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Titel: Modal meanings of two copulas in Western Yugur

Autor: Chen , Zongzhen

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Kontakt/Contact

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SUB Göttingen
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1
37073 Göttingen

✉ info@digizeitschriften.de

Modal meanings of two copulas in Western Yugur

Zongzhen Chen

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The article studies the modal meanings expressed by the two copulas *er* and *dro* in Western Yugur, a Turkic minority language in China. The author concludes that the Western Yugur copula *er* denotes an assertive nuance whereas the copula *dro* marks presumptivity. The use of the presumptive copula depends on the attitude of the speaker to the truth of the proposition.

Zongzhen Chen, *Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing 100081, P. R. of China. E-mail: yutianerdong@163.com*

1. Mood and modality

In Western Yugur, there are two moods expressed in various tense forms of verbs: the indicative mood used for making statements and the interrogative mood used for asking questions.¹ Each mood has two forms: an affirmative and a negative. There are thus four predicative forms of verbs: an affirmative and a negative form in the indicative mood, and an affirmative and a negative form in the interrogative mood. (While the affirmative interrogative form is a normal question, the negative interrogative may be used for rhetorical questions.) For example, the four predicative forms in the past tense of the verb *bar* 'to go' are:

- (1) a. *bahrdə* '(He) went.' (affirmative- indicative)
- b. *barmahdə* '(He) did not go.' (negative- indicative)
- c. *bahrdəm* 'Did (he) go?' (affirmative- interrogative, i.e. a normal question)
- d. *barmahdəm* 'Didn't (he) go?' (negative- interrogative, i.e. a rhetorical question)

The corresponding four forms in *ip dro* are:

- (2) a. *barəp dro* '(He) went.' (affirmative- indicative)
- b. *barmen dro* '(He) did not go.' (negative- indicative)
- c. *barəp drəm?* 'Did (he) go?' (affirmative- interrogative, i.e. a normal question)
- d. *barmen drəm?* 'Didn't (he) go?' (negative- interrogative, i.e. a rhetorical question).

¹ The article was translated from the Chinese original by Xiaoqian Li.

The two forms, *bahrdə* in (1a) and *barəp dro* in (2a), differ with respect to modality. The forms of the past tense mean '(he) went'; *bahrdə* may be interpreted as '(he) went', while *barəp dro* expresses a modal meaning.

2. Copula

Copulas in Western Yugur are used to relate the subject and the predicate which denote the attribute, the state, the action, or the change of the subject. The two basic copulas, *er* and *dro*, have the same meaning of 'be', though *er* also means 'right' or 'correct', and *dro*, 'have' or 'exist'.²

The verbs *er* 'be' and *tur* 'stand, stay, reside' already exist in Old Turkic, i.e., in Orkhon Turkic and in Old Uyghur. Obviously, the copula *er* of Western Yugur and the verb *er* of Old Turkic are cognates. As for *tur-*, the apparent cognate in Western Yugur is *dur* 'to stop, to reside'. The linking verb *dro* originated from *turur*, a participle form of the verb *tur-*.

The copula *er* has an allomorph *jer* with prothetic *j*. Other allomorphs, such as *erer*, *ere*, *jere*, and *e*, are sometimes observed, too. The copula *dro* also has allomorphs: *dər*, *do*, *də*, and *dzə*. Some speakers even use the form *dərur*. The allomorphs of the two copula thus show that not only *dro* but also *er* derives from a participle; i.e., *er* is a shortened form of the Old Turkic participle *erür*, just as *dro* goes back to *turur*.

3. Forms and meanings of the copulas

Although *er* and *dro* do not show complete verbal paradigms of voice, tense and aspect, they have a few inflectional forms, as follows:

(3) Forms of *er*

- a. *mer* or *ber* 'Is (it)?' (< *me/be* + *er*, or *me/be* + *erer*);
- b. *erse* 'If (it) is' (-*se* is the affix used to form the conditional mood)
- c. *ehgən* '(It) can be' (< *er* + *gən*; *gən* is the suffix used to form the participle in the past tense)
- d. *mehgən* or *bəhgən* 'Can (it) be?' (< *me/be* + *ehgən*), *me/be* is the interrogative particle)
- e. *emes* '(It) is not' (-*mes* is the affix used to form the negative participle in the objective future tense)

(4) Forms of *dro*

- a. *dram* 'Is (it)?' (< *dro* + *me*, or *dro* + *mu*), both *me* and *mu* are the interrogative particle)
- b. *darsa* 'If (it) is' (< *dur* + *sa*; *sa* is the affix forming the conditional mood)
- c. *dəhgən*, *təgən* or *təgən* '(It) indeed is' (< *durur* *ehgən*, or < *durgən* *ehgən*)

² Roos calls these copulas the copulative particle and the evidential particle, respectively (Roos 2000: 148ff).

Although the copulas *er* and *dro* both mean ‘be’, there is some difference: *er* is generally used for propositions with assertion, while *dro* has a presumptive meaning. Consequently, *er* can be characterized as a marker of assertion, and *dro* as a presumptive form, just as the case of verbal predicates that we have given in Section 1. This distinction is also found between the corresponding forms of *er* and *dro*. For example, *mer/ber* (3a), a form of *er*, is assertive, and the corresponding *drəm* (4a), a form of *dro*, is presumptive. However, in the case of *ehgən* (3c) and *dəhgən* (4c), the reverse is the case; *ehgən*, a form of *er*, means just ‘(it) can be’ and is therefore regarded as presumptive, while *dəhgən*, a form of *dro*, contains an assertion with certainty ‘(it) can indeed be, (it) can certainly be’. This may be the result of semantic change over a long period.

Now, let us characterize in a more detailed way the difference in meaning between assertive and presumptive copulas. Generally speaking, in indicative sentences speakers use assertive forms when they speak about something they know or grasp well. For example, *er* or *jer* ‘(it) indeed is’, and *emes* or *emes er* ‘(it) indeed is not’ are used in this situation. Speakers use presumptive forms when they talk about what they do not know or grasp very well, or when they consider it unnecessary to emphasize the uncertainty of their assertion. For example, *dro* ‘(it) is, (it) probably is’ and *emes dro* ‘(it) is not, (it) probably is not’ are used in this situation. In interrogative sentences, speakers use an assertive form when they ask the addressee something they think that the addressee knows or grasps well, when they ask the addressee something they think the addressee can verify, or when they ask the addressee to show an unambiguous attitude. In this situation, *mer / ber* ‘is it indeed ... ?’, *emes mer* ‘isn’t it indeed ... ?’ are used. However, speakers use the presumptive form when they do not think that the addressee knows well what they are asking, or when they require the addressees just to give an answer without verifying it or without showing a definite attitude. In this situation, *drəm* ‘is (it) ... ?’ and *emes drəm* ‘isn’t (it) ... ?’ are used.

4. Copulas attached to nominal predicates

Copulas can be attached to nominals, such as nouns, adjectives, numerals, pronouns, etc. For example:

- (5) a. *bu aq soqba jer.* ‘This is indeed millet.’
 b. *bu aq soqba emes (er).*³ ‘This indeed is not millet.’
- (6) a. *bu aq soqba me(r)?* ‘Is this indeed millet?’
 b. *bu aq soqba emes me(r)?* ‘Isn’t this indeed millet?’

³ The linking verb *er* or *r* in parentheses can be omitted, and the meaning of the resultant sentence remains the same.

These sentences are indicative, and interrogative, and assertive. Speakers can also describe the same facts, using presumptive copula:

- (7) a. *bu aq soqba dro.* 'This is millet.'
 b. *bu aq soqba emes dro.* 'This is not millet.'
- (8) a. *bu aq soqba drəm?* 'Is this millet?'
 b. *bu aq soqba emes drəm?* 'Isn't this millet?'

The choice between assertive or presumptive forms is according to the speaker's subjective decision. In other words, either can be accepted in the same contexts, as in (9) and (10):

- (9) a. *gol kəsi kəm er?* 'Who is that person?'
 b. *gol kəsi wang siliŋ er.* 'That person is General Wang.'
- (10) a. *gol kəsi kəm dər?* 'Who is that person?'
 b. *gol kəsi wang siliŋ dər.* 'That person is General Wang.'

However, two general rules may be pointed out. The form *dər* is used when the question may remain unanswered.

The second rule of usage concerns the speaker's involvement: when the speaker is talking about something relevant to himself/herself, the assertive form is more acceptable; in contrast, when the speaker is telling something relevant to somebody else, the presumptive form is more acceptable. In the case of interrogative sentences, however, the assertive form conforms better to the second person than to the first and third persons, for which the presumptive form is more suitable, as follows:

- (11) a. *bu məsdəŋ aht jere.* 'This is (indeed) our horse.'
 b. *bu selemnəŋ aht dro.* 'This is your horse.'
 c. *bu golarnəŋ aht dro.* 'This is their horse.'
- (12) a. *bu məsdəŋ aht drəm?* 'Is this (really) our horse?'
 b. *bu selemnəŋ aht ber?* 'Is this (indeed) your horse?'
 c. *bu golarnəŋ aht drəm?* 'Is this their horse?'

Besides the "common usages" mentioned above, there are some other usages applied to special cases. For example:

- (13) a. *bu məsdəŋ aht dro.* 'This is (can be) our horse.'
 b. *bu selemnəŋ aht jere.* 'This is (indeed) your horse.'
 c. *bu golarnəŋ aht jere.* 'This is (indeed) their horse.'

- (14) a. *bu məsdəŋ aht ber?* 'Is this (indeed) our horse?'
 b. *bu seleməŋ aht drəm?* 'Is this (really) your horse?'
 c. *bu golarnəŋ aht ber?* 'Is this (indeed) their horse?'

Compared with the corresponding sentences in (11) and (12), exemplifying the common usage mentioned above, each sentence in (13) and (14) includes a different copula, the presumptive instead of the assertive, and vice versa. Such a usage, of course, reflects the speaker's different attitudes toward the situation. For example, in (13a) and (14a) the speaker is not quite familiar with his/her own horse. In the other examples, the speaker suspects the ownership of the horse, or the speaker wants to make the situation more concrete.

So far we have examined sentences in the affirmative and in the interrogative mood, though the same argument also applies to the negative indicative and the negative interrogative (rhetorical question) mood. The following are the examples of the common usage.

- (15) a. *kər menəŋ ənə emes (er)* . 'Kor is (indeed) not my younger brother.'
 b. *kər senəŋ ənə emes dro.* 'Kor is not your younger brother.'
 c. *kər gonəŋ ənə emes dro.* 'Kor is not his younger brother.'
- (16) a. *kər menəŋ ənə emes drəm?* 'Is Kor (really) not my younger brother?'
 b. *kər senəŋ ənə emes mer?* 'Is Kor (indeed) not your younger brother?'
 c. *kər gonəŋ ənə emes drəm?* 'Is Kor not his younger brother?'

The subject of the sentences in (15) and (16) is a noun phrase in the third person, *kər* 'Kor', but the referent of *ənə* 'younger brother' differs from sentence to sentence. In indicative sentences, when it is 'my brother', the assertive copula is used. The presumptive copula is preferable otherwise. In interrogative sentences, when it is 'your brother', the assertive copula is chosen. 'My brother' and 'his brother' trigger the presumptive one. Yet, there are also exceptional cases to which the above-mentioned general rule cannot be applied:

- (17) a. *kər menəŋ ənə emes dro* . 'Kor is not (or, may not be) my younger brother.'
 b. *kər senəŋ ənə emes (er).* 'Kor is (indeed) not your younger brother.'
 c. *kər gonəŋ ənə emes (er).* 'Kor is (indeed) not his younger brother.'
- (18) a. *kər menəŋ ənə emes mer?* 'Is Kor (indeed) not my younger brother?'
 b. *kər senəŋ ənə emes drəm?* 'Is Kor (really) not your younger brother?'
 c. *kər gonəŋ ənə emes mer?* 'Is Kor (indeed) not his younger brother?'

(17a) carries the speaker's suspicion about whether Kor is his/her younger brother, whereas in (17b) and (17c) the speaker shows his/her direct commitment to the question about the younger brother. Interrogative sentences in (18) show the same pattern as in (14): the assertive copula is used in the case of the first and the third

person possessor, and the presumptive one in the case of the second person possessor, the reverse pattern of (16). As in (14), interrogative sentences with presumptive form carry the speaker's suspicion against the addressee's knowledge, while those with the assertive copula express the speaker's request to the addressee for concrete and direct information.

5. Copula with the additional meanings 'right' and 'existent'

Besides the meaning 'be', the copula *er*, *jer*, etc. also mean 'right', 'correct'; *dro*, *dər*, etc. 'existent' or 'there is', because both *er* and *dro* historically derived from participle forms. The negative form *emes* is also a participle of the linking verb, and may mean 'not right', 'not correct' or 'wrong'. Similarly the interrogative form *drəm* may mean 'does (he/she) have ...?' or 'is there ...?'

Since *er/jer* and *emes* are participles of the copula and, accordingly, can function as an adjective syntactically, they may be followed by one of the copula, resulting in such complex predicates as *jer er*, *jer dro*, *emes er* and *emes dro*, as follows:

- | | assertive | presumptive |
|---------|---|--|
| (19) a. | <i>senəŋ dioma jer er</i> . ⁴
'Your opinion is (indeed) right.' | b. <i>senəŋ dioma jer dro</i> .
'Your opinion is right.' |
| (20) a. | <i>anday tise emes er</i> .
'Talking about it in this way is
(indeed) not right.' | b. <i>anday tise emes dro</i> .
'Talking about it in this way is
not right.' |
| (21) a. | <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa jer er</i> .
'Singing in this way is (indeed) right.' | b. <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa jer dro</i> .
'Singing in this way is right.' |
| (22) a. | <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa emes er</i> .
'Singing in this way is (indeed) not right.' | b. <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa emes dro</i> .
'Singing in this way is not right.' |
| (23) a. | <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa jer mer?</i>
'Is singing in this way (really) right?' | b. <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa jer drəm?</i>
'Is singing in this way right?' |
| (24) a. | <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa emes mer?</i>
'Is singing in this way (really) not right?' | b. <i>məndaŋ jərɫasa emes drəm?</i>
'Is singing in this way not right?' |

In the following, examples of the indicative mood are shown first, followed by those of the interrogative mood.

⁴ This sentence can also be *senəŋ dioma jere*. The meaning does not change either. It is presumed that the last *r* in *jer er* dropped and the two parts contracted into one morph *jere*.

- | | affirmative | negative |
|---------|---|--|
| (25) a. | <i>mende menek bar (er).</i>
'I do have some money.' | b. <i>mende menek joq (er).</i>
'I really do not have any money.' |
| (26) a. | <i>sende menek (bar) dro.</i>
'You have some money.' | b. <i>sende menek joq dro.</i>
'You do not have any money.' |
| (27) a. | <i>gonda menek (bar) dro.</i>
'He has some money.' | b. <i>gonda menek joq dro.</i>
'He does not have any money.' |

In (25) the parenthesized *er* and *bar* can be omitted. Even when *bar* 'existent' or 'there is' and *joq* 'nonexistent' or 'there is not' are not followed by *er*, they nonetheless carry the possessive meaning and are interpreted as assertive. In contrast, in (26a) and (27a), *bar* can be omitted, and *dro* solely expresses the possessive meaning and indicates assertiveness. In the negative interrogative mood, however, the first part of the predicate *joq* cannot be omitted, since *joq* marks assertiveness by itself. In other words, *dro* is always interpreted as denoting the presumptive. In the same way, *bar* and *joq* are markers of assertiveness and are presumptive only in combination with *dro*. The following are examples of the common usage in the interrogative mood.

- | | question | rhetorical question |
|---------|--|--|
| (28) a. | <i>mende menek drəm?</i>
'Do I (really) have any money?' | b. <i>mende menek joq drəm?</i>
'Don't I (really) have any money?' |
| (29) a. | <i>sende menek bar mer?</i>
'Do you (indeed) have any money?' | b. <i>sende menek joq ber?</i>
'Don't you (really) have any money?' |
| (30) a. | <i>gonda menek drəm?</i>
'Does he have any money?' | b. <i>gonda menek joq drəm?</i>
'Doesn't he have any money?' |

The general rules in the common usage, mentioned in Section 4, also apply to the examples in this section. Deviation from the general rules under special pragmatic conditions are possible, too, just as the other cases.

6. Copulas in complex verb forms

So far we have looked at the usage of copulas with nominals. Lastly, we will examine copulas when they are used in combination with verbs. The copula *er* and *dro* can be placed after several forms of the verb, such as converbs and participles, to give different modal nuances to verbal predicates, as already mentioned in Section 1, (1) and (2). Here, a paradigm of the verb *bar* 'to go' with the inflection of tense, mood and modality is shown.

Table 1: Paradigm of the verb *bar* ‘to go’

Modality	Mood	Indicative Mood		Interrogative Mood	
	Tense	Affirmative	Interrogative	Affirmative (Normal Question)	Interrogative (Rhetorical Question)
Assertive	Past Tense	<i>bahrdə</i> ‘(He) indeed went.’	<i>barmahdə</i> ‘(He) indeed didn’t go.’	<i>bahrdəm</i> ‘Did (he) indeed go?’	<i>barmahdəm</i> ‘Didn’t (he) indeed go?’
	Present Tense	<i>barəp bar (er)</i> ‘(He) is indeed going.’	<i>baro joq (er)</i> ‘(He) is indeed not going.’	<i>barəp bar me (r)</i> ‘Is (he) indeed going?’	<i>baro joq be (r)</i> ‘Isn’t (he) indeed going?’
	Future Tense	<i>barəş (er)</i> ‘(He) will go indeed.’	<i>barəşmes (er)</i> ‘(He) will not go indeed.’	<i>barəş me (r)</i> ‘Will (he) indeed go?’	<i>barəşmes me (r)</i> ‘Won’t (he) go indeed?’
Presumptive	Past Tense	<i>barəp dro</i> ‘(He) went.’	<i>barmen dro</i> ‘(He) didn’t go.’	<i>barəp drəm</i> ‘Did (he) go?’	<i>barmen drəm</i> ‘Didn’t (he) go?’
	Present Tense	<i>baro dro</i> ‘(He) is going.’	<i>baro joq dro</i> ‘(He) is not going.’	<i>baro drəm</i> ‘Is (he) going?’	<i>baro joq drəm</i> ‘Isn’t (he) going?’
	Future Tense	<i>barəş dro</i> ‘(He) will go.’	<i>barəşmes dro</i> ‘(He) will not go.’	<i>barəş drəm</i> ‘Will (he) go?’	<i>barəşmes drəm</i> ‘Won’t (he) go?’

As in the case of nominal predicates, exemplified in (11) and (12), correlation is found between the person and the copula in sentences with a verbal predicate, as is shown in the following table. The first person indicative and the second person interrogative forms, are assertive, and the others are presumptive.

Table 2: Modality and person combination in the past tense form of *bar*-

Person	Mood	Indicative Mood		Interrogative Mood	
		Affirmative	Interrogative	Affirmative (Normal Question)	Interrogative (Rhetorical Question)
1	<i>men, məs</i> ‘I, we’	<i>bahrdə</i> ‘I/we indeed went.’	<i>barmahdə</i> ‘I/we didn’t go indeed.’	<i>barəp drəm</i> ‘Did I/we go?’	<i>barmen drəm</i> ‘Didn’t I/we go?’
2	<i>sen, seler</i> ‘thou, you’	<i>barəp dro</i> ‘You went.’	<i>barmen dro</i> ‘You didn’t go.’	<i>bahrdəm</i> ‘Did you really go?’	<i>barmahdəm</i> ‘Didn’t you go indeed?’

3	<i>gol, golar</i> 'he, they'	<i>barəp dro</i> 'He/they went.'	<i>barmen dro</i> 'He/they didn't go.'	<i>barəp drəm</i> 'Did he/they go?'	<i>barmen drəm</i> 'Didn't he/they go?'
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Table 2 shows the "common usage" mentioned in Section 4. It is also the case in verbal inflection that in special circumstances presumptive forms are used in the first person indicative mood and the second person interrogative mood, and that assertive ones are used otherwise.⁵

In Western Yugur, not every sentence necessarily contains a copula. Predicates without a copula are interpreted as assertive. In the present and the future tense, the indicative copula *er* and the interrogative copula *mer/ber* are cliticized to a nominal or a verbal predicate to emphasize that it is assertive. As for the presumptive, predicates always have the copula *dro* in the indicative mood or *drəm* in the interrogative mood. Such a situation arises with the distinction between *bar* 'existent (assertive)' vs. *dro* 'existent (presumptive)', or between *joq* 'nonexistent (assertive)' vs. *joq dro* 'nonexistent (presumptive)'.

The two copulas, *er* and *dro*, with other forms, such as *mer*, *drəm*, etc., can be combined with other types of participle and converb (*-yan*, *-yaq*, and *-mas*) besides those listed in Table 1. For example:

- (31) a. *baryan (er)* ' (He) has been (there) indeed.'
 b. *barmayan (er)* ' (He) indeed hasn't been (there).'
 c. *baryan me(r)?* 'Has (he) been (there) indeed?'
 d. *barmayan me(r)?* 'Hasn't (he) been (there) indeed?'
- (32) a. *baryan dro* ' (He) has been (there).'
 b. *barmayan dro* ' (He) hasn't been (there).'
 c. *baryan drəm?* 'Has (he) been there?'
 d. *barmayan drəm?* 'Hasn't (he) been (there)?'
- (33) a. *baryaq (er)* ' (He) often went (there) indeed.'
 b. *barmas (er)* ' (He) indeed didn't go (there) often.'
 c. *baryaq me(r)?* 'Did (he) indeed go (there) often?'
 d. *barmas me(r)?* 'Didn't (he) indeed go(there) often?'
- (34) a. *baryaq dro* ' (He) often went (there).'
 b. *barmas dro* ' (He) didn't go (there) often.'
 c. *baryaq drəm?* 'Did (he) often go (there)?'
 d. *barmas drəm?* 'Didn't (he) often go (there)?'

⁵ See Chen & Lei (1985: 94-96, 98-99, and 102-103).

As is easily understood from the description so far, in the common usage, the forms in (31) and (33) are assertive and the forms in (32) and (34) presumptive. This does not change if *er*, *r*, or *mer* in parentheses is omitted.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, it has been shown that the two copulas of Western Yugur, *er* and *dro* with their interrogative, conditional and deontic forms, as well as various allomorphs, denote two different modalities: the assertive and the presumptive. The Western Yugur copulas derive from the same Old Turkic verbs *er* and *tur* as, for example, the Modern Uyghur *idi*, *iken*, *imif*, and *du* do, though the semantic distinction made by *er* and *dro* is more consistent and ubiquitous in the grammar of Western Yugur than in that of the Modern Uyghur cognates. It is to assume that such fundamental differences have resulted from the different course historical change has taken in the two languages.

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