Chapter 5

Khuzestan Arabic

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Khuzestan Arabic is an Arabic variety spoken in the southwestern Iranian province of Khuzestan. It has been in contact with (Modern) Persian since the arrival of Arab tribes in the region before the rise of Islam. Persian is the socio-politically dominant language in the modern state of Iran and has influenced the grammar of Khuzestan Arabic on different levels. The present article discusses phenomena of contact-induced change in Khuzestan Arabic and considers their limiting factors.

1 Current state and historical development

1.1 Historical development

Arab settlement in Iran preceded the Arab destruction of the Sasanian empire with the rise of Islam. Various tribes, such as the Banū Tamīm, had settled in Khuzestan prior to the arrival of the Arab Muslim armies (Daniel 1986: 211). In the centuries after the spread of Islam in the region, large groups of nomads from the Ḥanīfa, Tamīm, ʕAbd-al-Qays, and other tribes crossed the Persian Gulf and occupied some of the territories of southwestern Iran (Oberling 1986: 215). The Kaʕb, still an important tribe in the area,[1] settled there at the end of the sixteenth century (Oberling 1986: 216). During the succeeding centuries many more tribes moved from southern Iraq into Khuzestan. This has led to a considerable increase of Arabic speakers in the region, which until 1925 was called Arabistan (see Gazsi 2011: 1020; Gazsi, this volume). Today Khuzestan is one of the 31 provinces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, situated in the southwest, at the border with Iraq.

There has been considerable movement to and from Iraq, to Kuwait, Bahrain, and Syria, and from villages into towns. Many of these migrations were a consequence of the Iran–Iraq war (1980–1988), but some were due to socio-economic

[1]Cf. Oberling (1986: 218) for an overview of the Arab tribes in Khuzestan.

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reasons. The settlement of Persians in the region over the past decades (Gazsi 2011: 1020) is another important factor in its demographic history. From the early twentieth century on, Khuzestan has attracted international, especially British, interest because of its oil resources.

1.2 Current situation of Arabs in Khuzestan

Information about the exact number of Arabic-speaking people in Iran, and in Khuzestan in particular, is hard to find. Estimates in the 1960s of the Arabic-speaking population in Iran ranged from 200,000 to 650,000 (Oberling 1986: 216). Today it is estimated that around 2 to 3 million Arabs live in Khuzestan (Matras & Shabibi 2007: 137; Gazsi 2011: 1020).

Many Arabs and Persians living in Khuzestan work in the sugar cane or oil industries, but few of the former hold white-collar or managerial positions (De Planhol 1986: 55–56). This is one of the reasons why many Arabs in Khuzestan feel strongly disadvantaged in society and politics in comparison to their Persian neighbours.[2]

2 Language contact in Khuzestan

Currently, the main and most influential language in contact with Khuzestan Arabic (KhA) is the Western Iranian language Persian. Among the other (partly historically) influential languages in the region the most prominent are English, Turkish/Ottoman (cf. Ingham 2005), and Aramaic (see Procházka, this volume).

Persian and different forms of Arabic share a long history of contact in the region of Khuzestan, implying a long exchange of language material in both directions.

KhA belongs to the Bedouin-type south Mesopotamian *gələt*-dialects.[3] Therefore, it shows great similarity to Iraqi dialects such as Basra Arabic, as well as to other dialects in the Gulf, such as Bedouin Bahraini Arabic – that is, the Arabic spoken by the Sunni Arab population descended from Najd.

[2]The most common Khuzestan Arabic terms for the Persian people and their language are *ʕağam* 'Persian' (people and language; lit. 'non-Arab'), and *əl-ğamāʕa* 'Persians' (lit. 'group of people'). Both are often used pejoratively.

[3]There is as yet no comprehensive grammar of the dialects of Khuzestan. The main source of information on these dialects is the collection of data made in the 1960s by the Arabist and linguist Bruce Ingham (1973; 1976; 2011). The article by Yaron Matras and Maryam Shabibi, "Grammatical borrowing in Khuzistani Arabic" (Matras & Shabibi 2007), is based on Shabibi's unpublished dissertation "Contact-induced grammatical changes in Khuzestani Arabic" (Shabibi 2006).

The dialects of Khuzestan can be considered "peripheral" dialects of Arabic because they are spoken in a country where Arabic is not the language of the majority population and is not used in education or administration. Therefore, there is practically no influence of Modern Standard Arabic. However, because it shares a long geographically-open border with Iraq, Khuzestan is not isolated from the Arabic-speaking world. Moreover, since around 2000 it has had access to Arabic news, soaps, etc. via satellite TV. Intra-Arabic contact is limited to the linguistically very similar (southern) Iraqi dialects[4] through, for example, religious visits to Kerbala.

Persian is the only official language in Iran, it is the only language used in education, and is sociolinguistically and culturally dominant, especially in the domains of business and administration. Persian consequently enjoys high prestige in society. For Persian speakers, and sometimes also for KhA speakers, the KhA varieties have very low prestige and are not associated with the highly prestigious Arabic of the Quran, which is taught in schools. KhA speakers who acquire KhA as a first language usually acquire Persian at school. Later, the opportunities for KhA speakers to use Persian are restricted to certain social settings outside the family, e.g. school, work (employment in a large company would probably require communication in Persian), contact with Persian friends, or through the Persian media.

Accordingly, the command of Persian or the degree of bilingualism among KhA speakers varies greatly due to such factors as level of education, affiliation, age, gender, and urban or rural environment. The older generation and women have far less access to education and jobs and consequently less contact with people outside the family, which implies less exposure to contact situations and a lower degree of bilingualism. Among some members of the younger generation we may notice a certain intentional reinforcement of Arabic words alongside a resistance to recognizable Persian lexical borrowings, plus a preference for the Arabic over the Persian names for the cities in Khuzestan. This is of course consistent with nationalist ideas and the separatist movement taking place in present-day Khuzestan, and also shows the impact of intentionality in language contact situations.

In sum, one might find very different degrees of Persian influence among the speakers of KhA (cf. Matras & Shabibi 2007: 147). For that reason, all statements on Persian–KhA contact phenomena must be seen in relation to the above factors, which are decisive for any speaker's command of Persian.

[4]KhA is often differentiated from its neighboring Iraqi dialects by the number of Persian borrowings that are employed (Gazsi 2011: 1020). Although the greatest influence has occurred in lexicon, Persian influence also extends to grammar (see below).

3 Contact-induced changes in KhA

3.1 General remarks

The main aim of the present chapter is to highlight the most striking phenomena and trends in KhA language change due to contact with Persian.[5]

All phenomena of contact-induced change in KhA can be considered as transfer of patterns or matter[6] from the source language (SL) Persian to the recipient language (RL) KhA under RL agentivity (i.e. borrowing rather than imposition). The agents of transfer are cognitively dominant in the RL KhA, the agents' L1. Even though Persian is generally acquired during childhood and today is spoken by most speakers, it usually is the speakers' L2. Cases of convergence (cf. Lucas 2015: 530–531) are possible in the present contact situation among speakers with a very high (L1-like) command of Persian, for example university students. But of course it is hard to draw an exact line between L1 and L2 proficiency and thus between convergence and borrowing (cf. Lucas 2015: 531).

3.2 Phonology

As in other Bedouin Arabic dialects, the presence of the phonemes /č/ and /g/ is ultimately the result of internal development from original *k and *q, rather than borrowing from Persian (see Procházka, this volume).

The phoneme /p/, e.g. *perde* 'curtain' < Pers. *parde*,[7] is also common in all Iraqi dialects and probably emerged in this region due to contact with Persian and Kurdish (see Procházka, this volume).

An interesting phonological feature of KhA is that /ɣ/ often reflects etymological *q,[8] which is otherwise realized as /g/ and /ǧ/. It is most likely that the shift /ɣ/ < *q first occurred in KhA forms borrowed from Persian but ultimately of Arabic origin, e.g. *ɣisma* 'part, section' (cf. Pers. *yesmat*), *taṣdīɣ* 'driving licence' (cf. Pers. *taṣdīɣ* 'approval'), *taɣrīban* 'approximately' (cf. Pers. *taɣrīban*

[5]The data used for the present analysis was collected mainly in Aḥwāz, Muḥammara (Khorramshahr), Ḥamīdiyye and Ḫafaǧiyye (Susangerd) in 2016. The male and female informants were bilingual as well as monolingual KhA speakers from 25 to over 70 years old.

[6]Sakel (2007: 15) defines matter replication as the replication of "morphological material and its phonological shape".

[7]For convenience, and due to the lack of sources on other spoken varieties of Persian, in this and all following lexical references "Persian" refers to Contemporary Standard Persian. This should not be taken to suggest that the relevant form in KhA was necessarily borrowed from this variety of Persian. The transcription and translation of all Persian lexical items is based on the forms as given by Junker & Alavi (2002) and/or information provided by native speakers.

[8]This phenomenon is also documented for the Arabic dialects of Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arabic Emirates (Holes 2016: 54, fn. 5).

'idem'), *bəɣri* 'electronic' (cf. Pers. *barɣi* with the same meaning but ultimately going back to CA *barq* 'lightning'). This feature is either an internal development,[9] or a transfer from Persian, in which both *q and *ɣ in Arabic loanwords are always pronounced /ɣ/ (Matras & Shabibi 2007: 138).[10] Later, this phonological change further affected lexemes which have no cognate forms in Persian, e.g. *baɣra* 'cow', a borrowing from Modern Standard Arabic (the KhA dialectal form being *hāyša* 'cow'). There are, however, certain lexemes, especially those that do not have a cognate form in Persian, which are not affected by this rule, e.g. *gāl* 'he said', *gēḏ* 'summer', or *marag* 'sauce'. Other lexemes show free variation in the pronunciation of /g/, e.g. *gabul* ~ *ɣabul* 'formerly, before'.

Lexical borrowings are often adapted to Arabic phonology. For example, speakers of the older generation usually pronounce the phoneme /p/ as [b], e.g. *berde* 'curtain' < Pers. *parde*.

Negative structures bear stress on the first syllable,[11] e.g. KhA *mā́ arūḥ* 'I don't go'. This is a feature shared with some Persian and Turkish varieties and other North East Arabian dialects (Ingham 2005: 178–179). This common phonological characteristic therefore seems to be a Sprachbund phenomenon of the Mesopotamian region, which reflects the long history of contact and migration across language boundaries due to trade, war, shared cultural practices, nomadism, etc. (Winford 2003: 70–74). Though the directions and mechanisms of borrowing within the languages of a Sprachbund are often hard to categorize (Winford 2003: 74), we can probably assume that KhA, being spoken by a minority group, has borrowed and adapted this phonological stress pattern under RL agentivity.

3.3 Syntax

3.3.1 Replication of Persian phrasal verbs

The replication of phrasal verbs is a contact phenomenon also found in the Arabic varieties of Turkey (Grigore 2007: 157–159; Procházka, this volume). As shown in examples (1–4), KhA replicates Persian phrasal verbs by substituting the Persian light verbs with KhA equivalents and directly replicating the Persian nouns (cf.

[9] Cf. Holes (2016: 53–54), who explains the /ɣ/–/q/ merger among the Najd-descendent Bahraini Arabic speakers as an internal development.

[10] In Modern Standard Persian with Tehran "standard" pronunciation (cf. Paul 2018: 581) the phoneme /ɣ/ (corresponding to CA /q/) has two allophones, [ɢ] and [ɣ] (Majidi 1986: 58–60). There are, however, some varieties of Spoken Modern Persian, for instance Yazdi Persian, that maintain a difference between *q and *ɣ (Chams Bernard personal communication; cf. Paul 2018: 582).

[11] Ingham (1991: 724) describes this phenomenon also for KhA *wh*-interrogatives and prepositions.

Matras & Shabibi 2007: 142). The noun in example (1) is Arabic in its origins but its usage in a phrasal verb construction with a new meaning is a Persian innovation.

(1) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 26 years (own data)
ṭəgg muḫḫ
hit.PRF.3SG.M brain
b. Persian
muḫḫ zadan
brain hit.INF
'to brainwash, convince someone'[12]

(2) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 39 years (own data)
kaðð īrād
take.PRF.3SG.M nagging
b. Persian
īrād gereftan
nagging take.INF
'to pick on someone'

As examples (3) and (4) show, Persian nouns are sometimes adapted morphophonologically.

(3) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 50 years (own data)
sawwa ʔōmāde
make.PRF.3SG.M ready
b. Persian
āmāde kardan
ready make.INF
'to prepare sth.'

(4) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 26 years (own data)
ṭalaʕ ɣabūli[13]
emerge.PRF.3SG.M acceptance
b. Persian
ɣabūl šodan
acceptance become.INF
'to pass (an exam), be accepted'

[12] All Persian translations are given in the modern spoken Tehrani variety of Persian, and were provided by Hooman Mehdizadehjafari, a native speaker of this variety. They are presented in a broad phonemic transcription.

The pattern for phrasal verbs – transferred into the RL KhA under RL agentivity – provides KhA with an easy way to convert foreign nouns into verbs.

As illustrated in examples (5) and (6), the pattern is adapted according to Arabic syntactic rules: (i) the verb is moved into the initial position; and (ii) a direct object is introduced between verb and nominal element (post-verbally). In Persian, however, the verb always remains in final position following the nominal element and a direct object would be introduced before both elements (see e.g. Majidi 1990: 447–448).

(5) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 26 years (own data)
ṭəggi ɣandart-i wāks
hit.IMP.2SG.F shoe-OBL.1SG wax

b. Persian
kafš-am-o vāks be-zan
shoe-OBL.1SG-OBJ wax IMP-hit.PRS
'Polish my shoes!'

(6) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, female, 35 years (own data)
yṭəggūn əṭ-ṭamāṭe rande
hit.IMPF.3PL.M DEF-tomato grater

b. Persian
gūğe_farangi-ro rande mī-zanan
tomato-OBJ grater IND-hit.PRS.3PL
'They grate some tomato.'

This structure has become productive in KhA. For example, in the phrasal verb *ṭəgg dabbe* 'to cheat' (lit. 'to hit a water canister') both the verb and noun are taken from KhA and only the construction's syntactic pattern is taken from Persian.

3.3.2 Definiteness marking

Matras & Shabibi (2007: 141–142) see KhA relative clauses without definite heads as evidence for the decline of overt definiteness marking in KhA, based on a Persian model with generally unmarked definiteness, e.g. *mara lli šiftū-ha ḥābarat* 'The woman that you saw called' (2007: 142). However, this pattern is also documented in Arabic dialects which have had no contact with Persian (Pat-El 2017: 454–455; cf. Procházka 2018: 269).

[13] The final *-i* in *ɣabūli* probably originates from the Persian indefiniteness marker *-i* (see Majidi 1990: 309–314) and has become part of this word in KhA, so that *ɣabūli* is monomorphemic.

Matras & Shabibi (2007: 140) further postulate that the Persian *ezāfe* pattern in adjectival attribution is replicated in KhA.[14] According to their theory, the construct state marker *-t* (with an indefinite head) and/or the definite article (of the attribute) are reanalysed as markers of attribution matching the Persian *ezāfe* marker *-(y)e*, as in (7).

(7) a. KhA (Matras & Shabibi 2007: 140)
ğazīra-t l-ḫaḍ̣ra
island-CON DEF-green.F
b. Persian
ğazīre-ye sabz
island-EZ green
'the green island'

However, this pattern is also observed in other modern Arabic dialects which have not been exposed to Persian influence as well as in older forms of Arabic.[15]

Consequently, it is highly unlikely that this phenomenon has developed due to Persian influence, although it cannot be ruled out that contact with Persian has fostered the preservation of this apparently old feature.

3.3.3 Word order changes

KhA shows no changes due to contact in basic word order.[16] The only attested word order changes concern the position of the verbs *čān* 'to be' and *ṣār* 'to become', both of which can appear in final position as an unmarked construction. This sentence-final position in no case functions as the default, and is in fact

[14] See e.g. Ahadi (2001: 103–109) for the usage of the Persian *ezāfe*.

[15] See Pat-El (2017: 445–449) and Stokes (2020) for numerous examples from different varieties of Arabic and other Central Semitic languages. See also Retsö (2009: especially 21–22) and Procházka (2018: 267–269), who also proves that this is an old feature already found in Old Arabic and points out that it is mainly found among dialects which are spoken in regions with no or only marginal influence from Modern Standard Arabic.

[16] Ingham (1991: 715) states that in KhA neither VSO nor SVO word order is particularly dominant. Matras & Shabibi (2007: 147) postulate that the usage of OV order in KhA is increasing as "the beginning of a shift in word order" on the basis of the Persian type, where OV prevails. In both of their examples the objects are topicalized (with pronominal resumption), which is a common phenomenon in spoken Arabic (Brustad 2000: 330–333; 349), and as such not obviously the result of Persian influence (cf. El Zarka & Ziagos 2019, who in their recent description of the beginnings of word order changes in some Arabic dialects spoken in southern Iran, show that these dialects, like KhA, have still retained VO as their basic word order despite the strong influence of Persian).

less frequent than its non-final position.[17] *čān* or *ṣār* in final position are never stressed.

The sentence-final position of *čān* or *ṣār* (see examples 8–10) is likely a pattern replication of the Persian model, i.e. sentences with final *būdan* 'to be' or *šodan* 'to become'.

(8) a. ʕAbbādān, Khuzestan, male, 35 years (own data)
šuɣul-hum b-əl-bandar čān
work-3PL.M in-DEF-port be.PRF.3SG.M

b. Persian
kār-ešūn tū-ye bandar būd
job-OBL.3PL in-EZ port be.PST.3SG
'Their job was at the port.'

(9) a. Muḥammara, Khuzestan, male, 30 years (own data)
əǧdād-i mallāk-īn čānaw
grandparents-OBL.1SG owner-PL be.PRF.3PL.M

b. Persian
aǧdād-am mālek būdan
grandparents-OBL.1SG owner be.PST.3PL
'My grandparents were owners [of land].'

(10) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, female, 40 years (own data)
hassa šway l-māy bārəd ṣār
now a_bit DEF-water cold become.PRF.3SG.M

b. Persian
alʔān yekam ʔāb sard šod
now a_bit water cold become.PST.3SG
'The water has become a bit cold now.'

The next example might show a tendency to use a present-tense copula with human subjects, expressed with the verb *ṣār* 'to become':

(11) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, female, 35 years (own data)
əhya mart uḫū-y əṣṣīr
3SG.F wife brother-OBL.1SG COP.IMPF.3SG.F

b. Persian
ūn zan-dādāš-am-e
3SG wife-brother-OBL.1SG-COP.PRS.3SG
'She is the wife of my brother.'

[17] In my data, *čān* appears 23 of 152 times in sentence-final position, *ṣār* 11 of 165 times. The additional examples are taken from my questionnaire.

In the KhA construction for pluperfect tense, *čān* can also appear in sentence-final position, after the active participle. This construction, although not very frequent, is very likely a direct transfer of the Persian structure, in which the auxiliary *būdan* also follows the participle.[18]

(12) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 26 years (own data)
lamman əyēna l-əl-bīət, əhma mākl-īn čānaw
when come.PRF.1PL to-DEF-house 3PL.M eat.PTCP-PL.M be.PRF.3PL.M

b. Persian
vaɣti-ke mā bargaštīm ḫūne, ūnhā ɣazā-ro ḫorde
when-REL 1PL come_back.PST.1PL home 3PL food-OBJ eat.PTCP
būdan
be.PST.3PL
'When we came home, they had (already) eaten.'

This word order change has probably been triggered by the high frequency in speech of Persian sentences with forms of *būdan* in final position. Lucas (2012: 295) explains the usage of foreign patterns as the result of the human cognitive tendency to minimize the high processing efforts associated with the extensive use of two languages.[19]

čān is also used in sentence-final positions after the main verb in the imperfect in KhA constructions expressing the continuous past. In spoken Persian, the continuous past is formed without a sentence-final *būdan*.[20] This case is not a direct transfer of the Persian pattern, but perhaps a construction analogous to the pluperfect and other Persian forms with *būdan* in final position.

(13) a. Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 55 years (own data)
hāda ham mən zuɣur yəštəɣəl čān
DEM.SG.M also from childhood work.IMPF.3SG.M be.PRF.3SG.M
'This one has also been working from childhood on.'

[18] Matras and Shabibi (2007: 142–143) describe the use of this construction as a change in the KhA tense system. However, the pattern *kān* + active participle is also commonly used in other Arabic dialects to express pluperfect meaning or to describe completed actions which have an impact on the present, see for example Denz (1971: 92–94; 115–116) for Iraqi (Kwayriš) and Grotzfeld (1965: 88) for Syrian Arabic.

[19] Connections between units of a neural network associated with certain syntactic patterns can be strengthened from repeated exposure to and use of that pattern (Lucas 2012: 291). Hence, the employment of a Persian syntactic structure in KhA needs less processing effort because the same strengthened neural network is activated.

[20] The Modern Iranian Persian continuous past is formed with the particle *mī* prefixed to the simple past of the respective main verb and can (for the progressive form) be preceded by the simple past of *dāštan* 'to have': e.g. (*dāšt*) *mī-raft* 'he was going' (Majidi 1990: 232, 235).

b. Persian
īn-am az kūdaki kār mī-kard
DEM.SG-also from childhood work IND-do.PST.3SG
'This one has also been working from childhood on.'

Example (14) shows both syntactic variants in one sentence, i.e. *čān* before and after the main verb.

(14) a. Muḥammara, Khuzestan, female, 40 years (own data)
umm-i čānat təṭḥağğab, eh, əb-zamān əš-šāh,
mother-OBL.1SG be.PRF.3SG.F veil.IMPF.3SG.F yes in-time DEF-shah
bass təṭbawwaš čānat
only veil.IMPF.3SG.F be.PRF.3SG.F

b. Persian
mādar-am (dāšt) neqāb mī-zad, āre, dar zamān-e
mother-1SG (have.PST.3SG) veil IND-hit.PST.3SG yes in time-EZ
šāh, hamīše neqāb mī-zad
shah always veil IND-hit.PST.3SG
'My mother used to veil her face (with a *būšiyye*),[21] yes, during the times of the shah, she always used to veil her face.'

Because all the above examples equally work with *čān/ṣār* in non-final position, this process of word-order-related pattern replication in KhA is still ongoing. Indeed, all informants, when asked for the correct structure in the above examples, preferred the verb *čān* in non-final position.[22]

Lucas (2015: 530–531) explains the basic word order changes (from VSO to SOV) in Bukhara Arabic (cf. Ratcliffe 2005: 143–144; and Versteegh 2010: 639) as a result of convergence with Uzbek.[23] Although a clear division between convergence and borrowing is hard to make, I consider the contact-induced word order changes that occur in KhA to be instances of borrowing because most speakers are clearly native speakers of, and therefore dominant in, KhA only.

[21] *būšiyye* or *pūšiyye* 'veil' is also documented for Iraqi Arabic (Woodhead & Beene 1967: 53).

[22] My informants from Baghdad considered all constructions with *čān* in final position to be wrong. However, this structure is used in Basra Arabic (Qasim Hassan, personal communication, January 2018).

[23] Lucas (2015: 525) defines convergence as changes made to a language under the agentivity of speakers who are native speakers of both the SL and the RL.

3.3.4 *ḫōš* preceding verbs and nouns

In Persian, *ḫoš* 'good, well' is used as a prefixed (lexicalized) element preceding some nouns and verbs to coin compound adjectives, nouns, and verbs (Majidi 1990: 411, 413): e.g. Pers. *ḫoš-andām* 'handsome' (< *andām* 'shape; body'), *ḫoš-nevīs* 'calligrapher' (< present stem *nevīs-* 'to write').

KhA has borrowed some of these Persian compound adjectives: e.g. KhA *ḫōš-bū* 'nice-smelling' (< Pers. *bū* 'smell, scent'), *ḫōš-tīp* 'handsome' (< Pers. *tīp* 'type'), and *ḫōš-aḫlāq* '(with) good manners' (< Pers. *aḫlāq* 'decency; ethics, morality', pl. of *ḫolq* 'character, nature'). However, in KhA the use of this element has been further developed. It is productively used as an attributive adjective preceding nouns, but not agreeing in gender or number with them, e.g. *ḫōš walad* 'a good boy', *ḫōš əbnayya* 'a good girl', *ḫōš banāt* 'good girls', *ḫōš əwlād* 'good kids', and as and adverb meaning 'well', e.g. *həyya ḫōš təsʔal* 'she asks good questions' (lit. 'she asks well'; speaker: Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 27 years).[24]

3.4 Lexicon

3.4.1 Lexical transfer

The greatest influence from Persian on KhA has occurred in lexicon. Many Persian lexemes were borrowed generations ago. The most frequently borrowed elements are nouns denoting cultural or technological innovations which have filled lexical gaps in the RL KhA. Verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and many discourse particles have also been borrowed from the SL Persian.

The majority of the examples below are cases of transfer of morphophonological material (matter) and semantic meaning (pattern) under RL agentivity.

Many of the Persian borrowings have been phonologically and morphologically integrated into the RL. For instance, for many borrowed Persian nouns Arabic internal plural forms are created, e.g. *ḫətākīr* 'ball-point pens' (sg. *ḫətkār* < Pers. *ḫod-kār* 'ball-point pen'), or *banādər* 'ports' (sg. *bandar* < Pers. *bandar* 'port').

Again, the borrowing of foreign (L2) elements into the speakers' L1 might be explained by the human cognitive tendency to minimize the processing effort in lexical selection between two languages (Lucas 2012: 291; see §3.3.3). So if a certain Persian word is frequently used and often heard (for example at school), the connections of a neural network associated with this word are strengthened (Lucas 2012: 291), which makes it easier to employ the word in one's L1.

[24] This construction is also found in Iraqi Arabic (cf. Erwin 1963: 256), which might prove that the element *ḫōš* is an older borrowing.

3.4.2 Semantic fields

The following illustrative list of Persian loans in KhA shows the most important semantic fields of lexical borrowing.

Administration and military:
čārra 'crossroad' < Pers. *čahār-rāh*; *sarbāz ~ šarbāz* 'soldier' < Pers. *sarbāz*; *farmāndāri* 'governorship' < Pers. *farmāndāri*.

Agriculture:
kūd 'dung' < Pers. *kūd*; *ʕalafkoš* 'pesticide' (lit. weed-killer) < Pers. *ʔalaf-koš*.

Dress and textiles:
dāmen 'skirt' < Pers. *dāman*; *šīəla* 'head covering' < Pers. *šāl* 'Kashmir shawl' (Ingham 2005: 174).

Education:
klāṣ 'class, grade' < Pers. *kelās*; *ḫətkār* 'ball-point pen' < Pers. *ḫod-kār*; *dānišga* 'university'< Pers. *dānišgāh*.

Food:
ǧaʕfari 'parsley' < Pers. *ǧaʔfari*; *češmeš* 'raisins' < Pers. *kešmeš*; *serke* 'vinegar' < Pers. *serke*; *šalɣam* 'turnip' < Pers. *šalɣam*.

Material culture:
šīše 'bottle' < Pers. *šīše*; *ǧām* '(window) glass' < Pers. *ǧām* '(window) glass; goblet, cup'; *tīɣe* 'blade' < Pers. *tīɣe*; *yəḫčāle* 'refrigerator' < Pers. *yahčāl*; *sīm buksel* 'towrope' < Pers. *sīm-e boksol*; *perde ~ berde* 'curtain' < *parde*; *gīre* 'hair barrette' < Pers. *gīre-ye sar/mūy*; *mīz* 'table' < Pers. *mīz*; *darīše* 'window' < Pers. *darīče*; *pənǧara* 'window' < Pers. *panǧare*.

Other:
ɣīme 'price' < Pers. *ɣīmat*; *bandar* 'port' < Pers. *bandar*; *nāmard* 'brute' < Pers. *nāmard* 'coward; brute, rascal'.

Some items ultimately of Arabic origin have been re-borrowed into KhA from Persian, preserving the Persian meaning, e.g. KhA *bəryi* 'electronic' < Pers. *barɣ* 'electricity; lightning' < Arabic *barq* 'lightning'.

3.4.3 Verbs and adverbs

KhA verbs and adverbs resulting from language contact are always morphologically integrated. These are either directly borrowed Persian verbs, e.g. *bannad* 'to close (e.g. the tap)' < Pers. imperfect and present stem *band-* 'close';[25] *gayyər* 'to get stuck' < Pers. *gīr šodan* 'to get stuck'; *ʕammər* 'to repair' < Pers. *taʃmīr kardan* 'to repair'; *čassəb* 'to glue' < Pers. *časb zadan* 'to glue'; *gəzar* 'to pass (time)' < Pers. present stem *gozar-* 'to pass (time)' (see example (15) below);[26] *zaḥəm* 'to bother' (transitive) < Pers. *zahmat dādan* 'to bother, cause trouble' (transitive) (see examples (16) and (17) below);[27] or Persian nouns turned into KhA (ad)verbs, e.g. *əb-zūr* 'by force' < Pers. *zūr* 'power; violence; force'.

(15) Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 26 years (own data)
čā hāy əl-ḥayāt lō la? təgzar baʕad, təmši
DM DEM.F DEF-life or no pass.IMPF.3SG.F after_all go.IMPF.3SG.F
'See, that is how life is, right? It passes by (quickly), it goes.'

(16) Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 26 years (own data)
zaḥmīət-kum, ʕafwan
bother.PRF.1SG-2PL.M sorry
'Sorry, I must have bothered you.'[28]

(17) Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 25 years (own data)
mumkin azaḥm-ək əb-šuɣla
possible bother.IMPF.1SG-2SG.M with-issue
'May I bother you with something (i.e. ask you a favour)?'

3.4.4 Discourse elements

A range of Persian discourse elements have been borrowed by KhA (cf. Matras & Shabibi 2007: 143–145),[29] e.g. KhA *ham ~ hamme* 'also, as well' < Pers. *ham* and

[25] Also common in the Gulf region and in Yemen (Behnstedt & Woidich 2014: 290).

[26] The verb *gəzar* is used only in phrases that refer to the "passing by" of life.

[27] The KhA noun *zaḥme* 'shame' is also used for a rebuke, e.g. *zaḥme ʕalīək!* 'Shame on you!', which would be expressed in a different way in Persian: *ḫeğālat ne-mī-keši?* 'Shame on you!' (lit. 'Are you not ashamed?').

[28] A phrase often used when leaving, for example after an invitation for dinner, cf. Pers. *ḫeyli zahmat dādīm* lit. 'We have caused (you) a lot of trouble'.

[29] Matras & Shabibi (2007: 144) claim that the Persian conjunctions *agarče* and *bāīnke*, both meaning 'although, even though', and the Persian factual complementizer *ke* 'that' have also been borrowed by KhA. However, I have found no evidence for their usage in my data.

KhA *ham…ham* '(both)…and' < Pers. *ham…ham*;[30] or KhA *hīč* 'nothing; no(t)… at all' < Pers. *hīč*.[31]

The KhA discourse elements *ḫō*/*ḫōš* 'well; okay' < Pers. *ḫo(b)*/*ḫoš* are often used phrase-initially, (18).[32] They are of Persian origin, but have partly adopted a different form and function in KhA.[33]

(18) Aḥwāz, Khuzestan, male, 55 years (own data)
ḫ̲ōš, š-ʕəd-na, taʕay əhna baba
DM what-at-1PL come.IMP.SG.F here father
'Okay, what (else) do we have, come here, dear!'

Both *ḫō* and *ḫōš* are also often used in stories following the verb *gāl* 'to say'.

(19) Aḥwāz/Fəllāḥiyya, Khuzestan, female, 50 years (own data)
lamman ɣada mən ʕəd-hum, gāl-la ḫ̲ō,
when leave.PRF.3SG.M from at-3PL.M say.PRF.3SG.M-DAT.3SG.M DM
hāy ər-rummānāt š-asawwi bī-hən
DEM.SG.F DEF-pomegranate.PL what-make.IMPF.1SG with-3PL.F
'When he left them, he said to him, "Well, what shall I do with these pomegranates?"'

4 Conclusion

Because of the dominance of Persian in the Iranian educational system and work environment, the lack of influence from Modern Standard Arabic, and the long period of geographical proximity, the Persian-speaking society of southwest Iran has left many linguistic traces in the language of the Arabic-speaking community of Khuzestan.

[30] This discourse element is also known for Iraq (Malaika 1963: 36) and, like KhA *hast ~ hassət* 'there is' < Pers. *hast* (Ingham 1973: 25, fn.27), is probably an older borrowing.

[31] Shabibi (2006: 176–177) further derives KhA *balkət* 'maybe, hopefully' from Pers. *balke ham*, which can mean 'maybe'. A Turkish origin of this word seems more likely: cf. Aksoy (1963: 620) for the existence of *belke ~ belkit* in Eastern Turkish dialects. Malaika (1963: 35) also derives the Baghdadi Arabic *belki* 'rather, maybe' from Turkish, as does Seeger (2009: 28) for *balki, balkīš, balkin* 'maybe; possibly; probably' in Ramallah Arabic.

[32] According to my informants and data, the form *ḫ̲ōb* is not used in KhA (contrast Matras & Shabibi 2007: 143).

[33] In Persian, *ḫ̲ob* is a discourse particle and related to the adjective and adverb *ḫ̲ūb*, *ḫ̲o* is also a discourse particle used in less formal situations (Mehrdad Meshkinfam, Erik Anonby and Mortaza Taheri-Ardali, personal communication), and *ḫ̲oš* is an adjective (see §3.3.4; Shabibi 2006: 160; Mohammadi 2018: 104–105). Thus the Persian adjective *ḫ̲oš* has been desemanticized in KhA to function as a discourse particle with the meaning 'well, okay' (Shabibi 2006: 160).

Van Coetsem (2000: 59; cf. Lucas 2015: 532) suggests that lexical, but not syntactic and phonological transfer is to be expected under RL agentivity. However, KhA phonology and syntax have been influenced by the SL Persian under RL agentivity, albeit to a much lesser extent than the lexicon.

KhA does not show transfer of patterns from Persian in either inflectional or derivational morphology. However, we do find an adapted pattern replication of Persian phrasal verbs (with preservation of the Arabic word order).

As for syntax and contact-induced word order changes, the alternative sentence construction with *čān* in sentence-final position can be explained as a result of Persian influence on KhA. This change might have been triggered by the similar and very frequent Persian constructions with sentence-final *būdan*. Thus, we do have some syntactic change due to transfer under RL agentivity, which Van Coetsem considered to be unexpected (see above).

Persian lexical items have often been borrowed in KhA for novel concepts (lexical gaps), which is why semantic fields relating to technical or cultural innovations, education, and administration show the greatest amount of Persian borrowing. This also explains why nouns are generally more often transferred than verbs (cf. Lucas 2015: 532). Persian words are regularly integrated into KhA phonology and morphology, for example the Arabic internal plural is formed for Persian nouns. Also, many discourse particles have been transferred from Persian into KhA. Some of them, e.g. *ham* 'also', had been in use generations ago among Arabic speakers in Khuzestan and beyond (Iraq, Gulf).

Of course, contact between KhA and Persian has always been limited to certain social contexts (outside the family), especially for women, who had and still have much less access to education and employment and thus to the Persian-speaking world. This fact, and some structural differences between the languages, explain the limits of contact-induced language change in KhA, especially in morphology and syntax.

Hopefully, future research on the dialects of Khuzestan will provide more empirical data on instances of contact-induced change. An enlarged database should especially provide further evidence concerning the development and extent of word order changes.

Further reading

- Ingham (2011) provides a sketch grammar of KhA.
- Ingham (2005) discusses Turkish and Persian borrowings in KhA and north-eastern Arabian dialects.

- Matras & Shabibi (2007) is an article on contact-induced changes in KhA based on Shabibi (2006).
- Shabibi (2006) is an unpublished doctoral dissertation on contact-induced change in KhA.

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Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person	KhA	Khuzestan Arabic
CA	Classical Arabic	M	masculine
COP	copula	OBJ	object
DAT	dative	OBL	oblique
DEF	definite	Pers.	Persian
DEM	demonstrative	PL/pl.	plural
DM	discourse marker	PTCP	participle
EZ	Persian *ezāfe*	PRF	perfect (suffix conjugation)
F	feminine	PROG	progressive
IMP	imperative	PRS	present
IMPF	imperfect (prefix conjugation)	PST	past
IND	indicative	REL	relative particle
INF	infinitive	SG/sg.	singular

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