

Argument-structure realizations and interactions with inflection in Maltese verbal paradigms

The starting point of this study is to illustrate some intricate paradigmatic interdependencies within the Maltese inflectional verbal paradigm. To this observation the account provided in Mifsud (1995) for the sub-set of type B integrated non-Semitic verbs that map onto a CVC_iC_iV templatic structure is brought in, particularly those verbs that display the ‘exceptional transfer’ (p. 122), i.e. verbs originally derived from *-are*-themed verbs which however pattern morphologically just like *-ere/-ire*-themed verbs, e.g. *poġġa* ‘sit/place’. Semitic and non-Semitic CVC_iC_iV type verbs are thus homogeneously characterised by an *ej* diphthong in the stem-form of the perfect 1st person cells and an *i* stem-vowel in the imperfect SG cells. This uniform paradigmatic behaviour is taken to represent a manifestation of a redundant interaction with argument-structure across the different *binyanim*. To illustrate this point further, changes that take place internal to the inflectional paradigms of V-final Semitic verbs, particularly as they shift from the Ist *binyan* to the IInd and to the Vth, are assessed. We find that the argument-structure alternations that come about via derivational morphology (Borg & Mifsud 1999, Spagnol 2011) are also reflected in the inflectional paradigm’s distinct behaviour, resulting in a redundant multiple exponence relation, based primarily on the premise that stem-forms are to be analysed as non-affixal exponents (Baerman & Corbett 2012). Orthogonal to this system of argument-structure alternations the behaviour of *għama*; treated as a labile verb in Spagnol (2011: 113), which can mean both ‘become blind’ and ‘blind s.one’ without shifting its *binyan*, is focused upon. What Spagnol does not mention is that the argument-structure difference results in an inflectional distinction. This distinct paradigmatic behaviour parallels the patterns obtained when argument-structure alternations involve a *binyan(im)*-shift strategy, with the difference that no multiple exponence across the derivational and inflectional morphology is involved in the case of *għama*.

References:

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