A Contrastive Study of Copula in Uzbek and English:
Towards a Better Pedagogical Grammar

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In teaching English, copula seems to be one of the essential parts of the knowledge to get the learners ready for using the new language skills, perhaps, which is why some textbooks start with teaching the copula *be*. At least, it seems to be the case in Uzbekistan, as it can be observed in the English textbook for the beginners. The approach can be justified by the seemingly simple structure of copula sentences, which allows to make some simple statements as *I am a boy, This is a pen* in just a few minutes of the first lessons. But unfortunately, quite soon, we notice that some of the children are making some mistakes and the mistakes seem to have certain common patterns. Besides, some children ask what these *am/is/are* literally mean. How to deal with the mistakes and the questions? Do we really have proper explanations for them? Are we teaching copula sentences properly or are we even prepared for that, in the first place?

In this paper, I intend to address the most essential questions and to offer some solutions for the problems and difficulties in teaching copula at secondary schools of Uzbekistan.

Firstly, we shall bring out as many issues as possible. In order to achieve that, we shall view the copula verb from two perspectives: from the perspective of its usage in the English language and its usage in the Uzbek language. From either of the perspectives, we discover some discrepancies and similarities in their relationship. Though, taking a dual perspective is crucial for the holistic understanding of the relationship, the constraints of this paper allow us only to discuss one of them, which is, in fact, more suitable and beneficial for beginners. As the English language is a foreign language for Uzbeks, they naturally face some difficulties in learning, but if the difficulties are justified and explained after thorough research is to be
verified on the pages of this paper. First we discover the fundamental reasons for the difficulties in learning copula, and then we investigate further to find more issues within various usages of be. We shall investigate the textbook and identify how copula is presented in it. We shall discover two fundamental problems: 1) the mistreatment of English copula by neglecting its negative relationship to Uzbek copula constructions in present tenses and 2) the treatment of the concept of “verb” in Uzbek language classes, which describes only action verbs and by omission, distorts proper understanding of other types of verbs as stative and copula.

After careful considerations of possible issues and difficulties, before giving any solutions, we shall make sure the existence of the Uzbek copula itself, which is largely unknown to the teachers in Uzbekistan. We shall do it by the method of comparison of similar constructions of the Turkish and Uzbek languages, which belong to the same family and share more similarities than differences. Using this method we discover a very important and interesting phenomenon called zero copula, whose importance is in its ability to ‘explain’ present tense copula constructions of the Uzbek language. Besides, we come across with two main copula verbs in Uzbek: e- and bo‘l, both of which have some similarities and differences between each other. We shall also find out that there are a few more copula-like verbs in Uzbek, the understanding of which might help with some predicational sentences, but the limitations of the paper does not allow us to go into their discussion. Nevertheless, the main copula verbs themselves will be used to explain most of the things.

The paper consists of three chapters: 1) the description of the background situation in Uzbekistan, 2) the analysis of the treatment of grammatical knowledge at the secondary schools to reveal any possible difficulties and problems and 3) solutions for the problems and difficulties.

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