

Lesson 1: Nominal Tripartite Sentences (Definite Predicate)

Sentences

A sentence is a set of words that contains a subject (what the sentence is about) and a predicate (what is said about the subject). The predicate always contains a verb.

- This is a sentence.
 - "This" is the subject
 - "is a sentence" is the predicate.
 - "is" is the verb
- That man is the ruler.
 - "That man" is the subject
 - "is the ruler" is the predicate
 - "is" is the verb
- John and Mike read many books this summer.
 - "John and Mike" are the subject
 - "read many books this summer" is the predicate
 - "read" is the verb
- Smoke rises.
 - "Smoke" is the subject
 - "rises" is the verb which serves as the whole predicate
- The boy is riding his bike down a long, windy road without stopping
 - "The boy" is the subject
 - Everything else is the predicate

Nominal Sentences

In Coptic, a sentence can be made in which a noun or noun equivalent serves as the predicate (i.e. without the use of a verb). This is called a Nominal Sentence. In English, this would look something like: "Very interesting, those books!" The subject is "those books" and the predicate is "very interesting." The verb is implied to be "be (is/are)" (i.e. "Those books 'are' very interesting.").

In Coptic, there are three patterns of nominal sentences:

- **A B** (Bipartite)
- **A <copula> B** (Tripartite)
- **A B <copula>** (Tripartite)

Copula

The copula is a connecting word; in particular, it is a form of the verb "to be" connecting a subject and a complement. In English, an example would be "You smell nice." Instead of "Your smell is nice" which uses the "is" conjugation of the verb "be," "smell" acts as a copula.

In Coptic, there are three copulas.

Masculine (am/is)	Feminine (am/is)	Plural (are)

In this section, we will study a couple forms of a tripartite sentence. In a future lesson, we will look at bipartite sentences. Tripartite sentences have three components:

- Subject
- Copula
- Predicate

It can take on several forms depending on whether the predicate is definite or indefinite. The rules for choosing the gender and number of the copula are as follows:

1. When both the subject and object are nouns and agree in gender and number with each other, the copula will also agree in gender and number with them.
2. If there is a disagreement in gender or number, then the copula in the masculine form () is used.
3. If the subject is a pronoun in the 1st or 2nd person (i.e. , ,) then the masculine form () is used regardless of the gender and number of the object.

In a sentence, the subject is who or what the sentence is about (and more specifically, the noun or pronoun that performs the verb in the sentence); the predicate gives more information about the subject. For example, in English:

- "The man is a teacher" - the subject is "the man" and the verb here is "is" so the (indefinite) predicate is "a teacher."
- "The teacher is a man" - the subject is "the teacher" and the (indefinite) predicate is "a man."
- "The teacher is the man" - the subject is "the teacher" and the (definite) predicate is "the man."
- "This man is a teacher" - the subject is "This man", the verb is "is" and the (indefinite) predicate is "a teacher."
- "This man is my teacher" - the subject is "This man", the verb is "is" and the (definite) predicate is "my teacher."

Definite Predicate

There are several forms of a nominal tripartite sentence. The first structure is used when both the subject and the object are definite noun phrases. At this point, we can define a "definite noun phrase" as any of the following; nouns with a definite article, nouns with a possessive article, nouns with a demonstrative article, pronouns.

Note that the word "predicate" is the more accurate term for what is referred to as the "object" below. However, "predicate" has a different meaning in Coptic than in English. In English, the "predicate" includes the verb (or copula). For that reason, I've chosen to use the word "object."

<Definite Subject> <Copula> <Definite Predicate>

<Definite Predicate> <Copula> <Definite Subject>

Definite Subject	Copula	Definite Object	Translation
			This man is my father
			This man is the father
ⲁⲓ		ⲓⲁ	This woman is the mother
ⲁⲓ			This woman is their mother
		ⲙⲓ ⲁⲓ ⲓⲁ	These Christians are the children of God
ⲓⲁ		ⲁⲓ	The queen is my mother

What is the difference between the subject and object in this case? How do you know if the noun is the subject or the object? Does it even matter?

Consider the following [English] sentence: "I am the ruler." - What is the subject and what is the predicate/object? It is ambiguous! If the sentence is in response to the question "Who is the ruler?," then "the ruler" is the subject and "I" is the object. If the sentence is in response to the question "Who are you?" then "I" is the subject and "the ruler" is the object.

Application

Application 1:

This is an excerpt from the Reconciliation Prayer of the Liturgy of St Gregory.

ⲙⲓ ⲁⲓ ⲓⲁ	For you are the provider and the giver of all goodness
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Application 2:

This is an excerpt from the Diptych of the Liturgy of St Gregory.

、	†	For you are God the merciful
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Application 3:

The hymn '2 x.

Biblical Examples

、 q 、 f	He is the propitiation of our sins (1 John 2:2)
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Exercises

Exercise 1: Translate to Coptic

Translate the following into Coptic:

1.

Exercise 2: Translate to English

Translate the following phrases into English:

1. \quad q
2. \quad \uparrow 2
3. \quad
4. \quad \uparrow
5. \quad 2

Exercise 3: Practice Text

Translate the following text:

“、†、ω、2、.ω、ω、.qб、2、

Resources

- "A Study in Bohairic Coptic" by Nabil Matar; p162
- See Moawad Daoud Lesson 2
- See Sameh Younan page 59 in the PDF

- ACTS 2990 Introduction to the Coptic Language (Bohairic) with Hany Takla Lesson 3A

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