

## Paradigmatic dependencies in Semitic and Romance Maltese verbal paradigms

Discussions on the integration of non-Semitic verbs in the inflectional verbal paradigm of (Semitic) Maltese highlights what Owens (2010) refers to as the ‘miracle paradigm’, with which he illustrates the stability of the inflectional paradigm in Semitic. Discussions in Mifsud (1995) and Hoberman & Aronoff (2003) have illustrated how the Romance *are* vs. *ere/ire* inflectional class distinction was redundantly maintained when these loan verbs integrated in the Semitic Maltese inflectional pattern, such that the morphological integration was not random. We here provide another set of data illustrating how the *are* vs. *ere/ire* inflectional class split is disrupted and not maintained at times, in the Imperfective verbal sub-paradigm. We observe that when this is the case, the distinct behaviours that result out of the inflectional pattern employed, correlate with argument-structure alternations.

Our starting point here is to consider the paradigm as an intricate structure of interdependencies (Wurzel, 1989). This then leads us to observe that there exists a redundant relation between morphological inflection and argument-structure alternations in the paradigms of certain Semitic and Romance vowel-final verbs, and which have not been previously identified in the literature on Maltese. Our discussion will thus first account for the full array of paradigmatic relations internal to the paradigms of vowel-final verbs, and will then zoom in on how and when these may correlate with argument-structure alternations.

Previous discussions in Hoberman & Aronoff (2003) have limited their description to the paradigmatic relations that arise between the forms of the diphthong in the Perfective 1<sup>st</sup> morphological forms, i.e. *aj* (as in *qara* ‘read’) vs. *ej* (as in *bena* ‘build’) and the Imperfective SG stem-vowel, which can be *a* or *i*. The logical set of relations is thus four-fold. From their representation of the data in tables (1-2), it *appears* as though it is only Semitic Maltese that exploits the maximal set of relations.

	Semitic Maltese	
	i	a
ej	+	+
aj	-	+

	Non-Semitic Maltese	
	i	a
ej	+	-
aj	-	+

Tables 1-2: Representing the array of paradigmatic relations as in Hoberman & Aronoff (2003: 78)

We will here illustrate that this is indeed **not** the full picture of the verbal paradigmatic behaviour and cross-sub-paradigmatic relations in Maltese. In the case of the non-Semitic Maltese data set, the represented state of affairs in table (2) is only true of primary loans, i.e. those verbs which entered the language directly from the source language. Second generation loans, i.e. verbs that have been derived via the concatenative morphological means available in Maltese, which yield a passive/reflexive interpretation and an overall monotransitive argument-structure, do not exhibit the *are* vs. *ere/ire* split in the Imperfective sub-paradigm, unlike their primary loan counterparts. In this respect, *ere/ire* second generation loans fill in the *pseudo ej – a* gap in Hoberman & Aronoff’s (2003) representation, and a detransitivised argument-structure is realized via multiple exponence; i.e. through prefixation and ablaut-changes. We here additionally demonstrate how the *ej – a* dependency is not solely present in the paradigms of such second generation loans, but has additionally grammaticalised in a way that it has paved the way to the formation of equipollent Romance verbs in the system. Alternating between the *ej – i* vs. the *ej – a* dependencies has developed into a novel synchronic strategy used by verbs that have entered later in the language and which do not have the concatenative morphological means with which to express a detransitivised argument-structure. Apart from establishing that the *aj – i* dependency is also available in Romance Maltese verbal paradigms, our observation of paradigmatic dependencies provides us with an additional argument in favour of Vanhove’s (1993: 27) claim that formal integration preceded semantic integration in Maltese.

## References

- Hoberman, R. D., & Aronoff, M. (2003). The verbal morphology of Maltese: From Semitic to Romance. In J. Shimron (ed.), *Language Processing and Language Acquisition in Languages of Semitic, Root-Based Morphology*, (pp. 61–78). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Mifsud, M. (1995). *Loan Verbs in Maltese: A descriptive and comparative study*. Leiden: Brill.
- Owens, J. (2010). What is language: Review of Introducing Maltese Linguistics. *Journal of Linguistic Contact* 3, 103–118.
- Vanhove, M. (1993). *La Langue Maltaise: Etudes syntaxiques d'un dialecte arabe >>périphérique<<* Weisbaden: Harrassowitz-Verlag.
- Wurzel W. U. (1989). *Inflectional Morphology and Naturalness*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.