PL-DEF LOC-house inside no exist-3PLM
 ‘The boys are not inside the house’ [They boys do not exist inside the house]
43. *təmari an-nəbər-x^w*
 student NEG-AUX.PST-1SG
 ‘I was not a student’
44. *bə-m^wəxir an-nəbər-ə*
 LOC-Muher NEG-live.PFV-3SGM
 ‘He was not in Muher’
45. *axə bəsəʔat ambəsaxə*
axə bə-səʔat an-bəsa-xə
 You(M) on-time NEG-come.IPFV-2SGM
 ‘You did not come on time’
46. *missiwe dəngəʔnəʔen*
miss-we dəngəʔnə-ʔe-n-ə
 man-DEF rich-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘The man is rich?’
47. *missiwe dəngəʔnəʔenwe (ʔ)*
miss-we dəngəʔnə-ʔe-n-ə-we (ʔ)
 man-DEF rich-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM-Q
 ‘Is the man rich?’

48. *abbonəf taməŋŋa bəssat/tɪm banno-we?*
abbonəf taməŋŋa bəsa-ət/tɪ-m bannə-ə-u-we?
 Abonesh.F yesterday come.PFV-3SGF-CVB COP.PST-3SGM-MVM-Q
 ‘Did/had Abonesh come yesterday?’
49. *təməri bə-xən-xə mam^wə-ʔe wat’ina*
 student if-become.PFV-2SGM good-thing to study
 ‘If you are a student, you must study well’
50. *bə-bet dən jə-nənə-tɪt/-we ɡərəd əttəm^w-əŋŋa-ja*
 LOC-house inside REL-EXIST-3SGF-DEF girl sister-POSS.1SG-COP.3SGF
 ‘The girl who is inside the house is my sister’
51. *ɡ^wəbəz jə-xən-ə-ət m^wam^wə wit’t’et a-bəssa-ø-m*
 clever REL-become.PFV-3SGM-VIC good result CAUS-come.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Since he is clever, he scored good result’
52. *bəzi bet jənəβərwe arəga banno*
bə-zi bet jə-nəbbər-ə-we arəga banno(ə)-ə-u
 LOC-this house REL-AUX.PST-3SGM-DEF Arega COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
 ‘It was Arega who was in this house’ [The one who was in this house was Arega]
53. *za miss dəŋəŋŋə-ʔe-n*
 that man rich-thing-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘That man is rich’
54. *za bet dəŋəŋŋə-ʔe-n*
 that house rich-thing-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘That house is rich’
55. *zi mət’af mam^wə-ʔe-n-ø*
 this book good-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This book is good’
56. **zi mət’af j-alf-ʔe-n-ø*
 this book 3SGM-be_betterIPFV-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This book is better’

57. *zi mət'af tə-za-we mət'af j-alf-ʔe-n-*
 this book from-that-DEF book 3SGM-be_betterIPFV-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 'This book is better than that book'
58. *gərəd-we malkamma-ja*
 girl-DEF beautiful-COP.3SGF
 'The girl is beautiful'
59. *ambəzatf lik' əttəm^w-əŋŋa-ja*
 ambezach elder Sister-POS.1SG-COP.SGF
 'Ambezach is my elder sister'
60. *waga-we bə-bet dən nən-m^w-tt[nənəm^wtt]*
 cattle-DEF LOC-house inside COP.PRES-3PLM-MVM
 'The cattle are inside the house'
61. *zi miss jə-muher-akilil-ʔe-n*
 PRX man GEN-Muher-thing-COP.PRES.3SGM
 'This man is from Muher-Aklil'
62. *nəzi mət'af jə-alemu-ʔe-n-m^w*
 these book.PL POSS-Alemu-thing-COP.PRES-3PLM
 'These books are Alemu's/These books belong to Alemu'
63. *tixə-we bə-bet-dən nən-ə-u [nəno]*
 child-DEF LOC-house-inside EXIST-3SGM-MVM
 'The child is inside the house'
64. *zewditu adot-əŋŋa-ja*
 Zewditu mother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES.3SGF
 'Zewditu is my mother'
65. *x^wa abəra-n*
 he Abera-COP.3SGM
 'He is Abera'
66. *jə-zi bora baləbet zəbərga-n*
 GEN-PRX ox owner Zeberga-COP.PRES.3SGM

- ‘The owner of this ox is Zeberga’
67. *jə-hawarjat astədadari taddesse-n*
 GEN-Hawariat administrator Tadesse-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘The administrator of Hawariat is Tadesse’
68. *jə-zi bora baləbet-we (-wita) zəbərga-n*
 GEN-PRX ox owner-DEF (POSS.3SGM) Zeberga-COP.3SGM
 ‘The owner of this ox is Zeberga’
69. *zəbərga-n jə-zi bora baləbet-we*
 Zeberga-COP.3SGM POSS-PRX ox owner-DEF
 ‘Zeberga is the owner of this ox’
70. *zi jə- dada-we tʃʼaf-n*
 PRX GEN-mountain-DEF tip-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘This is the tip of the mountain’
71. *zi en-n*
 PRX eye-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘This is an eye’ [This part of the body is an eye]
72. *zi abəra-n-ø*
 PRX Abera-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘This is Abera [This man is Abera]
73. *məsfin gʷəbbe-əɲɲa-n-ø*
 mesfin brother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES- 3SGM
 ‘Mesfin is my brother’
74. *zi-xinnəmʷ jə-zəbərga dengʷa-n-mʷ*
 PRX-3PLM GEN-zeberga son.PL -COP.PRES-3PLM
 ‘These ones are Zeberga’s sons’
75. *zi-we lik’ gʷəbbe-ɲɲa-n*
 PRX-DEF elder brother-POSS.1SG-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘This one is my elder brother’
76. *jə-kəbbədə bet zi-tt-n*
 GEN-Kebede house PRX-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘Kebede’s house is this [The house of Kebede is this]’

77. *zi bet ja-kəbbədə-ʔe-n*
 PRX house GEN-Kebbede-thing-COP-3SM
 ‘This house is Kebede’s. [This is Kebede’s house]
78. *zix/zi-mm-in(-zi)*
 PRX./DEM-FOC-COP(-DEM)
 ‘Here it is/Here they are!’
79. *zix bet/bora-axə*
 this house/ox-POSS.2SGM
 ‘This is your house/ox’
80. *att-att merrəŋŋə nən-m^w-tt*
 some worker EXIST-3PLM-MVM
 ‘There are some workers’
81. *bet-xⁱita wərja-ʔe-n-ø*
 house-POSS.3SGF new-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Her house is new’
82. *xinnəm^w gallif dengⁱa-n-m^w*
 they tall boy.PL-COP.PRES-3PLM
 ‘Thy are tall boys’
83. *zəbərga ja-zi bora baləbet-n*
 Zeberga GEN-this ox owner-COP.PRES.3SGM
 ‘Zeberga is the owner of this ox’
84. *təmari bəxənəxə mam^wə wat’ina*
təmari bə-xən-xə mam^wə wat’ina
 student if-be(come).IPFV-2SGM good to study
 ‘If you are a student, you must study well’
85. *bəbet dən jannət/ʔfɪwe gərəd əttəm^wəŋŋaja*
bə-bet dən ja-nən-əʔfɪf-we gərəd əttəm^w-əŋŋa-ja
 LOC-house inside REL-EXIST-3SGF-DEF girl sister-POSS.1SG-COP.3SGF
 ‘The girl who is inside the house is my sister’

86. *g^wəbəz jəxənət* *mam^wə wit't'et abəssam*
g^wəbəz jə-xən-ə-ət *mam^wə wit't'et a-bəssa-m*
clever REL-become.PFV-3SGM-VIC good result CAUS-come.PFV.3SGM-DCM
‘Since he is clever, he scored good result’
87. *aləmu nəzi mət'af baləbetin*
aləmu nəzi mət'af baləbet--n
Alemu these book owner-COP.PRES.3SGM
‘Alemu is the owner of these books’
88. *jə-innam-we gətʃə agəŋnə-nn-m*
ACC-cow-DEF hyena find.PFV.3SGM-3SGM_{Obj}-DCM
‘A hyena found a cow’
89. *t'e bə-ʔərə innam j-aβəfe-t*
sheep if-lost:PV cow 3SGSIPV-come:IPR:3SG-DCM
‘If a sheep is lost, one can bring a cow’
90. *jə-innam k'ər-wita a-j-rəz-n-ø [erəzin]*
POSS-cow horn-POSS.3SGM NEG-3SGM-become heavy.IPFV-COP.PRES-3SGM
‘Cow’s horn is not heavy to itself’
91. *k'əli merrəŋnə nənə-m^w-tt*
some worker EXIST-3PLM-MVM
‘There are some workers’
92. *bə-zi bet jə-nəbbər-we arəga bannə-ə-u*
LOC-this house REL-AUX.PAST-DEF Arega COP.PST-3SGM-MVM
‘It was Arega who was in this house’ [The one who was in this house was Arega]
93. Abonesh: *ək^wa bə-miʔe bəsa-xə-m*
today by-what come.PFV-2SGM-DCM
‘How did you come today?’ [lit. ‘By what did you come today?’]
Timerga: *ək^wa jə-bəsa-xu bə-abtobus-n [babtobusin]*
today REL-come.PFV-1SG by-bus-COP.PRES
‘How did I come today is by bus’ [By what I came today is by bus]

94. *zangjərə-we bə-dibr dən j-ef-ø-u*
 monkey-DEF LOC-forest inside 3SGM-walk.IPFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘The monkey walks in the forest’
95. *ambəzat/tf wəzgəb-we kəffət-ət/t/-u-m*
 Ambezach door-DEF open-3SGF-3SGM.ACC-DCM
 ‘Ambezach opened the door’
96. *kəbbədə bet asrə-ə-m*
 Kebbede house sell.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Kebbede sold a house’
97. *mərga tf’amma srə-ə-m*
 Merga Shoes buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Merga bought shoes’
98. *nurga-f*
 Nurga-what about
 ‘What about Nurga?’
99. *nurga tf’amma an-srə, x^wa libs srə-ə-m*
 Nurga Shoes NEG-buy.PFV he cloth buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Nurga did not buy shoes; he bought cloth’
100. *ləmma axuŋŋa tə-zəbərğa-ge bəssa-ə-m*
 Lemma now with-Zeberğa-with come.IPFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Lemma comes with Zeberğa now’
101. *zəbərğa axuŋŋa tə-ləmma-ge bəssa-ə-m*
 Zeberğa now With-Lemma-with Come.IPFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Zeberegа comes with Lemma now’
102. *ləmma-m zəbərğa-m axuŋŋa bəss-mu-m*
 Lemma-CONJ Zeberğa-CONJ now Come.IPFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘Lemma and Zeberğa come now’
103. *dengⁱa-axə etə-n ji-nəbir-m^w*
 sons-POSS.2SGM where-COP.PRES 3PL-live.IPFV-3PL
 ‘Where do your sons live?’

104. *work'u ji-nəbir bə-xawarijat mammo tʃ'in tə-wəlk'it'e fəka-ø-m*
 Worku 3SGM-live.IPFV LOC-Hawariat Mammo but to-Welkite go.PFV-DCM
 'Worku lives in Hawariat, but Mammo went to Welkite'
105. *deng'a-əɲɲa ji-nəbir-m^w bə-ʃɔ-n*
 Sons-POSS.1SG 3PL-live.IPFV-3PLM LOC-Shewa (Addis Ababa)-COP.PRES
 'My sons are living in Addis Ababa'
106. *ʒəx^wən-we k'it'e ji-bɛ-w*
 elephant-DEF leave 3SGM-eat.IPFV-3SGM
 'The elephant eats leave(s)'
107. *zi zangʃərə ef-ə-m banno*
 this monkey go.PFV-3SGM-CVB AUX.PST
 'This monkey had walked'
108. *jə-zi bet baləbet ambəzat/tʃ-ja*
 GEN-this house owner Ambezach-COP.PRES.3SGF
 'The owner of this house is Ambezach'
109. *g^wənda bafər dən jinəβru*
g^wənda bə-afər dən ji-nəbir-u
 ant LOC-soil inside 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM
 'Ant lives inside soil'
110. *ambezat/tʃ wəzgəb-we kəffətə-tʃ/tʃ-u-m*
 Ambezach door-DEF open.PFV-3SGF-3SGMObj-DCM
 'Ambezach opened the door'
111. *kəbbədə jə-anə [janə] mət'af a-fəka-ø-m*
 Kebbede GEN-I book CAUS-take.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 'Kebbede took my book'
112. *aləmu t'e asrə-ə-m*
 Alemu sheep sell.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 'Alemu sold sheep'
113. *t'e-we tə-asrə-m*
 sheep-DEF PASS-sell.PFV-DCM

‘The sheep was sold’

114. *aləmu jə-almaz [jalmaz] sit’ota ab-ə-nna-m*
Alemu for-Almaz gift give.PFV-3SGMSubj-3SGFObj-DCM
‘Alemu gave Almaz a gift/present’
115. *almaz kə-aləmu [kaləmu] sit’ot’a tək’əbe-ət/tf-im*
Almaz from-Alemu gift receive.PFV-3SGF-DCM
‘Almaz received/took a gift from Alemu’
116. *maritu jə-wərk’inəf adot-ja*
Maritu GEN-Worknesh mother-COP.3SGM. PRES
‘Maritu is Worknesh’s mother’ [Maritu is the mother of Worknesh]
117. *wərk’inəf jə-maritu gərəd-ja*
Worknesh GEN-maritu girl-COP.3SGM.PRES
‘Worknesh is Maritu’s daughter’ [Worknesh is the daughter of Maritu]
118. *məbrat bə-aləmu [baləmu] jiftət k’wəmə-ət/tf-m*
Mebrat LOC-Alemu in front of stand.PFV-3SGF-DCM
‘Mebrat stood in front of Alemu’
119. *aləmu bə-məbrat ankjə [anjə] k’wəmə-ə-m*
Alemu LOC-Mebrat back stood.PFV-3SGM-DCM
‘Alemu stood at the back of Mebrat’
120. *anə jə-səb-k’e wəzəngj an-fə*
I GEN-people-thing to talk NEG-want.IPFV
‘I don’t want to talk about my people’
121. *jə-timhirt-inna-ʔe ni-zəngj-nə-u [nizəngjno]*
about-education-POSS.1PL-thing 1PL-talk.IPFV-1PLSubj-DCM
‘Let us talk about our education’
122. *anə-mma bəssa-xu-m*
I-TOP come.PFV-ISG-DCM
‘REGARDING ME/AS FOR ME, I came’
123. *wəlk’it’e-mma bənnə-xu-wə-m*
Welk’it’e-TOP eat.PFV-ISG-APPL-DCM
‘I ate, Welk’it’e.’

124. *anə bənnə-xu-m axə-f*
 I eat.PFV-1SG-DCM you-TOP
 ‘I eat; how about you?’
125. Speaker 1: *nə-timərga bəss-m^w-m-we*
 ASSO.PL-timerga come.PFV-3PLM-DCM-Q?
 ‘Did Timerga and his companion(s) come?’
 Speaker 2: *xinnəmu-f ambəssəmw*
xinnəmu-f an-bəss-m^w
 they-TOP NEG-come.PFV-3SGM
 ‘As to them/Regarding them, they didn’t come.’
126. *k’awa an-sətf’ fəj i-sətf’-u*
 coffee NEG-drink.IPFV tea 1SG-drink.IPFV-DCM
 ‘Coffee, I don’t drink; tea I do (drink)’
127. a. *jə-bet kiraj bə-addis aba[baddis aba] widd-in-ø*
 GEN-house rent LOC-Addis Ababa expensive-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘House rent is expensive in Addis Ababa’
 b. *bə-addis aba [baddis aba] jə-bet kiraj widd-in-ø*
 LOC-Addis Ababa GEN-house rent expensive-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘In Addis Ababa, house rent is expensive’
128. a. *aləmu-m kəbbədə-m bə-irfə samit ekəs-mw-im*
 Alemu-CONJ Kebbede-CONJ LOC-farm week stay.PFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘Alemu and Kebbede stayed on farm for a week’
 b. *bə-irfə aləmu-m kəbbədə-m samit ekəs-m^w-im*
 LOC-farm Alemu-CONJ Kebbede-CONJ week stay.PFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘On farm, Alemu and Kebbede stayed for a week’
 c. *samit-n aləmu-m kəbbədə-m bə-irfə sinəbət-m^w-im*
 week-for Alemu-CONJ Kebbede-CONJ LOC-farm stay.PFV-3PLM-DCM
 ‘For a week, Alemu and Kebbede stayed on farm’
- 129 a. *səjfu jə-za miss a-j-wəd-n*
 Seifu ACC-that man NEG-3SGM_{Subj}-like.IPFV-3SGM_{Obj}

‘Seifu does not like that man’

b. *jə-zamiss səjfu a-j-wəd-n*

ACC-that man Seifu NEG-3SGM_{Subj}-like.IPFV-3SGM_{Obj}

‘That man, Seifu does not like’

130. *gəllif gunnän jə-annə-nna-we gərəd malkamma-ja*

long hair POSS-have.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}-DEF girl beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF

‘[A girl with a long hair]TOP [is beautiful]FOC’

131. a. *zebərga jə-kəbbədə a-talələ-n-ø-m*

Zeberga ACC-Kebbede CAUS-cheat.PFV-3SGM-ACC-DCM

‘Zeberga cheated Kebbede’

b. *kəbbədə tə-talələ-ø-m*

Kebbede PASS-cheat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

‘Kebbede was cheated’

132. a. *almaz k’awa asrə-ət/ɪ/-m*

Almaz coffee sell.PFV-3SGF-DCM

‘Almaz sold coffee’

b. *k’awa-we tə-srə-ə-m*

coffee-DEF PASS-sell.PFV-3SGM-DCM

‘The coffee was sold’

133. a. *timərga bəsər bənnə-ø-m*

Timerga meat eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

‘Timerga ate meat’

b. *bəsər jə-bənnə-we timərga banno*

meat REL-eat.PFV-DEF Timerga COP.PST

‘It was Timerga who ate (the) meat’

c. *timərga jə-bənnə-n-we bəsər banno*

Timerga REL-eat.PFV-3SGM.ACC-DEF meat COP.PST

‘It was meat that Timerga ate’

134. a. *aləmnəʃ kitf^wə bənnə-ət/ɪ/-m*

Alemnesh kitfo eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

‘Alemnesh ate kitfo’

- b. *kitf^wə-we aləmnəʃ bənnə-ətʃtʃ-u-m*
kitfo-DEF Alemnesh eat.PFV-3SGFSubj-3SGMObj-DCM

‘Kitfo, Alemnesh ate it’

- c. *aləmnəʃ bənnə-ətʃtʃ-u-m kitf^wə-we*
Alemnesh eat.PFV-3SGFSubj-3SGMObj-DCM kitfo-DEF

‘Alemnesh ate it, the kitfo’

135. a. *anə bijə an-bɛ*
I k’ocho NEG-eat.IPFV-

‘I don’t eat k’ocho’

- b. *bijə-we anə an-bɛ*
k’ocho -DEF I NEG-eat.IPFV

‘The K’ocho, I don’t eat (it)’

136. a. *anə jə-aləmu [jaləmu] an-wəddin*
I ACC-Alemu NEG-like.IPFV

‘I don’t like Alemu’

- b. *anə jə-x^wa an-wəddin jə-aləmu [jaləmu]*
I ACC-he NEG-like.IPFV ACC-Alemu

‘I don’t like him, Alemu’

137. a. *bə-birr timərga tə-nida j-alf-u*
by-birr Timerga from-Nida 3SGM-be_betterIPFV-MVM

‘By money/In terms of money, Timerga is better than Nida’

- b. *bə-nibrət mark’os tə-fik’rəmarijam a-j-alf*
by-wealth Markos from-Fikremariam NEG-3SGM-better.IPFV

‘Concerning wealth, Markos is not better than Fikeremariam’

138. X: *wəlk’ite ti-fəka mətʃə-n*
Welkite 2SGM-go.IPFV when-COP.PRES

‘When do you go to Welkite?’

- Y: *ji-bəsa-we wirsənbət*
REL-come.IPFV-DEF Sunday

‘The coming Sunday’

139. Merga: *ma-nn-i* *biru-we* *jə-a-fəka-n [jafekan]*
 who-COP.PRES-3SGM money-DEF REL-APPL-take.PVF-ACC
 ‘Who took the money?’

Aberash: *wərk’u*
 ‘Worku’

140. Amanuel: *igga-we* *tiru-n-ø?*
 water-DEF clean-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘Is the water clean?’

Arega: *oj!*
 ‘Yes’

- 141 a. *ji-zənb-ə-u*
 3SGM-rain.IPFV-IMP.3SGM-MVM
 ‘It is raining’
 b. *ji-fəl-ə-u*
 3SGM-boil.IPFV-IMP.3SGM-MVM
 ‘It is boiling’
 c. *ji-nəfs-ə-u*
 3SGM-blow.IPFV-IMP.3SGM-MVM
 ‘It is blowing’
 d. *ji-k’əlt’-ə-u*
 3SGM-melt.IPFV-IMP.3SGM-MVM
 ‘It is melting’

142. *jidz-we* *jə-tfəxa-ʔe-n-ø [jetfəxaʔen]*
 boy-DEF POSS-Chaha-thing-COP.PRES-3SGM
 ‘The boy is from Chaha’

143. *jidz-we* *bəzi* *bə-mwəxir* *ji-nəbir-u*
 boy-DEF here LOC-Muhir 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM
 ‘The boy lives here in Muher’

144. *jə-tfəxa-we* *jidz* *bəzi* *bə-mwəxir* *ji-nəbir-u*
 POSS-Chaha boy here LOC-Muhir 3SGM-live.IPFV-DCM

145. *gəllif* *gunnän* *jə-annə-na-we* *gərəd* *məlkamma-ja*
 long hair POSS-have.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}-DEF girl beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF

146. a. <i>bəsər-we</i>	<i>jə-bənnə-n</i>	<i>zəbərgə-n-ø</i>
meat-DEF	REL-eat.PFV-3SGMObj	Zeberga-COP.PRES-3SGM

b. <i>zəbərga</i>	<i>bəsər</i>	<i>bənnə-ø-m</i>
Zeberga	meat	eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

147. Awulachew: *zəbərɡa* *miʔe* *bənnə-ə-m?*
 Zebergə what eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

Seifu: *kitf^wə* *bənnə-ə-m*
 kitfo eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM

148. Question: *jə-zi* *bet* *ab* *ma-nn-i*
 GEN-this house owner who-COP.PRES-3SGM

Answer: *jə-zi* *bet* *baləbet* *ambəzatʃtʃ-ja*
GEN-this house owner Ambezach-COP.PRES.3SGF

149. a. <i>wəlk'it'e</i>	<i>jə-fəkka-we</i>	<i>ma-nn-i</i>
Welk'it'e	REL-go.PFV-DEF	who-COP.PRES-3SGM

b. *wəlde* *wəlk'it'e* *f əkka-ø-m*
Welde Welk'it'e go.PFV-3SGM-DCM

c. <i>wəlde</i>	<i>banno</i>	<i>wəlʔit'e</i>	<i>jə-fəkka-we</i>
Welde	COP.PST	Welk'it'e	REL-go.PFV-DEF

210

150. *betəsəb nənə-nnat bet-m mekina-m*
 family have.IPFV-3SGF house-FOC car-FOC
 ‘She has a family; she has also a house and a car.’
151. *timərga-m bərutf’f’a ef-ə-m*
 Timerga-FOC quickly go.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Also Timerga walked (went) quickly.’
152. *att-m səb an-bəsa*
 one-FOC man NEG-come.PFV
 ‘Nobody came’ [Even a single person did not come]
153. *an-xənə bet mekina-m nənə-nnat*
 NEG-be house car-FOC have.IPFV-3SGF
 ‘Not only a house, she has even/also a car.’
154. *almaz-m məlkamma-ja*
 Almaz-FOC beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF
 ‘Also Almaz is beautiful’
155. *anə-m zənga-we lik’k’e as-asəbe-m*
 I-FOC issue/matter-DEF big CAUS-worry.PFV-DCM
 ‘I am also worried by the issue/Even I am worried by the issue.’
156. X: *jə-agəŋŋə-xu-kkə-ət* *lik’k’e səj-ə-e-m*
 GEN-find.PFV-1SG_{Subj}-2SGM_{Obj}-VIC big feel_happy.PFV-3SGM_{Subj}-1SG_{Obj}-DCM
 ‘I felt very happy because I met you’
 Y: *anə-m lik’k’e səj-ə-e-m*
 I-FOC big feel_happy.PFV-3SGM_{Subj}-1SG_{Obj}-DCM
 ‘I also felt very happy’ [Even I felt very happy]
157. Speaker 1: *timərga bet srə-ə-m*
 Timerga house buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Timerga bought a house’
 Speaker 2: *anxənə, məkina -n-ø jə-srə-ə-m*
 It is not car-COP.PRES-3SGM 3SGM-buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘No [he did not buy a house]; it is car he bought’

158. *fəɲɲək' anxənə t'e-n*
 goat it is not sheep-COP. 3SGM
 'No, it is not goat; it is sheep'
159. A: *zebərga jidɜ-wita bet-m məkina-m srə-no-m*
 Zeberga son-POSS.3SGM house-FOC car-FOC buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}-DCM
 'Zeberga bought his son a house and a car'
- S: (a) *zebərga jidɜ-wita bet an-srə-no*
 Zeberga son-POSS.3SGM house NEG-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}
jidɜ-wita jə-srə-no məkina k'una-n
 son-POSS.3SGM REL-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj} car only-COP. PRES. 3SGM
 'Zeberga did not buy his son a HOUSE. [It was only CAR that he bought for his son]'
- (b) *anxənə jə-srə-no məkina k'una-n*
 no REL-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj} car only-COP.PRES.3SGM
 'No, it was only a CAR that he bought [for his son]'
160. *ləmma bəsər bənnə-m timərga tʃ'in dabbo bənnə-ø-m*
 Lemma meat eat.PFV-DCM Timerga but bread eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 'Lemma ate meat, but Timerga ate bread'
161. Askal: *g^wəbbe-xə ʃɔ-n wem wəlk'it'e-n*
 brother-2SGM.POSS shewa-COP.PRES or Welk'ite-COP.PRES
ji-nəbir
 3SGM-live.IPFV
 'Does your brother live in Shewa (Addis Ababa) or in Welk'ite?'
- Seifu: *g^wəbbe-əɲɲa ji-nəbirwəlk'it'e-n*
 brother-1SG.POSS 3SGM-live.IPFV Welk'ite-COP.PRES
 'My brother lives in Welk'ite'
- 162.X: *mət'af-we ma abə-nn-axə-m?*
 book-DEF who give.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}-2SGM-DCM?
 'Who gave you the book?'
- Y: *zəbərga*
 Zeberga

‘Zeberga’

163. **Mother:** *birhanu miʔe abə-nn-axə-m?*

Birhanu what give.PFV-3SGM_{Obj}-2SGM-DCM

‘What did Birhanu give you?’

Daughter: *birhanu jə-anə [janə] iga abə-e-m*

Birhanu for-I water give.PFV-1SG_{Obj}-DCM

‘Birhanu gave me WATER.’

164. *zi bora jə-srə-nn x^wa-tt-n*

this ox REL-buy.PFV-3SGM he-IFOC-COP.PRES. 3SGM

‘The one who bought this ox is he’ (with pointing)

165. *jə-wəlde jidʒ zi-tt-n*

GEN-Welde son PRX.DEM-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM

‘Welde’s son is this (here)’

166. *birtukwan-we zi-tt-n*

orange-DEF PRX.DEM-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM

‘The orange, here it is!’

167. *tamməŋna jə-odə-x^w-kkə-ət zi-tt-n*

yesterday GENT-say.PFV-1SG_{Subj}-2SGM_{Obj}-VIC PRX.DEM-IFOC-COP.PRES.3SGM

‘What I told you yesterday, here it is!’

168. a. *bəjjənə taməŋna jə-gəg-wita libs srə-ə-m*

Beyene yesterday for-self-POSS.3SGM cloth buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM

‘Beyene bought a cloth for himself yesterday’

b. *bəjjənə banno taməŋna jə-gəg-wita libs jə-srə*

Beyene COP.PST yesterday For-self-POSS.3SGM cloth REL-buy.PFV

‘It was Beyene who bought a cloth for himself yesterday’

c. *taməŋna banno bəjjənə jə-gəg-wita libs jə-srə*

yesterday COP.PST Beyene for-himself-POSS.3SGM cloth REL-buy.PFV

‘It was yesterday that Beyene bought a cloth for himself’

169. a. *zəbarga kitf^wə bənnə-m*

Zeberga kitfo eat.PFV-DCM

‘Zeberga ate kitfo’

- b. *kitf^wə zəbərga bənnə-ə-m*
 kitfo Zeberga eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Zeberga ate, kitfo’
170. *zi bet jə-srə-nn x^wa-tt-n*
 this house REL-buy.PFV-3SGM_{Obj} he-IFOC-COP.PRES. 3SGM
 ‘The one who bought this house is he’
171. a. *timərga bəsər bənnə-ə-m*
 Timerga meat eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 ‘Timerga ate meat’
- b. *timərga je-bənnə-ə-n jə-nəbbər-we bəsər banno*
 Timerga REL-eat.PFV-3SGM-ACC REL-live.PFV-DEF meat COP.PST
 ‘What Timerga ate was meat’
172. a. *səlam k’una-ja jə-aləmu libs ti-srə-no*
 Selam only-COP.PRES.3SGF for-Alemu cloth REL-buy.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}
 ‘It is only Selam who buys cloth for Alemu’
- b. *səlam jə-aləmu k’una-n libs ti-srə-no*
 Selam for-Alemu only-COP.PRES.3SGM cloth REL-buy.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}
 ‘It is only for Alemu that Selam buys cloth’
- c. *səlam jə-alemu libs k’una-n ti-srə-no*
 Selam for-Alemu cloth only-CIP.PRES.3SGM REL-buy.IPFV-3SGF_{Obj}
 ‘It is only cloth that Selam buys for Alemu’
173. a. *kəbbədə k’una-n t’əlla ji-sətf’*
 Kebede only-COP.PRES t’əlla 3SGM-drink.IPVF [REL]
 ‘It is only Kebede who drinks t’əlla (local wine)’
- b. *kəbbədə t’əlla k’una-n ji-sətf’*
 Kebede t’əlla only-COP.PRES 3SGM-drink.IPVF-3SGM [REL]
 ‘It is only t’əlla that Kebede drinks’
174. *bətəlaj anə jə-ʔigir zəba an-wəddin*
 especially I of-leg road NEG-like.IPFV.1SG
 ‘Especially I, don’t like going on foot/traveling long distances on foot’

175. *dəmmak'* *k'aləm* *an-wəddin* *bətəlaj* *biffa*
 dark color NEG-like.IPFV.1SG especially RED
 'I don't like dark color, especially red'
176. *x^wa* *gəg-wita* *bə-səʔat-we* *təgəjɲə-mta]* *a-j-xɛ [exji]*
 he body-POSS.3SGM on-time-DEF meet.IPFV-CVB.AUG NEG-3SGM-know
 'He himself has never been (come) on time'
177. *anə* *gəg-əjɲa* *jə-gudaj-we* *bazəna-n-xu*
 I body-POSS.1SG for-issue-DEF new-COP.PRES-1SGSubj
 'I myself am new to the issue'
178. *zi-we* *dabbo* *tetərf* *bənnə-ə-m*
 this-DEF bread FOC eat.PFV-3SGM-DCM
 'He ate even this bread' [he ate everything including this bread]
179. *wəfən-əjɲa* *tə-səbbəɾə-m*
 pot-POSS.1SG PASS-break down.PFV-DCM
 'My pot was broken DOWN'
180. Question: *sarem* *bet* *an-srə-ətʃtʃ-we*
 Sarem house NEG-buy.PFV-3SGF-Q
 'Didn't Sarem buy a house?'
 Answer: *srə-ətʃtʃ-m* (with falling intonation)
 buy.PFV-3SGF-DCM
 'She bought' [Sarem bought a house]
181. *k'una-m* *tə-gəjɲ-wita-t* *a-j-ʒəbbəɾ [ɛʒəbbəɾ]*
 FOC-FOC to-country-POSS. 3SGM-to NEG-3SGM-return.IPFV-3SGM
 'He will never return (come back) to his country'
182. *k'una-m* *k'una-m* *k^was* *a-j-tʃ'wɔt [etʃ'wɔt]*
 FOC-FOC FOC-FOC ball NEG-3SGM-play.IPFV
 'He will never never play (foot) ball'
183. A: *mət'af-we* *ma* *abə-n-xə-m?*
 book-DEF who give.PFV-3SGMSubj-2SGM-DCM
 'Who gave you the book?'
 B: *zəbərga*
 Zəbərga
 'Zeberga' [Lit. Zeberga gave me the book]

Appendix C: Sample Muher proverb texts

(Adapted from Awlacheu 2010: 155-159)

1. *səb jalə gəŋŋ-wita bet jalə g^warra-wita*
 person without country-POSS.3SGM house without garden-POSS.3SGM
 ‘A person without country, a house without garden will not exist’
2. *bə-ab-k’e jə-ədʒ-k’e -n*
 INST-father-thing POSS-hand-thing-COP.PRES
 ‘Own property is better than fathers property’
3. *x^wet g^wədʒə jannən f^wir a-j--m^wət-ət*
 two hole has rat NEG-3SGM-die.IPFV-VIC
 ‘A rat with two holes will not die’
4. *jə-innam k’ər-wita a-j-rəz-n-ø*
 POSS-cow horn-3MS NEG-3SGM-become heavyIPFV-COP.PRES-3SGM
 To cow, his horn is not heavy to himself
5. *jə-tixə a-j-dak-nn-u jə-gijə*
 POSS-child NEG-3SGM- laugh.IPFV-3SGM-2SGM POSS-dog
a-j-səxə-nn-u
 NEG-3SGM- run.IPFV-3SGM -2SGM
 ‘Don’t run for dog and don’t laugh for child’
6. *jə-ozʒa kənfər innimge anguz-n*
 POSS-fool mouth always mark-COP.PRES
 ‘A Foolish mouth is always marked’
7. *t’uri t’uri bi-bɛ-ja mət’af at’t’əbə-ət/tf-m*
 clever clever when-say-COP.PRES.3SGF book wash-3SGF-PVF
 ‘When someone is said her “clever”, she washes book’.
8. *k’iŋ zega-n əgɪr dəŋgəŋnə-n*
 buttock poor-COP.PRES leg rich-COP.PRES
 ‘Buttock is poor, foot is rich’ [To sit idle is to be poor, to work is to be rich]
9. *bə-en f^wirt’ jə-lib f^wirt’ ji-basə-u*
 LOC-eye blind GEN-heart blind 3MS.IPVF-worse-3MS
 ‘A heart blind is worse than an eye blind’

Appendix D: Muher Riddles

(Adapted from Awlachew 160-164)

1. X: *jəxʲ- inkʷit nikʷ*,
take.FS riddles ask
‘Let me ask you riddles, ask’
X: *tixə ni-fəka ni-fəka adot ni-tona ni-tona*,
child 1PL-go 1PL-go mother 1PL-sit 1PL-sit
‘Mother says let as stay, children say let us go’
Y: *wəfitʰtʰə-m mədʒə-m*
big milestone-and small milestone-and
‘Big and small milestone’
2. X: *jəxʲ inkʷit nikʷ*
take.2FS riddle ask
‘Let me ask you riddles, ask.’
X: *adot-wita tikʰur tixə-wita nətʰtʰə*,
mother-3MS.POSS black child-3MSPOSS white
‘Her mother is black and his children are white’
Y: *dʒəbəna-m sin-m*
coffee pot-CONJ cup-CONJ
‘Coffee pot and cups’
3. X: *əgir siβilwət gʷinnən ga/ga/ʃiwət*
leg thin hair heavy
‘The legs are thin, the head is heavy’
Y: *ambi*,
ambi,
‘Cabbage’
4. X: *xiwət jənnə en nən-ə-u*
life there is no eye EXIST-3SGM-MVM
‘There is not life, (but) there are eyes’
Y: *indʒəra*,
indʒəra,
‘injera’

5. X: *biffa mifra bə-nət/tʃʻə int'arjə at't'ər-ja-m*,
 red bride INST-white fence encircle-COP.3SGM-PVF
 'A red Bride encircled by white fences',

Y: *alləmət tə- sin:*
 tongue CONJ-teeth
 'Tongue and teeth'

Appendix E. Tale of *jifara donnə*

(Taken from Awlachev 2010: 165-176)

jifara donnə ji-bɛ-ba, jifara donnə gaz fəkkə-m,

jifara donnə 3IMPVF-say-AUX jifara donnə war go-PVF

‘He has-been said *jifara donə*; *jifara donə* went to war’

abba-wita tə-adot-wita nən-m^w-tt gaz fəkkə-m bə-gaz tʃiʔara

father-3MSPOSS and-mother-3MSPOSS present3MP war go-CVB LOC-war mud

ezzə-nni-m

catch-3MS-DCM

‘His father and his mother are alive; He went to war, in war place he was sunk into mud’

tʃiʔara ezzə-nni-m wət't'a k'əmmə-nni-m betəsəb-wita k'əbbət't'ə-nni-m,

mud catch-3MS-PVF out can't-3MS-CVB family-3MS.POSS can't find -3MS-PVF

bix'ə onna-m

lamentation set-DCM

‘He sunk into mud, he can't out from the mud, his family can't to find him, and therefore his family set a lamentation’

bix'ə bə-ɔnna-ge k^wəβərə bəssa-m,

lamentation PREP-set-POSTPO fox come-DCM

‘After a lamentation the fox came’

k^wəβərə xada-f tə-lax-e zikki zikki tʃila ɛze-m,

fox please-EMPH PASS-send-1SG like this like this mud catch-DCM

‘Please Fox; tell for my family I am sunk in mud like this’

t'e ti-ann-ak'i t'e ak'ik'ə-xə-m bɛ-xə-m jə-səddəd-xə-e jə-wəgga-xə-e

sheep PREP-NEG-eat sheep eat-2MS-CVB say-2MS-CVB REL-strike-2MS-1S REL-strike-2MS-1S

an-t-laxə,

NEG-IMPVF-2MS

‘Didn't you hit me, strike me without eating a sheep saying’; ‘You ate a sheep I will not tell them for you’

gətfə bəsa-m xəddaf gətfə-u tə-laxə-e
 hyena come-CVB please hyena-2MS PASS-tell-1SG

‘Hyena came, Please Hyena tell my family for me’

an-tə-laxə fərəs tə-ann-ak'ə-b-xə fərəs ak'ə-m bə-xə m
 NEG-PASS-tell horse PREP-NEG-eat-MALF-2MS horse eat-CVB say-2MS-CVB
jə-səddəd-xə-e baj bə-nni-m
 REL-hit-2MS-1S no say-3MS-DCM

‘I will not tell for you, because without eating your horse you said you ate my horse and hit me’

am'əra bəssa-m am'əra-u xəddaf tə-laxə-e
 sparrow come-CONJ sparrow-2MS please PASS-tell-1S

‘The sparrow hawk, "Please, tell my family for me", the sparrow hawk came’

kuttəna tə-ann-ak'ə-b-xə kuttəna ak'ə-xə-m bə-xə-m jə-səddəd-xə-e
 hen PASS-NEG-eat-MALF-2MS hen eat-2MS-CVB say-2MS-CVB REL-hit-2SM-1S
an-tə-laxə-xə
 NEG-PASS-tell-2MS

‘I will not tell for you. Without eating your hen, you said that you ate my hen and hit me’

bulle bəssa-m bulle bəssa-m bulle xədaf bulle tə-laxə-e,
 dove come-DCM dove come-DCM dove please dove PASS-tell-1S

‘The dove came, “Please dove, tell my family for me”’

k'iffiwə lək'k'əmə-xə-m bə-xə-m att kənə wəgga-xə-e-m ann-tə-laxə-xə
 peas eat-2MS-CVB say-2MS-CVB one day hit-2MS-1S-CVB NEG-PASSIVE-tell-2MS

‘I will not tell for you, don't you hit me saying you eat my peas from field’

xədaf tə-laxə-e t'ɪn, əge bə-nni-mta mik'e ni-bə-m ni-tə-laxə-xə,
 please PASS-tell-1S but Ok say-3MS-GEN what 1S-say-CVB 1SIMPVF-PASS-tell-2MS
 Please tell for me, but also, the dove said Ok, and asks him what can I say for you?

jifara donnə jifara donnə fərəs-wita bə-tʃila k'ərəm tʃaxʷə-wita
jifara donnə jifara donnə horse-3MSPOSS LOC-mud sink spir-3MS.POSS
bə-tibʷbʷitʃʷtsʷə k'ərəm gərəngər-wita bə-agat k'ərrəm bɛ-m odd-nni
 LOC-hand leave shield-3MS LOC-shoulder leaves say-DCM speak-1S MALF
 ‘Tell the “Donə of jifara, Donə of jifara, He sunk in mud, His spear is in his hand, and His shield is in his shoulder’

bəssa-m zi bi-ji-odə wəgga-i-m səddədə-i-m
 come-CVB this PREP-3MS-tell hit-IMPER-CONJ follow-IMPER-CONJ
 ‘When he came and told this to his family, the hit him’

anə-f zikki səddədə-i-ɪŋŋ-m ann-təkʰəbɛ bɛ-i-m bə-məzigʷit
 I-PART like this hit-IMPER-1S-CVB NEG-receive say-IMPER-CVB INST-Short
stick səddədə-i-ɪŋŋ-m
 hit-IMPER-1S-DCM
 ‘He said to him they hit me when I told them like this, they didn’t belief me’

əge zi jə-angət-əŋŋa gibir məllam ez-m fika
 ok this POSS-neck-1SPOSS material all catch-2MSGER go.2MS!
 ‘Ok, take my entire necklace’

ji-wəgga-kə-t ti-bəssa-e gibir-we biratʃ gibit-we gibir
 2MS-hit-2MS-IMPVF when-come-IMPER material-DEF spread half-DEF material
 ‘When they came to hit you spread half of the necklace’

biratʃə-m zəbbərə-m tannə zəbbərə-m ləkʰkʰəmə-m ti-bəssa-i-bbi-kkə
 spread-PVF again-PVF and again-PVF collect-PVF when-come-IMPER-MALF-2MS
zi-m od bɛ-nni-m
 this-also tell say-3MS-PVF
 ‘He said him “Spread again and again and when they reach to you told them again”

bəssa-m jifara -donnə jifara -donnə bɛ-m bi-bɛ jifara -donnə jə-fəkka-wət fika
 come-PVF jifara -donnə jifara -donnə say-PVF when-say jifara -donnə REL-go-LOC go!
bɛ-mʷ-m ji-wəgga-i-t bi-wətʰtʰa-e za gibir biratʃtʃə-m,

say-3MP-PVF IMPVF-IMPER-3MSIMPVF PREP-out-IMPER that material spread-PVF
 ‘He came to his house and said “donnə of ʃifara, donnə of ʃifara” His family came out to hit him.
 Then he spread the necklace’

lək'k'əm-m^w-i-m ʒəbbəram bɪratʃ'tʃ'ə-m lək'k'əm-m^w-i-m at-əʒʒ
 collect-3MP-3MS-PVF again spread-PVF collect-3MP-3MS-PVF CAUS-show.IMPER
 ‘He collected them and spread again and again, then ordered him to Show’

əge anə ʒift-ʒift-ət ef-u bə-ətʃ'tʃ'ə ə-tənna ə-tənna təx'itate-m^w-iŋŋ
 OK I front front-front-LOC go-1S LOC-tree 1S-sit 1S-sit follow-3MP-1S
at-əʒʒ-xim^wit
 CAUS-see-3MP
 He said "Ok, I will go in front of you, sitting on tree, follow me"

ti-tənna ti-təx'əte-oj ti-tənna ti-təx'əte-oj a-fəkka-m a-səlla-m
 when-sit when-follow-3MS when-sit when-follow-3MS CAUS-go-PVF CAUS-rich-PVF
 ‘They follow him, when he sits on the tree, he showed the place’

at't'əbə-i-m ət't'a-i-m a-gəbba-i-m,
 wash-3MSIMPER-PVF out-3MSIMPER-PVF CAUS-enter-3MSIMPER-PVF
 And his family pulls out donnə of ʃifara from the mud and washed him and he entered his home.

ʃifara-donnə bə-k''iʃʃiwa -siwat bə-t'əməʒə -siwat bə-əxi -siwat bəxənə-k''e sirim
 ʃifara-donnə LOC-peas-suck LOC-t'əməʒə-suck LOC-barley-suck any-thing never
inn-ətʃ'tʃ'ə-bb-wət ʒə-lək''əmə ʒə-zorə-m bɛ-m mazzəʒə-n-u-m
 NEG-shut-MALF-EMPH REL-eat REL-round-CON say-PVF order-3MS-3MS-PVF
 ‘Donnə of ʃifara ordered to his family that the Dove can eat in any of barley and sorghum, not to
 close any of the suck to him’

ti-lək''əmə ti-lək''əmə bəssa-m ɡərəd ʃəm^wə abə-ja-m
 When-eat when-eat come-PVF girl roasted barely give-3FS-PVF
ti-t-k''əŋŋə bəssa-m bə-ʃəm^wə lək'k''əmə-ba-m,
 when-IMPVF-roasting come-PVF LOC-roasted barley peck-AUX-PVF
 ‘One day while girl was roasting barley, the dove came and pecking from it’

bulle tof səffərə-i-m jə-abə-ijɲ-n-ij ji-k''əbɛ-bi-u
 Dove leave measure-IMPER-PVF REL-give-1S-is-EMPH 3MS-low-MALF-3MS
ti-at-k'ətɛ-je-u ti-a-zənnəfə-e-u to bi-t-bɛ-i-n lək'k''əmə-ba-m
 3MS-CAUS-1S-2MS 3MS-CAUS-beat-1S-2MS leave PREP-IMPVF-3MS eat-AUX-PVF
 ‘She said to Dove, “Leave Dove, it is given to me by measure, if it is not full they will kill me”
 but he eat’

angət-wita k'ərrəfə-tɪf-u-m
 Neck-2MS cut-3FS-3MS-PVF

‘After that, she killed him’

mʷətə-m ɔt''t''a-tɪf-m bə-gʷərərə bə-əssət gʷərərə sək''k''ɛ-tɪf-u-m
 die-PVF out-3FS-PVF LOC-troat bə-Enset throat threw-3FS-PVF

‘The dove died and she threw into the edge of Enset plantation’

bə-gʷərərə bə-əssət gʷərərə sək''k''ɛ-tɪf-u-m,
 LOC-troat LOC-Enset throat threw-FS-PVF

‘She put it in the edge of Enset plantation’

ʃifara- donnə gəbba-m
 Donnə of ʃifara enter-PVF

‘Done of Shifara entered’

tʃ'orə-m bi-gəba ʃifara- donnə etə-n
 carry-GER when-enter ʃifara-donnə where-is

‘He entered and said “where is ʃifara donnə?” (To say Dove)’

daxim bənnə-m wət't''a-m lək'k'əmə-m wət't'a-m
 just now eat-PVF out-PVF collect-PVF out-PVF

‘Just now eat and out’

ʃifara-donnə bi-bɛ ʃifara-donnə bi-bɛ x''a-f eban an-bənnə bɛ-m
 ʃifara-donnə when-say ʃifara-donnə when-say he-EPH without NEG-eat say-PVF

‘When he call to Dove, the Dove didn’t respond. Then, he said that I will not eat without Dove
 and he left out’

tabat/tfə *ɛzə-m* *wət't'a-m* *əssət* *ti-tʃ'əllif* *angət-wita* *tʃ'əlləfə-nni-m*,
 scythe catch-PVF out-PVF Enset when-cut throat-3MSPOSS cut-3MS-PVF
 ‘Done of Shifara took the scythe, and when he was cutting leaves for the cattle, he slits the doves throat’

jə-bulle *angət* *ti-tʃ'əlləf* *jə-anə-m* *angət* *jə-tʃ'əlləf* *bɛ-m* *angət-wita* *arrət'ə-m*
 POSS-dove neck when-cut POSS-my-PVF neck REL-cut say-PVF neck-3MSPOSS cut-PVF
 ‘He cut his throat saying “If the dove throat is slit, let my throat be slit.”

adot *bi t-wət't'a* *ʃifara -donnə* *angət* *tə-arrət'ə-m*
 mother when IMPVF-out ʃifara-donnə neck PASS-cut-PVF
 ‘When his mother goes out, the throat of Donnə of ʃifara slit’

jə-ʃifara-donnə *angət* *tə-arrət'ə-m* *jə-anə-m* *angət* *ikkim* *jə-tə-arrət'*
 POSS-ʃifara-donnə neck PASS-cut-PVF POSS-I-PVF neck like this REL-PASS-cut
bɛ-tʃ'ə-m *angət-x'ita* *arrət'ə-tʃ'ə-m*
 say-3FS-PVF neck-3FSPOSS cut-3FS-PVF
 ‘She slit her throat saying if my Donnə of ʃifara throat is slit let my throat will be slit’

gərəd-m *wət't'a-tʃ'ə-m* *jə-ado-ɲɲa* *angət* *tə-arrət'ə-m* *jə-anə-m*
 girl-CON out-3FS-PVF POSS-mother-1S.POSS neck PASS-cut-PVF REL-I-CON
angət-ɲɲa *ikki* *jə-tə-arət*
 neck-1sPOSS like this REL-PASS-cut
 ‘The girl also said if my mother throat is slit let my throat will be slit’

abək'at'-m *baləbet-ɲɲa* *ʃifara -donnə* *mˀwətə-m* *jə-anə-m* *angət* *ikkim* *jə-tarət'*
 husband-also wife-1SPOSS ʃifara-donnə die-PVF POSS-I-also neck like this REL-cut
 ‘The wife of Donnə of ʃifara also said if my husband throat is slit let my throat will be slit and passed away’

innim *tə-ərərərət'ə-m* *annək'ə-m*,
 all PASS-cut each other-CVB die-PVF
 ‘All slit and died’

jorar *za* *jɪdʒdʒ* *jə-waga* *zəmantʃə* *k'una-wita* *tərrəfə-m* *waga-wita*

after sunset that boy POSS-animals keeper alone-with stay-PVF animal-3MSPOSS
wε-m bi-bāsa bə-bet səb jənnə

keep-GER when-come LOC-house person no

‘After sunset, a cowherd boy came with his cattle, but there was no one in the house’

innim annək''-m^w-m

All die-3MP-PVF

‘All are died’

gət/ə bāssa-m u u wi bε-m x^wa k^wətə assε-m tōnna-m abba- əŋŋa bija
 hyena come-PVF u u wi say-PVF he loft climb-PVF sit-PVF father-1sPOSS eat!

The cow herd tied his cows and climbed up to loft, then the hyena came and said “u u wi” he respond "eat my father"

u u wi adot- əŋŋa bija

u u wi mother-1SPOSS eat!

When the hyena said u u wi, he said “eat my mother”

u u wi g^wəbe-t/t/ə bija

u u wi brother-1SPOSS eat!

When he said “u u wi” he said “eat my brother”

u u wi gərəd bija

u u wi girl eat!

u u wi "eat a girl"

bānna bānna bāssa-m gəbba-m xetta ji-bε-k'e k'əbbət'ə-m annk'ə-wə-m
 eat eat come- PVF enter-PVF after that 3MS-eat-thing finish-PVF finish-PART-PVF

‘After finished eating he came into the house’

k^wətə bəmmin assε-xə-m? assε-xu-m bəmmin?

loft how climb-2MS-PVF climb-1S-PVF how

The hyena asked him “how do you climbed up to the loft? “ He said “I climbed” The hyena asked “How”,

g^weta jəxenn k^wək^wəssa agəbba-xu-m bə-midʒdʒadʒdʒa isat məɣie-xu-m
 God know dry Enset leave enter-1S-PVF LOC-fire place fire light on-1s-PVF
k^winn-əŋŋa tə-səme-ət g^winnən-əŋŋa tə-afər-ət bɛ-xu-mtannə asse-xu-m bɛ-m
 buttock-1SPOSS to-sky-to head-1SPOSS to-ground-to say-1S-GER climb-1S-PVF say-PVF
 ‘I brought a lot of dried Enset leaves, put them in the fire and climbed to the loft my head to the ground and my leg to the sky’

k^wək^wəssa aggəbba-m ənna-m məɣie-m g^winnən-wita tə-afər-ət k^winn-wita
 dried leave enter-PVF sit-PVF light on-PVF head-3MSPOSS to-ground-to buttuck-3MS.POSS
tə-səme-ət bi-bɛ bə-tʃ'əx^wə k^winn-wita wəɣga-nni-m,
 to-sky-to when-say INST-spear buttuck-3MSPOSS sting-3MS-PVF
 ‘The hyena also collected dried leaves of Enset and put on the fire and tried to climb the loft his head downward and his foot to upward. Then the cowherd stings his buttock with spear’

bə-t'ənnək'ə-n-xəma wət't'a-m bə-isat-we b^wənna-m wət't'a-m ʒarrəgə-m,
 PREP-fright-3MS-like out-PVF LOC-fire-DEF enter-PVF out-PVF go (rapidly)-PVF
 ‘The hyena frightened, entered in the fire and left out from the house’

bə-mənnagawita amaki bəssa-m abba-ŋŋa-x bi-bɛ m^wətə-m
 LOC-next day sister husband come-PVF father-1Sposs-question REL-say die-PVF
adot-ŋŋa-x m^wətə-tʃtʃ-m
 mother-1SPOSS-ques die-3FS- PVF
 ‘The next day his sister husband came and ask him where father and mother going. He told him as they passed away’

gərəd-x m^wətə-tʃtʃ-m ʃifara -donnə-x m^wətə-m
 girl-question die-3FS-PVF ʃifara-donnə-question die-PVF
 ‘He also told him that the girl and Shifara done passed away’

jə-abba-wita waga-n jə-amat-wita waga-n dʒəbbe-m
 POSS-father-3MS.POSS animals-COP POSS-father-in-law-3MSPOSS animals-COP collect-PVF
k^wutʃtʃ' abəŋŋə-m jannə gibir ezə-m gəŋŋ-wita
 collect make-PVF all materials catch-PVF country-3MS.POSS
 ‘He collected and took all his father’s (father-in-laws) animal and any materials’

gəŋŋ-wita ti-gəbba jə-za jidʒdʒ g^wəttətə-m bə-sox bə-awara g^wəttətə-m
country-3MS when-enter POSS-that boy pull-PVF LOC-thorn LOC-dirty pull-PVF
ʃabə-m dəm- tə-dəm ʃəkkətə-m nətʃʼtʃ^wə jə-nəbbərə tik^wur xənə-m aqəbba-m
pull-PVF blood-with-blood make-PVF white REL-was black be-PVF enter-PVF
‘When he came in to his region he pulled the cowherd with dirt and poison thorn, he makes his
white body bloody and black’

jə-gaz fəkkə-xu-m-ba marrəxə-xu-m a-bəssa-xu-m bε-nna-m
POSS-war go-1S-PVF-AUX conquer-1S-PVF CAUS-come-1S-PVF say-3FS-PVF
‘He told his wife I went to war and brought him to you’

zi jə-abba-ŋŋa fərəs ji-məse-u
this POSS-father-1SPOSS horse 3MS-seem-3MS
His wife said him “This horse seems my father’s horse”

jə-abba-x^j fərəs b-ann-xənə fərəs jənnə
POSS-father-2FSPOSS horse PREP-NEG-is horse there is no
‘There is no horse other than your father’s horse’

zi jə-abba-ŋŋa bora ji-məse-u jə-abba-x^j bora b-ann-xənə
this POSS-father-1SPOSS ox 3MS-seem-3MS POSS-father-2FSPOSS ox PREP-NEG-be
bora jənnə
ox there is no

She also said “this seems my father's ox”, he replied that “there no other than your father's ox”

zi jə-abba-ŋŋa innam ji-məse-u jə-abba-x^j innam
this POSS-father-1sPOSS cow 3MS-seem-3MS POSS-father-2FSPOSS cow
b-ann-xənə
PREP-NEG-be

innam jənnə marrəxə-xu-m jə-abəssa-xu-nnəm^w-k'e bijə sit'e f^wat tə-k^wib
cow there is no conquer-1MS-PVF REL-bring-1MS-3MS-thing eat drink milk and-butter
She also said “this seems my father’s cow. He replied that is “there is no other than your father's
cow”. “I conquered them from war, use the milk and butter of them”

xi bare sirə-xu-m marrəxə-xu-m abəssa-xu-nni-m giʒʒə,
 that slave buy-1MS-PVF conquer-1MS-PVF bring-1MS-3MS-PVF use!
 ‘I brought this slave from the war use him’

jə-t'on tə-mək'ət'k'et' tə-t'abət'' bε-u bə-addəgə-n dak'i-bb-u-wə jidʒdʒ
 REL-wrestle with-mortar REL-struggle say-3MS if-win-3MS laugh3FS-MALF-3MS-3MS boy
bə-addəgə zɪnf-u
 if-win hit-3MS
 ‘Let him wrestle with mortar, if he throws it down hit him, if the mortar throws him laughs at him’

iga bə-ant'ift namə bε-u,
 water INST-grassbasket bring say-3MS
 ‘Tell him to bring water from in a grass basket’

isat bə-gʷərəbet bə-nat'a namə bε-u
 fire LOC-neighbor INST-grass bring say-3MS
 ‘Ask him to bring fire with grasses’

gidjə-wita jə-fərəs əgrət,
 Sleep-3MS GEN-horse back
 Let he sleep on the back of the horse

jə-buk'urə fendijə jəbija fərət jə-bik'urə simat jəst'e bε-m azzəzə-
 POSS-mule dung eat. JUSSIVE food POSS-mule urine drink.JUS say-PVF order-PVF
 ‘Let his food be mule's dung and his drink be mules urine’

x'a jonim məsse-nna-m,
 She real think-3MS-PVF
 ‘She believes him’

tə-mək'et'k'ət' ti-t'abbət' ti-ji-addig ti-zənf-t ti-wət'k' ti-dək'-wə-t,
 with-mortar when-wrestle when-3MS-win 3MS-hit-3MS when-lie 3FS-laugh-MALF-3MS
 ‘When he wrestle with mortar if he throws down him she hit him, if the mortar throws him she laughs at him’

bə -ak'k''ja əddijə b'ənnə-m ti-bəsa jə-adot gərəd bəssa-t/tf-m iga namə
 LOC-after river go-PVF when-come POSS-mother girl come-3FS-PVF water bring
ti-bə-j-e bə-ant'ift ti-ji-a-nət't''if isat namə ti-bə-j-e
 when-say-EPHEN-1S INST-grass basket when-3MS-CAUS-leak fire bring 3FS-say-1S
bə-nat'a ti-nt'a t'a
 INST-grass when-sayt''at''a

‘After that when bring water from the river, my mother daughter makes fun of me, to bring water she tells me in a grass basket, it is leaking’

jə-t'on tə-t'abət ti-bə-j-e tə-mək''ət'ik''ət bə-addəg-xu-n ti-zənf-e
 REL-wrestle PASS-wrestle 3FS-say-1S with-mortar if-win-1s-3MS IMPVF-hit-1S
bə-addəg-e ti-dək''-bb-i
 if-win-me 3FS-laugh-MALF-1S

‘To wrestle she tells me with the mortar, if I throw it down, she hits me, if he thrown me down she laughs at me’

ə-sət/tf''-n jə-b'ik'urə simat ə-bənnə-n jə-imar fendijə bə-m ti-bə
 1S-drink-is GEN-mule urine 1S-eat-COP POSS-donkey dung say-PVF when-say
g'wərabət səmma-m int'e- wit/tf''ə-m simə-u bə-jja-m
 neighbor hear-PVF let-out-PVF hear.2FS.JUSSIVE-3MS say-3FS-PVF

‘My drinking is mule's urine; my food is donkey's dung. At this time heard from the neighbor and told her to hear the boy’

zi jə-adot gərəd bəssa-t/tf-m tə-mək'ət'k'ət' jə-t'on tə-t'abət'
 this POSS-mother girl come-3FS-PVF with-mortar REL-wrestle PASS-wrestle
ti-bə-j-e bə-addəg-e ti-dək''-bi bə-addəg-e ti-zənf-e,
 3FS-say-EPHEN-1S if-win-1S 3FS-laugh-MALF if-win-1S-3MS 3FS-hit-1S

‘She heard when he said the daughter of my mother became very crude. To wrestle she tells me with the mortar, if I throw it down, she hits me, if he thrown me down she laughs at me’

fərat-əjja jə-imar fendijə ə-sət/tf''-n iga-jja jə-imar simat
 food-1S.POSS POSS-donkey dung 1S-drink-3MS water-1sPOSS POSS-donkey urine

bε-m ti-bε wət't'a- t/t/-m at/t/'ama-t/t/-u-m
 say-PVF when-say out-3FS-PVF hear secretly-3FS-PVF
 ‘She heard him when saying “My drinking is donkey's urine; my food is donkey's dung”

mik'e-n bε-t/t/-m gəbba-t/t/-m bi-təssε-e-n,
 What-COP say-3FS-PVF enter-3FS-PVF when-ask-3FS-3MS
 ‘When she ask him what he was saying’

ikki-tin zi jə-abba-x' fərəs-n jə-abba-x' b'ik'urə-n zi
 like this-is this POSS-father-2FS horse-COP POSS-father-2FS mule-COP this
jə-abba-x' borra-n anə g'wəbbe-x'-nx' ebəljə-n-x',
 POSS-father-2FS ox-COP I brother-2FS-1S someone-COP- 1SG
 ‘It is like this, this is your father horse, this is your father mule, this is your father horse, I am
 your brother my name is someone’

adot-x' ziki gət/ə ak'ya-nna-m angət-xinnəm' ziki tə-t/əlləf-m'-m
 mother-2FS like this hyena eat-3FS-PVF neck-3MP like this PASS-cut-3MP-PVF
gət/ə bəsər xinnəm' bənnam anə ziki wət't'a-xu-m fəkka-xu-m bε-m
 hyena meat 3MP eat-PVF I like this out-1S-PVF go-1s-PVF say-PVF
əddə-nna-m,
 tell-3FS-PVF
 ‘Your mother has eaten by hyena, they slit their own throats and eaten by hyena, I safe myself
 like this’

ikki-tti-n bε-t/t/-m at't'əbə-t/t/-m t/ima a-sət/t/'ə-t/t/-m
 Like this-FOC-COP say-3FS-PVF wash-3FS-PVf anthelmintic CAUS-drink-3FS-PVF
at-təfa-t/t/-m fərat a-bənnam-t/t/-m gəddε-t/t/-u-m
 CAUS-vomit-3FS-PVF food CAUS-eat-3FS-PVF sleep-3FS-3MS-PVF
 ‘She washed her brother and asks him to drink and spit out anthelmintic to wash his stomach’

baləbet-we ji-gəbba-dar g'wədʒə x'wərrə-t/t/-m bə-zəngin k'in kəbbad g'wədʒə
 husband-DEF IMPVF-enter-until hole dig-3FS-PVF LOC-wall buttock big hole
x'wərrə-t/t/-m a-ləbbəsə-t/t/-m t/ət/t/'ə-t/t/-m

dig-3FS-PVF CAUS-wear-3FS-PVF arrange-3FS-PVF

‘Before her husband came she dug a hole and covered with mat and clothes’

bə-zi tə-gədde bə-dənn-ət saxəta səkkəkə-t/tf-m jəxə

PASS-sleep LOC-inside-to sharp wood put-3FS-PVF take.2MS.JUSS

bə-zi tona af^wi bε-t/tf-u-m

LOC-this sit.IMPER rest IMPER say-3FS-3MS-PVF

‘Inside the hole she arranged a sharp wood and asks him to sit and take a rest on the hole’

k'unna-m-ge bəssa-m ti-tənna b^wənnə-m fəkka-m saxəta wəgga-nni-m

only-CONJ-time come-PVF when-sit enter-PVF go-PVF sharp wood hit-3MS-PVF

‘While he came and sit he entered in the hole and the sharp wood heart him’

zax iga bə-f^we a-bəssa-t/tf-m g^wədə-t/tf-wə-m

that water LOC-up CAUS-3FS-PVF pour-3FS-MALF-PVF

‘She poured that cool water over him’

bək'k'a a-ləbbəsə-t/tf-m k'əbbərə-t/tf-u-m xim- zəba ikki -nəb^wər-i-m

finish CAUS-wear-3FS-PVF bury-3FS-3MS-PVF on that-way like this-leave-IMPER

boji-m

say.IMPER-PVF

‘Finished, it is said, she covered with clothed and buried the corpse. The leaves like this’

Appendix F: Tales of a man and a girl

(Taken from Awlachew 2010: 176-179)

1. *att-miss jə-tixə-wita tixə ji-fədʒdʒə-ət assəbə-mta gərəd-we ji-aʒʒ-ət*
 one-man POSS-son-POSS son 3ms-mary-to think-GER girl-DEF 3MS-see-to
jə-gərəd-we-bet ji-fəkka-u
 POSS-girl- DEF-house 3MS-went-2MS
 ‘A person thinks to marry his son and went to the girl’s house to see the girl’
2. *jə-gərəd-we bet ti-fəkka gərəd jə-k’unna-x’ita bet*
 POSS-girl-Def house when-went girl POSS-alone-2FS house
ti-t-k’irə-agəŋŋə-nna-m
 when-IMPVE-keep-got-3FS-PVF
 ‘When he went the girl’s house, she was alone keeping her house’
3. *abba-x’ita tə-adot-x’ita an-nəbbər-m^w*
 father-3FSPOSS CONJ-mother-3FSPOSS NEG-were-3PL
 ‘Her father and her mother were not present’
4. *gərəd-m angət-x’ita səbbərə-t/tf/-m tonna-t/tf/-m ba*
 girl-EMPH neck-3FS break 3FS-PVF sit-3FS-PVF AUX
 ‘She was sit her neck lying forward to the ground’
5. *miss bəssa-m jə-anə-gərəd abba tə-adot-ax’i etə fəkka-m^w-m bə-m*
 man came-PVF POSS-my-girl father CONJ-mother-2FS where go.PFV-3P-PVF say-PVF
ti-təsɛ-nna
 When-ask-3FS
 ‘When a man came and asked her " My girl where are your father and your mother?’
6. *abba-ŋŋa jə-an-bɛ-n kəs ji-kassə-ət adot-əŋŋa dəmmo janə-na*
 father-1S.POSS REL-NEG-eat-3MS pay 3MS-pay-to mother-1FSPOSS also has-3FS
ti-odə-ət fəkka-t/tf/-m bɛ-t/tf/-m ʒəbbərə-t/tf/-n-u-m
 3MS-tell-to go.PFV-3FS-PVF say-3FS-PVF answer-3FS-BEN-3MS-PVF
 ‘My father is to pay the money he didn't use, my mother is to tell what she has" she answered.’
7. *k’əli ekkəsə-m ti-bɛ-i-n-k’e lik’k’e-m an-gəbba-n*
 little stay-PVF what-say-3FS-3MS-thing a lot-CONJ NEG-understand-3MS
 ‘He stayed a little; he didn't understand what she said’

8. *əge gərəd-əŋŋa-o əge zi waga-xim^w e-fət/e-m^w-we ti-bε-nna*
 so gər-1SPOSS-EMPH so this cows-2PPOSS NEG-untie-3P-QUES when-say-3FS
 ‘When he asked her “why these cows don’t untied?”’
9. *f^wat-xinnəm^w an-arəw-i. k^wank^w’a-xinnəm^w ji-xε-i*
 milk-3MP NEG-milking-IMPER. behaviour-3MP IMPVF-know-IMPER
ji-arəbə-m^w səb jənnə
 IMPVF-milking-3P person there is no
 ‘They didn’t milk. There is no the one who knows their behavior to milked them’
10. *adot-əŋŋa-m wem abba-ŋŋa-m bə-an-xənə i/ff-i-səb*
 mother-1S .POSS-CONJ or father-1SPOSS-CONJ PREP-NEG-is other-person
e-ji-arəbə-m^w bε-t/tf-m
 NEG-IMPVF-3P say-3FS-PVF
 ‘Only my father and my mother can milked them, no other than them" she said’
11. *bəmmi ti-bε-nna att-we innam bə-k’um ji-arəwi-k’e-n*
 how when-say-3FS one-DEF cow PREP-stand 3MS-milked-thing-COP.PRES
 ‘When he asked her, "how", "One of the cows is milked by someone with stand’
12. *x^wett-əŋŋə-we bə-gulbət tonna-e-m ji-arəwi-k’e-n*
 two-cardinal-DEF PREP-knee sit-IMPER-PVF 3MS-milked-thing-COP.PRES
 ‘The second cow is milked someone with stands on knee’
13. *səstt-əŋŋə-we tonna-mta ji-arwi-k’e-n bε-t/tf-m odə-t/tf-m*
 three-cardinal-DEF sit-GER IMPVF-milked-thing-COP.PRES say-3FS-PVF tell-3FS-PVF
 ‘The third one is milked by somebody sitting”, said and told.
14. *miss-we bə-gərəd-we məls attimk’e an-gəba-n gira*
 man-DEF PREP-girl-DEF answer nothing NEG-understand-3MS confuse
tə-gabbə-m
 CAUS-understand-PVF
 ‘The man confused with her answer, he understand nothing’
15. *k’əli-k’e assəbə-mta jə-anə gərəd jə-ʒəbbər-xⁱ-nni məls-ikko*
 a little-thing think-GER POSS-my girl REL-answer-2FS-1S answer-EMPH
gira-at-gəbbe-m an-gəbe
 confuse-CAUS-understand-PVF NEG-Understand
 ‘He thinks a little and told her" I didn’t understand your answer, I am confused”

16. *mik'e wə-be-xi-n bε-m en en-xiita ti-ji-a33-nna*
 what VN-say-2FS-is say-PVF eye eye-3FS when-3MS-see-3FS
 'He said her "what are you saying" and when he see her eyes again and again'
17. *abba abba age ikki wə-be-n*
 father father ok likethis VN-say-COP.
 'My father Ok, it is to say like this'
18. *abba-ɲɲa an-be-wə ida wə-be-ɲɲa jə-səb wəs xənə-mta*
 father-1SPOSS NEG-eat-EMPH pay VN-say-1S GEN-person behalf be-GEN
bə-wəs ji-inkirattətə-u wə-be-ɲɲa-n
 PREP-behalf IMPV-introuble-3MS VN-say-1S-COP.PRES
 'When I say my father went to pay that he didn't he was to someone and to say he is in troubled'
19. *adot-ɲɲa jannə-nna ti-odə-ət wə-be-ɲɲa wənfit ti-ti-wəs-ət*
 mother-1SPOSS has-3FS 3FS-tell-GER VN-say-1s grass basket PREP-3FS-lend-to
jə-səxər wənfit ti-ti-wəs-ət fəkkə-t/tf-m wə-be-nna-n
 POSS-local drink grass PREP-IMPVF-to go.PFV-3SF-PVf VN-say-1P-is
 'When I say my mother went to tell what she has, is that she lending a grass basket which is used to filter local drinks'
20. *ɲɲa wənfit za-m jannə-na xəma ti-odə-i wənfit*
 we grass basket that-CONJ has-3FS PREP I MPVF-tell-3FS grass basket
ti-ti-wəs səb-we ji-xε-ba-t wə-be-ɲɲa-n
 when-3FS-lend person-DEF 3MS-know-MALF-3FS VN-say-1S-COP.PRES
 'When she lend the grass basket her neighbor knows what she has'
21. *waga-we dəmmo att-we bə-k'um ji-arəwi-t wə-be-ɲɲa ji/fi*
 cows-DEF EMPH one-DEF PREP-stand 3MS-milked-3MS VN-say-1S other
səb-k'e-n wə-be-ɲɲa-n
 person-thing-COP.PRES VN-say-1S-is
 'Someone milked the cows also standing means it is not ours, it is others'

Appendix G: Sample Muher story text

gurage bə-ettə-n jətnesa? bə-ettə-n bə-min-n je-bəssa? gurage bə-wanna-ŋŋinnet bəssa-m ji-wuj bə-eritera kiflā xagər be-akalə-guzaj bi-wuj mädər tənəssa-m tannə bə-gize-wita je-nəbbər-m^w jə-t'or məri ajmäläl bi-wuj mädər bə-soddo afər tonno-m^w-m ba. bə-xi bə-tonnə-m^w-ət bätälaj abgaz sibat jə-zi jə-gurage-we jə-t'or meri-we x^wənə-m^w-m. jə-bəssa-m^w-we abgaz sibat bə-gura mädər tonna-m^w-m banno ji-wuj. bə-xi jə-bəssa gurage boijm. indägəna dämmo iffī-we səb-imma bə-xi-m-ət bə-eritrea bə-nəbbər-m^w-b^wə mädər bə-akalə guzaj gura? ji-buj mädər banno. jə-tənəssa-m^w-b^wə. gurage ji-buj-ə-m bə-xi mädər jə-bəssa-m^w-tt-n ji-bε-u gībit-we. inna tarik-we bə-xi ajnət-n gurage ji-wuj-m^w. bə-xi ank^jə bə-ajmäläl tinəwiri tinəwiri je-abgaz sibat deng^jə bə-x^wənə-m^w-we gībit att-we mixirijə ji-buj-t. zi axuŋŋa m^wəxir ni-bε-ne-we m^wəxirije jI-buj jə-abgaz sibat att-we tixə-n. abgaz mixirijə iffī-we mixirijə zam tiŋŋat za təm^wəxirət bəssa-m m^wəxir ni-bε-ne bəmwəxir arrəsəm iffī-we za-m bəgəŋŋ bätelijajə mädər gībit-we bə-xi-m bə-soddo afər tonna-m. xi-we bə-tf'əbona gurage wərədəm wədə dəbub wədə xadija məsmər təbtattənīm^w-m ji-buj-t. xi-we za-m səbatwe betəgurage. bəsəbat biŋŋa səbat bet gurage nəbbərnəm. jank^jə mixirijə tinəbir bə-m^wəxir afər tinəbir səbat deng^jə tf'əŋŋəm ji-buj-t. mixirijə səbat dengja bə-m^wəxir tf'əŋŋəm. xinnəm^w zi səbat-we däng^jə bə-m^wəxir jə-tf'əŋŋi-m^w-we səbat-we deng^jə manni-jə-m^w? att-we widmatt'ərə-n, att-we dəssa-n, att-we əfītəməŋŋə-n, att-we ɟanno-n, att-we aklil, att-we dʒərətman, səbat-əŋŋə-we assonəm^w. zi səbat-we deng^jə zi axuŋŋ nazine t'ək'ilala m^wəxir bəzamtəŋŋə gəŋŋ-we jəmənəm^wi zi jabgaz sibat səbat deng^jə-nə-m^w jə-məxərija səbet-we dengja jə-tf'əŋŋə-nə-m^w m^wəxir gugur mənnanīm ji-nəbir-u. jiftət jiftət xi-nə-m^wim tə-xi-nə-m^w betgabbəm^wit. x^wett məto amet minamin betgabbəm^wit bəxiank^jə axuŋŋa zam iffī t'ibim jənnət jəxwənət jitgabbəm^wit. be-səbet-we att-we k'unna-wita təx^wage e-tigabba ləmisale wudmatt'ərə tasko jətgabba banxəne. wudmatt'ərə təwudmatt'ərə bitgabbo. səbat-we att-we tə-att-we jətgaba banəxne. x^wa-m tə-zi təməto-we amət ank^jə banxəne. təməto-we amət jiftət xinnəm^wim betgabbəm^wit. za ək^wa səb-we jəbəzat mädər-m-we intfə jəbat sibat-we axuŋŋa xinnəm^w tə-xinnəm^w wətegabba k'ərrəsəm. ɟin widmatt'ərə tə-widmatt'ərə etgabba. asko te-asko etgabba. dʒərərīma tə-dʒərətīma etgabba. be-zi ajnət banno. jə-axuŋŋa-we ɟizijə təmola godəl akkəbbərə-m jə-nəbbərə-m nənno. bə-x^wənnə ɟin bə-widmatt'ərə-m x^wa tə-x^wa-m bet təljajəmitanə jə-k'unawita xi-we bə-bet indägəna bodmatt'ərə misale jarbättət jifədu. arbət deng^jə jinnənīt widmatt'ərə arbət-we att-we tə-att-we sitgabbo. x^wa-m be-zi bə-axuŋŋa-we zəbən bə-zi tassir tə-xuɟam amət zi jətgabba banxənə. bə-zi jiftət betgabbəm^wit. innīm jarwa jarwa-wita bet-wita

*k'irəm ji-nəbir-k'e banno. axuŋna ge k'əli zi arbət-we bet wətgabba bəɡred jəwətt'a minamin
təbaŋnem wətgabba k'ərrəsəm jəw je-səwi-m məbzat jə-kiristina-we-m xajmanot təsəbat tiwıld
ank'^jə ji-buj-k'e jənnə alfo alfo wətgabba k'ərrəsəm. axuŋna jətgabba wəbaŋna tex^wən jə-k'ənə-
we xunet jasredan. be-zi ajnət ji*nəbir-u. zərinna jəbiza mwəxir axuŋn bəzzam. kətəma-m-we
innimət mənnani-m-we. be-zi jilik' jəmiŋanninnə. bunnə jəg^wəddələ g^wəta jəmiŋawə*