

Notes on the verbal system of Gulf Pidgin Arabic*

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This is a description of one of the essential constituents of sentence structure in one reduced linguistic system in use in various countries of the western coast of the Arab Gulf and Saudi Arabia, that has been given the name Gulf Pidgin Arabic (GPA) in the very little that has been written about it. The paper starts with locating this reduced linguistic form in its sociolinguistic background. This is followed by a description of the morphological characteristics of the verbs used in this system. The discussion also involves how the grammatical categories that form part of the verbal system are signaled, when and if they are (e.g. tense, aspect, mood, modality, and those that mark agreement like gender, person, and number). Furthermore, the paper deals with the status of the copulative element and predication marker *fi* and sentence negation in relation to the verbal system. It ends with a discussion of the properties of GPA compared to the general characteristics of world pidgins and to other Arabic-based pidgins and creoles.

Keywords: Gulf Pidgin Arabic, pidgin Arabic, Arabic-based pidgins, verbal system, pidgin languages

1. Introduction

The following notes attempt to provide a detailed description of the verb phrase in one of the linguistic systems in use in the region of the Arab Gulf. This is a reduced system that emerged as a means of communication between communities with different native linguistic background in this region, a system that may be given the name of Gulf Pidgin Arabic (GPA). Though pidgin and creole languages have

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been the locus of both descriptive and theoretical interest in linguistic research, manifested in a rich literature dating to the nineteenth century, GPA has never drawn attention and virtually nothing has been written on it, save one piece of research published nearly two decades ago (Smart 1990).¹

First, I will place GPA within its social context, and move to give a description of the main constituents of the verb phrase: the verb and those elements that are associated with it. The description will involve the morphological characteristics of the verb form(s) used together with the variability that is frequently witnessed, a prominent characteristic of such relatively unstable systems. I will also be concerned with such grammatical categories as tense, aspect, mood and modality, and negation that form core constituents of the verb phrase and how they are realized. In addition, the discussion will involve the copular element and predicator *fi*, and the phenomenon of compound verbs that are frequently encountered in the world's pidgin systems. This will be followed by a discussion of the status of GPA in comparison to the other pidgin systems around the world and other Arabic-based pidgins and creoles.

2. Sociolinguistic overview

Gulf Pidgin Arabic is the reduced linguistic system used in communication between the non-national labour force (mostly Asiatic, from such countries as Iran, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Srilanka, and more recently from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines) and the native Arabic-speaking community in the various countries of the Arab Gulf and Saudi Arabia. These migrant workers come from diverse linguistic backgrounds involving different languages such as Farsi, Panjabi, Malayalam, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Thai, Tagalog, Indonesian, Nepalese, Tamil, Sinhalese, and others. More significantly, it is the system used among these non-national expatriates when they don't have another common language.

GPA has been in use as a communication medium in the region for some time. Its emergence in the different localities of the region may be traced to the arrival of the expatriate labor force in the area as a result of the development of the oil industry and the immense socioeconomic changes it brought about in the fifties of the twentieth century. Over the years, GPA has become a permanent feature of present life in the Gulf, very much like other social or physical distinctive characteristics and artifacts of this part of the world. It is socially stigmatized, and as

1. Smart's (1990) pioneering study of GPA is based mainly on analyzing excerpts from mock news and commentaries in newspapers in the UAE in which GPA is used. These texts were composed by native speakers of Arabic imitating GPA.

such it also forms an important component of the laughter stock, the favorite lingo of cartoons, comic strips bubbles, and social satirical commentary in the media.²

The emergence of GPA looks like a textbook example of the situation that breeds pidginization. It is a situation of ‘unbalanced demography’ (Owens 1985), where the L1 speakers (the native speakers) are greatly outnumbered by the L2 speakers. In a situation like this a reduced linguistic emerges from drawing on language X — the superstrate, or lexifier — in its lexicon, and the native languages of its L2 speakers in phonology, and begins to be used between the L1 and the L2 speakers, and between the L2 speakers themselves when they come from different linguistic backgrounds. It is also a situation that is characterized by limited or trivial contact between the two groups and by the existence of a wide social distance between the two speech communities (Foley 2006:7).

The social situation in the Gulf is characterized by a wide social divide between the dominant community of the native Arabs of the region and the non-dominant community of the migrant workers. The first group has always maintained its distance and admits no members from the other community into its culture. A situation like this would not encourage a newcomer to learn the language of the country, i.e. the language of the dominant linguistic group. Instead, what they find available for them is the reduced system that is commonly used in the contact between the two linguistic communities. This situation has helped in the preservation of GPA. The use of GPA is also enhanced by a continual flow of new laborers, some of whom come to the region for a limited period of time, by the widening linguistic diversity of this expatriate labor force. The presence of such a large and linguistically heterogeneous community helps in the continuation of such a system (Holms 1988:5), and has helped in elevating this means of communication from a collection of individual jargons into a system of conventionalized norms.

GPA is used in a variety of contexts. It is used in the market to talk to the shop attendants and in offices to give various orders to the helpers, janitors, porters, and others of the low ranks of the employment hierarchy. It is also used at homes when speaking with the maids, drivers, and other members of the household. All of these belong to the non-dominant linguistic groups of the migrant community in the place.

2. The fact that Smart based his analysis on data taken largely from such sources raises a big question on the authenticity of the description. The language displayed in these cartoons and commentaries may not necessarily reflect what this system really is, as spoken by its L2 speakers; rather it represents what the writers perceive this language to be, or what they do when talking to people who use GPA, i.e. foreigner talk. Wiswall (2002) shows that there are significant differences between this ‘foreigner talk’ used by the native speakers of Gulf Arabic (L1 speakers) and that of what he calls the Indian workers (L2 speakers).

Table 1. Subjects' data

Speaker	Gender	First language	Length of Stay	Occupation
A	M	Bengali	20 years	Worker/driver
B	M	Malayalam	30 years	Tailor
C	M	Bengali	30 years	Bookstore clerk
D	F	Tagalog	5 years	Maid
E	F	Sinhala	4 years	Maid
F	F	Tamil	5 years	Maid
G	M	Hindi	10 years	Driver
H	F	Malayalam	3 years	Maid
I	M	Bengali	20 years	A/C technician
J	F	Sinhala	2 years	Maid

GPA has not, however, developed into a creole. It remains without native speakers. The transience of the working conditions, the mobility of the working force, and the social and racial differences are all responsible for the absence of intermarriage between these groups. And in the rare cases of intermarriage between the L1 and L2 speakers, the L2 partner will begin to de-pidginize his, or mostly her, GPA to approximate the L1, i.e. Gulf spoken Arabic, with its different sub-varieties. The settlement of some of these expatriates in the region motivates them to move up the linguistic ladder in the sense of moving closer to Gulf spoken Arabic.

This study is based on data collected from recordings of conversations between GPA speakers who did not share another language or interviews with such GPA speakers.³ Ten GPA speakers participated in these interviews and conversations that were held in private homes and shops. Table 1 specifies the individuals participating in these conversations and interviews: their gender, first language, occupation and length of stay in Arabic-speaking Gulf countries.

None of the subjects is a native speaker of Gulf Arabic. They all belong to the Asian expatriate community. The list shows that the time spent by each in Doha or other Gulf Arabic-speaking countries varied; some appear to have lived and worked there for a considerable period of time, twenty years or more, while others

3. The informants in this study resided and worked in the state of Qatar at the time they were interviewed. The lexifier language of their GPA is Qatari Arabic, a sub-dialect of Gulf Arabic spoken in this country. The term Gulf Arabic (Holes 1995) subsumes this and other sub-systems in the region among which variation may be noticed, e.g. verb forms. It is expected that the GPA spoken in the different countries of the region reflect the differences between these spoken dialects. However, these differences don't seem to have affected the GPA structures discussed here. Whenever they do, they will be noted.

have only been in the region for the last two years. The men are of different occupations: tailors, air-conditioner technicians, workers in restaurants, or private drivers in companies or homes. The women are all maids in private homes. The recorded conversations and interviews, which were of a total time of approximately five hours, were of varying lengths. All concentrated on topics that concerned the subjects' lives, what they want to do, work conditions, home countries, and relatives at home.

3. The verb phrase

The verbal system, which is our point of focus in these notes, comprises the head verb and those elements that are universally associated with the verb, the grammatical categories of tense, aspect, mood, and modality. Our discussion will involve the inflectional morphology of the verb, how temporal and aspectual differences are realized, and how changes in mood and modality are indicated. We will also touch on the various types of verbal constructions.

3.1 The verb

One of the essential features that we encounter in the literature repeatedly is the inflectional poverty of the lexical categories in pidgin languages (Drechsel 1996: 1225). In these systems, the verb is said to be used in its 'unmarked' form with no inflections to specify the usual verbal attributes, such as tense, aspect, and agreement in number, gender, and person. Nor would it carry pronominal clitics. These seem to be realized independently, or not realized at all. How does this characterization fare in the case of GPA? It appears that it is largely borne out. The most obvious feature of the verbal system in this linguistic variety is the general use of one form of the verb by its speakers. No changes are applied to this form to indicate difference in tense, aspect, mood, voice, or agreement in gender, number, or person with the subject. Nor would it be affixed by any object pronominal clitics.

This is in complete contrast to the verb in the lexifier Gulf Arabic, in which verbs have different forms realizing differences in these grammatical categories, and can usually be suffixed by various object clitics. A form like '(y)iktib' 'write' in GPA stands for all the following forms in Gulf Arabic: imperfect: *?aktib* (1SG), *niktib* (1PL), *taktib/tiktib* (2SG.M), *tkitbiin/tikitbiin* (2SG.F), *tkitbuun/tikitbuun* (2PL), *yaktib* (3SG.M), *taktib* (3SG.F), *ykitbuun/yiktibuun* (3PL); the perfect *katabt/kitabt* (1SG), *katabna/kitabna* (1PL), *katabt/kitabt* (2SG.M), *katabti/kitabti* (2SG.F), *katabtaw/kitabtaw* (2PL), *katab/kitab* (3SG.M), *ktabat/ktibat* (3SG.F), *ktibaw* (3PL); the imperative: *?iktib* (2SG.M), *ktibi/?iktibi* (2SG.F), *kitbaw* (2PL), and

the passive *yinkitib* (3SG.M), *tinkitib* (3SG.F), etc. Each of these forms can have any of the object clitics — (*n*)*i* ‘me’, *na* ‘us’, *ak* ‘you (SG.M)’, *ič* ‘you (SG.F)’, *kum* ‘you (PL)’, *a* ‘him’, *ha* ‘her’, *hum* ‘them’, or their variants- affixed to it, e.g. *šiftak* ‘I saw you(SG.M)’, *šiftič* ‘I saw you(SG.F)’, *šiftkum* ‘I saw you(PL)’, *šifta* ‘I saw him’, *šift \underline{h} a* ‘I saw her’, *šift \underline{h} um* ‘I saw them’.⁴

The common verb form that is used in GPA is the Gulf Arabic 3rd person singular masculine imperfect form: *yiji* ‘come’, *yabi* ‘want’ (with a variant *yibga*), *yaakid* ‘take’. Although this form has the 3SG.M prefix /y-/, it should not be taken as an inflectional marking. The verbal form is frozen, in that it is used with all subjects regardless of their person, gender, or number. It is also used in sentences indicating actions of various time references. Consider the sentences in (1) and (2), in which the same form of the verb *yabi* ‘want’ (3SG.M imperfect) is used with first person, second person singular masculine and feminine and third person plural subjects, and in contexts of different time references, past and future.

- (1) a. ?anaa yabi ... (E)
1SG want
‘I want ...’
b. ?inta yabi ... (A)
2SG.M want
‘You want ...’
c. waraga waahid (?inti) yabi (C)
paper one (2SG.F) want
‘Do you want one sheet?’
d. waajid nafar yabi ... (B)
many person want
‘Many people want ...’
- (2) a. ?amis ?anaa yabi ... (F)
yesterday 1SG want
‘Yesterday, I wanted ...’
b. baačir ?anaa yabi... (I)
tomorrow 1SG want
‘Tomorrow, I want ...’

4. The transliteration system follows the common conventions used in the literature. In addition to the Latin letters with their customary phonetic values, the following symbols are used: /ð/ for voiced dental fricative; /č/ for voiceless palato-alveolar affricate; /š/ for voiceless palato-alveolar fricative; /x/ for voiceless velar fricative; /ʔ/ for voiced pharyngeal stop; and /ʔ/ for the glottal stop. Vowel length and consonant gemination are indicated by symbol doubling.

Many times a form similar to this but without the /y-/ prefix is used, e.g. *ruuh* 'go', *guum* 'stand', *šuuf* 'see':

- (3) a. ?anaa maaafi ruuh siinema (H)
 1SG not go cinema
 'I don't go to the cinema.'
 b. baabaa yiji ?anaa gum (E)
 Master come 1SG stand
 'When Master comes I stand.'
 c. ?inti šuuf filim (D)
 2SG.F see movie
 'Have you seen the movie?'

In Gulf spoken Arabic, the latter form, i.e. the imperfect verb stem with no inflectional prefix, is often identical to the second person singular masculine imperative form.⁵

(4) imperative	imperfect	
<i>guum</i>	<i>y-guum</i>	'he stands'
<i>šuuf</i>	<i>y-šuuf</i>	'he sees'
<i>saafir</i>	<i>y-saafir</i>	'he travels'
<i>naam</i>	<i>y-naam</i>	'he sleeps'

This similarity between the imperative and imperfect forms in the lexifier Gulf Arabic has been a source of confusion as to what verbal forms these two most commonly used forms in GPA are derived from. Smart (1990:98) believes that both of these forms are taken from the imperfect 3SG.M verb form in Gulf Arabic which begins with the prefix /y/. Sometimes the original form is retained with no alteration and at others this prefix is dropped. He mentions that Owens (1985) considers the unprefix forms like *ruuh* 'go', and *šuuf* 'see', which are commonly used in another Arabic-based pidgin, Ki-Nubi, to come from the imperative verb forms in the lexifier language.

The same claim might be true in our case except that there are verbs in Gulf Arabic which exhibit a distinction between the two stems of the imperative and the imperfect, e.g. *ixið* – *aaxið* 'take', *ikil* – *aakil* 'eat'. The fact that it is the second, i.e. imperfect, stem that shows up in GPA may be taken as evidence that, at least, some of the 'unprefix' forms that are used in this reduced system are derived from the imperfect form in the superstrate language. For the others, we cannot decide on formal grounds what their derivational origin is, i.e. whether they come

5. In some cases this bare imperfect stem is further prefixed with /?/, to form the imperative, e.g. /ilbas/ > /?ilbas/ 'dress' (Cf. *yilbas* 'he dresses').

from the imperfect or imperative forms. We need to look for the context of their use to correctly predict their origin.

As a sign of instability that characterizes GPA, we may find the two forms occurring in the speech of the same speaker. Note the verbs in the following sentence said by someone describing what she did at night

- (5) ?anaa fii leel **guum yabi ruuh yišrab** maay (E)
 1SG in night stand want go drink water
 ‘At night, I got up to go and drink some water.’

The four verbs in this passage appear in either the un-prefixed form (*guum, ruuh*), or the prefixed form (*yabi, yišrab*). And the data show that they are equally common in the speech of the informants:

- | (6) Unprefixed form | | Prefixed form | |
|---------------------|----------|---------------|-------------|
| <i>guul</i> | ‘say | <i>yabi</i> | ‘want’ |
| <i>walli</i> | ‘leave’ | <i>yaarif</i> | ‘know’ |
| <i>ruuh</i> | ‘go’ | <i>yaskit</i> | ‘be silent’ |
| ?ismaa | ‘hear’ | <i>yaakid</i> | ‘take’ |
| <i>waddi</i> | ‘bring’ | <i>yajlis</i> | ‘sit’ |
| <i>guum</i> | ‘stand’ | <i>yadri</i> | ‘know’ |
| <i>šuuf</i> | ‘see’ | <i>yis?al</i> | ‘ask’ |
| <i>saafir</i> | ‘travel’ | | |
| <i>sawwi</i> | ‘make’ | | |
| <i>kallim</i> | ‘talk’ | | |

As to the reason behind the selection of this or that form for a particular verb, I concur with Smart’s suggestion that the prefixation is phonologically determined. Verb stems that begin with a consonant cluster get prefixed, resulting in a CVC CVC structure. With those stems that don’t begin with a cluster prefixation is optional. This is why we see some variation in the forms of some verbs like those in (7):

- (7) *šuuf* and *yšuuf* ‘see’
waddi and *ywaddi* ‘bring’
saafir and *ysaafir* ‘travel’
iji and *yiji* ‘come’

In some instances, the above mentioned variation in the verb form is not attested in the speech of the same person. While one speaker uses *saafir*, the other uses *ysaafir*. The use of the second variant need not be perceived as a sign of a higher degree of competence in the superstrate language. It may only be a function of the inconsistency of use in such systems. Either form is being used as an unmarked

form. The /ya-/ that appears at the beginning of the prefixed form is not the inflection that we find in the superstrate form indicating third person masculine singular. Rather, it is part of the verb form. It does not have its original function. As example (5) above shows, this form is used with a first person subject.

Variation, however, does not stop at this. Other forms of the verb are used by these informants, some of which show different person, gender, and number inflections from those of the typical third person masculine singular imperfect form. Some of these are even perfect verb forms. Alongside *yabi* (3SG.M), 'want' we also have *tabi* (2SG.M), and *tabiin* (2SG.F); with *ruuh* (2SG.M imperative), 'go' we have *ruuhi*, (2SG.F imperative) and *yruuh* (2SG.M imperfect); with *sawwi* (2SGG imperative), we have *sawweet* (1SG perfect); and with *hutti* 'put' (2SG.F imperative) we have *hatteeti* (2SG.F perfect). In one instant the informant consistently used imperative verb forms: *šilli* 'lift' (2SG.F), *hutti* 'put' (2SG.F), *sawwi* 'make' (2SG.F), *badli* 'change' (2SG.F). Again the use of these forms should not be interpreted as a more advanced stage in the learning of the superstrate language. They are all used as unmarked 'fossilized' forms with no specific indications of tense, person, number, gender, or even mood (imperative).

One informant (J), was telling the interviewer about her routine house chores:

- (8) **hutti** saabuun, **gisli** tiyaab, **badli**
 put.2SG.F.IMP soap wash.2SG.F.IMP clothes, change.2SG.F.IMP
 toob, **šilli** laham, **sawwi** kudra klin,
 cloth, lift.2SG.F.IMP meat, make.2SG.F.IMP vegetables clean,
 hatteeti fii jidir, **šilli** kudra, **galli** beeda
 put.2SG.F.PERF in pan lift.2SG.F.IMP vegetables fry.2SG.F.IMP egg
 'Put soap, wash the clothes, change the dress, lift the meat, clean the
 vegetables, put them in the sauce pan, take them out and fry an egg.'

The feminine singular imperative form is used in all but one case, *hateeti*, which we find in the 2nd person feminine singular perfect form. She tells of what she is going to do tomorrow:

- (9) bukra **hatteeti** maay gassaala, badeen saabuun
 tomorrow put.2SG.F.PERF water washing-machine then soap
hatteeti, badeen **hatteeti** tiyaab, badeen **šilli**
 put.2SG.F.PERF then put.2SG.F.PERF clothes then lift.2SG.F.IMP
 tiyaab, badeen **sawwi** ?uuti
 clothes then make.2SG.F.IMP iron
 'Tomorrow, I'll put water in the washing machine, then soap, then clothes,
 then take them out and iron them.'

Here, one verb is used three times in the second person feminine singular perfect form, followed by two verbs in the second person feminine singular imperative form.

The above passages show clearly that the verb forms that are used by the informants are not meant to carry any information about the verb tense, gender, person, or number, in contrast to what they indicate in the lexifier language. They also tell us something about the choice of the forms used by the informants. It is true that there is a tendency to use the morphologically simplest form of the verb in such reduced systems, presumably the third person masculine singular form. However, the choice seems to be equally determined, or influenced, by the extent of exposure of the GPA learner to any of the forms available in the lexifier language. It could be the form most frequently used in communication with these people. The speaker in the above two texts (8–9) is a female house servant, whose contact with her employers is mostly limited to receiving requests to do things, hence the use of the feminine singular imperative form. It is the verb form she is most frequently exposed to.

There are, however, instances in the data where we find variation in the verb forms that is analogous to that found in the lexifier, as in example (10) below, which exhibits the use of the correct form of the verb.

- (10) a. min zamaan **sawweet** tanziiif (D)
 from time made.1SG.PERF cleaning
 'I did the cleaning a long time ago.' (said by one house maid to another)
- b. **tabiin** ?anaa baččaa ruuh madrisa (H)
 want.2SG.F IMPERF 1SG children go school
 'Do you want me to take the children to school?'

It is possible to explain the use of the correct verb forms as representing a degree of awareness of the correct forms of the verbs in the lexifier language. It reflects an advanced stage in the mastery of the lexifier system, manifested by the application of its verbal inflectional system. Nevertheless, one cannot exclude the other possibility of the used verb forms being the forms that the speakers are frequently exposed to, and addressed with.

In contrast to the lexifier language, in this system the verb is not suffixed with object clitics. Actually there are no object clitics in GPA. All pronouns are independent and never morphologically bound to the verb. Gulf Arabic, as shown above, contains a full set of object clitics. It is possible that the use of the independent pronouns is because of the influence of the substrate languages, some of which do not contain such pronominal bound forms.

- (11) a. maamaa yabi ?anaa (E)
 Madam want 1SG
 ‘Madam wants me.’
- b. ... guul la ?anaa ruuh ... (A)
 tell to 1SG go
 ‘... told me to go ...’

3.2 Tense and aspect

Tense as a grammatical category associated with verbs is absent in this system. There are no tense marking items. As was said above, the verb occurs in one single form that does not undergo any inflectional changes to signal tense/aspect. Despite the false appearance of inflections on the verbal form that is selected by the speakers of this system, these should not be interpreted as such in any way. Nor do we find any independent item that specifically indicates this category. Both the lexifier and the substrate languages exhibit rich tense and aspectual systems realized in tense/aspect-related changes in the form of their verbs.

In Gulf Arabic past-present tense, and perfect-imperfect aspect are marked on the verb form, e.g. *?akal* > *yaakil* ‘eat’. The first, called the perfect form, refers to past finished actions, while the second, imperfect form, refers to present, habitual actions, or timeless general statements. Reference to the future is signaled by the addition of the prefix /*b-*/ to the verb, e.g. *b-yaakil* ‘will eat’. Similarly, Urdu, Hindi, Persian show this tense contrast on the different verb stems: Persian *miixure* > *xurd*; Hindi/Urdu *khata* > *khana* ‘eat’; Bengali *bosa* > *boslo* ‘sit’, etc. Futurity is marked either inflectionally via particular markers, e.g. Urdu/Hindi / *-ngl*/, or with the help of an auxiliary, e.g. Persian *xah* ‘want’.⁶

Thus, in GPA, the time of the action referred to in the sentence can only be inferred from the particular adverbials in the sentence, or is left to be discerned from the context.

- (12) a. **bukra** hatteeti may gassaala (future) (J)
 tomorrow put.2SG.F.PERF water washing.machine
 ‘Tomorrow I’ll put water in the washing machine.’
- b. **?amis** sawwi za?laan (past event) (F)
 yesterday make.2SG.IMP cross
 ‘Yesterday I made myself look upset.’

6. Information about the substrate languages is mainly from the various chapters in Comrie (1990).

- c. ?anaa fii leel gum yabi ruuh
 1SG in night stand.2SG.M.IMP want.3SG.M.IMPERF go.2SG.M.IMP
 yišrab maay (past event) (E)
 drink.3SG.M.IMPERF water
 'At night, I got up because I wanted to drink water'
- d. ?anaa hibbi haadi muganni (general statement) (F)
 1SG like.2SG.F.IMP this singer
 'I like this singer.'
- e. kul yoom sawwi maal ?anaa muškil (habitual action) (D)
 every day make.2S.IMP of 1SG problem
 'Everyday she makes a problem for me.'⁷

Aspect markers on the verb are also absent. No aspectual inflections can be attested in GPA. With regards to the progressive aspect, Gulf Arabic contains an independent aspectual particle indicating the continuity of the action. This is the pre-verbal particle *gaa'id*, originally an active participle meaning 'sitting', forming with the following verb a serial verbal construction. The substrate languages show this aspectual distinction either by particular inflectional markers, or by other independent elements. No such particle is found in GPA. Continuation of the action can only be inferred from the context or the use of an appropriate adverbial, as in the following example that tells of an action in progress.

- (13) alhiin ?anaa fii guum (E)
 now 1SG fii stand
 'Now I am standing.'

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.

- (14) a. ?atbuk kalaas laham šilli (J)
 cook.1SG done meat lift.2.SF.IMP
 'When the cooking is done, I raise the meat (from the pan).'
- b. ?ahmad ?ašši kalaas, ruuhi foog (J)
 Ahmed dine.2SG.F.IMP done go.2SG.F.IMP up
 'When Ahmed has taken his dinner, he goes upstairs.'

7. The verb forms used in these five sentences mirror different inflections in the lexifier language, as is indicated in the gloss. Though the un-prefixed *guum* and *ruuh* in (c) have been glossed as imperatives, they could equally be originally imperfect forms as the discussion above suggests. It is clear that the tense/aspect inflections they mirror have no relation to the temporal reference of the sentences they occur in.

- c. ?inta **kalaas waddi** fuluus (E)
 2SG.M done send.2S.IMP money
 'Have you sent the money?'

3.3 Modality

Modality overtones are marked by independent forms (auxiliaries?) borrowed from the lexifier Gulf Arabic. These lexical items which are originally either verbs or participles, have developed through the process of grammaticalization into items that have lost their lexical content and now maintain only a functional status. They occupy a sentence-initial or preverbal position. The modal notion of possibility is expressed by *yimkin* 'may' and *mumkin* 'possible'.⁸

- (15) a. **mumkin** baabaa galli (E)
 possible master said
 'It is possible that Master said.'
 b. **yimkin** tineen ?usbuu (H)
 maybe two week
 'Maybe for two weeks'
 c. baabaa **yimkin** maafii maluum (F)
 master maybe not known
 'Maybe Master doesn't know.'

Necessity/obligation is expressed by another independent form, *laazim* 'obligatory':

- (16) a. **laazim** kulliš gurfa naziif (D)
 obligatory all room clean
 'All rooms must be cleaned.'
 b. **laazim** sawwi muškil ?ašaan saafir (F)
 obligatory make problem for travel
 'I must make problems so that I can travel.'

A third notion of modality, intention, and hence futurity, is also discernible in this system. It is indicated by the use of the independent lexical form *ruuh*, preverbally. This element is to be distinguished from the verb *ruuh* 'go' as a main verb. The two uses of *ruuh*, as a modality marker, and a verb are differentiated by the complements they take. The first is followed by a verb of action, while the main verb is followed by a locative complement. The following sentences below are examples.

8. Of course Gulf Arabic exhibits more variety in the verbs and participles used to signify modality notions. In contrast to the two or three items attested in our GPA data, we may find in Gulf Arabic the items *mumkin*, *yimkin*, *yjuuz*, *jaa?iz*, for possibility, and *laazim*, *waajib*, *yajib*, *laabud* for obligation and necessity.

- (17) a. Modality marker:
- i. ?anaa ruuh kallim baabaa (E)
1SG will talk master
'I'll talk to Master.'
 - ii. ... ruuh zawwij hurma taani (H)
will marry woman second
'... He'll marry another woman.'
- b. Main verb:
- i. ?anaa ?ahmad ruuh hadiika (J)
1SG Ahmed go garden
'I'll take Ahmed to the garden.'
 - ii. ruuh landan yadris (J)
go London study
'He'll go to London to study.'

3.4 Mood

Likewise, changes in mood are not indicated on the verb form either. Though the discussion here will be limited to the indicative-imperative mood contrast, the previous statement is true for the subjunctive, i.e. the infinitival form used in the complement of another verb. This is contrary to the state of affairs that we find in the superstrate lexifier language, Gulf Arabic, where there is a separate verb stem indicating the imperative mood (see the discussion above), or the substrate languages which exhibit rich morphological mood distinctions, often identifying a separate verb stem for the imperative, with the usual gender, number and stylistic variation: Urdu/Hindi *ghum* 'take a walk', Persian *bexur* 'eat'. In GPA the same uninflected verb form may be found in both statements and orders. Consider the following examples, all orders or requests to do something.

- (18) a. yalla guum (A)
come.on stand
'Come on stand up!'
- b. ?isma haadi kaaset (F)
hear this cassette
'Listen to this cassette!'
- c. sawwi tanziiif gurfa saala (E)
make cleaning room hall
'Clean the hall!'
- d. sukti (F)
be.silent (2 SG.F)
'Be silent.'

- e. maafi sawwi maskara (E)
not make silly
'Don't make silly things!'

In all these cases the form of the verbs is identical to the imperative verb form in Gulf Arabic. The *ya-* prefixed verb form, which we have found to be the form most frequently used in this system is not used in the context of orders. This may be interpreted that there is a mood-based distinction in the verb forms used. Nevertheless, it is to be remembered that the use of this unprefixed verb stem in GPA is not specific to this context. The same form was found to be in use in statements as in the many examples above, e.g. example (8), where the informant is talking about (stating) her duties or chores.

3.5 *fii*

One element that we frequently find in the verb phrase of GPA is *fii*. This is a borrowing from the lexifier Gulf Arabic. In Gulf Arabic, it has two distinct uses: its original use as a preposition meaning 'in', and its use, together with its negative *maafii*, as an existential element similar to the English expletive 'there is/there isn't', e.g. *fii badlaat jidiida* 'there are new dresses' and *maafii makaan hnaak* 'there is no room there'.

However, in GPA *fii* has developed a much wider range of uses than what it has in origin.⁹ In addition to its common conventional existential use, exemplified in (19) below, *fii* has come to be used as a syntactic tool to achieve predication.

- (19) a. *fii muškil* (C)
there problem
'There is a problem.'
- b. *kulliš bilaad laazim fii suuperstar* (F)
every country must there superstar
'In every country there must be a superstar (TV program).'
- c. *?ašaan fii nafar yiji* (B)
because there person come
'Because there is someone coming'
- d. *maafii muškil* (I)
not.there problem
'There is no problem.'

9. Smart (1990) considers *fii* a verb, again because of its occurrence before adjectives and nouns in equational sentences of the sort mentioned below. He takes its occurrence before main verbs as a case of compound verbs.

- e. sayyaara maafii betrool (G)
 car not.there petrol
 'There is no petrol in the car.'

In this role it can be found in a great many sentences functioning as a predication marker linking between the subject and predicate. It is often present in equational sentences, used in a similar manner to that of the English copulative verb 'be', and usually located between the subject and the nominal, adjectival, or adverbial complement, as the sentences in (20) show.

- (20) a. ?inta fii majnuun (D)
 2SG.M BE crazy
 'Are you crazy?'
 b. ?ašara fii kabiir (B)
 ten BE big
 'Ten are big.'
 c. ?anaa fii koof maamaa (E)
 1SG BE fear(N) madam
 'I am afraid of Madam.'
 d. ?anaa fii maluum (A)
 1SG BE known
 'I know.'¹⁰
 e. ?anaa fii hnii (A)
 1SG BE here
 'I am here.'
 f. haadaa fii wakit maal filim (E)
 this BE time of film
 'Is this a time for a movie?'

And negative:

- g. laa, maafii zaruuri (F)
 no not.BE necessary
 'No, it is not necessary.'
 h. maafii koof husband sawwii marid (E)
 not.BE fear(N) husband make married
 'Aren't you afraid your husband gets married?'

10. *fii maluum* translates into English as a stative verb 'know, understand', and may therefore be taken as another instance of a copula followed by a stative predicate like the preceding examples. In this sense, the sentence *?anaa fii maluum* could be interpreted as 'I am in the state of knowing'.

- i. maafii ?uyuun ?inti (D)
 not.BE eyes 2SG.F
 'Don't you have eyes?'

What is interesting is that *fii* may also be found in sentences containing main verbs occupying a preverbal position. Again, it seems that *fii*, and its negative counterpart *maafii* are playing the role of a predication marker.

- (20) a. ?anaa fii guul (A)
 1SG fii say
 'I say.'
- b. ?inta fii yaskit (E)
 2SG.M fii be.silent
 'You keep quiet.'
- c. ?inti fii šuuf (B)
 2SG.F fii see
 'Do you see?'
- d. ?inta fii saafir (F)
 2SG.M fii travel
 'Are you traveling?'
- e. ?anaa fii ruuh warša (I)
 1SG fii go workshop
 'I go to the workshop.'
- f. kafiiil fii sawwi jinjaal (A)
 sponsor fii make quarrel
 'The sponsor quarrels (with me).'
- g. haay faatora maafii ?aktib (B)
 this receipt not write
 'I can't write the receipt.'

It is noteworthy that in this function *fii* may even assume a modality tone, expressing ability or possibility. And in certain instances it seems to have assumed the role of the auxiliary 'have' or that of a main verb. The sentences in (22) are examples of such extended use:

- (22) a. kul yoom iji maafii ruuh barra (C)
 every day come not go out
 'Everyday I come I can't go out.'
- b. fii baddil kafiiil (B)
 fii change sponsor
 'Can I change the sponsor?'

- c. haadi maafii slop (A)
 this not slope
 'This doesn't have a slope.'
- d. haadi sitta saba madrisa fii talalbaar (A)
 this six seven school fii orders
 'Six or seven schools make orders.'
- e. kamsiin riyaal fii ?ikaama (B)
 fifty riyal fii residence
 'For fifty riyals you get a residence.'
- f. laakin minni minni ?inti fii ruuh, maamaa maafii maluum (B)
 but here here 2SG.F fii go mother not known
 'But if you may go here and there, your mother wouldn't know'
- g. ?anaa fii šugul, ?anaa maafii muškila (B)
 1SG fii work 1SG not problem
 'If I have work I don't have a problem.'

The occurrence of the element *fii* in GPA raises an important question about the universal properties that characterize reduced linguistic systems like pidgins, foreigner talk, child language, and others that are discussed extensively in the literature. One salient feature that characterizes pidgins is said to be the absence of copulative verbs in these systems even when such elements exist in their lexifier and/or substrate languages, a suggestion made first in Ferguson (1971). The present situation seems to be the opposite of what is to be expected. Gulf Arabic does not contain a copula. Predication is realized by mere juxtapositioning of the subject and the predicate, no matter what kind of phrase this may be. If this is the case, then the question arises as to the reason for, and origin of this extended use in GPA. The answer seems to lie in the fact that the copula is found in the substrate languages, as in Persian, Urdu/Hindi, etc. It is obvious that it is under the influence of these languages that GPA has adopted the element *fii* as a copula and a predication marker.

Finally we may need to note here that as a copula and a predication marker, the use of *fii* is not without exception. The data contain many instances of equational sentences without *fii*, and many other sentences with main verbs that are not preceded by this element. These are contexts in which the presence of *fii* is expected.

- (23) a. ?intii waajid girgir (E)
 2SG.F much talk
 'You are very talkative.'
- b. ?anaa tabaan (F)
 1SG tired
 'I am tired.'

- c. ?intii šuuf filim (E)
2SG.F see film
'Are you watching movies?'
- d. ?anaa raas maal ?anaa ?awwir (D)
1SG head of 1SG hurt
'My head hurts.'
- e. ?anaa sawwi tanziiif (D)
1SG make cleaning
'I am cleaning.'

3.6 Negation

Negation is marked by the negative particle *maafi*, mentioned in the previous section and which comes from the lexifier Gulf Arabic, meaning 'there isn't'. *maafi* has developed in GPA as a general negative particle with a much wider use than in Gulf Arabic. As was discussed and exemplified above, it is not only used to negate existential and equational sentences, but also to negate sentences with main verbs. In this last use it appears to function exactly like the English 'do not'.

- (24) a. ?anaa maafii noom (C)
1SG not sleep(N)
'I don't sleep.'
- b. leeš maamaa maafii sawwi tabdiil (D)
why Madam not make change(N)
'Why doesn't Madam make changes?'
- c. fii nafar muut ?ašaan maafii šuuf filim (E)
there person die because not see film
'Is there a person who dies because he doesn't watch a movie?'
- d. maafii kaaf maamaa (D)
not fear Madam
'I am not afraid of Madam.'
- e. kafiiil guul maafi alhiin iji (B)
sponsor say not now come
'The sponsor says he will not come now.'

However, variation is inescapable here too. The Gulf Arabic negative particles *maa* and *mub* 'not' are also used occasionally as alternatives to *maafi* by some informants in negating main verbs and adjectives respectively.

- (24) a. ?anaa maa yadri (B)
1SG not know
'I don't know.'

- b. ?ašaan maa šurta waddi ... (B)
 so.that not police take
 'so that the police don't take...'
- c. ... ?ašaan maa sawwi maamaa jinjaal (F)
 so.that not make Madam quarrel
 '... so that Madam doesn't quarrel (with you).'
- d. haada kafil mub zeen (B)
 this sponsor not good
 'This sponsor is not good.'

maa and not *maafii* seems to be the particle consistently selected before the verb *yabi* 'want'.

- (26) a. ?anaa maa tabi tisma (E)
 1SG not want hear
 'I don't want to hear.'
- b. maa yabi muškil (I)
 not want problem
 'I don't want problems.'

I can't find a reason why this alternative is found with this verb in particular. Again it may be the result of frequent association in use between the two items.

3.7 Compound verbs

GPA exhibits verb compounding in its verb phrases. These are constructions where a verb appears to be closely linked to the following element which could be either a noun or an adjective, or another verb. The data show two verbs to fall into this category. Both seem to have a close link to what follows them so that they might constitute a single unit with them.

First, we have the verb *sawwi* 'do' that is used with a following noun or adjective, or even a verb, to form a compound, a process similar to the morphological derivation of a new verb from a noun or an adjective in other languages.

- (27) a. sawwi jinjaal
 make quarrel
 'quarrel'
- b. sawwi hibbi
 make love
 'court'
- c. sawwi tanziiif
 make cleaning
 'clean'

- d. sawwi zalaan
make upset
'upset'
- e. sawwi tiktib
make write
'write'

This method of referring to actions in GPA is completely absent in the lexifier language Gulf Arabic, whose rich verbal morphology allows the derivation of such verbs from the noun or adjective stem. However, the substrate languages make wide use of such a process of compounding via the compounding of particular verbs with nouns or adjectives, e.g. Persian *kardan* 'do', *zadan* 'strike', Urdu/Hindi *karna*. This seems to be behind the appearance of this process in GPA.

The second verb that occurs as an element in compound verbs is *ruuh* 'go'. This verb is found before other verbs, in what appears like a serial verb construction. Here, the verb *ruuh* loses its meaning 'go'. It only signifies intention and is used in future reference contexts as was mentioned in the section on modality above.

- (28) a. ?anaa ruuh waddi baččaa medrisa (G)
1SG will take child school
'I'll take the children to school.'
- b. ... hazband maal ?intii ruuh zawwij (E)
husband of 2SG.F will marry
'... your husband gets married?'

4. The pidgin status of GPA

The above descriptive account has helped in sketching a structural outline of a particular area in the grammar of GPA. The structural properties of this system place it among the group of pidgin and creole linguistic systems. The morphological and syntactic features that the discussion revealed are those that are universally found in such systems and are therefore used as tools for their identification. Such features have been the topic of extensive discussion in the literature, e.g. Bickerton (1981), Kaye & Tosco (2001) and Winford (2006).

In morphology and syntax, pidgin systems exhibit the absence of morphological apparatus. That is, they show very little affixation or inflection. Thus, we don't expect to see any expression of functional categories as agreement, number, gender, or person. As was seen in Section 3.1 above, the verbs in GPA lack the inflections that characterize them in the lexifier Gulf Arabic. One form of the verb is

used. It does not exhibit any agreement inflection with the subject and admits no affixation with object clitics.

Pidgin systems across the world are also characterized by the absence of such functional categories as tense and aspect. This is exactly the case in GPA verbs as the discussion in Section 3.2 shows. The tense inflections that are noticeable on the verb form and which indicate tense differences in the lexifier language are devoid of that function in GPA. They can best be described as instances of frozen morphology, where the verb form is borrowed together with its inflections as one single unit, a phenomenon frequently attested in world pidgins. Instead, tense and aspect references are discerned from the occurrence of certain time-indicative lexical items, such as adverbials, or are left to be retrieved from the context. The exception here is the use of a particular lexical item, *kalaas* 'done' to signal the perfect aspect. This could be seen as the result of a process of grammaticalization. We may note here that this process is not witnessed in other functional categories.

Pidgin systems are said to contain a very limited number of functional morphemes such as complementizers, quantifiers, question words, pronouns. This is the case in GPA, which shows no complementizers and only contains a limited number of question words, *minu* 'who', *šinu* 'what', *kam* 'how many', and *ween* 'where'. It is worth noting here that these are all simple wh-phrases with no pied-piped material.

Another universal property that pidgins are characterized with is their use of a single universal negative marker. From the discussion in 3.6, we see that, contrary to the lexifier language, GPA predominantly uses one negative marker- i.e. *maafii*, although the use of other markers is occasionally attested. The use of *maa* and *mub* may be seen as an instance of approximation to the lexifier system on part of the user, or in the case of *maa yabi* 'not want' another instance of frozen morphology.

In syntax, pidgins seem to use analytic structures, and hence, use word order to determine grammatical functions. Though this is not one of the issues that were dealt with in these notes, a quick look at the data will show that this property is found in GPA. So is the observation that pidgin systems make use of a reduced number of sentence patterns, which is due to the absence of rules of movement. The sentences mentioned in our discussion and which exemplify the various points amply show that GPA seems to prefer the use SVO order over other orders that may be found in the lexifier and substrate languages. These sentences are also characterized with lack of derivational depth, hence the rarity of subordination and embedding structures.

In his interesting discussion of the process of pidginization, Winford (2006) suggests a line of development that pidgins seem to follow. In every stage of their development these systems are characterized by a number of defining features. In the earliest, stage-1 pidginization, the lexicon is rather rudimentary and comprises

a few noun-like and verb-like items, some adjectives and adverbs, a three-way pronoun distinction, and some quantifiers and function words. At this stage, the syntactic structure in the system is minimal and the rules of predication have not developed yet. It represents a 'pregrammatical' stage, or individual 'jargons', and shows no consistency across speakers (ibid: 296–7).

In contrast to this, stage-2 pidgins seem to have acquired a clear, though impoverished, grammar, which contains simple rules of predication. They also show some degree of consistency across their speakers. This is an indication that learning them is not achieved by applying individual or idiosyncratic rules. Winford calls such systems 'prototypical pidgins' like Hawai'i Pidgin English (used on Hawaii plantations in the 19th century) and Eskimo Pidgin (used in the 19th century between the native Indians and European traders). These systems lack inflections and bound derivational morphemes, and do not show any functional categories except in very rare cases. Copulas and articles are lacking too, and so are complex structures of embedding and subordination (ibid: 285).

When these properties are projected on the data at hand, one can readily come to the conclusion that GPA is such a system. It is characterized by most of these features. There is a total absence of inflectional and derivational affixation in this system. It also lacks a good number of the functional categories usually present in non-pidgin languages. While a copula has developed in GPA, articles are still absent, and there is neither embedding nor subordination.

5. GPA in relation to other Arabic-based pidgins and creoles

The argument for the pidgin status of GPA gains more support from the fact that there are common features that GPA shares with other Arabic-based pidgins and creoles. Three of these have attracted the attention of researchers for some time. The first is Juba Arabic, a language that arose in southern Sudan. It is used either as a lingua franca in this region, especially in Juba the capital city, or as a native language by some sections of the urban population. The second is Ki-Nubi, a language spoken now by groups of people living in Kenya and Uganda, which is used as a lingua franca in the West Nile district in Uganda. It started as a pidgin in the 19th century in the military camps in the southern Sudan that brought together Sudanese soldiers and African slaves and laborers. Part of this community settled later in their present localities. Bongor Arabic, also called Turku, is another Arabic-based pidgin spoken in southwestern Chad. It is used as a lingua franca between Chadic populations speaking Chadic and Niger-Congo languages and the Arab traders from the north.

The common features that GPA and the three African pidgin/creole systems share set them apart from their lexifier languages, i.e. the various spoken Arabic dialects. These are all systems of reduced grammar, though they exhibit various degrees of such reduction. In terms of phonology, they all have a reduced phonemic inventory, in comparison to the inventories of their lexifiers. Morphological poverty, both inflectionally and derivationally, is another common property that they share. In addition, when compared to their lexifier languages, their syntax proves rather rudimentary and exhibits less derivational complexity. Nevertheless, there are some areas where GPA seems to differ from the above mentioned pidgin/creole systems. I will try to compare between these language varieties with regards to the various points concerning their verbal systems.¹¹

- a. The four systems share the fundamental feature of using a single verb form. The verb in these languages does not change its unmarked form (derived in all of them from third person singular masculine source) to indicate agreement with the subject in person, number or gender. This is in complete contrast to their lexifier languages, the various spoken Arabic dialects. Nor is the verb inflected for the functional categories of tense, aspect, or modality. The only instance of verb inflection appears to be in voice in Juba Arabic and Ki-Nubi. In these languages the passive is formed by a stress shift to the final syllables. No parallel inflection can be attested for GPA.
- b. Change in the form of the verb to produce derived verb patterns seems to be non-existent too. The transitive-factitive alternation in verbs is not accompanied by any change in the verb form in any of the four languages except with a limited set of verbs in Juba Arabic, e.g. *gumu* 'stand' < *gowmu* 'raise' (Miller 2007: 523). No such change is attested in GPA. The verb *ruuh* 'go', for example, keeps its form when used transitively to mean 'make go' or 'take' as in (9b) above.
- c. Affixation by clitics is limited to prefixation in the three African Arabic-based languages of the preverbal prefixes *bi-* and *ge/gi/gay*. The other instance of affixation is the addition of a second person plural pronominal suffix to the verb in plural imperatives in Ki-Nubi.
- d. One area of difference seems to reside in the expression of the categories of tense, aspect, and modality. It was said above that these are not realized on the verb in the form of inflection, as is the case in the lexifier or the substrate languages, and that they are realized, if they are, in the form of independent markers. GPA

11. The information about the African Arabic-based pidgins and creoles is from Owens (2001) and Wellen (2007) on Ki-Nubi; Luffin (2007) on Turku (Bongor) Arabic, and Tosco (1995) and Miller (2007) on Juba Arabic.

has been found to express no difference in temporal reference in any of these ways, and that time reference is inferred from the context. The bare verb form is equally used to refer to past, present, or future events. It is also used in referring to habitual or timeless statements and general truths. In the other three systems, preverbal markers are used to distinguish temporal and aspectual difference: *bi-* and *ge-* in Juba Arabic, *bi-* and *gi-* in Ki-Nubi, and *gay-* in Bongor Arabic (Turku).

These particles/markers have generally the same function in the three languages: *bi-* marks futurity and *ge-/gi-/gay-* progressivity. Their use is linked to the basic stative/non-stative distinction that is made in the verbs of these languages. Thus, *ge-/gi-/gay-* is generally prefixed to non-stative verbs when reference is made to the present time, or to express the progressive aspect regardless of time reference. The bare unmarked form of a non-stative verb always indicates punctuality and realis meaning, i.e. past reference. Stative verbs, which naturally have a present time reference, do not usually get prefixed with this marker. The prefix *bi-*, whose use is limited to Juba Arabic and Ki-Nubi, has a future irrealis, besides a habitual meaning, which it shares with *ge-/gi-*. In this case they seem to be interchangeable.¹² The two markers may co-occur in Ki-Nubi, in the order *bi-* FUT + *gi-* PROG. None of these particles/markers shows up in GPA.

Nevertheless, GPA and the African Arabic-based creoles all make use of other independent auxiliary-like elements to mark various tense, aspect, or modality notions. The languages differ as to which particular marker they use. Some, like *kalas*, which signifies completeness, and *ruuh*, for futurity, are found in all four. Others are language particular. But they all seem to play the same function of marking the various notions of tense, aspect, and modality.

e. In negation, all four languages seem to alternate between the two negative markers: *ma* and *mafi*. However, these elements seem to have different status in these languages. In Juba Arabic, the negative *ma* is the element generally used and is placed in a pre-predicate position. *mafi* is only used in existential sentences, but could also be used to emphasize negation in negative sentences, occupying a sentence-final position. Bongor Arabic (Turku) uses *mafi* or its variant *mapi* in all sentences, usually positioned sentence-finally, but it also makes use of *ma* occasionally, placing it in a pre-predicate position. Ki-Nubi uses both particles, placing them in a sentence-final position. GPA generally uses *mafi* in all sentences and not only in existential sentences. However, the data showed that *ma* is also used occasionally and occupies only a preverbal position. It seems that in the more

12. There are finer distinctions in the different uses of these two pre-verbal markers in the two languages; Tosco (1995) provides a more detail discussion of these uses and the differences between the two languages in this regard.

stabilized and extended systems, i.e. Juba Arabic and Ki-Nubi, the use of the two particles has become more specified. The contexts in which each marker is used are well defined. This is not the case in Bongor Arabic or in GPA, where *mafi* is the usual alternative. This particle is used in all sentences and the use of *ma* is rare, and when it is used it only occupies a pre-verb/predicate position. It is possible that in these two languages the use of *ma* represents an influence of the lexifier language where it occupies a similar position.

A legitimate question may arise here about the reasons behind the differences noted above. The answer may be sought in the developmental stage that each of these systems has attained. Like language acquisition, first or second, these systems pass through stages of development towards stabilization and expansion. The development is naturally manifested in grammatical complexity. The three African languages appear to have reached a more advanced stage in their development. Juba Arabic and Ki-Nubi have been nativized and are therefore creoles. They are stable and expanded linguistic systems. Bangor Arabic (Turku) is also considered a creole by certain accounts (Luffin 2007). This is not the case as far as GPA is concerned, which we have characterized as a stage-2 pidgin in Winford's developmental hierarchy (2006: 298).

6. Conclusion

The picture that results from the above account is quite clear as far as the pidgin status of GPA is concerned. This system exhibits the general properties of grammatical simplification and reduction that such systems are characterized with. The various pidgin/creole languages in the world seem to have reached different levels of development measured in terms of grammatical stability and expansion in use. This line of development begins from those pre-grammatical systems of early pidginization and ends with the fully stabilized and expanded creoles. With its reduced grammar and lack of inflectional and derivational morphology, GPA seems to occupy a position near the middle of this development hierarchy, showing some conventionalized norms that speakers seem to follow, albeit not without inconsistency.

The variation that we find almost everywhere in the subsystem that we are concerned with here is an indication that GPA has not reached the stage of full stability and expansion yet. In this, it is different from Tok Pisin, which has recognized grammatical norms that are consistently followed by its speakers. Variation abounds at all aspects of the verbal system to the extent that none of the above descriptive statements is free of exception. The noticeable variation may be taken as a sign of the instability of GPA as a system reflected in the inconsistency in its use.

Variation in the speech of the speaker may also reflect the different levels of learning that the speakers of GPA have achieved. It might be suggested that variation would be more common in the speech of those who have not had much practice in it. They are the newcomers who are only starting to speak it. Those who have been using it for a lengthier period of time must have discovered what the norms are and would thus show less variation and more consistency.

The present descriptive account has also shown that the reductionist tendency that is universally found in pidgin systems may not prevail in certain cases. The extension in the use of the element *fii*, and its negative counterpart *maafii* in GPA is a case in point. In this system *fii* is elevated from an existential element in the lexifier language, Gulf Arabic, into a full predication marker (auxiliary?) found in a variety of sentences much larger than those in which it occurs originally. In Gulf Arabic, predication in equational sentences does not need a verb like English 'be'. The use of *fii* in such contexts in GPA does not represent structural simplification. Rather, this innovation may be attributed to pressure from the substrate languages, which do have a copula. If so, then we may speak here of some conflict of powers that determine, or influence, the structure of this system. In this case the tension, in Smart's (1990) words, between the tendency towards simplification and reduction on the one hand, and the influence of the substrate languages on the other, was solved by succumbing to the influence of the latter.

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