The Syntactic Function of *fi* in GPA

This paper investigates and discusses the existential use of *fi* in Gulf Pidgin Arabic (GPA). Surprisingly, this pidgin has not been syntactically studied by linguists, despite the interest such a phenomenon holds for them. However, there are a few descriptive papers that elaborate on this pidgin. These papers claim that *fi* functions as an expletive subject, similar to the role of *there* in English.

Smart (1990), who was the first to publish *fi's* function in GPA, claims that *fi* in Gulf Arabic functions as a copula verb that is derived from the expletive subject; it also functions as an existential expletive subject in GPA.

(Note: In data 1 below, the gloss interpretation of *fi* is incorrect, according to my analysis)

- fi.(h)   aqlam   fi   albaqala
  there .(3SG)   pen.PL   in   the.grocery

There are pens in the grocery   (Gulf Arabic Dialect)

- fi   aqalam   baqala
  there   pen.PL   grocery

There are pens in the grocery   (GPA)

From the example above, we understand that Smart (1990) assumes that in both the Gulf Arabic variety and GPA, *fi* functions as an expletive subject. Later studies adopted Smart's assumption about the existential exponent use of *fi*. Nass (2008) made the same claim about *fi* as an expletive subject in these contexts, but he argued that in other contexts, there are other functions of *fi* (e.g., as a copular verb and a tense-aspect marker). A final paper published in 2010 by Bakir supported previous literature and claimed that *fi* also functions as a preposition.

This paper focuses on the syntactic function of fi in in GPA, arguing against claims about fi's syntactic expletive subject function in GPA. Instead, I claim that that fi tends to have the properties of verb. Syntactic evidence is provided from the substrate languages of this pidgin— that is, Arabic, Hindi, as well as other pidgins. Moreover, evidence on the terms of GPA itself are discussed.