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The Grammaticalization of *Buh* in Qassimi Arabic

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Abstract: *The grammaticalization framework provides a strong approach to accounting for syntactic categorizations as it examines grammatical changes as paths of grammar through which linguistic expressions emerge and develop (Heine & Kuteva, 2002; Kuteva et al., 2019). This study aims to investigate, on descriptive syntactic grounds, the syntactic (categorical) status of the grammatical element buh in Qassimi Arabic (QA) by showing how a grammaticalization framework can systematically inform the multiple categories of buh in QA and therefore account for its grammatical functions. In this study, I suggest that the QA grammatical element buh serves five grammatical functions: a locative adverb, a locative/comitative prepositional phrase, a possessive verb, an existential pronoun, and a modal particle. I also claim that when buh is used as a possessive verb, it shows agreement with its subject (i.e., the possessor). This study is the first to explore the grammatical functions of the QA grammatical element buh, and hence, it may contribute to the current research on QA by providing a better understanding of this grammatical element.*

Key words: buh, grammaticalization, qassimi arabic

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1.1 Introduction

Grammaticalization is a widespread phenomenon in all natural languages and affects all linguistic levels: phonological, lexical, semantic, morphological, and syntactic. This phenomenon has received wide attention within generative grammar (van Gelderen, 2004). The concept of grammaticalization can sometimes be misleading since it may be perceived as a language theory or a theory of language change (Heine, 2003). Several approaches are based on a grammaticalization perspective, and this diversity has led to a variety of views on how this phenomenon should be defined (see Narrog & Heine, 2011). As a theory, grammaticalization aims to explore the origin and development of grammatical forms and to explain the rationale behind their structure; it explains changes by providing insight into why certain grammatical forms emerge and develop (Heine, 2003). Thus, grammaticalization has the advantage of predicting potential future changes in a language or assuming what would be possible in an unknown language (Heine, 1995, as cited in Heine 2003). This capacity leads to the emergence of some universal paths, pathways, clines, or chains, which explain the origin and development of certain linguistic expressions (Heine, 2003; Heine & Kuteva 2002; Kuteva et al., 2019).

1.2 Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Grammaticalization

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The descriptive analysis and discussion in the present study are made in line with the grammaticalization approach established by Hopper (1991), Heine and Kuteva (2002), and Kuteva et al. (2019). According to this approach, grammaticalization is used to study, diachronically and synchronically, the relations among lexical, constructional, and grammatical materials in both particular languages and cross-linguistically. In addition, the process of grammaticalization can be observed when lexical items (i.e., content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) become grammatical items (i.e., function words such as auxiliaries) as well as when grammatical items become more grammaticalized and therefore develop additional grammatical functions. The present study aims to examine how a lexical item (viz., *buh* 'in it'/'have') becomes a grammatical item (e.g., *buh* 'there'). Thus, grammaticalization in the present study employs the panchronic approach, in which QA is regarded as a dynamic system with diachrony revealing itself through synchrony.

Cross-linguistically, the change from lexical to grammatical condition or from grammatical to even more grammatical condition seems to follow a predictable way, called a channel, chain, cline, path, or pathway, in which a lexical item undergoes semantic, morphosyntactic, and phonological changes (Heine & Kuteva, 2002; Kuteva et al., 2019). The best example of the process of a chain is the English noun *back*. This lexical item has been used for a human body part 'back' and has developed over time to convey the spatial notion 'behind'; it may also be used for an action 'go to' or for a grammatical concept (future tense) (Heine & Kuteva, 2002; Kuteva et al., 2019). In this study, the terms *path* and *pathway* will be used interchangeably to refer to the series of changes involved in the development of a lexical item (viz., *buh* 'in it'/'have') into a grammatical item (e.g., *buh* 'there').

In fact, the chain process that grammaticalized items undergo has led linguists to consider the existence of certain universal patterns of change that govern most grammaticalized cases observed across languages, which can also be referred to as the mechanisms of grammaticalization: desemanticization, extension, decategorization, and erosion (Heine, 2003; Heine & Kuteva, 2002; Kuteva et al., 2019). These four mechanisms are regarded as overlapping stages of language change that, respectively, reflect the grammatical components of semantics, morphosyntax, pragmatics, and phonetics, although they do not necessarily apply in the order listed above.

Generally speaking, grammaticalization takes place only when a linguistic expression is regularly employed in circumstances that lead to a specific inference, which becomes conventionalized as part of the related expression's lexical meaning, thereby undergoing the desemanticization mechanism (also known as *semantic bleaching*), which refers to a shift from lexical to grammatical meaning (Kuteva et al., 2019). For example, the Old English content word *willan* 'want' has been developed into the future auxiliary *will*, and the Swahili verb *-taka* 'want' has been developed into the future marker *ta-* (Heine & Kuteva, 2002, Kuteva et al., 2019). This shift from lexical to grammatical meaning leads to the second mechanism of grammaticalization, extension, whereby a linguistic component is used in previously inapplicable circumstances (Heine, 2003). When the linguistic component is extended, however, it is more likely to lose its

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old categorical status through the decategorization mechanism (Hopper, 1991). Because the syntactic elements undergoing grammaticalization are components of the sentences in which they are used, grammaticalization can end up with a variety of syntactic shifts (Heine & Kuteva, 2002). For instance, when a verb is grammaticalized to a benefactive or dative adposition, the syntactic transition from verb phrase (V + DP) to adverbial phrase (PREP + DP) is likely to occur (Heine & Kuteva, 2002). This study will demonstrate that the QA grammatical element *buh* undergoes certain syntactic changes through the process of grammaticalization and that these changes have desematicized, extended, and decategorized this element. The last mechanism of grammaticalization, erosion, is generally indicated by a loss of phonetic substance or phonetic reduction (Heine, 2003). This process may be observed, for example, in reducing the grammaticalized future marker "going to" into "gonna" (Bybee, 2017, p. 616). However, this mechanism is not employed by the QA grammatical element *buh*, whereas the first three mechanisms, namely, desemanticization, extension, and decategorization, are frequently applied.

1.3 Question and Aims

This study mainly aims to investigate, on descriptive syntactic grounds, the syntactic (categorical) status of the grammatical element *buh* in QA. It shows (a) how a grammaticalization framework can methodically apprise the various categories of *buh* in QA and therefore explain its grammatical functions and (b) how *buh* and its grammatical functions can be fitted on grammaticalization paths. Therefore, the present study attempts to answer the following question:

1. What is the syntactic (categorical) status of the QA grammatical element *buh*?

1.4 Qassimi Arabic

Qassimi Arabic (QA), a colloquial form of Saudi Arabic, is an Arabic variety spoken in the Qassim region. It is considered a subvariety of the Najdi Arabic (NA) dialect, which is spoken in Najd—located in the center of Saudi Arabia.

The term Najdi Arabic is used to describe a group of local dialects that are "fairly homogenous", including "Northern Najdi, Central Najdi, Mixed Northern-Central" Najdi, and "Southern Najdi" (Ingham, 1994, pp. 4-9). Because the Qassim region is located in the central-northern area of Najd, QA is considered a Mixed Northern-Central Najdi dialect. The Qassim region has a number of provinces, and its capital city is Buraydah. There are minor differences in the speech of QA speakers, which may be attributed to place, age, ethnic group, etc.

The QA dialect has several interesting linguistic features. First, the QA canonical word order is subject-verb-object (SVO) or verb-subject-object (VSO), as shown in (1). In both of these possible word orders, the verb shows full agreement with the subject.

(1) a) ʔar-rdʒa:l ʃara-u: be:t SVO
the-men bought-3.Masc.Pl house
'The men bought a house.'

b) ʃara-u: ar-rdʒa:l be:t VSO
bought-3.Masc.Pl the-men house

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'The men bought a house.'

Another well-known syntactic property of QA is that it is a pro-drop dialect, in which it is possible to drop the subject pronouns. The context and rich subject-verb agreement manifested by the inflections on the verb are sufficient to indicate who or what is being referred to, as illustrated in (2).

(2) a) (hu:) ʔakal l-karaz
(he) ate.3.Masc.Sg the-cherry
'He ate the cherry.'

b) (hi:) ʔakal-at l-karaz
(she) ate-3.Fem.Sg the-cherry
'She ate the cherry.'

Moreover, QA prepositions fall into two main types: free morphemes (e.g., *fi:* 'in', *ʕind* 'at', *maʕ* 'with', *ʕala* 'on/in', *min* 'from', *fo:g* 'above', and *taħt* 'under') and bound morphemes (e.g., *l-* 'to, for' and *b-* 'in, at, with'). The latter are attached to complement expressions that follow them (e.g., *l-l-be:t* 'to the home', *lu-h* 'for him, it', *b-l-be:t* 'at/in home'). The QA prepositions must be followed by nominal complement expressions.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses some of the significant literature that is relevant to the grammaticalization of *buh* in QA. It reviews the significant research on languages that use prepositions to express predicative (or verbal) possession. It also provides an overview of the existing research on certain evolutionary patterns of existential pronouns. It also discusses the significant work on languages that use prepositions as to express modality.

2.1 Possessive Verbs

Cross-linguistically, the function of prepositions has crossed into the domain of verbs. For example, Stassen (2009) notes that various languages, such as Maltese, Tunisian Arabic, Lokono, Swahili, and Ngbaka, employ a locative/comitative preposition as a transitive verb of possession that shows agreement with the possessor. In Maltese, for example, the preposition *għand* 'at' is used as a possessive verb inflected with an agreeing suffix, as shown in (3), where *għand* 'at' agrees with the possessor.

(3) Pawlu *għand*-u ktieb
Pawlu at-3.Masc.Sg book
'Pawlu has a book.' (Stassen, 2009, p. 237)

Other examples are from Swahili, Lokono, and Ngbaka which employ prepositions as possessive verbs. Interestingly, when the preposition is used as a possessive verb, it is preceded

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by a prefix that agrees with the possessor, as illustrated in (4), (5), and (6)[1] , respectively, by the Swahili preposition *na* 'with', the Lokono preposition *amyn* 'near', and the Ngbaka preposition *tέ* 'with'.

(4) Ni-*na* kisu (Swahili)
1SG-with knife
'I have a knife.' (Ashton, 1947, as cited in Stassen, 2009, p. 216)

(5) Kakythinon k-amyn-ka khaboho (Lokono)
people 3PL-have-PERF hand
'People have hands' (Pet, 1987, as cited in Stassen, 2009, p. 238)

(6) a) ʔé lí-tέ ngón (Ngbaka)
he REM.PAST-with/have chicken
'He had chickens.'

b) ʔé lí-bū (Ngbaka)
he REM.PAST-arrive
'He had arrived.'
(Thomas, 1963, as cited in Stassen, 2009, p. 217)

Stassen (2009) generally argues that the preposition behaves as a verb-like entity since it shows agreement with the possessor. He maintains that this behavior might be attributed to grammaticalization, a process through which a "'have'-like verb" is created with the possessor as its subject (Stassen, 2009, p. 237).

Along the lines, Comrie (1991) and Rubin (2005) discuss the use of a locative preposition as a possessive verb in certain Semitic languages such as, such as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Moroccan Arabic, Chadian Arabic, Lebanese Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, and Ge'ez. In these languages, the preposition is suffixed by a morphological inflection that agrees with the possessor in person, number, and gender, as illustrated in (7), (8), (9), (10), (11), respectively, by the MSA preposition *ʕind* 'at', the Moroccan Arabic preposition *ʕend* 'at', the Chadian Arabic preposition *ind* 'at', the Lebanese Arabic preposition *ʿind* 'at', and the Ge'ez preposition *ba-* 'in'. Ouhalla (2000) draws similar conclusions about Moroccan Arabic.

(7) kaana *ʕind*-ii daǰaaǰat-un (MSA)
was:3SM at-1S chicken-NOM
'I had a chicken.' (Comrie, 1991, p. 28)

(8) faṭima kan-u *ʕend*-ha le-ktuba (Moroccan Arabic)
Fatima was-3P at-3SF the-books
'Fatima had the books.' (Comrie, 1991, p. 24)

[1] REM stands for Remote Past.

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(9) *indi* wiled (Chadian Arabic)
'I have a child.' (Jullien de Pommerol, 1999, as cited in Rubin, 2005, p. 57)

(10) ma *ʿindi* maṣāri (Lebanese Arabic)
'I don't have any money.' (Rubin, 2005, p. 57)

(11) *ba*ya beta (Ge'ez)
'I have a house.' (Rubin, 2005, p. 58)

Research on Arabic dialects spoken in Saudi Arabia has also demonstrated this phenomenon. For example, Eifan (2017) argues that three prepositions (i.e., *ʕind* 'at', *maʕ* 'with', and *fī* 'in') might be used as possessive verbs and take an agreement suffix in the context of Urban Hijazi Arabic as depicted in (12) and (13).

(12) maʕā-hum kutub-hum
with-3PL books-3PL
'They have their books with them.' (Eifan, 2017, p. 45)

(13) mā fī-na nōm
NEG have-1PL sleep
'We do not feel sleepy.' (Eifan, 2017, p. 50)

Alrasheedi (2019) maintains that the preposition *ʕind* 'at' in NA may be used as a possessive verb inflected with an agreeing suffix that corresponds to the φ-features of the possessor, as shown in (14). Alrasheedi adds that the preposition *maʕ* 'with' may be used interchangeably with *ʕind* 'at' in some contexts that indicate possession, as shown in (15).

(14) Muħammad *ʕind*-ah kitaab
Muhammad at-3.Masc.Sg book
'Muhammad has a book.' (Alrasheedi, 2019, p. 134)

(15) Muħammad maʕ-ah/*ʕind*-ah ħaraarah
Muhammad with-3.Masc.Sg temperature
'Muhammad has a fever.' (Alrasheedi, 2019, pp. 135-141)

In line with the above-mentioned researchers (e.g., Alrasheedi 2019; Comrie 1991; Eifan 2017; Ouhalla 2000; Rubin 2005; Stassen 2009), I propose that the locative preposition *bu* 'in' (or any of its allomorphs such as *ba* and *bi*) in QA may be used as a possessive verb that contains an agreeing suffix corresponding to the φ-features of the possessor, which will be discussed in detail in section (3). Unlike Alrasheedi (2019), who suggests that only the preposition *ʕind* 'at' or its variant *maʕ* 'with' can be used as possessive verbs in NA, I argue in this study that the preposition *bu/ba/bi* 'in' may also be used as a possessive verb in QA, which is a sub-variety of

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the NA. Such usage is parallel to that of the NA preposition *ʕind* 'at' or its variant *maʕ* 'with' in certain contexts that indicate possession.

2.2 Existential Pronouns

Given Jespersen's (1924/2007) standard assumption that existential constructions originate from locative constructions, several researchers have reported that existential pronouns developed from locative prepositional phrases. For example, Freeze (1992) notes that the existential pronoun *i ai* 'P+3sg' in Samoan, Tongan, and Gilbertese is a grammaticalized preposition in which the locative preposition *i* 'in' is inflected with a third-person singular pronominal object, as shown in (16).

(16) 'oku 'i ai 'ae kurii 'i he poopao (Tongan)
PRES P 3sg ABS.ART dog P ART canoe
'There's a dog in the canoe.' (Freeze, 1992, p. 569)

McCloskey (2014) also points out that the existential pronoun *ann* in Irish existential sentences "is the third-person singular nonfeminine form of the preposition meaning 'in' and so might be translated 'in it' (p. 347), as shown in (17).

(17) Beidh go leor bia *ann*.
be-FUT plenty food in-it
'There'll be plenty of food.' (McCloskey, 2014, p. 347)

Researchers on the various Arabic varieties have also illustrated this phenomenon. They have shown that the sources of the existential pronoun *fīh/fiih/fi* in in Egyptian Arabic (Esseesy, 2010), Palestinian Arabic (Hoyt, 2000; Mohammad, 1998), Syrian Arabic (Rubin, 2005), Chadian Arabic (Rubin, 2005), and NA (Alharbi, 2022; Alsaeedi, 2019) are the locative preposition *fī/fii/fi* 'in' and the third-person masculine singular pronominal clitic *–h*, as shown in (18). The same conclusion holds for the existential pronoun *bih* in Yemeni Arabic (Rubin, 2005) and the existential pronoun *buh* in QA (a variant of the existential pronoun *fiih* in NA) (Alsaeedi, 2019), which include the locative preposition *bi*/*bu* 'in' and the third-person masculine singular pronominal clitic *–h* (Alsaeedi, 2019; Rubin, 2005), as shown in (19).

(18) a) *fīh* ʿadl (Egyptian Arabic)
'There is justice.' (Esseesy, 2010, p. 182)

b) *fiih* walad be-d-daar (Palestinian Arabic)
there boy in-the-house
'There is a boy in the house.' (Mohammad, 1998, p. 19)

c) hnīk *fi* bēt (Syrian Arabic)
'over there there is a house.'(Ambros, 1977, as cited in Rubin, 2005, p. 62)

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d) almi *fī?* (Chadian Arabic)
'Is there water?' (Jullien de Pommerol, 1999, as cited in Rubin, 2005, p. 62)

e) *fiih* walad b-l- ʁurfah (NA)
there boy in-the-room.Fem.Sg
'There is a boy in the room.' (Alharbi, 2022, p. 1)

(19) a) *bih* bisbās (Yemeni Arabic)
'There is chili.' (Watson, 1996, as cited in Rubin, 2005, p. 62)

b) *buh* waħdah ʕind l-bab (QA)
there.EX one.INDF.SG.F at DEF-door
'There is a girl/woman at the door.' (Alsaeedi, 2019, p. 68)

However, it has been documented in the literature that existential pronouns may originate from transitive possessive expressions. For example, Creissels (2014) notes that existential pronouns in some languages, such as Modern Greek, Vitnamese, and Palikur, have developed from transitive possessive verbs. In Modern Greek, the possessive verb *eíche* 'have', which agrees with its subject, is used as an existential pronoun, as shown in (20) by the impersonalization of such verb, as illustrated in (21). Creissels argues that while the possessive verb variably includes a referential third-person plural suffix, it invariably includes a non-referential third-person singular suffix when it is used as an existential pronoun.

(20) a) Ta chōriá den échoun neró.
the villages neg have.pres.3pl water.acc
'The villages don't have water.'

b) Den eíche Germanóus sto chōrió.
neg have.past.3sg Germans.acc in-the village
'There were no Germans in the village.'
(Creissels, 2014, p. 30)

(21) 'one has N' > 'there is N somewhere' (Creissels, 2014, p. 35)

In Vietnamese and Palikur, the transitive possessive verbs *có* and *kadahan* 'have' are used as existential pronouns through the deletion of the noun phrase that precedes the transitive verb, as shown in (22).

(22) a) Tôi *có* sách (Vietnamese)
I have book
'I have books.'

b) *Có* một con ruồi trong bát canh của tôi (Vietnamese)

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have one CLS fly in bowl soup of me
'There was a fly in my soup.'

(Creissels, 2014, p. 30)

c) Nah *kadahan* aynesa karukri (Palikur)
I have some money
'I have some money.'

d) *Kadahan* im ahakwa un (Palikur)
have fish in water
'There are fish in the water.'

(Launey, 2003, as cited in Creissels, 2014, p. 30)

The main point in Creissels' argument is that a transitive possessive verb can be used as an existential pronoun if and only if the pivot (i.e., the indefinite nominal item in existential sentences) serves the same grammatical function as the possessum in a transitive possessive construction, a construction in which the semantic roles of possessor and possessum are assigned to the agent and patient of typical action verbs. McNally (2016) makes a similar argument in her study, which deals crosslinguistically with the form and meaning of existential sentences.

Following the above-mentioned researchers (e.g., Alharbi; 2022; Alsaeedi, 2019; Esseesy, 2010; Freeze, 1992; Hoyt, 2000; McCloskey, 2014; Mohammad, 1998; Rubin, 2005), I show in section (3) that the QA existential existential pronoun *buh* 'there' may have its etymology as a locative preposition *bu* 'in' and a third-person masculine singular pronominal clitic *–h*. In addition, I suggest that the existential pronoun *buh* 'there' may also have its etymology as a possessive verb *bu* 'have' and a third-person masculine singular pronominal clitic *–h*, following Creissels (2014) and McNally (2016).

2.3 Modals

In the literature, prepositions have been documented to express modality in some varieties of Arabic. For example, Ali (1994) points out that the preposition *9alaa* 'on' in MSA may be used as a modal equivalent to the English modal *have to*, as shown in (23).

(23) *9ala*yka biha
on-you with-it
'You have to do it.' (Ali, 1994, p. 224)

Similarly, Cowell (1964/2005) and Jarad (2012) point out that the preposition *fī* 'in' in Syrian Arabic may be used as a modal meaning 'to be able to' as shown in (24).

(24) a) ʔaʕad *fī* ṣ-ṣaff l-ʔawal
sat-he in the-row the-first
'He sat in the first row (of seats).'

b) *fī*-yyi sāʕd-ak b-kamm lera?
can-I help-you with some liras
'Can I help with a few pounds?'

(Jarad, 2012, pp. 130-133)

Analogously, Mobarki (2020) demonstrates that the preposition *fī* 'in' in Gulf Pidgin Arabic may be used to indicate tense, aspect, and modality (TAM), as shown in (25).

(25) a) Bēbī ana *fi* bangaladiš.
baby 1SG in Bangladesh
'My children are in Bangladesh.'

b) binti *fi* āti māl walad
daughter TAM give to son
'My daughter is feeding my son.'

(Mobarki, 2020, pp. 125-127)

Building upon the conclusions reached by Ali (1994), Cowell (1964/2005), Jarad (2012), and Mobarki (2020), in this study I suggest that QA uses the PP *bah* 'in it', which consists of the preposition *ba* 'in' and the third-person feminine singular pronominal clitic *–h*, to express modality. In particular, I show in section (3) that this PP may be used as a modal particle meaning 'may' through the process of grammaticalization.

3. What is *Buh*?

As noted earlier, the present study aims to examine the categorical status of the QA grammatical element *buh*, since it appears in different syntactic positions. Thus, this section introduces the multiple grammatical functions of *buh* according to its syntactic position and the morphosyntactic features that coincide with each position. In what follows, I show that *buh* serves five grammatical functions: a locative adverb, a locative/comitative prepositional phrase, a possessive verb, an existential pronoun, and a modal particle. Accordingly, *buh* falls under five grammatical categories. I also demonstrate the grammaticalization pathways onto which *buh* and its functions can be fitted.

3.1 *Buh* as a Locative Adverb

The QA grammatical element *buh* was originally used as a locative adverb, as shown in (26).

(26) Mħammad *buh*
Mohammad there
'Mohammad is there.'

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In (26), certain locative adverbs (e.g., *hna:* 'here' and *hna:k* 'there') can be used interchangeably with *buh*, as shown in (27.a). These lexical items, however, do not co-occur with the QA locative adverb *buh* in the same sentence, as shown in (27.b). This behavior might be explained by their apparent occupation of the same syntactic position within the sentence. That is, the locative adverbs in (27.a) appear to serve the same grammatical function as *buh* in (26).

(27) a) Mħammad *hna:k/ hna:*
Mohammad there/ here
'Mohammad is there/here.'

b) Mħammad *buh* **hna:k/ hna:*
Mohammad there there/ here
'Mohammad is there/here.'

3.2 *Buh* as a Locative/Comitative Prepositional Phrase

In addition to its original function as a locative adverb, the QA grammatical element *buh* may also be used as a locative/comitative prepositional phrase (PP), consisting of the locative/comitative preposition *bu* 'on/in/with' (or its allomorphs such as *ba* and *bi*) and a pronominal clitic (i.e., a third-person masculine singular pronoun suffix *–h*) that functions as the object of the preposition, as shown in (28), (29), and (30). As shown in (28), the PP *buh* 'on/in/with it' precedes the object of the verb. It should be observed that the use of the locative/comitative preposition *bu* 'on/in/with' or of its allomorphs *ba* and *bi* is determined by the nature of the pronominal clitic that follows it.

(28) a) ħitˁ *bu-h* ʕala:mih (locative)
put.IMP.Masc.Sg on-it.Masc.Sg sign
'Put a sign on it!'

b) ħitˁ *ba-h* ʕala:mih (locative)
put.IMP.Masc.Sg on-it.Fem.Sg sign
'Put a sign on it!'

c) ħitˁ *bi-hin* ʕala:mih (locative)
put.IMP.Masc.Sg on-them.Fem.Pl sign
'Put a sign on them!'

(29) a) mumkin ʔana:m *bu-h* (locative)
may sleep.1.Sg in-it.Masc.Sg
'I may sleep in it.'

b) mumkin ʔana:m *ba-h* (locative)
may sleep.1.Sg in-it.Fem.Sg
'I may sleep in it.'

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(30) a) farħ-at *bu-h* (comitative)
became happy-3.Fem.Sg with-it.Masc.Sg
'She became happy with it.'

b) farħ-at *ba-h* (comitative)
became happy-3.Fem.Sg with-it.Fem.Sg
'She became happy with it.'

c) farħ-at *bi-hin* (comitative)
became happy-3.Fem.Sg with-them.Fem.Pl
'She became happy with them.'

The assumption that the pronominal suffix refers to the object of the preposition is supported by the possibility of using a definite noun interchangeably with it. Consider the examples in (31), which illustrate (28.a), (29.a), and (30.a). These examples demonstrate that the PP *buh* 'on/in/with it' consists of a pair of items: a preposition and its object. Table 1 shows the pronominal suffixes that can be cliticized to the QA preposition *bu* 'on/in/with' or its allomorphs *ba* and *bi*.

(31) a) ħitˤ *b-1-kirsi:* ʕala:mih
put.IMP.Masc.Sg on-the-chair sign
'Put a sign on the chair!'

b) mumkin ʔana:m *b-as-siri:r*
may sleep.1.Sg in-the -bed
'I may sleep in the bed.'

c) farħ-at *b-l-kambiju:tar*
became happy-3.Fem.Sg with-the-computer
'She became happy with the computer.'

Table 1

Pronominal Suffixes in QA That Can be Cliticized to the Prepositions bu, ba, and bi

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
1st Person	Masculine	-j	-na
	Feminine	-j	-na
2nd Person	Masculine	-k	-kum
	Feminine	-ts	-kin
3rd Person	Masculine	-h	-hum
	Feminine	-h	-hin

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From these facts, we note that the preposition *bu* 'on/in/with' (or any of its allomorphs, such as *ba* and *bi*), like other Arabic prepositions as well as prepositions in other languages, is used to connect its complement to other parts in the sentence, such as nouns, verbs, or adjectives (Husni & Zaher, 2020; Van Valin, 2004). Specifically, this preposition connects its complement to verbs, like ħitˤ, *ʔa-na:m* and *farħ-at*, to reveal the locative/comitative relationships between the two elements. Above all, this preposition can be substituted by certain locative/comitative prepositions, such as *fo:g* 'above', *taħt* 'under', *ʕala* 'on' and *fi:* 'in/on/with', meaning that they perform the same grammatical function, as illustrated in (32), (33), and (34) for (28.a), (29.a), and (30.a).

(32) a) ħitˤ *fo:gu-h* ʕala:mih
put.IMP.Masc.Sg above-it.Masc.Sg sign
'Put a sign above it!'

b) ħitˤ *ʕale:-h* ʕala:mih
put.IMP.Masc.Sg on-it.Masc.Sg sign
'Put a sign on it!'

c) ħitˤ *taħtu-h* ʕala:mih
put.IMP.Masc.Sg under-it.Masc.Sg sign
'Put a sign under it!'

(33) mumkin ʔana:m *fi:-h*
may sleep.1.Sg in-it.Masc.Sg
'I may sleep in it.'

(34) farħ-at *fi:-h*
became happy-3.Fem.Sg with-it.Masc.Sg
'She became happy with it.'

Equally important, the preposition *bu* 'on/in/with' (or any of its allomorphs, such as *ba* and *bi*) cannot be stranded in wh-movement, as demonstrated in (35) by the preposition *bi*, the allomorph of the preposition *bu*. In the literature, it has been observed that preposition stranding is disallowed in wh-movement in certain Arabic varieties, including Saudi Arabic, a variety that encompasses all the local dialects of Saudi Arabia (Alshaalan & Abels, 2020).

(35) a) ʃar-e:t as-sejjarih *b*-kam?
bought-2.Masc.Sg the-car with-how much
'For how much did you buy the car?'

b) *kam ʃar-e:t as-sejjarih *bi*?
how much bought-2.Masc.Sg the-car with
'For how much did you buy the car?'

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From the grammaticalization perspective that concerns us here, the development of the QA locative/comitative PP *buh* 'in/on/with it' from the locative adverb *buh* follows the common view that that prepositions develop from adverbial status to prepositional status in both synchronic and diachronic ways (Heine et al., 1991a, 1991b; Kortmann, 1997). Thus, I assume that this process, if it were to continue, would lead to possessive, existential, and modal functions for the PP *buh* 'in it', as will be discussed in the following subsections.

3.3 *Buh* as a Possessive Verb

In light of the grammaticalization framework, the QA locative PP *buh* 'in it' tends to be grammaticalized into a possessive verb equivalent to the verb *have* in English. In particular, the locative preposition *bu* 'in' (or any of its allomorphs, such as *ba* and *bi*) is used as a possessive verb and thus shows agreement with its subject (i.e., the possessor), as shown in (36), since QA typically uses prepositions as possessive verbs.[2] This usage is compatible with the assumptions that prepositions may function as predicates (Sag et al., 2003) and that cross-linguistically, (locative) prepositions may be used as possessive verbs that show agreement with their subjects (Alrasheedi, 2019; Comrie, 1991; Eifan, 2017; Ouhalla, 2000; Rubin, 2005; Stassen, 2009).

(36) a) ʔal-walad *bu-h* ʃa:mih
the-boy has-3.Masc.Sg mole.3.Fem.Sg
'The boy has a mole.'

b) ʔaʃ-ʃiggih *ba-h* θala:θ ʁraff
the-apartment has-3.Fem.Sg three rooms.3.Fem.Pl
'The apartment has three rooms.'

c) ʔal-ʕya:l *bu-hum* karam
the-boys have-3.Masc.Pl generosity.3.Masc.Sg
'The boys have generosity.'

d) ʔal-bana:t *bi-hin* kuro:na:
the-girls have-3.Fem.Pl Corona.3.Masc.Sg
'The girls have Corona.'

The examples in (36) exhibit one type of predicative possession construction, which Stassen (2009) labeled as HAVE-Possessive since they contain a) a transitive predicate *have*; b) the possessor (the grammatical subject); and c) the possessum (the grammatical object). In these examples, *buh* is the transitive predicate since it marks a possessive relationship between its complement (i.e., the possessum) and the subject (i.e., the possessor).

From these facts, we note that the locative preposition *bu* 'in' in *buh* 'have' is used as a possessive verb to express predicative possession, and the agreement suffix, which correlates with the possessor φ-features, must appear with it. Alrasheedi (2019), Comrie (1991), Eifan

[2] According to Harley (2002), languages differ in their availability of the verb *have*.

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(2017), Ouhalla (2000), and Stassen (2009) have suggested that the pronominal affix on the preposition serves as an agreement marker.

In light of the grammaticalization framework, I note that the QA locative PP *buh* 'in it' has developed into a possessive verb through the grammaticalization process. As evidence, both the locative PP *buh* 'in it' and the possessive verb *buh* 'have' can appear in the same sentence, as shown in (37). This usage reflects that the original form of *buh* (i.e., the locative PP *buh* 'in it') has undergone grammaticalization but has not disappeared and may retain its original usage in some instances.[3] Furthermore, the development of the locative PP *buh* 'in it' into a possessive verb has desematicized, extended, and decategorized this element. That is, this development has broadened the original semantic content of this element, thereby enabling it to be used in structures where it has never been used before, and has expanded its previous grammatical function and category. Moreover, this development has gained the locative PP *buh* 'in it' new features specific to its new grammatical function as a possessive verb. The linguistic operations manifest the grammaticalization mechanisms (i.e., desemanticization, extension, and decategorization) employed in the transformation of the QA locative PP *buh* 'in it' into a possessive verb.

(37) ma:-*bu-h* ħe:l jamʃi: *bu-h*
Neg-has-3.Masc.Sg power walk.3.Masc.Sg in-it.Masc.Sg
'He doesn't have power to walk in it.

The assumption that the preposition *bu* 'in' in *buh* 'have' is used as a possessive verb analogous to the English verb *have* is supported by four pieces of evidence in QA. First, the verb *bu* 'have', like all verbs, agrees with its subject (i.e., the possessor) in all φ-features, as shown in (36) above. Second, it can merge with the negative particle *ma:*, which is commonly used with verbs in QA,[4] as shown in (37) above. Third, it can occur before or after its subject or after a copula in the past tense, as shown in (38).

(38) a) (*bu-h*) ʔal-walad (*bu-h*) ʃa:mih
has-3.Masc.Sg the-boy has-3.Masc.Sg mole.3.Fem.Sg
'The boy has a mole.'

b) ʔal-walad ka:n *bu-h* kuro:na:
the-boy be.PST.3.Masc.Sg has-3.Masc.Sg Corona.3.Masc.Sg
'The boy was infected with Corona.'

Fourth, the verb *bu* 'have', like any other transitive verb, assigns semantic (i.e., thematic) roles to the arguments of a verb (i.e., the subject and object). For example, we note that the thematic

[3] The use of the original and the grammaticalized form is called *layering* (see, e.g., Hopper, 1991 for more details).
[4] The negative particle *ma:* negates the element that follows it in QA. This particle can be used with both verbal and nominal expressions in QA in particular and in NA in general (see Ingham, 1994).

roles associated with the subject (i.e., the possessor) and complement (i.e., the possessum) are often that of *experiencer* and *theme*, respectively (see, e.g., Radford, 2009 for more details on thematic roles).

3.4 *Buh* as an Existential Pronoun

In addition to its development into a possessive verb, the QA locative PP *buh* 'in it' may also develop another grammatical function through the process of grammaticalization.[5] Specifically, the QA locative PP *buh* 'in it' may develop into an existential pronoun equivalent to the English *there* and be used in existential sentences, as shown in (39).

(39) *buh* bint b-l-ħo:ʃ
there girl in-the-backyard
'There is a girl in the backyard.'

The development of the PP *buh* 'in it' into an existential pronoun aligns with the common view that existential constructions developed from locative constructions (Jespersen, 1924/2007). It is also compatible with the grammaticalization path proposed by Heine and Kuteva (2002), shown in (40).

(40) Locative > Exist (Heine & Kuteva, 2002, p. 203)

Furthermore, such usage is evidenced by cross-linguistic research, which has confirmed that existential pronouns developed historically from locative PPs in which the preposition is inflected with a third-person-singular pronominal clitic (Alharbi, 2022; Alsaeedi, 2019; Esseesy, 2010; Freeze, 1992; Hoyt, 2000; McCloskey, 2014; Mohammad, 1998; Rubin, 2005). As evidence, the original form of *buh* (i.e., the locative PP) and the grammaticalized form (i.e., the existential pronoun) may co-occur in the same sentence, as shown in (41). In both forms, *buh* may display one phonetic form and, hence, the locative PP *buh* 'in it' and the existential pronoun *buh* are regarded as homophonous. Alharbi (2022) has noted that the existential pronoun *fiih* 'there' is a homophone of the locative PP *fiih* 'in it' in NA existential sentences.

(41) *buh* ʕala:mih *bu-h*
there sign in-it.Masc.Sg
'There is a sign in it.'

Despite their homophony, the QA locative PP *buh* 'in it' and the existential pronoun *buh* differ in function. Whereas the locative PP *buh* 'in it' has a locative function, the existential pronoun *buh* has an existential function. The existential pronoun *buh* behaves like other subject pronouns in QA in that they both attract the negative particle *ma:* to adjoin to them, as shown in

[5] The process whereby one form gives rise to more than one grammaticalization path or develops more than one grammatical category is called polygrammaticalization (Heine & Kuteva, 2002).

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(42). It should be observed that the complex negative construction *ma:...b-* is used in (42.a)[6] because the negative particle *ma:* is attached to a nominal expression. Ingham (1994) has pointed out that when the negative particle *ma:* is attached to nominal sentences in NA, the complex negative construction *ma...b-* occurs.

(42) a) ma:-*hu:* b-dʒa:j maʕ-na:
Neg-he Fut-coming with-us
'He is not coming with us.'

b) ma:-*buh* ʁada:
Neg-there lunch
'There is no lunch.'

In addition, the existential pronoun *buh* behaves similarly to the other subject pronouns in QA as they all can interact with verbal agreement, as shown in (43). Whereas the verb agrees with the φ-features of the personal pronoun in (43.a), it agrees with the φ-features of the existential pronoun *buh*, which are third-person masculine singular, in (43.b) (see Mohammad, 1998). In QA, the verb and the subject always agree in all φ-features, as illustrated in (44). The fact that the existential pronoun *buh* can interact with verbal agreement is in line with Alharbi (2022) and Mohammad (1998), who have pointed out that the existential pronoun *fiih* in NA and Palestinian Arabic can interact with verbal agreement.

(43) a) ħinna: bi-nru:ħ l-l-ʕirs
we Fut-going.1.Pl to-the-wedding
'We are going to the wedding.'

b) ka:n *buh* madʒallih ʕala ʔar-raff
be.PST.3.Masc.Sg there.3.Masc.Sg magazine on the-shelf
'There was a magazine was on the shelf.'

(44) a) ka:n l-mifta:ħ ʕala l-ba:b
be.PST.3.Masc.Sg the-key in the-door
'The key was in the door.'

b) ka:n-at ʔal-madʒallih ʕala ʔar-raff
be.PST-3.Fem.Sg the-magazine on the-shelf
'The magazine was on the shelf.'

There is one more point to consider in the historical development of the QA existential pronoun *buh*, which concerns the common assumptions that existential constructions developed from possessive constructions and that both have historically developed from locatives (Lyons,

[6] The complex construction *ma:-hu: b-* 'he is not' is often reduced to *mu-hu b-* or *mu b-* (Ingham, 1994 for more details).

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1967). Given such assumptions, I further assume that the QA existential pronoun *buh* has developed from the QA possessive verb *buh* 'have', which has its etymology as a locative PP *buh* 'in it'. My assumption is prompted by the pivot serving a grammatical function identical to that of the possessum in a transitive possessive construction, as shown in (45). That is, the pivot in an existential construction, as in (45.b), serves as the possessum in a transitive possessive construction (45.a).

(45) a) ʔal-walad *bu-h* ʃa:mih (possessive)
the-boy has-3.Masc.Sg mole.3.Fem.Sg
'The boy has a mole.'

b) *buh* ʃa:mih b-wadʒhu-h (existential)
there mole on-face-his
'There is a mole on his face.

The assumption that the QA existential pronoun *buh* may have its etymology as a possessive verb *buh* 'have' is consistent with the proposals by Creissels (2014) and McNally (2016) that a possessive verb in some languages may function as an existential pronoun if the pivot shares a grammatical function with the possessum in a transitive possessive structure, as shown in (20) above. Further support for this assumption is offered by the grammaticalization path suggested by Heine and Kuteva (2002), as shown in (46).

From these facts, we may conclude that the QA existential pronoun *buh* may have developed historically from two lexical forms[7]: a locative PP *buh* 'in it' or a possessive verb *buh* 'have'. Whether the QA existential pronoun *buh* has developed from the locative PP *buh* 'in it' or the possessive verb *buh* 'have', the original form has been desematicized, extended, and decategorized. That is, this original form has developed new semantic content, grammatical function and category, and it has occurred in a new structure. In addition, this original form has developed new characteristics that are consistent with its new grammatical function as an existential pronoun.

(46) H-Possessive > Exist (Heine & Kuteva, 2002, p. 338)

The examples in (45) demonstrate that the QA existential pronoun *buh* is homophonous with the possessive verb *buh* 'have'. Mobarki (2020) has pointed out that the existential pronoun *fi* in Gulf Pidgin Arabic is homophonous with the possessive verb *fi*. As suggested by examples in (41) and (45), I assume that the QA existential pronoun *buh* is homophonous with the forms from which it has historically developed (i.e., the possessive verb *buh* 'have' and the locative PP *buh* 'in it'). One interesting point about the three homophonous forms of *buh* is that they can co-occur in the same sentence, as shown in (47). The presence of the three homophonous forms of

[7] This is another case of polygrammaticalization, in which one grammatical function may derive from multiple source forms (Heine & Kuteva, 2002).

buh, which demonstrate three different uses, in one sentence reflects that they are distinct grammatical categories and that *buh* is grammaticalized.

(47) *buh* ʔaħad *bu-h* ħe:l jamʃi: *bu-h*?
there anybody has-3.Masc.Sg power walk.3.Masc.Sg in-it.Masc.Sg
'Is there anyone (who) has the power to walk in it?'

Another interesting point regarding the three homophonous forms of *buh* concerns the ambiguity of sentences that contain the QA grammatical element *buh* occurring after the question word *wiʃ* 'what'. The occurrence of *buh* after the question word *wiʃ* 'what' makes the sentence ambiguous, since *buh* has three different uses, and, hence, the sentence can be interpreted in three different ways, as shown in (48). I assume that the source of ambiguity is structural and that the three different interpretations of *buh* in (48) arise from these various structures, which are associated with certain grammatical functions (i.e., an existential pronoun, a possessive verb, and a locative PP).The vital role played by the syntactic distinction in accounting for the semantic distinction offers further support for this claim.

(48) wiʃ *buh*?
'What is there?' (existential pronoun)
'What does he have?' (possessive verb)
'What is in it?' (locative PP)

From these facts, we may conclude that the three homophonous forms of *buh* belong to distinct syntactic categories that serve various grammatical functions. In particular, the possessive verb *buh* 'have' is a verb (V) that serves a possessive function, the locative PP *buh* 'in it' is a PP that serves a locative function, and the existential pronoun *buh* 'there' is an NP that serves an existential function. As pointed out earlier, the existential pronoun *buh* behaves like other NP subjects in QA in that it a) can merge with the negative particle *ma:*, as shown in (42) and b) can interact with verbal agreement, as shown in (43). It is well documented in the literature that existential pronouns are regarded as NPs in several languages, including English (see, e.g., McNally, 2011, 2016) and some spoken Arabic varieties such as Egyptian Arabic, Palestinian Arabic, Syrian Arabic, and NA (see, e.g., Alharbi, 2022; Eid, 1993; Hoyt, 2000; Jarad, 2015; Mohammad, 1998).

3.2.4 *Buh* as a Modal Particle

In accordance with the grammaticalization framework, the QA locative PP *buh* 'in/on/with it' may be used as a modal particle (i.e., *bah* 'may') equivalent to the English modal *may*, as shown in (49). This usage is consistent with the assumption that prepositions in certain varieties of Arabic, such as MSA, Syrian Arabic, and Gulf Pidgin Arabic may be used to express modality (Ali, 1994; Cowell, 1964/2005; Jarad, 2012; Mobarki, 2020).

(49) a) *bah* ʔinni-k ti-stifi:d

may that-2.Masc.Sg PRS.2-make use.Masc.Sg
'You may make use of it.'

b) *bah* ʔinni-ts ti-stifi:d-i:n
may that-2.Fem.Sg PRS.2-make use-Fem.Sg
'You may make use of it.'

It should be observed that when the QA PP *buh* 'in/on/with it' is used as a modal particle, it exhibits one phonetic form: the preposition *ba* 'in', the allomorph of *bu*, followed by the third-person feminine singular pronominal clitic *–h*. Thus, I assume that the modal particle *bah* is homophonous with the PP *bah* 'in/on/with it', which consists of the preposition *ba* 'in/on/with' and the third-person feminine singular pronominal clitic *–h*, as shown in examples in (28.b), (29.b), and (30.b) above. One interesting point about the two homophonous forms is that they can co-occur in the same sentence, as shown in (50). The co-occurrence of the two forms in one sentence indicates that they serve various grammatical functions.

(50) *bah* ʔinni-k taskin *ba-h*
may that-2.Masc.Sg settle.2.Masc.Sg in-it.Fem.Sg
'You may settle in it.'

The assumption that the QA PP *buh* 'in/on/with it' exhibits one phonetic form when it is used as a modal particle is consistent with the fact that certain modal particles in Arabic (i.e., the MSA modal particles *rubbama* 'may' and *qad* 'may') are morphologically fixed, including those (i.e., *rubbama* 'may') that were originally/morphologically composed of a preposition (i.e., *rubba*) and an affix (i.e., *ma*) (Ali, 1994; Althawab, 2014).

As shown by the examples in (49) and (50), the QA modal particle *bah* 'may', like other modal particles in Arabic, is used to modify certain phrases (Althawab, 2014): it modifies a VP headed by the complementizer *ʔinn-pro* 'that-pro'. This modal particle indicates epistemic possibility since it is used to judge the possibility that something is or is not the case or to express possible future propositions.[8] As evidence, typical lexical items that indicate epistemic possibility can be used interchangeably with the QA modal particle *bah*. For example, the adjective *mumkin* 'may' can be used interchangeably with the particle *bah*, as illustrated in (51) for the examples in (49). This modal item does not co-occur with the particle *bah*, indicating that they serve the same grammatical function in the sentence.

(51) a) *mumkin* ʔinn-ik ti-stifi:d
may that-2.Masc.Sg PRS.2-make use.Masc.Sg
'You may make use of it.'

b) *mumkin* ʔinn-its ti-stifi:d-i:n

[8] According to Palmer (1990), there is a close connection between epistemic modality and future.

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may that-2.Fem.Sg PRS.2-make use-Fem.Sg
'You may make use of it.'

Further support for the assumption that *bah* is a modal particle comes from the behavior of *bah* with negation: the modal particle *bah*, like other modal particles in MSA, is not inflected for negation (i.e., it cannot be merged with the negative particle *ma*:), which is illustrated in (52) by the ill-formed negative sentences of the examples in (49). Ali (1994) and Althawab (2014) have noted that Arabic modal particles are not marked for negation.

(52) a) *ma:-*bah* ʔinn-ik ti-stifi:d
Neg-may that-2.Masc.Sg PRS.2-make use.Masc.Sg
'You may not make use of it.'

b) *ma:-*bah* ʔinn-its ti-stifi:d-i:n
Neg-may that-2.Fem.Sg PRS.2-make use-Fem.Sg
'You may not make use of it.'

In negative constructions, the negative particle *ma*: is always attached to the verb rather than the modal particle *bah*, as illustrated in (53).

(53) a) *bah* ʔinn-ik ma:-ti-stifi:d
may that-2.Masc.Sg Neg-PRS.2-make use.Masc.Sg
'You may not make use of it.'

b) *bah* ʔinn-its ma:-ti-stifi:d-i:n
may that-2.Fem.Sg Neg-PRS.2-make use-Fem.Sg
'You may not make use of it.'

As shown, the use of the QA PP *bah* 'in/on/with it' as a modal particle has desematicized, extended, and decategorized this item. That is, this usage has acquired the PP *bah* 'in it' new semantic content, a new grammatical function and category, and a new structure. In addition, it has acquired for the PP *bah* 'in/on/with it' some morphosyntactic features that are associated with its grammatical function as a modal particle.

4. Conclusion

This study has discussed the various grammatical functions of the QA grammatical element *buh* (i.e., a locative adverb, a locative/comitative PP, a possessive verb, an existential pronoun, and a modal particle). It has laid out how some of these functions can be incorporated into the historical development of the QA grammatical element *buh* in light of the grammaticalization framework. It has also presented new observations and data to account for the different grammatical functions served by the QA grammatical element *buh*.

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The present study draws some useful conclusions regarding the origin and grammatical functions of the QA grammatical element *buh* through the lens of the grammaticalization framework. These conclusions may contribute to the current research on the QA in particular by providing novel understanding about the multiple grammatical functions served by the grammatical element *buh*. They may also contribute to the theory of syntax in general by adding to the literature supporting evidence for the grammaticalization framework. The present study, however, did not provide a theoretical account for the derivation of *buh* in its various uses and the nature of its pronominal clitic. Therefore, further research on the derivation of *buh* in its various uses and the nature of its pronominal clitic is required to enhance the validity of the descriptive account provided in the present study.

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