CHAPTER III

VERB 'be'

Recent developments in the theory of grammar are towards a maximally general form of the rules (cf. Katz and Fodor 1963; Chomsky 1965; Bach 1966). In this connection, the often despised problem of linguistic universals has acquired new actuality (cf. Greenberg 1963, Weinreich 1963 and 1966).

Chomsky (1965, 202) has connected universal translatability between natural languages with the existence of substantive universals, the latter being a necessary condition on the former. Applying this to our case, and inverting the implication, one could ask: is the existence of a universal 'to be' in any way necessarily conditioned by the fact of universal translatability? In other words: is 'to be' a universal feature? Linguistically interesting way of discussing 'to be' seems to be in terms of substantive universals.

3.1 Different grammatical theories of verb 'be'

From the philosophical interpretation to the syntactic analysis, many scholars have defined the characteristic features of verb 'be'.

Bach (1967: 462-85) proposes an analysis in which he eliminates verb 'be' (and 'have') as a main verb from the base and derives it transformationally. He does so on the grounds
that many languages equational sentences are framed by the juxtaposition of a subject and a noun phrase, adjective or locational phrase, without using an overt verb corresponding to copulative 'be'. Bach suggests the same analysis for the use of verb 'be' as an Auxiliary also. With this re-analysis, he brings out some minor additions to the Chomskian base rules (1965) in which Chomsky had retained the copula in the base. The new base rules, he proposed, are closer to the universal base rules as compared to the rules proposed in the earlier analysis.

Lyons (1968:322) considers verb 'be' not as a constituent of deep structure, but a semantically empty "dummy verb". According to him, this holds true for English and other languages also.

Meillet (1938) focusing on the nonsemantic form of verb 'be' says that verb 'be' is a grammatical device used for introducing the markers of aspect, tense, mood and person in a sentence.

Ferguson (1971:145-47), relating the absence of copula to the notion of simplicity, says that even though a linguist might treat absence of copula in an equative sentence as a deletion and hence grammatically more complex, a native speaker will generally use a sentence without an overt copula as simpler than one with a copula. That the absence of copula adds to the simplicity of an equational construction is supported by the fact that,
a child in the initial stages forms equational clauses without a copula. The acquisition of copula by a child comes at a later stage. Apart from this, copula tends to be omitted in other forms of simplified speech, e.g., foreign talk, telegraphic speech, pidgin language etc.

Thus, most of the linguists consider the copulative function of verb 'be' a 'secondary development' and, therefore, it should be eliminated from the base and should be derived transformationally. All the views presented above, take care of only a part of the problem. We cannot account for the both — the copulative 'be' and the 'be' present in existential constructions in the same way. We cannot derive verb 'be' in existential construction through transformations for the simple reason that the function of verb 'be' in existential constructions is different from its copulative function. Gilson's argument, as reported in Kahn (1973), is an evidence for the fact that the status of verb 'be' in existential constructions is that of a main verb, with semantic content.

Keeping in view the status of verb 'be' in various constructions ranging from existential constructions to copula constructions, it may be claimed that verb 'be' has two basic functions:

(i) In existential constructions, and
(ii) In non-existential constructions.
In (i) it is present in the base because in existential constructions verb 'be' functions as a main verb and with full semantic control.

For (ii) in non-existential constructions it is inserted at a later stage through transformations. Non-existential constructions include copulative, auxiliary, locative, possessive constructions. The function of verb 'be' as a copula is that of a linker. Bach (1967: 477) also expresses similar views when he says that the contribution of copula to the meaning of a sentence is 'determined completely by the items that link'. Also, initially, it is absent in child language as well as in baby talk; its acquisition comes at a later stage.

In existential constructions verb 'be' asserts or negates the existence of an object $X$, and thus, it has a semantic value. In locative constructions, however, it serves as a linker only. In such constructions we have a subject NP and to specify the location of the subject NP (on temporal or spatial scale), we have a locative element, not verb 'be'. Verb 'be' merely links the nominal and the locative element at a purely grammatical level. That is why, if we delete verb 'be' in a locative construction, (which we do in telegraphic speech and in the newspaper headline), the location is specified all the same by the locative element. Similarly in possessive constructions, verb 'be' is not crucial semantically for two reasons; first, possessive constructions are at the underlying level derived from locative 'be' which functions merely as a linker. Secondly, it may be noted that
in many languages it is the case ending which reflects the special kind of relation of possession that exists, between the two NPs — the possessor and the possessed, verb 'be' acts merely as a linker between the two NPs.

3.2 Syntactic analysis of verb 'be'

There is an underlying relation between existential, locative and possessive constructions. A number of works have been undertaken highlighting this relation (Lyons 1967, 1968; Bhaskarao 1972; Anderson 1971; Boadi 1969; Clark 1978). Though showing a link between existential, locative and possessive constructions, the previous analyses are far from being exhaustive and there remains something to be said about the existential and locative constructions and distinction between the two.

Lyons (1967) asserts that existential and possessive constructions are derived from locatives. According to him the occurrence of an originally deictic particle in the existential sentences of many Indo-European languages provides evidence to his hypothesis that existential sentences are at least 'implicitly locative'. Similarly, possessive sentences also are distinct from locatives only 'prima facie'. If we do not take 'have' as a lexical item in deep structure, we can form a parallelism between a possessive sentence like John has a book and a locative sentence The book is on the table, and can transformationally derive: the former sentence from a sentence which has a structure to the latter sentence at the deep level.
Lyons (1968) makes a distinction between existential and locative sentences in the following way:

(1) Existential has an indefinite subject, therefore, at a deeper level they should be treated as indefinite locatives.

(2) We can paraphrase an existential construction with a sentence containing the verb *exist* whereas in the case of a locative sentence we cannot do so.

(3) If an assertion is made about the existence of something, a locative (or a temporal) complementation is necessary for its semantic interpretation. This is yet another proof to the claim that existential and locative sentences are related.

(4) The locative element in an existential sentence is syntactically 'detachable' but we cannot detach it in a locative sentence.

Anderson's (1971) model of case grammar groups locative, existential and possessive constructions together and calls existential and possessive constructions a sub-set of the larger set of locative sentences. According to him, a locative clause may be of two types:

(1) **Non-Stative**

A clause is non-stative locative clause in case (i) the copula is missed in the sentence; (ii) the sentence contains a verb; (iii) the sentence has a locative element; and (iv) ergative is present.
(2) **Stative**

A locative clause is stative when it fulfills the following conditions: (i) verb is missing; (ii) copula is present; (iii) the sentence contains a locative element; and (iv) ergative is absent, i.e. His house is in the town.

According to Bhaskarao (1972), Telegu verb 'be' has two types of predications — Existential and Copulative. He establishes three types of existential constructions:

1. **Absolute existential construction**: Those sentences which denote absolute existence of abstract entities like God, Truth and Law. In these sentences verb 'be' does not take complement e.g. Truth exists.

2. **Temporal existential construct**: In this type of construction verb 'be' takes a temporal phrase complement There is school today.

3. **Locative existential construction**: In these constructions, a locative phrase forms the complement of 'be', Locative existential constructions may be of many types, e.g. John is at home.

3.3 **Verb 'be' and its polysemous functions**

The most characteristic feature of verb 'be' is 'stativity'. So on this basis we may say that verb 'be' (1) defines a singular state, not a change from state X to Y, and
(ii) may show the continuance or progress of a singular state, and not the derived state which is a result of a change.\(^1\)

Verb 'be' has multiple functions to perform in various types of constructions in the language of the world. These functions which range from copulative to existential are strikingly diverse in nature. They do not exhibit any apparent relation among themselves.

Russell (1903) pointed out four functions of verb 'be':

1. The sense in which it asserts 'Being' as in "A is" (Existence).
2. The sense of identity (Predication).
3. The sense of predication as in "A is human", (identity), and
4. The sense of "A is man" (class inclusion).

Later, locative and possessive constructions were also added to these functions. But these are not the only functions that verb 'be' performs. Also, some of the functions mentioned by Russell show some kind of structural similarity.

In Meiteilon, there are four forms of verb 'be', viz. /lɔi/, /ɔi/, /-ni/ and /-y/. On the basis of their respective grammatical functions, verb 'be' in Meiteilon can be divided into two groups.

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1. Boadi (1969), 'To Be in Twi' defines 'the stative verbs in a wider sense are verbs that have continuative; in a narrow sense, ones that have no other tense; these are partly complemented by suppletian from non-stative verbs', p.14 in 'The Verb 'Be' and its Synonyms' Foundation of Language, Vol.9 Part 4.
The concept of 'being' and 'existence' is conveyed by the verb /læi/ and it also conveys the idea of possession. /læi/ and /oi/ differ from /-ni/ and /-y/ at syntactic level in the sense that /læi/ and /oi/ are independent lexical items and can be used as verbs. /-ni/ and /-y/, on the other hand, are suffixes. Aspect can be added to /læi/ and /oi/ unlike in the case of /-ni/ and /-y/. Consider:
1. a. /imo-gi kar āma lāi/
   Imo-poss. car one be
   'Imo has a car'.

b. /imo-gi kar āma lāi-ri/
   -prog.asp.
   'Imo still has the car' -prog.asp.
   (is having)

c. /Imo-gi kar āma lāi-re/
   -perf.asp.
   'Imo has had a car' -perf.asp.
   (Imo already has a car)

2. a. /imo kolidz-gi oja oi/
   Imo in teacher be
   'Imo is a lecturer in a college'

b. /imo kolidz-gi oja oi-ri/
   'Imo is still a lecturer in a college'.

c. /imo kolidz-gi oja oi-re/
   'Imo has become a lecturer'.

d. /imo kolidz-gi oja-ni/
   'Imo is a lecturer (in a college)'

*e. /imo kolidz-gi oja-ni + ri/

*f. /imo waŋ-y + ri/
   tall

/lāi/, /oi/, /-y/ and /-ni/ are not inflected for gender, number and person. Consider :
A. Gender:

3. a. \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{Imphal-dai lei/}\)
   \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{is at Imphal'}\).

b. \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{oja oii/}\)
   \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{is a teacher'}\).

c. \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{wan-y/}\)
   \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{is tall'}\).

d. \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{oja-nil/}\)
   \(\text{Tomba} \quad \text{Rita} \quad \text{is a teacher'}\).

B. Number:

4. a. \(\text{mahak 'he'} \quad \text{mokhoi 'they'} \quad \text{Imphal-dai lei/}\)
   \(\text{He} \quad \text{They} \quad \text{are} \quad \text{in Imphal'}\).

b. \(\text{mahak mokhoi} \quad \text{oja oii/}\)
   \(\text{He} \quad \text{They} \quad \text{is} \quad \{(a) \text{teacher(s)}'}\).

c. \(\text{mahak mokhoi} \quad \text{wan-y/}\)
   \(\text{He} \quad \text{They} \quad \text{are} \quad \text{tall'}\).
d. \(\text{ma\-hak}\) \(\text{m\-ako}\) \(\text{oja-\text{ni}}\/\)

\{He\}  \{is\}  \{(a) teacher(s)\}.

C. Person:

5.  
   a.  \(\text{ai}\) \(\text{'I'}\)
       \(\text{na\-e}\) \(\text{'You'}\)
       \(\text{ma\-hak}\) \(\text{'He'}\)

       \{I\}  \{am\}  \{in Imphal\}.
       \{You\}  \{are\}  \{\}\.
       \{He\}  \{is\}  \{\}\.

   b.  \(\text{ai}\)
       \(\text{na\-e}\)
       \(\text{ma\-hak}\)

       \{I\}  \{am\}  \{a teacher\}.
       \{You\}  \{are\}  \{\}\.
       \{He\}  \{is\}  \{\}\.

   c.  \(\text{ai}\)
       \(\text{na\-e}\)
       \(\text{ma\-hak}\)

       \{I\}  \{am\}  \{tall\}.
       \{You\}  \{are\}  \{\}\.
       \{He\}  \{is\}  \{\}\.

   d.  \(\text{ai}\)
       \(\text{na\-e}\)
       \(\text{ma\-hak}\)

       \{I\}  \{am\}  \{a teacher\}.
       \{You\}  \{are\}  \{\}\.
       \{He\}  \{is\}  \{\}\.
3.4 Syntactic Properties and Constraint of Verb 'Be'

Each form of verb 'be' in Meiteilon /ləi/, /o1/, /-ni/ and /-y/ has its own syntactic properties and constraints that are discussed hereafter.

/ləi/

It is already stated that /ləi/ is an independent lexical item and aspect and is indicated by suffixation of various aspect markers to this verb 'be'. /ləi/ can be used as a locative and/or existential verb in a construction. Consider:

6. a. /məhak Imphal-da ləi/
   he -at be
   'He is in Imphal'.
   b. /məhak yam-na nuŋai-na Imphal-da ləi/
   he very happily -at be/stay
   'He is living in Imphal very happily'.
   c. /məhak Tomba-go ləi/
   he -with be/stay
   'He lives with Tomba'.

Sentence 6(a) and (b) can be taken as a 'locative while (c) is an 'existential' sentence and /ləi/ here is the main verb. It can also be used in possessive construction as in sentence 7(a).

7. a. /pi-gi hui ñma ləi/
    I-gen. dog one be(have)
    'I have a dog'.
/oi/

Like /ləi/, /oi/ is also an independent lexical item and aspect which is indicated by suffixation of aspect markers to this verb 'be'. /oi/ can also be used grammatically as a finite verb in a construction. Consider:

8. a. /məhak-ti nəha oï-nə profesar oï-re/
   he-classi. in young age become-asp.
   'He has become a Professor at a young age'.

   b. /məhak həuzik-ti mi oï-re/
   he now man become-asp.
   'Now he has become a man' (a perfect man).

/oi/ indicates class-members in such constructions.

/-ni/

It is already mentioned above that /-ni/ is a suffix. It can be suffixed to different class of words to indicate identification class membership and class inclusion. Consider:

A. Proper noun + ni

9. a. /məhak John-ni/
   he
   'He is John'.

   b. /nupi məca ədu Rita-ni/
   Girl that
   'That girl is Rita'.
B. Pronoun + ni

10. a. /hurənəhə adu məhək-ni/

thief that he -be

'He is a thief'.

b. /ŋəənə əsi-da laklmbə nupa adu məhək-ni/
yesterday here-to comet+who person that he - be

'He is the person who came here yesterday'.

It appears that /-ni/ in such construction definitizes the noun and co-referent pronoun under consideration.

C. Modifier + ni

11. a. /fi əsi faəəhbə -ni/
cloth this nice - be

'This cloth is nice'.

b. /film adu nuŋəi-bə-ni/
that enjoyable-be

'That film is enjoyable'.

D. Cardinal + ni

12. a. /məkhoi-di mi əni-ni/
they-class. person two-be

'They are two persons'.

b. /məkhoi məcin-mənao məŋə-ni/
they sisters-brothers five-be

'They are five brothers and sisters'.

E. **Ordinal + ni**

13. a. /nupa mæca æsi-na ænisubæ-ni/
   
   boy this-nom. second-be
   
   'This boy is the second one' (son).

   b. /mæhak-na mægasubæ-ni/
   
   he - nom fifth -be
   
   'He is the fifth one'.

   In sentences 12 and 13 (a) and (b) /-ni/ serves as numeral classifier indicating definiteness. In construction like 13(a) /-ni/ identifies the particular nominal element under consideration.

F. **Verb + ni**

/-ni/ can be suffixed to any finite verb serving as a complex symbol for auxiliary tense and aspect. In construction 14(a) and (b) given below /-ni/ indicates that the performance of the action will be undertaken in immediate future. Consider:

14. a. /øikhoi-na cœuki æma sa-ni/
   
   we-nom. chair one make-Aux.
   
   'We will make a chair'.

   b. /œi thæbak ædu tæu-ni/
   
   I work that do-Aux.
   
   'I shall do the work'.

   /-ni/ can occur with the unrealized aspect marker /-gɔ/~/-kɔ-/, as in sentences 15 (a) and (b) without any change in meaning.
15. a. /]\akhoi-na cauki e\ma sa-ga-ni/  
    'We will make a chair'.

b. /\i th\eb\ek adu tau-ga-ni/  
    'I shall do the work'.

It also occurs with adverb of time (future) such as /h\eyen/ 
'tomorrow', /\e\ncit/ 'day after tomorrow' etc. Consider:

16. a. /\eyen \e\ncit/ \akhoi-na cauki e\ma sa-(ga)-ni/  
    [Tomorrow  
    [Day after tomorrow] we will make a bridge.'

b. /\eyen \e\ncit/ \i th\eb\ek adu tau-(ga)-ni/  
    [Tomorrow  
    [Day after tomorrow] I shall do the work.'

3.5 **Copulative function of verb 'be'**

When in a sentence consisting of a subject and a predicate, verb 'be' serves as a linker between the two, it is called copula. Copulative functions are grouped into three:

1. Equatives
2. Attributives, and
3. Participle formation.

These are being described hereunder:

3.5.1 **Equatives** include identification, class inclusion and class membership.
A. Identification:

17. a. /məhak Thoibi-ni/
   She Thoibi-be
   'She is Thoibi'.

b. /əi John-ni/
   I John-be
   'I am John'.

c. /Rita əi-gi Ɂoan-ni/
   I-gen.y.sister-be
   'Rita is my younger sister'.

d. /nəŋ Julie-ni/
   You be
   'You are Julie'.

B. Class Membership:

18. a. /Imo oja-ni/
   teacher-be
   'Imo is a teacher'.

b. /məkhoi лəumи-nи/
   they peasant-be
   'They are peasants'.

c. /Tomba editor-ni/ои/
   'Tomba is an editor'.

d. /məkhoi fisабэ-siŋ-nи/
   they seaver-pl.-be
   'They are weavers'.

C. Class inclusion: \( (x \not\subseteq y) \) (where both members are noun).

19. a. /məhak nupa əma-ni/
   he man a-be
   'He is a man'.

   b. /doktər ədu nupi-ni/
      that woman-be
      'That doctor is a woman'.

   c. /oja ədu əmerikan-ni/
      teacher that -be
      'That teacher is an American'.

3.5.2 **Attributives** /-\( y \)/

In attributive constructions also, Meiteilon employs verb 'be' /-\( y \)/ to function as a copula. /-\( y \)/ follows the modifier in a predicative position.

20. a. /Tomba fəi-y
    good-be
    'Tomba is good'.

   b. /yum ədu cao-y/
      house that big-be
      'The house is big'

   c. /u ədu waŋ-y/
      tree that tall-be
      'The tree is tall'.
Participle formation

Verb 'be' may be used in the formation of three types of participle constructions, viz. Adjectival participle, Adverbial participle and Predicative participle in general. However, Meiteilon has only Adjectival particle which is constructed by the verb 'be' /ləi/ and /oi/ to which the participle marker /-ba/ is suffixed as in [ləi + ba] , [oi + ba] Consider:

21. a. /u-kha-da  ləi-bə nupa/
    tree-under-to be-parti.mk. man
    'The man who is under the tree'.

    b. /upu mənəŋ-da  ləi-bə furit/
    Almira in be-parti.mk Shirt
    'The shirt which is in the almirah....'

    c. /ka mənəŋ-da  ləi-bə cəuki/
    room in be-parti.mk chair
    'The chair which is in the room...'

These adjectival participle phrases are derived from the following sentences : 22 (a), (b) and (c) respectively and these sentences (22 (a) to (c) will justify that the verb /ləi/ is a verb 'be'.

Consider :
22. a1 /nupa ədu u-kha-da 1ə1/  
'The man is under the tree'.

a2 /u-kha-da nupa ədu 1ə1/  
'The man is under the tree'.

b1 /furit upu m nun-da 1ə1/  
'The shirt is in the almirah'.

b2 /upu mənuŋ-da furit 1ə1/  
'The shirt is in the almirah'.

c1 /cəuki  kə mənuŋ-da 1ə1/  
'The chair is in the room'.

c2 kə mənuŋ-da cəuki 1ə1/  
'The chair is in the room'.

Adjectival participles are also formed by verb 'be' /oi/. Consider:

23. a. /ləmpfel skul-da oja oĩ-bə Tombə/  
'Lampfel school-at teacher be-parti. Tomba  
'Tomba who is a teacher in a Lampfel school...'

b. /ukil oĩ-bə Ibo/  
'Ibo who is lawyer...'

c. /Librarian oĩ-bə Itə/  
'Ito who is a librarian...'

Like /1ə1/ in sentences 22 (a-c) where /1ə1/ functions as verb 'be', /oi/ also functions as verb 'be' in sentences 24 (a-c). The above adjectival particle phrases 23 (a-c) are derived from the sentences 24 (a-c) respectively.
24. a. /Tomba ləmfeI skul-da oja oi/
   'Tomba is a teacher in Lamphel school'.

b. /ibo ukil oi/
   'Ibo is a lawyer'.

c. /Ito librarian oi/
   'Ito is a librarian'.

3.6 **Existential function of verb 'be'**

The form of verb 'be' used in existential sentence is /ləi/ only. Here verb 'be' focuses on the existence of subject NP in a construction and thus function as a main verb. The existential use implies an assertion about the 'existence' of an abstract concept or an entity. Here are some examples:

25. a. /mahak yum-da ləi/
   he house-at be
   'He is at home'.

b. /mahak ai-ga ləi/
   he I-with be
   'He is with me'.

c. /aikhoi-gi yum-da mi təret ləi/
   we-gen. home-at person seven be
   'There are seven persons in our house'.
   (There are seven persons in our family)

d. /əsi-da əŋaŋ adu ləi/
   here-at child classi. be
   'Here is the child'.
   (The child is here)
e. /bombei-da industrialist yam-na lai/
Bombay-in industrialist many be
'In Bombay there are many industrialists'.

In these sentences (25 a-e) verb 'be' /lai/ acts as a main verb.
Since this verb 'be' is a main verb, the negative marker /-ta-/ /-roi/ /-loi/ can be suffixed to indicate the negation (for details see Chapter on Negation). In other words, we can negate the existential sentences. Consider:

26. a. /məhak yum-da lai-te/
   'He is not at home'.

b. /məhak ai-ga lai-roi/
   'He will not be with me'.

c. /aikhoi-gi yum-da mi təret, lai-te/
   'There are not seven persons in our house'
   (There are not seven persons in our family)

d. /əsi-de ənaŋ edu lai-te/
   'The child is not here'.

e. /bombei-da industrialist yam-na lai-te/
   'In Bombay there are not many industrialists'

f. /nupa ədu-gi məral lai-te/
   man class-gen. fault be-neg.
   'The man has no fault'.

3.7 **Locative function of verb 'be'**

In locative function, again verb 'be' /lai/ is used to link the noun and the locative element. Consider:
27. a. /Thoibi Imphal-da 1əi/
    at be
    'Thoibi is in Imphal'.

   b. /lairik ədu table-da 1əi/
      book class -at be
      'The book is on the table'

   c. /furit du upu-da 1əi/
      shirt classi. almirah-at be
      'The shirt is in the almirah'

   d. /əi ka ədu-da əi/
      I room classi-at be
      'I am in that room'.

For framing negative sentence, the neg. markers
/-tə-/~/-də-/ , /-roi/ /-loi/ etc will be suffixed to the verb
'be' /1əi/. /1əi + te/roi/. Consider :

28. a. /Thoibi Impal-da 1əi-te/
   'Thoibi is not in Impal'.

   b. /lairik ədu table-da 1əi-roi/
      'The book will not be on the table'

   c. /furit ədu upu-da 1əi-te/
      'The shirt is not in the almirah'

   d. /əi ka ədu-da 1əi-te/
      'I am not in that room'

It is to be noted that in Existential and Locative construction
there is a postposition locative marker /-ta~/~/-da/ which is
suffixed to the noun which indicates location.
3.8 Possessive function of verb 'be'

Possessive construction employs verb 'be' as a linker. Verb 'be' /ləi/ is used for possession, as a verb in the construction and as postposition /-gi/-/-ki/ in genitival construction. Without postposition /-gi/-/-ki/ the genitival construction is ungrammatical. Consider:

29. a. /əi-gi hui ǝma ləi/  
I-geni dog one be  
'I have a dog'.

b. /Nongal-gi məca nupa məri ləi/  
-geni. son four be  
'Nongal has four sons'.

c. /Nongyai-gi kar ǝma ləi/  
-geni. car one be  
'Nongyai has a car'.

d /nonyai kar ləi/  
'Nongyai car be

Sentence 29 (d) is ungrammatical because the postposition /gi/ is not added. However, without post-position /-gi/-/-ki/, a construction can be grammatical when the entity that is possessed (by some one) is abstract or is a quality, say, /thouna/ 'courage', /əkibǝ/ 'fear' and other like /ləiħeu/ 'fever', etc. Consider:

30. a. /məhak məthunə ləi/  
he courage be  
'He has courage'.

b. /məhak əkiba 1əi-te/
   he      fear     be-neg.mk.
   'He has no fear'.

c. /Tomal laiha 1əi/
   fever     be
   'Tomal has fever'.

d. /Tomal tibi 1əi-te/
   be-neg.mk.
   'Tomal has no T.B.'

30 (a-d) can occur with post-position /-ki/-/gi/ also. Consider:

31. a. /məhak-ki məthəuna 1əi/
   'He has courage'.

b. /məhak-ki əkiba 1əi-te/
   'He has no fear'.

c. /Tomal-ɡi laiha 1əi/
   'Tomal has fever'.

d. /Tomal-ɡi tibi 1əi-te/
   'Tomal has no T.B.'

However, construction 30 (a-d) are preferred construction in Meiteilon.

3.9 Other than these forms of verb 'be', /1əi/, /o1/, /-ni/ and /-y/, which are discussed above, Meiteilon has verb 'be' for interrogative construction. Interrogative verb 'be' is of two kinds: one is interrogative verb 'be' form for Yes/No question marker /-ra/-/-la/, another is interrogative verb 'be' form for wh-question /-no/.
3.9.1 Yes/No question marker /-ra/-/-la/

This yes/no question marker verb 'be' form /-la/-/-ra/ has the following syntactic function. When suffixed to the noun and pronoun, it performs as a verb 'be'. Here are some sentences where /-la/-/-ra/ is functioning as verb 'be'. (For detailed discussion see Chapter on Interrogatives).

The following sentences are yes/no questions:

A. **Noun + la/ra**

32. a. /mæsi lil-la/
   this snake-Q.mk. (functioning as verb 'be' also)
   'Is this a snake?'

b. /mədu əi-gi lairik-la/
   that I-geni. book-Q.mk. (functioning as verb 'be' also)
   'Is that my book?'

c. /mədu əi-na ləibə furit-la/
   that I-nom. buy-parti. shirt-Q;mk. (functioning as verb 'be' also)
   'Is that the shirt which I bought?'

d. /məkhoi əfə bə mi-ra/
   they good people-Q.mk. (functioning as verb 'be' also)
   'Are they good people?'

B. **Pronoun + la/ra**

33. a. /nəran lakləmbə ədu nəŋ-la/
   Yesterday come-parti class you-be
   'Are you the person who came yesterday?'
b. /məhak-pu fu-be aду məkhoi-ra/
   he-acc. beat-parti. class. they-be/
   'Are you the persons who beat him?'
   (Are you who beat him?)

  c. /Hospital cət-lu-be aду aikhoi-ra/
     go-parti class. we-be
     'Are we the persons who went to hospital?'
     (Are you who went to hospital?)

C. Demonstrative pronoun + la/ra

34. a. /fəi aду aṣi-ra/
   cloth class. demon.-be/
   'Is this the cloth?'

b. /lairik aду aṣi-ra/
   book class. demon.-be
   'Is this the book?'

c. /kolidz aду aṣi-ra/
   class. dem.-be
   'Is this the College?'

3.9.2 Wh-question verb 'be' form /-no/

Wh-question form of verb 'be' is /-no/ which is suffixed to wh-question words to perform the function of verb 'be' (for detail: discussion see Chapter V, Interrogative...). In other words, when question marker /-no/ is suffixed to wh-question words which are /kəri/ 'what', /kəri/ or /kərəmbə/ 'which', /kəna/ 'who',
/kədəida/ 'where', /kədəunəi/ 'when' and /kərəm-na/ 'how', it
(-no/ performs the function of verb 'be'.

| kəri |
| kərəmbe |
| kəna |
| kədəida |
| kədəunəi |
| kərəmna |

Performs the function of verb 'be'

Examples are given here:

35. a. /əsi kəri-no/
   this what - be + question
   'What is this?'

b. /nəŋ kəna-no/
   You who - be + question
   'Who are you?'

c. /laįrik adu kərəmbe-no/
   book class. which - be + question
   'Which book is that?'

d. /nəkhoi kədəida-no/
   you where - be + question
   'Where to'?
   (Where are you going)
Various semantic nuances of these wh-question words + /no/ are considered in detail in Chapter V Section 5.7.

Thus, in Meiteilon, it is seen four different forms of verb 'be' which are used in different grammatical functions.