



# Immigrant workers and language formation: Gulf Pidgin Arabic

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Ever since the oil boom of the 1970s, Saudi Arabia and the countries on the western coast of the Arab Gulf, i.e. Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar, have been witnessing both a significant increase in their non-national labour force and considerable urbanization. Most of the immigrant workers come from South and South-East Asia, with smaller number of expatriates from other regions. The overwhelming majority of these foreign workers live and work in the cities, which have thus become not only a meeting place of speakers of a variety of languages, but also a linguistic laboratory in which a new means of inter-ethnic communication, generally known as Gulf Pidgin Arabic, has emerged in approximately the last 40 years. The present paper describes the main features of the phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary of this still under researched pidgin. Also discussed are the various sources of these features: the speakers' first languages, the Foreigner Talk register of Arabic, grammaticalization, Gulf Arabic, and English.

**Keywords:** immigrant workers, urbanization, multilingualism, pidgin formation, Gulf Pidgin Arabic.

*Trabajadores inmigrantes y formación de la lengua: el pidgin del Golfo Pérsico.* Desde el boom del petróleo de los años setenta, Arabia Saudí y los países de la costa oeste del Golfo Pérsico, i.e. Kuwait, Emiratos Árabes Unidos, Omán, Baréin y Catar, han conocido un aumento significativo tanto de la mano de obra inmigrante como de la urbanización. La mayoría de los trabajadores inmigrantes viene del sur y del sudeste de Asia, existiendo un pequeño número de expatriados de otras regiones. La apabullante mayoría de estos trabajadores extranjeros vive y trabaja en las ciudades, que se han convertido no solamente en un lugar de encuentro para los hablantes de distintas lenguas, sino también en un laboratorio lingüístico donde un nuevo tipo de comunicación entre las diferentes etnias, generalmente conocido como pidgin del Golfo Pérsico, ha aparecido en, aproximadamente, los últimos cuarenta años. Este artículo describe las características principales de la fonología, morfología, sintaxis y léxico de este pidgin poco investigado. El trabajo también trata las

diferentes fuentes de estas características: las lenguas maternas de los hablantes, los registros del árabe como lengua extranjera, la gramaticalización, el árabe del Golfo y el inglés.

**Palabras claves:** trabajadores inmigrantes, urbanización, multilingüismo, creación de pidgin, pidgin del Golfo Pérsico.

## 1. Introduction

As is well known, Saudi Arabia and the countries on the western coast of the Gulf, i.e. Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar, host a large number of immigrant workers. The overwhelming majority of these immigrant workers are from South and South-East Asian countries; in addition to these, there are much smaller numbers of expatriates from other countries. The multilingual setting of the Arab Gulf countries and the lack of a common language have led to the emergence of an Arabic-lexifier pidgin, generally known in the literature as ‘Gulf Pidgin Arabic’. The present paper is an attempt at outlining the main structural features of Gulf Pidgin Arabic and at relating them to the particular sociolinguistic factors which have given rise to it.

The organization of the paper is as follows. Section 2 is an outline of the sociolinguistic situation in the Arab Gulf. Section 3 presents the corpus and the methodology. Section 4 is an overview of Gulf Pidgin Arabic. Section 5 examines the factors and mechanisms conducive to the occurrence of a number of selected features of Gulf Pidgin Arabic. Section 6 summarizes the findings and discusses some of their implications.

## 2. Sociolinguistic situation

The relatively recent history – i.e. following the oil boom in the 1970s – of the Arab Gulf countries is characterized, in a nutshell, by two inter-related phenomena, with wide-ranging implications: the staggering increase in the non-national labour force, and a remarkably rapid process of urbanization.

Generally, the foreign workers come from countries in South and Sout-East Asia. According to Bakir (2010: 202), “the non-national labour force [comes] from such countries as Iran, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Srilanka, and more recently from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines”. Consider e.g. the figures for 2011 (from Baruah 2013) for some of the main countries of outgoing migration:

Country of origin	Country of origin					
	Saudi Arabia	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	United Arab Emirates
Bangladesh	15,039	13,996	29	135,265	13,111	282,739
India	289,297	14,323	45,149	73,819	41,710	138,861
Nepal	71,116	4,647	15,187	2,442	102,966	44,464
Pakistan	138,495	5,940	6,251	37,580	10,171	222,097
Sri Lanka	70,896	7,057	48,105	6,370	53,632	42,198
Philippines	293,049	15,434	53,010	10,955	87,813	201,214

Table 1. *Origin and Arab Gulf destination of Asian foreign workers in 2011*

However, there are many other source countries (note that in the table below, from Serageldin *et al.* 2012: 178, these are listed alphabetically, not in the order of their importance):

Country	Top ten source countries
Bahrain	Algeria, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen
Kuwait	Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, India, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America
Oman	Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, United Kingdom
Saudi Arabia	Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Yemen

Table 2. *Source countries of the non-national labour force in the Arab Gulf countries*

Non-nationals account for a large share of the total employment in all the Arab Gulf countries. With the exception of Saudi Arabia, they constitute the overwhelming majority of the labour force (data from Serageldin 2012: 176 and Baruah 2013):

Country	Percentage
Bahrain	74.0
Kuwait	83.0
Oman	73.0
Qatar	94.4
Saudi Arabia	52.9
United Arab Emirates	96.1

Table 3. *Proportion of non-nationals in the labour force of the Arab Gulf countries*

As shown by Luebker *et al.* (2013: 31), a large part of the non-national labour force is made up of domestic workers:

Country	Year	Number of domestic workers
Bahrain	2009	76,500
Kuwait	2005	246,100
Oman	2009	94,600
Qatar	2009	80,300
Saudi Arabia	2009	784,500
United Arab Emirates	2008	236,500

Table 4. *Domestic workers in the Arab Gulf countries*

Immigrant domestic workers account for a considerable percentage of the labour force (data from Luebker *et al.* 2013):

Country	Percentage of total employment	Year
Bahrain	12.8	2009
Kuwait	21.9	2005
Oman	9.2	2009
Qatar	6.4	2009
Saudi Arabia	9.6	2009
United Arab Emirates	12.8	2008

Table 5. *Proportion of domestic workers in the Arab Gulf countries*

Note that “by 2009, the number of domestic workers in Kuwait exceeded 660,000, the majority of whom are women” (Dashti 2013: 64).

The details for particular countries are worth considering. For instance, in 2002, “each household in the United Arab Emirates [employed], on average, three domestic workers” (Luebker *et al.* 2013: 33), while, according to Dashti (2013: 65), Kuwait “has the highest ratio of domestic workers to citizens, with one foreign domestic worker for every two Kuwaiti citizens”. Generally, “domestic workers come from Asia, particularly from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia and India” (Luebker *et al.* 2013: 32). With respect to Kuwait, for instance, Dashti (2013: 64-65) writes that “Indian, Srilankan, Filipino, Indonesian, Nepali [...] constitute the most widely represented nationalities among Kuwait’s domestic workers”. Finally, some of the foreign workers are accompanied by their families, which accounts both for the high absolute numbers of immigrants and for the high percentage of the foreign-born population (data from Serageldin *et al.* 2012: 179):

Country	Number of immigrants	Percentage of foreign-born population
Bahrain	315,000	39.1
Kuwait	2,098,000	68.8
Oman	826,000	28.4
Qatar	1,305,000	86.5
Saudi Arabia	7,289,000	27.8
United Arab Emirates	3,293,000	70.0

Table 6. *Immigrants and foreign-born population in the Arab Gulf countries*

Consider next the process of urbanization, as reflected in the increase of the absolute numbers of urban inhabitants (data from Serageldin *et al.* 2012: 174):

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Bahrain	434,000	511,000	574,000	643,000	715,000
Kuwait	2,100,000	1,692,000	2,188,000	2,654,000	3,001,000
Oman	1,218,000	1,557,000	1,719,000	1,881,000	2,122,000
Qatar	431,000	495,000	586,000	845,000	1,445,000
Saudi Arabia	12,451,000	14,361,000	16,615,000	19,120,000	21,541,000
United Arab Emirates	1,476,000	1,906,000	2,599,000	3,364,000	3,956,000

Table 7. *Urban population in the Arab Gulf countries*

The share of the urban population is even more impressive (data from Serageldin *et al.* 2012: 174):

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Bahrain	88.1	88.4	88.4	88.4	88.6
Kuwait	98.0	98.1	98.2	98.3	98.4
Oman	66.1	71.7	71.6	71.9	73.0
Qatar	92.2	94.1	94.9	95.4	95.8
Saudi Arabia	76.6	78.7	79.8	81.0	82.1
United Arab Emirates	79.1	78.4	80.3	82.3	84.1

Table 8. *Percentage of urban population in the Arab Gulf countries*

Most immigrant workers live and work in cities. They have thus contributed to the significant increase of the proportion of urban population in the Arab Gulf countries.

Large-scale immigration and urbanization have also led to a radical modification of the language situation. Generally, cities are known to be a place sociolinguistically characterized by “le brassage des langues”, as put by Calvet (2000; 2002; 2011; 2013). When analyzing the impact of urbanization on Arabic vernaculars, Miller (2003; 2004) identifies two types of cities with a large component of non-Arab immigrants. An example of the first type is Khartoum (Sudan) “where the non-Arab migrants are national, might stay permanently and speak very different levels of Arabic (from pidgin-creole type to regional dialectal varieties” (Miller 2004: 194). The second type “is represented by the Gulf cities (Dubai, Kuwait, etc.) with numerous foreign immigrants”. In these cities, “urbanization has reinforced long-standing contact with [...] languages such as Hindi/Urdu, English as well as with various Arabic dialects spoken by the native population or by the Arab expatriates” (Miller 2004: 195). With respect to the United Arab Emirates, for instance, Miller (2008: 376) speaks of “une forte présence du perse, de l’urdu/hindi, de l’anglais”. Actually, the numbers are mind-boggling: according to a recent estimate (*The National*, 22 March 2009), there are 200 nationalities and 150 ethnic groups in the United Arab Emirates, who speak some 100 languages. For Qatar, Bakir (2010: 202) lists “Farsi, Panjabi, Malayalam, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Thai, Tagalog, Indonesian” (Bakir 2010: 202). As can be seen from these examples, the first languages of the migrant workers are both genetically and typologically quite diverse.

One of the immediate needs facing both the local Arabic-speaking population and the foreign workers, with various language back-

grounds, is therefore communication. Generally, the educational attainment of immigrant workers from Asian countries is at the lower end. This is particularly true of two groups: domestic workers as a whole, and women, large numbers of which work as domestic workers. With respect to the immigrant domestic workers in Saudi Arabia, for instance, Luebker *et al.* (2013: 32) write that in 2009, 301,000 (i.e. 38.4%) of them had no formal educational qualifications; of these, 247,000 were officially classified as having “basic literacy skills”, while the remaining 54,000 are registered as “illiterate”. In addition, in 2009, 203,000 (i.e. 25.9%) of the domestic workers had completed only primary school (see Luebker *et al.* 2013: 32). One notable exception is represented by Filipino domestic workers, who are typically better educated [and] have a better knowledge of English (Luebker *et al.* 2013: 31). This is stark contrast to the smaller contingent of high-skilled expatriates from countries such as the USA, the UK, Australia, etc. Usually, none of the groups of foreign workers attains reasonable fluency in Arabic, be it Modern Standard Arabic or (any of the varieties of) Gulf Arabic. Also, while English, is used to some extent for inter-ethnic communication, it cannot and has not become the local means of inter-ethnic communication. English is not widely spoken, either by most immigrant workers from South and South-East Asia – with the exception of those from the Philippines – or by the local population in the Arab Gulf countries. It is perhaps only in Dubai that English is a competitor, but its use is limited mostly to “business circles” (Randall and Samini 2010: 43). Under these circumstances, “a kind of pidgin Arabic, known as Gulf Pidgin Arabic, is spoken as a *lingua franca*” (Miller 2004: 195; see also Miller 2008: 376).

Various social criteria have been suggested for the classification of pidgins. Sebba (1997: 26-33) proposes the following typology of pidgins in terms of the social context of their origins: (i) military and police pidgins; (ii) seafaring and trade pidgins; (iii) plantation pidgins; (iv) mine and construction pidgins; (v) immigrants’ pidgins; (vi) tourist pidgins; (vii) urban contact vernaculars. Given the setting in which it emerged, Gulf Pidgin Arabic obviously belongs to type (vii). Bakker (1995: 27-28) suggests that pidgins can be classified in terms of the social situation in which they are used: (i) maritime pidgins; (ii) trade pidgins; (iii) interethnic contact languages; (iv) work force pidgins. In accordance with this typology, Gulf Pidgin Arabic is illustrative of type (iii). Finally, in the multilingual setting typical of the cities in the Arab Gulf countries, Gulf Pidgin Arabic functions as a *langue véhiculaire* (in the sense of Calvet 1981).

### 3. Corpus and methodology

The varieties of Gulf Pidgin Arabic (henceforth GPA) considered are Kuwaiti Pidgin Arabic (KPA), Omani Pidgin Arabic (OPA), Qatari Pidgin Arabic (QPA), and Saudi Pidgin Arabic (SPA). In the literature, these are frequently lumped together under the name of ‘Gulf Pidgin Arabic’ (see e.g. Smart 1990; Wiswall 2002; Næss 2008; Bakir 2010; Albakrawi 2012; Almoaily 2013; Avram 2012; 2013a; 2013b). Other names include a.o. ‘Arabic Gulf Pidgin’ (Miller 2008: 376), ‘Urdu Pidgin Arabic’ (Almoaily 2008), and ‘Asian Pidgin Arabic’ (Al-Azraqi 2010). The last two reflect the pre-eminence of speakers of Asian languages among the users of GPA. The users themselves refer to it as ‘Arabic’ whereas the local native speakers of Arabic and the media generally designate it as ‘broken Arabic’.

The corpus of GPA consists of both published and unpublished sources. The former include transcripts of interviews, answers to questionnaires, translations of test sentences (Wiswall 2002; Almoaily 2008; Næss 2008; Al-Azraqi 2010; Bakir 2010; Almoaily 2013; Salem 2013). The latter are online sources: internet discussion lists (involving participants with different first languages, not including Arabic), songs, poems. The data are collected from 25 websites (see Avram 2012; 2013a; 2013b), catering either to a particular community (e.g. Filipino, Indian, Indonesian, Pakistani) or to a wider, multinational audience. Interestingly, GPA is also occasionally used even among participants otherwise sharing another language, who wish e.g. to practice their ‘Arabic’. It should be noted that, unlike Smart (1990) and Al-Azraqi (2010), the corpus does not include representations of GPA in e.g. the media, cartoons, TV series, films, etc. Also excluded are what appear to be samples of the Foreigner Talk register of Arabic, rather than of GPA proper. The corpus is thus authentic, to the exclusion of examples illustrative of how local, native speakers of Arabic imagine GPA to be or of their attempts at imitating it.

Generally, all examples appear in the system of transcription used in the sources. The examples from Al-Moaily (2008; 2013) are transliterated from the original version in Arabic script. All quotations are accompanied by glosses and translation (the examples from Næss 2008; Al-Azraqi 2010; Bakir 2010; and Salem 2013 include the original glosses and/or translations). In addition, when known, the examples include the specification of the speaker’s first language, as well as the length of stay.

The following abbreviations are used in the glosses: 1 = 1<sup>st</sup> person; 2 = 2<sup>nd</sup> person; 3 = 3<sup>rd</sup> person; COP = copula; COMPL = completive aspect



marker; DEM = demonstrative; FI = multifunctional item; LV = light verb; M = masculine; NEG = negator; PART = particle; POSS = possession marker; PREP = preposition; TAM = tense, aspect or modality marker.

## 4. GPA: Selected structural features

### 4.1. Phonology

The phonology of GPA differs significantly, in several respects, from that of Gulf Arabic.

Vowel length, which is phonemic in Gulf Arabic, is not distinctive in GPA, as noted by e.g. Næss (2008: 42) for OPA and Salem (2013: 107) for KPA, even though phonetically short and long vowels do occasionally occur. The inventory of consonants undergoes a significant reduction, given that the marked phonemes of Arabic are either replaced or lost (Almoaily 2008: 36-37; Næss 2008: 30-43; Salem 2013: 106-107). Consider the forms, illustrative of the treatment of the treatment of e.g. the ‘emphatic’ voiceless stop /t̤/, ‘emphatic’ voiceless fricative /s̤/, the voiceless velar fricative/h̤/, the voiceless pharyngeal fricative /ħ/ and its voiced counterpart /ʕ/:

- (1) KPA
  - a. /t̤/ → [t]  
*but* ‘to put’
  - b. /s̤/ → [s]  
*balas* ‘finished’ (Salem 2013: 107)
  - c. /h̤/ → [h]  
*balas* ‘finished’ (Salem 2013: 107)
  - d. /ħ/ → [h]  
*but* ‘to put’ (Salem 2013: 107)  
/ħ/ → Ø  
*yerua* ‘to go’ (Salem 2013: 107)
  - e. /ʕ/ → Ø  
*araf* ‘to know’ (Salem 2013: 107)

Consonant gemination is not phonemic. Moreover, consonants frequently undergo the process of degemination (Næss 2008: 36; Salem 2013: 107).

- (2) KPA  
*sita* ‘six’ (Salem 2013: 107)

Finally, the reduction of the inventory of vocalic and consonantal phonemes also leads to a significant reduction in the number of phonological contrasts.

Another striking characteristic of the phonology of GPA is the occurrence of considerable inter-speaker variation. Note that this is very frequently reflected in the orthography used in online sources. Consider the variation between short [a] and long [a:], short [e] and long [e:], and [e] and [i] respectively, illustrated in the following examples:

- (3) a. Tagalog, SPA  
*baden* ‘then’ (Online 2009)  
b. Tagalog, SPA  
*badin* ‘then’ (Online 2008)  
c. J (Sinhala, 2 years), QPA  
*bāden* ‘then’ (Bakir 2010: 209)  
d. A2 (Urdu, 5 years), OPA  
*bādēn* ‘then’ (Næss 2008: 91)

Inter-speaker variation also affects consonants. The word-initial consonants in the forms below are all reflexes of Arabic [z]:

- (4) a. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*jēn* ‘good’ (Næss 2008: 34)  
b. B2 (Sinhala, 5 years), OPA  
*sēn* ‘good’ (Næss 2008: 34)  
c. C5 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*zēn* ‘good’ (Næss 2008: 33)

Intra-speaker variation also occurs. The following examples illustrate intra-speaker variation in vowels. Again, the spelling used in online sources reflects variation in the realization of vowels. For instance, in the examples under (5)-(7), etymologically long vowels are variably realized as short or long, sometimes in one and the same word:

- (5) Bengali, SPA  
a. *fi* ‘COP’, *katir* ‘a lot’ (Online 2009)  
b. *badeen* ‘then’, *fii* ‘COP’, *kabeer* ‘big’ (Online 2009)

- (6) Tagalog, SPA  
 a. *salam* ‘peace’, *tamam* ‘alright’ (Online 2006)  
 b. *kabeer* ‘big’ (Online 2006)
- (7) Urdu, SPA  
 a. *mafi* ‘NEG COP’, *zalan* ‘angry’ (Online 2012)  
 b. *fee* ‘COP’, *jaded* ‘new’ (Online 2012)

The same hold for consonants, with intra-speaker variation attested in both published and unpublished sources:

- (8) Tagalog, SPA  
*nafar* ~ *napar* ‘person’ (Online 2010)
- (9) D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*sĕn* ~ *jĕn* ‘good’ (Næss 2008: 32 and 34)

## 4.2. Morphology

As already shown by e.g. Smart (1990), GPA has virtually no inflectional morphology. The absence of inflectional morphology impacts on a number of areas of nominal and verbal morphology.

In the nominal morphology one consequence of the lack of inflections is the replacement of the dual forms of nouns by structures with the cardinal numeral ‘two’ followed by the etymologically singular form of the noun:

- (10) a. H (Malayalam, 3 years), QPA  
*tineen ?usbuu*  
 two week  
 ‘two weeks’ (Bakir 2010: 213)
- b. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*isnĕn sana*  
 two year  
 ‘two years’ (Næss 2008: 35)

Similarly, pronominal suffixes are replaced by full pronouns (Næss 2008: 52; Al-Azraqi 2010: 171), i.e. by free morphemes:

- (11) a. E (Sinhala, 4 years), QPA  
*maamaa yabi ?anaa* (Bakir 2010: 211)  
 Madam want 1SG  
 ‘Madam wants me.’

- b. A (Bengali, 20 years), QPA  
*guul la ?anaa ruuh* (Bakir 2010: 211)  
 tell to 1SG go  
 ‘told me to go’

As for the verbal morphology of GPA, its most striking characteristic is undoubtedly the invariant form of verbs. As shown by Bakir (2010: 206), “the common verb form [...] is the Gulf Arabic 3rd person singular masculine imperfect form [which is] used with all subjects, regardless of their person, gender, or number”.

Derivational morphology is a topic which has not been addressed in previous work on GPA. However, two word-formation processes have occasionally been mentioned in the literature. Consider first total reduplication, which can be regarded as a sub-type of compounding. Several lexical categories can serve as bases for reduplication (Avram 2013b), such as nouns (12), numerals (13), verbs (14), and adverbs (15):

- (12) Tagalog, SPA  
*Alatul bara bara* (Online 2012)  
 always heat heat  
 ‘It is always very hot’
- (13) M1 (Malayalam, 2 years 6 months), SPA  
*ma fi malum miyya miyya* (Almoaily 2013: 199)  
 NEG FI know hundred hundred  
 ‘[I] don’t understand [it] perfectly’
- (14) D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*Huwa amsi-amsi* (Næss 2008: 58-59)  
 3SG go go  
 ‘She walks and walks.’
- (15) Abulbašar (Bengali, 11 years), SPA  
*eš fi kalam hada sura sura* (Almoaily 2008: 80)  
 what FI speak DEM quickly quickly  
 ‘why are you speaking so fast’

Almoaily (2013: 176) claims that “there are plenty of examples of [total] reduplication in GPA”. In fact, total reduplication is neither frequent nor productive. Moreover, there seems to be no demonstrable difference in meaning between the simplex and the reduplicated forms. Consider the examples below:

- (16) D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA
- a. *Ana bādēn fakkar šwey- šwey.* (Næss 2008: 83)  
1SG then think a little a little  
'So then I [had to] think a little.'
  - b. *Bas arap swey.* (Næss 2008: 32)  
only know a little  
'I just know a little'

Finally, a number of totally reduplicated forms are actually instances of pseudo-reduplication (Avram 2013b) – i.e. there is no corresponding simplex form – e.g. *sēm-sēm* / *sem-sem* / *seym-seym*, recorded in SPA (Almoaily 2008; 2013), OPA (Næss 2008), and KPA (Salem 2013).

The only process of word-formation worth mentioning is compounding, of a rather special type: the high-frequency verb *sawwi* 'to make' combines with either a noun or an adjective. The resulting compound functions as a verb, as shown in the following examples:

- (17) a. P2 (Punjabi, 6 years), SPA  
*huwa sawwi taleem* (Almoaily 2013: 170)  
he make learning  
'he learns'
- b. A (Bengali, 20 years), QPA  
*kafiil fii sawwi jinjaal* (Bakir 2010: 217)  
sponsor FI make quarrel  
'The sponsor quarrels [with me]'
- c. J (Sinhala, 2 years), QPA  
*sawwi kudra klin* (Bakir 2010: 209)  
make vegetable clean  
'clean the vegetables'
- d. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*bas asōn sawwi mersalla* (Næss 2008: 32)  
only so LV correspondence  
'Just so I can correspond'
- e. A2 (Urdu, 5 years), OPA  
*bāden sawwi arūs* (Næss 2008: 91)  
then LV bride  
'then get married'
- f. C5 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*ana sawwi suōl* (Næss 2008: 92)  
1SG LV question  
'I asked [him]'

- g. Tamil, OPA  
*kafīl ma fi isawwi naqal kafāla* (Online 2011)  
 sponsor NEG FI make transfer guarantee  
 ‘the sponsor does not transfer the guarantee’

Note that this word-formation process is a direct consequence of the small size of the GPA vocabulary: the compound *sawwi* + noun/adjective compensates for the ‘missing’ verb.

### 4.3. Syntax

A pervasive characteristic of GPA syntax is categorial multifunctionality (in the sense of Mühlhäusler 1997: 137): words can be assigned to more than one lexical category, i.e. they are lexically underspecified. Categorial multifunctionality is a consequence of both the lack of inflections and of the small size of the vocabulary.

The phenomenon of categorial multifunctionality in GPA is probably best illustrated by the functions of *fi* (Al-Azraqi 2010: 167-168 and 169-171; Bakir 2010: 215-219; see in particular Avram 2012; 2013a; 2013b).

Consider first a series of examples in which *fi* is used as a predicative copula:

- (18) a. Shera (Pashto, 22 years), SPA  
*fi absan* (Al-Moaily 2008: 127)  
 FI good  
 ‘it is alright’
- b. D (Tagalog, 5 years), QPA  
*?inta fii majnuun* (Bakir 2010: 216)  
 2SG.M FI crazy  
 ‘Are you crazy?’
- c. F (Tamil, 5 years), QPA  
*laa, maafii zaruuri* (Bakir 2010: 216)  
 no NEG FI necessary  
 ‘No it is not necessary.’
- d. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*ana fi miskin* (Næss 2008: 82)  
 1SG FI poor  
 ‘Poor me!’
- e. Indian, OPA  
*Beelad fi zein.* (Online 2011)  
 country FI good  
 ‘Hometown is good.’

- f. Pakistani, OPA  
*qalb mal ana fi wayid farban* (Online 2012)  
 heart POSS 1SG FI a lot glad  
 ‘my heart is very happy’

*Fi* also functions as an equative copula:

- (19) a. Abdulhamid (Punjabi, 26 years), SPA  
*huwa fi mīkānīki* (Al-Moaily 2008: 93)  
 3SG FI mechanic  
 ‘he is a mechanic’
- b. Tamil, OPA  
*Insān ana ma fi hayawan* (Online 2011)  
 human being 1SG NEG FI animal  
 ‘I’m a human being, not an animal.’
- c. KPA  
*ana fi doctor* (Salem 2013: 109)  
 1SG FI doctor  
 ‘I am a doctor.’

The use of *fi* as an existential copula is widely attested:

- (20) a. B (Malayalam, 30 years), QPA  
*ʔaʃaan fii nafar iji* (Bakir 2010: 215)  
 because FI person come  
 ‘Because there is someone coming.’
- b. Abdulhamid (Punjabi, 26 years), SPA  
*fi šuwāya bas ma fi katīr* (Al-Moaily 2008: 86)  
 FI a little but NEG FI much  
 ‘there are a few, but not many’
- c. Shera (Pashto, 22 years), SPA  
*ana fi bas* (Al-Moaily 2008: 126)  
 1SG FI only  
 ‘there was only me’
- d. D4 (Tagalog, 9 months), OPA  
*fi saḥīr dukān* (Næss 2008: 76)  
 FI small shop  
 ‘There was a small shop.’
- e. D2 (Tamil, 12 years), OPA  
*fi muslim fi mafi muslim* (Næss 2008: 77)  
 FI Muslim FI NEG-FI Muslim  
 ‘There are Muslims [and] there are non-Muslims.’

- f. Pakistani, OPA  
*Fi taiyara.* (Online 2012)  
 FI airplane  
 ‘There is an airplane.’

Although less frequently found in the corpus, *fi* is also used as a locative copula:

- (21) a. A (Bengali, 20 years), QPA  
*ʔanaa fi bnii* (Bakir 2010: 216)  
 1SG FI here  
 ‘I am here.’  
 b. Abulbashar (Bengali, 11 years), SPA  
*aʔwal fi hin āk* (Al-Moaily 2008: 72)  
 first FI there  
 ‘he was there before’

To express predicative possession (the *have*-construction) GPA again resorts to *fi*. In this syntactic structure the possessee is the subject, the possessor is a locative complement, and the predicate is a locative copula:

- (22) a. Abdulmajid (Punjabi, 27 years), SPA  
*ana fi bēt tāni* (Al-Moaily 2008: 98)  
 1SG FI house other  
 ‘I have another house’  
 b. Tagalog, SPA  
*Ana fi sadiki shogul Bahrain* (Online 2011)  
 1SG FI friend work Bahrain  
 ‘I have a friend who works in Bahrain.’  
 c. B (Malayalam, 30 years), QPA  
*ʔanaa fi šugul, ʔanaa maafii muškila* (Bakir 2010: 218)  
 1SG FI work 1SG NEG FI problem  
 ‘If I have work I don’t have a problem.’  
 d. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*fi riyāl bas ma fi arūs?* (Næss 2008: 76)  
 FI man but NEG FI marriage  
 ‘you have someone, but you’re not married?’

Finally, *fi* also functions as what appears to be a verbal predicate marker. In such cases, *fi* occupies follows the subject and immediately precedes the verbal predicate of the sentence. Consider the following examples:



- (23) a. Hindi, SPA  
*ana fe gul inta taal bet* (Online 2011)  
 1SG FI say 2SG come house  
 ‘I told you to come [to my] place.’
- b. Tagalog, SPA  
*baden ana fi dugdug* (Online 2009)  
 then 1SG FI ring up  
 ‘then I’ll ring you up’
- c. KPA  
*ana fi ma’loum* (Salem 2013: 109)  
 1SG FI know  
 ‘I know.’
- d. E (Sinhala, 4 years), QPA  
*?inta fii yaskit* (Bakir 2010: 217)  
 2SG FI be silent  
 ‘You keep quiet.’
- e. F (Tamil, 5 years), QPA  
*?inta fii saafir* (Bakir 2010: 217)  
 2SG FI travel  
 ‘Are you travelling?’
- f. Pakistani, OPA  
*mafi raqas?? goom dance* (Online 2012)  
 NEG-FI dance stand up dance  
 ‘Aren’t you dancing? Stand up [and] dance’

Another word illustrating categorial multifunctionality is *māl*. As shown below, *māl* may function as the mark of attributive possession:

- (24) a. Pakistani, OPA  
*qalb mal ana fi wayid farhan* (Online 2012)  
 heart POSS 1SG FI a lot glad  
 ‘my heart is very happy’
- b. D (Tagalog, 5 years), QPA  
*raas maal ?anaa ?awwir* (Bakir 2010: 219)  
 head of 1SG hurt  
 ‘My head hurts.’

However, *māl* is widely used as multi-purpose preposition as well:

- (25) a. C2 (Malayalam, 8 years), OPA  
*bint araf ziyāda māl bilād* (Næss 2008: 66)  
 daughter know much PREP coutry  
 ‘[my] daughter knows a lot about [her] country’
- b. C4 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*ana fi zeyn māl hindi* (Næss 2008: 66)  
 1SG COP good PREP India  
 ‘I’m well [when I’m] in India’
- c. C2 (Malayalam, 8 years), OPA  
*binti fi āti māl walad* (Næss 2008: 66)  
 daughter TAM give PREP son  
 ‘[My] daughter gives [it] to my son’
- d. A2 (Urdu, 2 years), OPA  
*māl malābis ana fi šugl* (Næss 2008: 67)  
 PREP clothes 1SG TAM work  
 ‘I work with clothes’
- e. D (Tagalog, 5 years), QPA  
*sawwi maal ?aana muškil* (Bakir 2010: 212)  
 make of 1SG problem  
 ‘[she] makes a problem for me’

GPA syntax is also characterized by the occurrence of considerable variation (see e.g. Avram 2013b; Almoaily 2014). For instance, while the predominantly attested word order is (S)VO. However, the (S)OV type is also frequently found:

- (26) a. B2 (Sinhala, 5 years), OPA  
*ana čiko sūp* (Næss 2008: 34)  
 1SG child see  
 ‘I [will] see [my] children’
- b. C (Bengali, 30 years), QPA  
*waraga waahid yabi* (Bakir 2010: 206)  
 sheet one want  
 ‘Do you want one sheet?’

Occasionally both the (S)VO and the (S)OV patterns occurs in one and the same sentence, and thus also illustrates intra-speaker variation:

- (27) J (Sinhala, 2 years), QPA  
*batteeti maay [...], badeen saabuun batteeti* (Bakir 2010: 209)  
 put water then soap put  
 ‘put water [...] then soap’

Speakers who also make use of the (S)OV pattern may exhibit other parameters correlated with this word order. Some of these are illustrated in what follows. Consider, for instance, the position of the modal verb:

- (28) C1 (Bengali, 7 years), OPA  
*inte šāra šūf yigdar* (Næss 2008: 41)  
 2SG street see can  
 ‘you can see [them] on the street’

Adverbs may precede the verb:

- (29) a. P1 (Punjabi, 5 years), SPA  
*sem sem kalām* (Almoaily 2013: 211)  
 same speak  
 ‘they speak [in the] same [way]’  
 b. C1 (Bengali, 7 years), OPA  
*hini rakab* (Næss 2008: 35)  
 here ride  
 ‘was carried here [lit. rode here]’

Adpositions, which are generally preposed, i.e. are prepositions, but they may also be postposed, i.e. function as postpositions:

- (30) a. C1 (Bengali, 7 years), OPA  
*zamal fōk* (Næss 2008: 35)  
 camel above  
 ‘on top of the camel’  
 b. B3 (Sinhala, 22 years), OPA  
*itnēn w arba’in fōk* (Næss 2008: 43)  
 two and forty above  
 ‘more than [lit.= above] forty years old’

Note also the occasional occurrence of pre-nominal relative clauses:

- (31) A2 (Urdu, 5 years), OPA  
*ta’šira māl umān nafarāt* (Næss 2008: 65)  
 visa POSS Oman persons  
 ‘People who have Omani visas’

Considerable inter-speaker variation is attested in one of the structures expressing attributive possession. As can be seen in the following examples, two patterns of juxtaposition are found: either possessor–possessee, in (32a-b), or possessee–possessor, in (33a-b):

- (32) a. Bengali, SPA  
*bēbi anā fi bangaladiš* (Al-Azraqi 2010: 171)  
 baby 1SG PART Bangladesh  
 ‘My children are in Bangladesh’
- b. C2 (Malayalam, 8 years), OPA  
*ana sadiki bēt* (Næss 2008: 61)  
 1SG friend house  
 ‘my friend’s house’
- (33) a. Tagalog, SPA  
*kulo fulus anta* (Online 2009)  
 all money 2SG  
 ‘all your money’
- b. Tamil, OPA  
*Ma fi šuf abli ana* (Online 2011)  
 NEG FI see family 1SG  
 ‘I haven’t seen my family’

The same holds for the alternative structure with *māl*. In (34a-b) the order of the constituents is possessor + *māl* + possessee, whereas the examples under (35a-b) illustrate the order possessee + *māl* + possessor:

- (34) a. OPA  
*batn mal ana fee sawee same same usfoor* (Online 2002)  
 belly POSS 1SG FI make same bird  
 ‘my belly is making [noises] like a bird’
- b. D (Tagalog, 5 years), QPA  
*raas maal ?anaa ?awwir* (Bakir 2010: 219)  
 head of 1SG hurt  
 ‘My head hurts.’
- (35) a. C2 (Malayalam, 8 years), OPA  
*ana māl bint tālīm arabi* (Næss 2008: 63)  
 1SG POSS daughter learn Arabic  
 ‘my daughter is learning Arabic’
- b. A3 (Urdu, 2 years), OPA  
*salīm māl ana sadīg* (Næss 2008: 63)  
 Salim POSS 1SG friend  
 ‘Salim is my friend’

The position occupied by the emerging aspectual marker *kalaas* is also subject to inter-speaker variation. It appears either in pre-verbal position, as in (36a), or in post-verbal position, as in (36b):

- (36) a. E (Sinhala, 4 years), QPA  
*ʔinta kalaas waddi fuluus?* (Bakir 2010: 213)  
 2SG COMPL send money  
 ‘Have you sent the money?’
- b. J (Sinhala, 2 years), QPA  
*ʔatbuk kalaas* (Bakir 2010: 212)  
 cook COMPL  
 ‘[I] have cooked’

The third major characteristic of GPA syntax is the significant reduction and simplification of the range of structures, constructions, and of the formal means of expressing syntactic relations found in Arabic, its lexifier language (Avram 2013b).

One case in point is, for example, the temporal and aspectual interpretation of sentences. Since “the verbal is frozen”, it is “used in sentences indicating actions of various time references” (Bakir 2010: 206). In the absence of inflections, the temporal and aspectual interpretation essentially relies either on contextual clues or on the use of time adverbials, e.g. *albiin* ‘now’ *ʔamis* ‘yesterday’, *awwal* ‘before’, *bādēn* ‘later’, *baačir/bukera* ‘tomorrow’, (Almoaily 2008: 40; Næss 2008: 85; Bakir 2010: 211-213).

- (37) a. B3 (Sinhala, 22 years), OPA  
*awwal ana yistegel wāhid bēt* (Næss 2008: 85)  
 before 1SG work one house  
 ‘Before, I was working [only] in one house.’
- b. C2 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*yimkin šwey kamsa sana swey bādēn yiglis bēt* (Næss 2008: 86)  
 maybe little five year little then sit house  
 ‘Maybe a little longer, like five years, then I will stay at home.’
- c. F (Tamil, 5 years), QPA  
*ʔamis ʔanaa yabi ...*  
 yesterday 1SG want  
 ‘Yesterday, I wanted ...’
- d. I (Bengali, 20 years), QPA  
*baacir ʔanaa yabi...*  
 tomorrow 1SG want  
 ‘Tomorrow, I want ...’

Similarly, negation is basically limited to the use of an invariant negator, *ma* (Næss 2008: 71; Bakir 2010: 219-220):

- (38) KPA  
 a. *ma yebi* (Salem 2013: 107)  
 NEG want  
 ‘[I] don’t want’  
 b. *Ana ma fi ma’loum* (Salem 2013: 109)  
 1SG NEG FI know  
 ‘I don’t know’

Sentence coordination is typically, and most frequently, achieved via parataxis, i.e. juxtaposition of sentences:

- (39) a. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*ati pulūs Ø sīr dikān* (Næss 2008: 57)  
 give money go shop  
 ‘[you] give her money and she walks to the shop’  
 b. C5 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*siyōra masbūt, nadīf, zēn Ø yimši ey makān* (Næss 2008: 33)  
 car OK clean good go any place  
 ‘the car is OK, clean, good enough to go anywhere’

The only alternative is the occasional use of ‘then, afterwards’ as a coordinating conjunction:

- (40) J (Sinhala, 2 years), QPA  
*bukera hatteeti maay gassaala, badeen saabuun hatteeti,*  
 tomorrow put water washing machine then soap put  
*badeen hatteeti tiyaab, badeen šilli tiyaab, badeen sawwi ?muti*  
 then put clothes then lift clothes then make iron  
 (Bakir 2010: 209)  
 ‘Tomorrow, I’ll put water in the washing machine, then soap,  
 then clothes, then [I’ll] take out the clothes and iron [them]’

The absence of overt complementizers and the infrequent occurrence of conjunctions accounts for the fact that subordination is also essentially dependent on parataxis, regardless of the type of subordinate clause. Consider the examples below, illustrative of the various types of subordinate clause found in the corpus: complement clauses (41), adverbial clauses of reason (42), adverbial clauses of time (43), and adverbial clauses of condition (44):

- (41) B (Malayalam, 30 years), QPA  
*Kafiil guul Ø maafii alhiin iji* (Bakir 2010: 219)  
 sponsor say not now come  
 ‘The sponsor says he will not come now.’
- (42) D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*Ø imārāt mafi jēn ana yerīd riji maktab* (Næss 2008: 34)  
 emirates NEG good 1SG want return agency  
 ‘since [work in] the Emirates wasn’t good I wanted to return to the agency’
- (43) a. C5 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*Ø nafar sadīk yiji, ana sarwwi suāl* (Næss 2008: 92)  
 person friend come 1SG LV question  
 ‘when my friend came, I asked him’  
 b. E (Sinhala, 4 years), QPA  
*Ø baaba yiji ?ana gum* (Bakir 2010: 207)  
 master come 1SG stand  
 ‘When Master comes, I stand’
- (44) a. B2 (Sinhala, 5 years), OPA  
*Ø ana roh polis catch* (Næss 2008: 90-91)  
 1SG go police catch  
 ‘if I had gone, the police would have caught [me]’  
 b. B (Malayalam, 30 years), QPA  
*Ø ?anaa fii šugul, ?anaa maafii muškila* (Bakir 2010: 218)  
 1SG fii work 1SG not problem  
 ‘If I have work, I don’t have a problem.’

As with coordinated sentences, the occurrence of conjunctions is rather rare. The only type of subordinate introduced by a conjunction, with anything approaching frequency, is the adverbial clause of reason. Consider the examples below in which the adverbial clause of reason is introduced by *asān/?ašaan* ‘because’:

- (45) a. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*asān hōda mama kalām arabi ana bādēn fakkar* (Næss 2008: 83)  
 because DEM madam speak Arabic 1SG then think  
 ‘Because the madam [only] spoke Arabic, I [had to] think’

- b. E (Sinhala, 4 years), QPA  
*fii nafar muut ?ašaan maafii šuuf filim* (Bakir 2010: 219)  
 there person die because not see film  
 ‘Is there a person who dies because he doesn’t watch a movie?’

#### 4.4. Vocabulary

As already mentioned, in sections 4.3 and 4.4, GPA has to cope with the consequences of the small size of its vocabulary. As far as GPA vocabulary is concerned, a first such consequence is lexical polysemy. GPA lexical items etymologically derived from Arabic undergo semantic extensions and thus become polysemous. The examples under (46) illustrate the polysemy of a verb:

- (46) a. P1 (Punjabi, 5 years), SPA  
*ana iġlis hina* (Almoaily 2013: 210)  
 1SG sit here  
 ‘I live here.’
- b. E1 (Malayalam, 17 years), OPA  
*awwal yijlis andel sandūg māl cash* (Næss 2008: 65)  
 first sit PREP box POSS cash  
 ‘At first I was sitting at the cash register’
- c. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*mafi ijlis* (Næss 2008: 74)  
 NEG rest  
 ‘[We] can’t rest’
- d. C2 (Malayalam, 8 years), OPA  
*yijlis bēt* (Næss 2008: 74)  
 sit house  
 ‘stay at home’

Consider also the polysemy of the preposition *māl* in the examples under (25), repeated here for expository reasons, as (47):

- (47) a. D (Tagalog, 5 years), QPA  
*sawwi maal ?aana muškil* (Bakir 2010: 212)  
 make of 1SG problem  
 ‘[she] makes a problem for me’
- b. C2 (Malayalam, 8 years), OPA  
*bint araf ziyāda māl bilad* (Næss 2008: 66)  
 daughter know much PREP country  
 ‘[my] daughter knows a lot about [her] country’



- c. C4 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*ana fi zeyn māl hindi* (Næss 2008: 66)  
 1SG COP good PREP India  
 ‘I’m well [when I’m] in India’
- d. C2 (Malayalam, 8 years), OPA  
*binti fi āti māl walad* (Næss 2008: 66)  
 daughter TAM give PREP son  
 ‘[My] daughter gives [it] to my son’
- e. A2 (Urdu, 2 years), OPA  
*māl malābis ana fi šugl* (Næss 2008: 67)  
 PREP clothes 1SG TAM work  
 ‘I work with clothes’

The small size of the vocabulary also accounts for the existence of synonymic series, in which one lexical item is etymologically derived from Arabic, the lexifier language, and the other from another language, most often English. This sometimes occurs in the speech of one and the same user of GPA, as shown below. In (48) the Arabic-derived form *sabar* alternates with the English-derived *patient*:

- (48) Bengali, SPA
- a. *inti ahyanan mafi sabar* (Online 2009)  
 you sometimes NEG-FI patient  
 ‘sometimes you aren’t patient’
- b. *fi patient* (Online 2009)  
 FI patient  
 ‘be patient’

In (49) the speaker uses both the Arabic-derived *zawwīj* and the English-derived *marid* ‘married’:

- (49) E (Sinhala, 4 years), QPA
- a. *hazband maal ?intii ruuh zawwīj* (Bakir 2010: 221)  
 husband of 2SG go marry  
 ‘your husband gets married?’
- b. *maafii koof husband sawwii marid* (Bakir 2010: 216)  
 not.be fear husband make married  
 ‘Aren’t you afraid your husband gets married?’

In (50) the Arabic-derived *bas* ‘but’ competes with the English-derived *but*:

- (50) Urdu, SPA  
 a. *yalla bas khalas* (Online 2012)  
 alright but finish  
 ‘alright, but that’s it’  
 b. *ana maloom but shuf* (Online 2012)  
 I know but see  
 ‘I know, but look’

Interestingly, synonyms from different source languages may occasionally co-occur in the same sentence. Consider the following example illustrating the co-occurrence of the Arabic-derived *tanēn* ‘two’ and of the English-derived form *second*:

- (51) C4 (Malayalam, 7 years), OPA  
*tanēn second čiko* (Næss 2008: 90)  
 two second child  
 ‘[my] second child’

Given the small size of the GPA vocabulary, speakers sometimes have to resort to circumlocutions, in the absence of the lexical item needed:

- (52) D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*āti halīb* (Næss 2008: 62)  
 give milk  
 ‘breast-feeds’

Another characteristic of the GPA vocabulary is the existence of lexical items which are instances of reanalysis of morphemic boundaries. In such cases, two – occasionally three – morphemes are construed as forming a single unit. In the examples under (52), the Arabic pronominal suffixes *-i* 1SG, *-ik* 2SG.F, *-ak* 2SG.M have been reinterpreted as part of the root of the nouns *ukt* ‘sister’, *bint* ‘daughter’ and *ism* ‘name’ respectively; in addition, in (52), the Arabic question word *(e)š* has also been reanalyzed as part of the root of the noun *ism* ‘name’.

- (53) a. Tagalog, SPA  
*es ismak hada napar* (Online 2011)  
 what name DEM person  
 ‘what is the name of that person’  
 b. B1 (Sinhala, 14 years), OPA  
*ana ukti binti* (Næss 2008: 54)  
 1SG sister daughter

- ‘my sister’s daughter’  
c. D1 (Javanese, 4 years), OPA  
*šismik Cahyantuk* (Næss 2008: 26)  
name Cahyantuk  
‘[his] name is Cahyantuk’

In (54) the Arabic prefix *y-* 3SG.M and the pronominal suffix *-ik* 2SG.F have been reinterpreted as part of the root of the verb ‘to give’:

- (54) A1 (Urdu, 10 years), OPA  
*rijal yātik mišan hurma* (Næss 2008: 56)  
man give to woman  
‘the man gives the woman’

In (55) the Arabic *mū zēn* ‘not good’ has undergone reanalysis, whereby the negator *mū* and the adjective *zēn* are merged into one word:

- (55) KPA  
*muzen* (Salem 2013: 108)  
‘bad’

Finally, in (56) the Arabic definite article *el* has been reinterpreted as part of the preposition:

- (56) E1 (Malayalam, 17 years), OPA  
*andel sandūg māl cash* (Næss 2008: 65)  
PREP box POSS cash  
‘at the cash register’

## 5. Sources of selected GPA structures

The data examined in the preceding section have shown that GPA is a radically restructured variety of Arabic. This radical restructuring of Arabic is the outcome of processes of reduction and of simplification. It appears that these processes can be traced back to or accounted for in terms of several sources.

Consider first the reduction in the number of phonemes and of phonological contrasts. This most certainly reflects the influence of the phonologies of the various first languages of GPA users. An influence exerted by the Foreigner Talk register of Arabic seems to be ruled out. Arabic Foreigner Talk appears to hold its ground in phonology: some varieties, e.g. Lebanese Arabic Foreigner Talk, do not evince reduction

in the inventory of phonemes and in the number of phonological contrasts (Bizri 2010: 151); although occasional adjustments towards non-Arabs do occur in other varieties, e.g. Egyptian Arabic Foreigner Talk (Al-Sharkawi 2010: 228-230), they are not of the magnitude characteristic of GPA.

It is tempting to regard the absence of dual marking on nouns as just one facet of the general loss of inflectional morphology in GPA. However, the possible influence of Arabic Foreigner Talk should not be discarded. According to Al-Sharkawi (2010: 234), an “element absent from [...] native speaker FT [= Foreigner Talk] is the dual marker *-ēn*”. Similarly, Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk resorts to “the cardinal number [...] followed by the singular noun [...] even if a dual [...] is required” (Dashti 2013: 78). Consider the following examples:

- (57) a. Egyptian Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*'itnēn kitāb* (Al-Sharkawi 2010: 234)  
 two book  
 ‘two books’
- b. Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*ju:fi talʔi aθne:n diɕa:ɕa* (Dashti 2013: 78)  
 see get out two chicken.SG  
 ‘look, prepare two chickens’

The occurrence in GPA of full pronominal forms instead of pronominal suffixes can be attributed to the general loss of inflections. The use of independent pronouns, however, may be reinforced by Arabic Foreigner Talk. Al-Sharkawi (2010: 231) notes the “consistent use of redundant pronouns” (see also Tweissi 1990: 313), illustrated below:

- (58) Egyptian Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*'inta šuft-u huwwa?* (Al-Sharkawi 2010: 231)  
 you saw-3SG he  
 ‘Did you see him?’

Moreover, the pronominal suffix itself may be dropped in (some varieties of) Arabic Foreigner talk, as demonstrated by the following example, in which it is the full form of the personal pronoun that occurs:

- (59) Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*haða ʔawa:z ma:l intɛj* (Dashti 2013: 75)  
 this passport belongs you  
 ‘This is your passport’

Arabic Foreigner Talk may have played a part in the emergence of yet another feature of GPA, namely, the most frequent form of the invariant verb. According to Ferguson (1971/1996: 118), Arabic Foreigner Talk “is characterized by such features as the use of the third person masculine singular of the imperfect of the verb for all persons, genders, numbers, and tenses”. This claim is confirmed by the following examples of Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk, in which this form occurs instead of its feminine counterpart (60a), instead of the second person feminine singular of the perfect (the first verb in 60b), and instead of the first person singular of the perfect (the second verb in 60b):

- (60) Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk  
 a. *ilhi:n hijja jii:b* (Dashti 2013: 82)  
 now she bring  
 ‘she will bring it in a moment’  
 b. *wen inti jhuʔil ʕis ams a:na jaʔti:ʕ* (Dashti 2013: 72)  
 where you put the paper bag yesterday I give you  
 ‘where did you put the bag I gave you yesterday’

Consider next the multiple functions and uses of *fi* in GPA (see also Avram 2012; 2013a), for which there are several putative sources. Thus, the emergence of *fi* as copula may be due to the conjunction of several factors: the occurrence not only of existential *fih* in Gulf Arabic, but also of overt copulas (existential, predicative, equative, locative) in the first languages of the users of GPA. The extensions in the use of the copula may be due either to the influence of some of the first languages of the immigrant workers or to grammaticalization. Some of the first languages of the users of GPA, e.g. Hindi and Urdu, also use the copula with a predicative and a locative function. Equative *fi* may be the result of the grammaticalization process “COPULA, LOCATIVE > COPULA, EQUATIVE”, itself “presumably part of a more extended pathway, namely LOCATIVE > EXIST > COPULA” (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 99).

The use of *fi* as a means for expressing predicative possession (i.e. *have*-constructions) is hardly surprising. On the one hand, most of the first languages of the immigrant workers draw on the Location Schema ‘Y is located at X’ (Heine 1997a and 1997b). On the other hand, this use of *fi* may also have emerged as a result of the grammaticalization path “COPULA, LOCATIVE > H-POSSESSIVE” (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 101),

given that the Location Schema is also cross-linguistically one of the most frequent sources for *have*-constructions.

The use of *fi* as a verbal predicate marker may again be the outcome of a ‘conspiracy’ of factors. One is the influence of the first languages spoken by immigrant workers. Some of them, e.g. Hindi and Urdu, use the auxiliary verb ‘to be’ both for the continuous and for the habitual aspect. This might account for the high frequency of *fi* as a verbal predicate marker in GPA, whose users include a large number of Indians. In addition, two grammaticalization processes readily come to mind. A first grammaticalization chain is “COPULA, LOCATIVE > CONTINUOUS” (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 97). The second one is “CONTINUOUS > HABITUAL” (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 93). As shown by Bybee *et al.* (1994: 158), progressive markers may develop into presents and imperfectives, and the progressive extends to cover habitual functions. Therefore, “the result is a gram [= grammatical morpheme] of very general meaning” (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 158). In other words, the two grammaticalization processes at issue are arguably part of a more extended chain, namely, LOCATIVE, COPULA > CONTINUOUS > HABITUAL > PREDICATE MARKER.

The widespread occurrence of compound verbs of the type *sawwi* + noun structure has been traced back to the first languages of GPA users (Bakir 2010: 221). Indeed, many of the substrate languages, e.g. Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Persian, Telugu, use a light verb ‘to do’ (see Jäger 2006: 160-176; Versteegh 2011: 220-221). Note, however, that this may turn out to be a more general strategy to coin verbs. For instance, the same structure is also found in Pidgin Madam, used by Sri Lankan domestic workers in Lebanon, with Sinhala as their first language, which does not employ a light verb ‘to do’:

- (61) Sinhala, Pidgin Madame  
*ana sêwi akel* (Bizri 2009: 9)  
 I do food  
 ‘[if] I cook’

Moreover, similar uses of a verb ‘to do’ + noun are also independently reported to occur in several varieties of Arabic Foreigner Talk:

- (62) a. Egyptian Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*‘amalt sūra* (Al-Sharkawi 2010: 234)  
 made photo  
 ‘I had a picture taken of myself’  
 b. Lebanese Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*ana bellel ‘amele talifōn hon* (Bizri 2010: 148)  
 1SG at night do telephone here  
 ‘[that] I will phone him tonight’

- c. Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*a:na jsawwi talifu:n ams* (Dashti 2013: 72)  
 1SG make telephone yesterday  
 ‘I telephoned yesterday’

Last, but not least, Gulf Arabic itself resorts to the use of *sawwa* ‘to do’. For example, the variety spoken in Bahrain combines *sawwa* with English-derived monosyllabic lexical items in order to coin verbs (Alsadeqi 2010: 123).

GPA has been shown to exhibit both the (S)VO and the (S)OV patterns. The latter as well as the occurrence of parameters correlated with this word order certainly reflect the influence of the first languages of the immigrant workers. In addition to that, the order adverbial clause of reason/condition – main clause may have been reinforced by the fact that “sequencing rules are iconic of the sequence of real events reported” (Mühlhäusler 1997: 130), i.e. this sequencing also reflects ‘natural’ syntax (in the sense of Haiman 1985).

Finally, most of the vocabulary is etymologically derived from Arabic, the lexifier language. However, in a number of Arabic-derived words or phrases their morphological structure is not recognized. In addition, Arabic-derived words may undergo semantic extensions and thus become polysemous. The only other language which contributes appears to be English. Its contribution, however, is limited to a very small number of lexical items, occasionally used as synonyms of Arabic-derived words. All these characteristics have also been reported for Pidgin Madam (Bizri 2010)

To sum up, the selected features discussed in this section illustrate the complex intertwining of the various factors and mechanisms accounting for the structural characteristics of GPA.

## 6. Conclusions

According to Miller (2007: 17), GPA is “used between the Gulf speakers and the Asian migrants”. However, GPA is also used among immigrant workers of various linguistic backgrounds, i.e. when no native speakers of Arabic are involved. As shown in section 3, the corpus of GPA analyzed in the present paper includes data from e.g. internet discussion lists with contributors with various first languages, to the exclusion of Arabic.

The main structural features as well as the occurrence of considerable intra- and inter-speaker variation, described in section 4, point to the conclusion that GPA is a pre-pidgin/minimal pidgin (in the sense of Mühlhäusler 1997), exhibiting few signs of stabilization. This basically

accords with Næss (2008: 94) who suggests that GPA is “a variety on the way to becoming conventionalized”, but runs counter to Almoaily (2013: 186), in whose view GPA is already a stable pidgin (in the sense of Mühlhäusler 1997).

The sources of the structural features of GPA, discussed in section 5, reflect in various ways the complexity of the sociolinguistic situation of the Arab Gulf countries. The first languages of the immigrant workers, the Foreigner Talk register of Arabic, grammaticalization, Gulf Arabic and English have all contributed to the pool from which the structural features of GPA have emerged.

At present, it is Gulf Pidgin Arabic that is used as a means of inter-ethnic communication, a position it does not appear to really share with English, although Miller (2008: 376) states that “l’anglais et un pidgin à base arabe baptisé Arabic Gulf Pidgin servent de principale langue de communication entre les migrants et les populations locales”. GPA thus instantiates what Calvet (2000; 2011; 2013) calls ‘gestion *in vivo* des situations linguistiques’. Finally, predictions regarding the role of GPA and its place in the complex sociolinguistic situation in the countries of the Arab Gulf are difficult to make, although some have ventured to do so. Bassiouney (2009: 255), for instance, writes that “my gut feeling is that Pidgin Arabic [...] will serve as a lingua franca” in the future as well.

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