

Specificational copular clauses in Beria – a preliminary report

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This poster presents data on copular clauses in Beria (also known by the exonym Zaghawa). Beria is an under-described Nilo-Saharan language which is spoken at the border of Chad and Sudan. Our particular focus is on the Wagi dialect of Darfur. Research on this variety by Isabel Compes (University of Cologne) and Elsadig Omda Ibrahim Elnur, a native speaker of the language and PhD student at the Institute of Linguistics, University of Cologne, dates back to 2014. Data collection took place in fieldwork in Sudan in 2015 and in 2018, as well as in field method classes taught by Isabel Compes and Birgit Hellwig from 2014 on at the University of Cologne (see the archived corpora in ELAR (Compes 2015-2016), and LAC (Compes & Hellwig 2023a-d) as well as Omda & Compes 2026, Compes 2021, 2024, Laureck 2024, Gayler, Omda & Compes 2023).

The poster reports on work in progress. Data collection and its ongoing analysis is conducted by students and Isabel Compes in cooperation. In January 2026, the last field method class went on a short field trip to Bremen where we met five Beria speakers. One group of students used the Fieldwork Questionnaire Copular Clauses/Nonverbal predication of the SynCop project (Hartmann et al. 2025). Since we already have some data on predicative copular clauses in our corpora, we concentrated on specificational copular clauses and tested the scenarios provided in the questionnaire. The background for this decision is that, in previous studies, the analysis of the marker =*dI* is debated as either a focus marker (Jakobi 2006, Jakobi & Crass 2004) or a specificational copula (Wolfe & Adam 2018). Both studies are based on the Kube dialect and data for the Wagi dialect is lacking. Thus, our data collection filled this gap and in addition we worked with more speakers which gives us a basis to compare not only dialects, but also speaker variation. In the poster session, we will, first, introduce predication copular clauses to provide the background. Second, we will show the preliminary results on specificational copular clauses based on the data collection with the questionnaire which, however, was (and still is) considerably extended during transcribing sessions. Third, we will evaluate these results in the light of the previous studies. A last point will concern a reflection on the particular field work situation and the use of the questionnaire.

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