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## Language Contact and Grammaticalization in Gulf Pidgin Arabic

### Abstract

The language situation in the countries of the Arab Gulf is a highly complex one. The multilingual landscape is characterized by diglossia (Modern Standard Arabic vs. Gulf Arabic and other Arabic dialects), by the use of various languages (mostly Asian ones), and of two means of interethnic communication – Gulf Pidgin Arabic and English, which serve as *linguae francae*. In this multilingual landscape, Gulf Pidgin Arabic represents an ideal case for illustrating the interplay of grammaticalization processes and contact-induced developments. On the one hand, it has a large number of substrate languages, extremely diverse both genetically and typologically. On the other hand, even though it appears not to have reached the stabilization stage, Gulf Pidgin Arabic does already exhibit outcomes of grammaticalization, either incipient or in more advanced stages. The present paper analyzes several cases of grammaticalization in Gulf Pidgin Arabic. The findings and some of their implications are discussed within the larger context of: (i) grammaticalization theory – with reference to sources, paths and outcomes of grammaticalization; (ii) grammaticalization in pidgins; (iii) the influence of the substrate languages of Gulf Pidgin Arabic; (iv) the role of the Arabic Foreigner Talk register.

**Keywords:** Gulf Pidgin Arabic, ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization, replica grammaticalization, polysemy copying

### Introduction

The countries of the Arab Gulf exhibit considerable superdiversity<sup>1</sup>, triggered by both rapid urbanization and a huge inflow of immigrant workers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and therefore fit the observation made by Rampton *et al.* (2015: 2) that “the demographic, socio-political, cultural and

1 For the concept of “superdiversity” see Vertovec (2007) and Rampton *et al.* (2015).

linguistic face of societies worldwide has been changing due to ever expanding mobility and migration” [leading to] “a dramatic increase in the demographic structure of the immigration centres of the world.” The United Arab Emirates, for instance, is home to over 200 nationalities; consider also Qatar’s expatriate population by nationality<sup>2</sup>: Indians 21.8 and Bangladeshis 12.5%, Nepalese 12.5%, Filipinos 7.3, Pakistanis 4.7%, Sri Lankans 4.3%, Iranians 1%, Kenyans 1%. This superdiversity is also reflected in the complexity of the language situation. As in most Arabic-speaking areas, there is diglossia involving Standard Arabic and the local dialects<sup>3</sup>. The extremely large expatriate labour force accounts for two other characteristics of the language situation. One is use of languages other than Arabic, which include a.o. Bengali, Hindi, Indonesian, Javanese, Kannada, Malayalam, Nepali, Pashto, Punjabi, Persian, Sinhalese, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, and Urdu, spoken by large numbers of migrant workers (Avram 2014, 2017b). The other is the use of English, in domains such as trade, commercial signage, banking, higher education (see e.g. Randall and Samini 2010; Boyle 2012; Buckingham 2016). Finally, there is widespread use of Gulf Pidgin Arabic (e.g. Smart 1990; Avram 2014) as well as of the Arabic Foreigner Talk register (Avram 2017b, 2018).

In this multilingual landscape, Gulf Pidgin Arabic (henceforth GPA) is an ideal case for illustrating the interplay of contact-induced developments and grammaticalization processes: it has a large number of substrate languages, extremely diverse both genetically and typologically (Avram 2014, 2017a; Bonais 2022); even though it appears not to have reached the stabilization stage (in the sense of Mühlhäusler 1997), it already exhibits outcomes of grammaticalization (Avram 2017a, 2022, 2023).

This paper looks at the following six cases of grammaticalization identified so far in the literature on GPA: the plural marker *kullu* ‘all’, on nouns and personal pronouns; the demonstrative *hada/hādi/hāy* as definite article; the completive aspect marker *ḥalas/kalās*; the light verb *sawi/sawwi* ‘make’ + noun/adjective; the predicative copula *fi/fi*; the verbal predicate marker *fi/fi*. The GPA examples are transliterated in a uniform system. The following abbreviations are used: 1 = 1<sup>st</sup> person; 2 = 2<sup>nd</sup> person; 3 = 3<sup>rd</sup> person; COMPL = completive aspect marker; DEF = definite; DEM = demonstrative; IMP = imperative; LV = light verb; NEG = negator; PL = plural; PM = predicate marker; POSS = possessive; SG = singular.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 is concerned with grammaticalization in language contact situations. Sections 3 through 8 each focus on the analysis of a case of grammaticalization in GPA. Section 9 discusses the findings and some of their implications within the larger context of: (i) grammaticalization theory – with reference to sources, paths and outcomes of grammaticalization; (ii) grammaticalization in pidgins; (iii) the influence of the substrate languages of GPA; (iv) the role of the Arabic Foreigner Talk register.

## Grammaticalization and Language Contact

The literature on grammaticalization (Bruyn 1996; Heine, Kuteva 2003, 2005; Bruyn 2008; Heine, Kuteva 2008; Bruyn 2009; Heine, Nomachi 2013; Heine, Kuteva 2020; Narrog, Heine 2021) has identified the following types of grammaticalization involving language contact:

- (i) Ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization (Heine, Kuteva 2003)
- (ii) Replica grammaticalization (Heine, Kuteva 2003)

2 Excluding expatriates from Arabic-speaking countries.

3 For diglossia in the Arab world see e.g. Albirini (2016: 9–44) and Bassiouney (2023: 10–29).

- (iii) Apparent grammaticalization (Bruyn 1996), also known as polysemy copying (Heine, Kuteva 2003)

Each type of grammaticalization is characterized by a particular mechanism<sup>4</sup>. According to Heine, Kuteva 2003: 533), ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization proceeds as follows:

- a. Speakers of language R notice that in language M there is a grammatical category Mx.
- b. They develop an equivalent category Rx, using material available in their own language (R).
- c. To this end, they draw on universal strategies of grammaticalization, using construction Ry in order to develop Rx.
- d. They grammaticalize construction Ry to Rx.

The second type, replica grammaticalization, involves the mechanism outlined below (Heine, Kuteva 2003: 539):

- a. Speakers of language R notice that in language M there is a grammatical category Mx.
- b. They develop an equivalent category Rx, using material available in their own language (R).
- c. To this end, they replicate a grammaticalization process they assume to have taken place in language M, using an analogical formula of the kind [My > Mx] = [Ry > Rx].
- d. They grammaticalize category Ry to Rx.

Consider finally apparent grammaticalization, as defined by Bruyne (1996: 42), with reference to creoles: “A feature does not result from grammaticalization that took place within the Creole language itself but rather from the transfer of the result of a process of grammaticalization that has taken place in another language.” Heine, Kuteva (2003: 555) call this type of grammaticalization polysemy copying in which “speakers of language R appear to have used a shortcut by simply copying the initial and the final stages of the process,” i.e. “speakers simply observed a polysemy pattern [...] (My = Mx), and they replicated this pattern in their own languages (Ry = Rx).”

## Plural Marker ‘all’

Albakrawi (2012: 129) writes that GPA, as spoken in Saudi Arabia, “chooses different ways of indicating plurality without inflection of the noun form”, which include “using the word *kullu*”. A similar observation is made by Alshammari (2018: 213), who states that “sometimes lexical items such as *kullu* (< Arabic *kull-uh* “all of it”) ‘all’ function as pluralizers”. As shown below, the pluralizer *kullu* appears in post-nominal position:

- (1) *mīn    nafar    ġasīl    tōb    malābis    kullu?*  
 who    person wash    dress clothes PL  
 ‘Who washes your clothes?’

(Alshammari 2018: 153)

In her comments on *kullu*, in example (2), Al-Azraqi (2020) concludes that it is “used to pluralize the preceding pronoun, though, it could pluralize the following noun as well”:

<sup>4</sup> Where language M = model language and language R = replica language.

- (2) *ʔinta kullu walad kabīr*  
 2SG PL child big  
 ‘Your children are old.’

(Al-Azraqi 2020)

In light of the data in (1)–(2), the position of ‘all’ as a plural marker appears to be variable: it is placed after the noun *malābis* ‘clothes’ in (1), *i.e.* post-nominally, but before the noun *walad* ‘child’ in (2), *i.e.* pre-nominally. However, there is evidence for the post-nominal position of the plural marker *kullu*. Consider the next set of examples:

- (3) a. *ʔinta kullu fī rūh?*  
 2SG PL FI go  
 ‘Are you going to leave?’  
 b. *huwwa kulu nōm*  
 3SG PL sleep  
 ‘They are sleeping.’

(Al-Azraqi 2020)

As can be seen, the plural marker ‘all’ occurs exclusively after the personal pronoun. This constitutes, then, circumstantial evidence that a post-nominal position is to be expected with nouns as well. Furthermore, Bonais’ (2022) examples confirm the post-nominal placement of ‘all’ as a plural marker:

- (4) a. *daḥīl korsi kollo dawar ma yiḥasel*  
 inside chair PL search NEG find  
 ‘[they] searched under the sofas, but did not find [them]’  
 (Bonais 2022: 102–103)  
 b. *diḡāḡ kollo rokōb syara*  
 chicken PL ride car  
 ‘the chickens are walking between cars’  
 (Bonais 2022: 115)

Kuteva *et al.* (2019: 48) write in their entry “**ALL** > (**1**) **PLURAL**” that “this process has the effect that words meaning ‘all’ grammaticalize into plural markers on nouns or personal pronouns”. Note that grammaticalization of ‘all’ into a plural marker is also attested in pidgins and creoles. As seen in the examples below, all has been grammaticalized into a plural marker in an English-lexifier pidgincreole<sup>5</sup> (5), an English-lexifier creole (6) as well as in an Arabic-lexifier pidgin (7):

- (5) Tok Pisin *ol* < E *all*  
*ol man*  
 PL man  
 ‘men’

(Kuteva *et al.* 2019: 48)

5 A pidgincreole is “a restructured language which is the primary language of a speech community, or which has become the native language for only some of its speakers” (Bakker 2008: 139).

- (6) Australian Kriol

*ole haus*

PL house

‘houses’

(Schultze-Berndt, Angelo 2013)

- (7) Pidgin Madam

***kellobēbi***

all baby

‘babies’

(Bizri 2010: 116)

Neither Gulf Arabic nor the substrate languages of GPA use ‘all’ as a plural marker. However, Gulf Arabic and many of the substrate languages have plural markers. Cross-linguistic evidence would therefore suggest that the GPA (optional) plural marker *kullu* is the outcome of ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization.

However, ‘all’ as a plural marker also occurs in Arabic Foreigner Talk (Avram 2017b: 177, 2018: 254). Consider the following example:

- (8) *ġībi*      *hāḍa*      *ġanṭa*      ***killā***      *māl*      *āna*  
 bring-IMP    DEM    bag    all of it    POSS    1SG  
 ‘bring my bags’

(Avram 2018: 254)

Evidence from Arabic Foreigner Talk, then, suggests that the use of ‘all’ as a plural marker in GPA is an instance of polysemy copying.

## Demonstrative as Definite Article

In the first description of GPA, Smart (1990: 105) states that “the demonstrative is much overused” and that “this overuse is very probably connected with the use of the demonstrative pronouns in Urdu to convey the force of a definite article”. Hobrom (1996: 82) also claims that “demonstratives are overused”, given “the influence of the speaker’s first languages which use demonstratives to convey the force of a definite article”. However, there is no evidence of an overuse of demonstratives either in Smart’s (1990) examples or in the transcripts of the interviews in Hobrom (1996); in fact, when demonstratives occur, they are used as such, not as substitutes for the definite article.

The status of these etymological demonstratives appears to be undergoing a change in GPA. Al-Azraqi (2020), for instance, notes that in GPA as spoken in Abha, Saudi Arabia: “*hada* [...] can denote definiteness in specific grammatical contexts”. This is illustrated by the examples reproduced below:

- (9) a. ***hada***      *kafīl*      *ʔawwal fī*      *zalān*  
 DEF    sponsor first    FI    angry  
 ‘The former sponsor was angry.’

- b. *inta lāzim sūf hada marīd fōg*  
 2SG must see DEF sick upstairs  
 ‘You must see the patient upstairs.’

Bonais (2022: 66–69) also mentions the use of “*hada* as a definite article” in GPA as used in Saudi Arabia. Consider two of her examples:

- (10) a. *hada raḡul kalam horma sawa-sawa emši*  
 DEF man talk woman together go  
 ‘the boy said to the girl, let’s go!’  
 b. *awal ḥalas hada diplom bādin šogol itnin wa nos sana*  
 first finish DEF diploma then work two and half year  
 ‘I first finished the diploma and then worked for two years and a half’  
 (Bonais 2022: 68)

With respect to GPA as used in Qatar, Bakir (forthcoming) writes that “the demonstratives *haada*, *haadi* or *haay* are [...] used as markers of definite reference” These are “in free variation, regardless of the gender or number of the following head noun” (Bakir forthcoming), as shown below:

- (11) a. *hādi baladiyya alatūl sakkir*  
 DEF municipality directly close  
 ‘The municipality will close it right away.’  
 b. *hādi drēwil māl kafil sawwi kalām*  
 DEF driver POSS sponsor make talk  
 ‘The sponsor’s driver says.’  
 c. *bād inta rūh hāy riḡḡāl fī muškila, inta fī hāy siḡil*  
 after 2SG go DEF man FI problem 2SG FI DEF record  
 ‘Then, if you go and the man makes problems, you have the record’  
 (Bakir forthcoming)

According to Bakir (forthcoming), this use of *haada*, *haadi* or *haay* is “a new development in this system” [= GPA]. This confirms therefore the observation made above that the use of demonstratives to mark definiteness is not attested in earlier stages. Bakir (forthcoming) further writes that “demonstratives in GPA are undergoing a process of acquiring a new function as markers of definite reference – *i.e.* grammaticalization”. However, since in most cases there is still no overt marker of definiteness, Bakir (forthcoming) correctly concludes that “this claim cannot be substantiated until the common variability in use ceases and its new use becomes consistent”.

As is well known, one of the pathways of grammaticalization of demonstratives (Kuteva *et al.* 2019: 137) is “**DEMONSTRATIVE** > **(4) DEFINITE**”. As noted by Kuteva *et al.* (2019: 138), this “present pathway constitutes the most frequent way in which definite articles evolve”. Also, the development of definiteness markers out of (etymological) demonstratives is widely attested in pidgins and creoles, with various lexifier languages. Some illustrative examples are given below:

- (12) Haitian Creole French *a* < F *là*  
*pè* -*a*  
 father DEF  
 ‘the priest’
- (13) Chinook Jargon *uk*- < *úkuk* ‘this, that’  
*uk*- *háya*- *haws*  
 DEF big house  
 ‘the big house’  
 (Kuteva *et al.* 2019: 137)
- (14) Turku Pidgin Arabic *da* ‘this’ > definite marker  
*laam da*  
 animal DEF  
 (Tosco, Owens 1993: 202)

Gulf Arabic uses the definite article as a marker of definiteness. This fact and cross-linguistic evidence suggests that the use of demonstratives as definite articles in GPA is an instance of ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization. The fact that the users of GPA cannot possibly have known that the Arabic definite article itself developed from a demonstrative (Rubin 2005, 2011) also suggests that the demonstratives used as definite articles in GPA illustrate ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization (*cf.* Heine, Kuteva 2003: 537, on the development of a definite article in Sorbian on the model of German).

Consider, however, an alternative possibility. As mentioned by Bakir (forthcoming), “the substrate languages [of GPA] signal definite references with markers that are also used as demonstratives”<sup>6</sup>. The languages at issue include Bengali, Hindi / Urdu, Malayalam, Sinhala, and Tamil. In Bengali definite reference marked by *-ta* for singular nouns, *-gula* for plural nouns. Hindi *vo* ‘that,’ *ye* ‘this’ and Urdu *vo* ‘that’ *iis* ‘this’ are used as definiteness markers before the head nouns. In Malayalam: definite reference sometimes signalled by the distal demonstrative *aa* ‘that.’ Sinhala uses different noun suffixes are used to mark the definiteness-indefiniteness contrast. Finally, in Tamil definite reference is sometimes signalled by the distal demonstrative *anta* ‘that.’ Bakir (forthcoming) concludes with respect to the GPA definiteness markers that their use “is obviously neither so stable as it is in the substrate languages, nor does it exhibit the richness of their corresponding systems.” The use of pre-nominal demonstratives as definite reference markers in some substrate languages – including the most important ones, *i.e.* Hindi / Urdu – and the fact that their grammaticalization is still ongoing suggest that the similar use of demonstratives in GPA is an instance of replica grammaticalization.

### Completive Aspect Marker

The use of a completive aspect marker has been mentioned in the literature on GPA. Smart (1990: 104) already observed that *ḥalāṣ* “occurs in GP [= Gulf Pidgin] quite often, usually pre-posed.” Similarly, Hobrom (1996: 84) states that “[xəla:sʔ] ‘finished’ [is] frequently used to indicate [...] aspect”. Bakir

<sup>6</sup> See also Bonais (2022: 48–54).

(2010: 212) also writes that “as for the perfect/completive aspect, signaling the completion of an action, GPA contains a specific particle *kalaas* ‘done, finished,’ positioned after the verb, but again not without exception.” More recently, Alshammari (2021: 33) in his paper on tense and aspect marking in Arabic-lexifier pidgins and creoles, concludes that “*kala:s* (< Arabic *xala:s* ‘finishing’) ‘finished/done’ is used post-verbally to communicate the perfect/completive aspect.”

The occurrence of inter-speaker variation, however, suggests that *kalās/ħalas* has not yet been fully grammaticalized in GPA. As shown below, *kalās/ħalas* occurs in pre-verbal position in (15a–b), post-verbally in (15c) and in sentence-final position in (15d).

- (15) a. *hāḍa ramaḍān ħalāṣ rūḥ*  
 DEM Ramadan COMPL go  
 ‘Ramadan has gone.’  
 Smart (1990: 104)
- b. *inta kalās waddi fulūs?*  
 2SG COMPL send money  
 ‘Have you sent the money?’
- c. *ahmad ašši kalās*  
 Ahmad dine COMPL  
 ‘Ahmad has taken [his] dinner’  
 (Bakir 2010: 212)
- d. *Inta fi ruh dukan ħalas?*  
 2SG FI go store COMPL  
 ‘Have you already gone to the store?’  
 (Avram 2022: 31)

In their entry “**FINISH** (‘to finish’, ‘to complete’, ‘to end’) > (**S**) **IAMITIVE**”, Kuteva *et al* (2019: 178) note that forms meaning ‘finish(ed)’ [...] are frequent sources of iamitives, particularly in creole languages.” As seen below, this is also true of pidgins, with various lexifier languages. The following examples are from a pidgincreole (16) and two pidgins (17) –(28), respectively:

- (16) Tok Pisin *pinis* < E *finish*  
*Nait I go pinis*  
 night PM go COMPL  
 ‘The night was over’  
 (Kuteva *et al* 2019: 178)
- (17) Pidgin Madam *kalas* < A *ħalāṣ*  
*kullu kalas sēwe bil bēt*  
 all COMPL do in-DEF house  
 ‘I have done everything in the house’  
 (Bizri 2010: 127)



- (18) Romanian Pidgin Arabic *halas* < A *ḥalāṣ*

*Inte halas it?*

2SG COMPL eat

‘Have you eaten [everything]?’

(Avram 2010: 26)

Gulf Arabic and most of the substrate languages of GPA do not have a completive marker. Among the latter, Indonesian is an exception, with *habis* ‘to finish’ occurring occasionally as a completive marker:

- (19) *Saya habis menonton musim pertama.*

1SG COMPL watch season first

‘I have seen the first season.’

In all likelihood, therefore, the GPA completive marker is the outcome of (language-) internal grammaticalization.

### Light Verb “do, make” + noun/adjective

Smart (1990: 102) observes that GPA exhibits “compounds are commonly formed with [...] *sawwi* ‘do, make.’” As noted by Næss (2008: 92), “the usage of *sawwi* [...] indicates that the verb fits the criteria of a so-called ‘light verb.’”

The light verb *saw(w)i* ‘do, make’ can combine with a noun, an adjective and, more rarely, even with another verb<sup>7</sup>. Of these possible combinations, the most widely spread is *saw(w)i* + noun, illustrated below:

- (20) a. *sawwi tafkir*

LV thinking

‘to think’

(Smart 1990: 103)

- b. *sawi habar ana*

LV news 1SG

‘Let me know!’

(Al-Yammahi 2008: 56)

- c. *lēš māmā mā fī sawwi tabdīl*  
why Madam NEG FI LV change

‘why doesn’t Madam change [it]’

(Bakir 2010: 219)

<sup>7</sup> Not discussed in this paper (but see Avram 2017b: 181, 2018: 260).

- d. *sawi tartib*  
 LV preparation  
 ‘prepare’

Bonais (2022: 117)

The following examples contain *saw(w)i* + adjective structures:

- (21) a. *ana sawwi nadip*  
 1SG LV clean  
 ‘I clean

(Næss 2008: 91)

- a. *sawwi zalaan*  
 make upset  
 ‘upset’

(Bakir 2010: 221)

The cross-linguistic grammaticalization of “do” is illustrated by Kuteva *et al.* (2019: 150) in their entry “**DO** (‘to do’, ‘to make’) > (4) **PRO-VERB**”<sup>8</sup>, with examples from genetically and typologically diverse languages<sup>9</sup>.

The occurrence of light verb constructions in many of the important substrate languages of GPA has not gone unnoticed in the literature. Smart (1990: 102), for instance, writes that “such verbs are also common in Urdu and Hindi [...] and no doubt in other languages of the Indian subcontinent.” Næss (2008: 92) states that “these types of verbal constructions are very common in South Asian languages such as Urdu, one of the main substrate languages for GPA”. Bakir (2010: 221 also notes that “the substrate languages make wide use of [...] compounding of particular verbs with nouns or adjectives”. In fact, as shown in Avram (2014: 36), “many of the substrate languages, *e.g.* Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Persian, Telugu, use a light verb ‘to do’”; *e.g.* Bengali noun/adjective + *karā* ‘to make’, Hindi/Urdu noun/adjective + *karnā* ‘to make’, Persian “compound verbs”: noun/adjective + *kardan* ‘to make’. To conclude, this suggests that GPA *saw(w)i* + noun/adjective is the outcome of polysemy copying.

However, constructions with a light verb ‘do, make’ etymologically derived from the Arabic root  $\sqrt{\text{swy}}$  also occur in Arabic Foreigner Talk (Avram 2017b: 181, 2018: 259–260):

- (22) Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*āna yisawwi talifūn ams*  
 1SG make telephone yesterday  
 ‘I phoned yesterday.’

(Avram 2018: 260)

If Arabic Foreigner Talk is the model, then GPA *saw(w)i* + noun/adjective constructions have emerged via polysemy copying.

8 Kuteva *et al.* (2019) use the term “pro-verb” instead of “light verb.”

9 See also Jäger (2006: 160–176).

### Predicative Copula *fī/fī*

There is a large body of literature on the use of *fī/fī* as a predicative copula in GPA (see e.g. Smart 1990: 101; Al-Azraqi 2010: 169–171; Bakir 2010: 216; Avram 2012, 2013; Al-Shurafa 2014: 18; Avram 2014: 20–21; Bakir 2014: 420; Potsdam, Alanazi 2014: 16; Avram 2016: 66; Avram 2022: 32–33).

Smart (1990: 101) mentions the fact that the “use of the copula [...] is not obligatory, but certainly more common than its omission”. Avram (2022: 33) concludes that “the overt predicative copula *fī/fī* is in free variation with the zero predicative copula”. As shown below, the overt predicative copula *fī/fī* is widely attested in GPA:

- (23) a. *ida haḍa fī ṣaḥīḥ*  
if DEM FI true  
‘if this is true’  
(Smart 1990: 101)
- b. *Nafar fī kabīr yi-ji ṣuḡul kēf?*  
person FI big come work how  
‘If a person is old, how can he come and work here.’  
(Almoaily 2012: 93)
- c. *Hada ma fī barid wāḡid.*  
DEM NEG FI cold very  
‘This is not very cold.’  
(Al-Azraqi 2010: 169)
- d. *anta ma fī zēn*  
2SG NEG FI good  
‘you are not good’  
(Avram 2017b: 182)
- e. *lā, mā fī zarūri*  
no NEG FI necessary  
‘No it is not necessary.’  
(Bakir 2010: 216)
- f. *anta fī zaʔlān*  
2SG FI angry  
‘You got angry.’  
(Almaʿašnī 2016: 8)

The use of *fī/fī* as a predicative copula in GPA appears to be an instantiation of the grammaticalization pathway “**EXIST** > (1) **COPULA**”, whereby “verbs or particles expressing existence (‘there is, be present’) may grammaticalize into [...] copulas” (Kuteva *et al.* 2019: 163).

As in Gulf Arabic, in GPA *fī/fī* is also used as an existential copula (Avram 2013, 2014: 21–22, Mobarki 2020). Most of the important substrate languages of GPA, e.g. Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Persian, Tamil, Urdu, have overt predicative copulas, which might account for the widespread use of the

predicative copula *fi/fi* in this variety (Hobrom 1992: 66, Avram 2014: 20, 2017a: 144). The additional function of predicative copula of *fi/fi* can therefore be analyzed as being the outcome of ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization. The fact that the overt predicative copula is still not obligatory shows that “*fi* has not been fully grammaticalized” (Avram 2022: 33).

Note, however, that *fi* also occurs as a predicative copula in the Foreigner Talk register of Arabic (Avram 2017b: 182, 2018: 261), as exemplified below:

- (24) a. Saudi Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*kwayes mā fī baʕdēn*  
 good NEG Fī then  
 ‘It won’t be good then.’
- b. Omani Arabic Foreigner Talk  
*mā fī zayn hēde*  
 NEG Fī good DEM  
 ‘This isn’t good.’  
 (Avram 2018: 261)

On the assumption that Arabic Foreigner Talk is the source of this feature, the use of *fi/fi* as a predicative copula in GPA is a case of polysemy copying.

### Verbal Predicate Marker *fi/fi*

The use of the *fi/fi* + verb construction is extremely well documented in the literature on Gulf Pidgin Arabic (Smart 1990: 102; Hobrom 1992: 63–65; Bakir 2010: 217; Avram 2012, Avram 2013, 2014: 22–23; Al-Shurafa 2014: 19; Bakir 2014: 422–424; Al-Mahrooqi, Denman 2014; Potsdam, Alanazi 2014: 14–16; Almaʕašni 2016; Avram 2016: 67).

Smart (1990: 102) mentions the fact that “the use of *fi* with verbs, but not usually obligatory” and “in negative sentences it is more frequent”. As shown below *fi/fi* occurs with forms which are etymologically verbs (25a-b), verbal nouns (25c) or passive participles (25d):

- (25) a. *Baladiyya [...] fī yirīd*  
 local authority FI want  
 ‘the local authority wants’  
 (Smart 1990: 102)
- b. *inta fī yaskit*  
 2SG FI be silent  
 ‘You keep quiet.’  
 (Bakir 2010: 217)
- c. *Fī kalam arabi?*  
 FI speak Arabic  
 ‘Do you speak Arabic?’  
 (Avram 2022: 34)

- d.    *ana*     ***fi***     *malum*  
       1SG     FI     know  
       ‘I know.’

(Salem 2013: 109)

This specific use of *fi/fi* may be accounted for by assuming a more complex grammaticalization pathway, consisting of three grammaticalization chains:

- (i) “**COPULA, LOCATIVE** > **(5) PROGRESSIVE**” (Kuteva *et al.* 2019: 139)
- (ii) “**PROGRESSIVE** > **(1) HABITUAL**” (Kuteva *et al.* 2019: 346)
- (iii) “progressive markers may develop into presents and imperfectives” and “the result is a gram [= grammatical morpheme] of very general meaning” (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 158)

On this analysis, GPA *fi/fi* appears to be on its way to becoming a grammatical morpheme of very general meaning, the result of an extended grammaticalization chain: COPULA, LOCATIVE > CONTINUOUS > HABITUAL > PREDICATE MARKER.

Some of the most important substrate languages of GPA, *e.g.* Hindi, Persian, Urdu, use the auxiliary verb ‘to be’ in a number of tenses and aspects (Avram 2014: 36, 2017a: 146). The GPA verbal predicate marker *fi/fi* might therefore be the outcome of ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization.

On the other hand, *fi/fi* used as a verbal predicate marker is also found in Arabic Foreigner Talk (Avram 2017b: 182–183, 2018: 262). Interestingly, Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk even exhibits overuse of *fi/fi*, which occurs more frequently than in Gulf Pidgin Arabic. Also, *fi* with verbs and verbal nouns is attested in Omani Arabic Foreigner Talk. Consider the following examples:

- (28) a. Kuwaiti Arabic Foreigner Talk

*anta fi fakkar*  
 2SG FI think  
 ‘you think’

- b. Omani Arabic Foreigner Talk

*baʕdayn fi šill fir-rās*  
 then FI take in head  
 ‘then he takes it to the head’

(Avram 2018: 262)

Based on evidence from Arabic Foreigner Talk a case could be made for polysemy copying.

## Conclusions

As shown by a number of authors (*e.g.* Heine, Kuteva 2003, 2005, Matras 2011, Heine, Kuteva 2020, Narrog, Heine 2021), grammaticalization – understood as a process based on universal strategies of conceptual transfer – and contact-induced language change – understood as a process resulting from a specific socio-historical context – are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This is confirmed by GPA, in which both (language-) internal and grammaticalization involving contact are attested.

Bruyn 1996: 406) writes that “in the context of P/C [= pidgin/creole] studies, it would be unrevealing if no distinction were made between internal and contact-induced grammaticalization, even if that sometimes proves to be difficult.” Moreover, as noted by Plag (1998: 234), “there are often ambiguous cases, such that a given development might be due to universal tendencies of language development, due to transfer, or due to a conspiracy of both factors.” The cases of grammaticalization in GPA discussed also show that different types of grammaticalization involving contact may “conspire,” *i.e.* converge on the same outcome.

As seen, there is independent cross-linguistic evidence (Kuteva *et al.* 2019) for all the sources, grammaticalization chains and outcomes identified in the GPA cases discussed.

Consider next the pace of grammaticalization. According to Plag (2002: 239): “The discrepancies in time span between certain processes in creoles and non-creoles strongly indicate that creoles develop much faster than non-creoles,” a fact which can “be explained in terms of discontinuity of transmission and communicative pressure that exists in the situation in which the new creole language emerges.” Bruyn (2008: 406) also states that grammaticalization processes “appear to proceed faster than is normally the case, which can be understood in light of the fact that P/C development involves the expansion of a more or less reduced language system.” A similar conclusion is expressed by Michaelis, Haspelmath (2020: 1116), who write that “functionalization of content items in general happens more quickly in creoles (and apparently also in pidgins) than in other languages”<sup>10</sup>. Finally, as put by Narrog, Heine (2021: 218), “such speed in grammatical change is presumably hard to find in languages other than pidgins and creoles, where such changes normally take centuries to materialize.” Now, since GPA has a history of only some 60 years at most, the processes of grammaticalization illustrated confirm the observations by Plag (1998), Bruyn (1996, 2008), Narrog, Heine (2021), in the sense that they are instances of “instantaneous grammaticalization,” *i.e.* “proceeding considerably more rapidly than is typically the case in languages with a longer history” (Bruyn 1996: 42).

With respect to the characteristics of instantaneous grammaticalization Plag (1998: 239) surmises that “it is conceivable that even cases of instantaneous grammaticalization show all the properties of ordinary grammaticalization apart from time span.” As seen, none of the cases of instantaneous grammaticalization discussed with reference to GPA exhibits properties different from those of (language-) internal grammaticalization.

Finally, as shown, the substrate languages of GPA serve as languages M in all the three types of grammaticalization involving contact – ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization, replica grammaticalization, and polysemy copying – whereas the contribution of the Arabic Foreigner Talk register as language M is limited to cases of polysemy copying.

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<sup>10</sup> See also Bruyn (2009: 332).

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