ASPECTS OF THE COPULA IN WELSH AND MODERN STANDARD ARABIC

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In many languages, the copula has two rather different uses. On the one hand, it has a predicational use, in which it ascribes a property of some kind to an individual or thing (or a group of individuals or things). On the other hand, it has what can be called an identity use, in which two individuals or things (or groups of individuals or things) are identified or equated. This raises the question: Do these two uses mean that there are there are two copula lexical items? Or is there a single lexical item which somehow has two different uses? Many languages also have what can be called missing copula sentences, sentences with no form of the copula where similar sentences in the same language or other languages have the copula. This raises the question: Do missing copula sentences involve a phonologically empty form of the copula? Or not?

Two languages that are relevant here are Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Welsh. In both languages, there are syntactic differences between predicational and identity uses of the copula. However, the two uses involve the same forms in MSA and mainly the same forms in Welsh. The similarities and the differences between the two uses can be handled by assuming a lexical type with two subtypes. Both languages also have missing copula sentences. They are a more systematic feature of MSA than of Welsh, but both languages have a variety of different examples. They look (with one exception in the case of MSA) like copula sentences without the copula. This suggests that the facts should be accounted for by postulating a phonologically empty form of the copula.