

The verb sequence 'V1+V2' in Maltese

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This paper is concerned with the verb sequence in Maltese, which has also been called *multi-verb-construction* in Fabri (1993), *complex predicate* in Maas (2009); Peterson (2009), *verb chain* in Stolz (2009) and *verb sequence* in Fabri & Borg (2017). This construction can be defined as a sequence of finite verbs and it is highly frequent in both spoken and written Maltese. Sequences of different amounts of verbs are possible, as can be seen below.

(1) *Bd-ew* *j-istudja-w*
begin-3PL.PRF 3.IPFV-study-PL
'They started studying.'

(2) *Kon-t* *rid-t* *n-erġa'* *n-ibda* *n-ipprova*
be-1SG.PRF want-1SG.PRF 1SG.IPFV-repeat 1SG.IPFV-start 1SG.IPFV-try

n-ara *n-aqbad-x* *il-ħalliel*
1SG.IPFV-see 1SG.IPFV-catch-neg DEF-thief.SG.M

'I had wanted to start trying to see whether I could catch the thief anew.'

It is true that previous studies have looked at elements in addition to verbs constituting the chain, and have regarded the latter from a general theoretical perspective, but the behaviour of specific verbs, when part of the verb chain, has not been treated in any depth. However, Fabri & Borg (2017) analysed sequences made up of two verbs, namely V1 and V2, where V1 is a verb of motion.

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it looks at verbs occurring in the sample gathered using MLRS – 500 chains of the type V1+V2 - and categorises them according to their syntactic behaviour, i.e. verbs filling only the slot intended for V1 belong to one group, those filling the V2 slot belong to another group, while verbs which may occur either as V1 or V2 make up another group. This paper also aims to investigate the morphosyntactic behaviour of some verbs with reference to semantics. Examples (3)-(6) given below illustrate the combinatorial possibilities for V1 *spiċċa* when it carries a resultative meaning, while (7)-(10) show the same polysemous verb carrying a terminative meaning. The

implication here is that the same verb may have different instantiations of morphosyntactic behaviour based on the meaning carried by the V1.

spiċċa – Resultative Meaning

(3) IPFV+IPFV:

<i>Aktarx</i>	<i>n-ispicċa</i>	<i>n-iddefendi-h</i>	<i>jien.</i>
probably	1SG.IPFV-end up	1SG.IPFV-defend-3SG.M	I

‘Probably I will end up being the one to defend him.’

(4) IPFV+PRF:

<i>Allaħares</i>	<i>n-ispicċa</i>	<i>ddefend-ejt-u</i>	<i>għalxejn.</i>
God forbid	1SG.IPFV-end up	defend-1SG.PRF-3SG.M	for nothing

‘God forbid me ending up having defended him for nothing.’

(5) PRF+IPFV:

<i>Bla</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>n-af</i>	<i>kif</i>	<i>spiċċ-ajt</i>	<i>n-iddefendi</i>
without	NEG	1SG.IPFV-know	how	end up-1SG.PRF	1SG.IPFV-defend

<i>lil</i>	<i>oħt-u.</i>
OM	sister-3SG.M

‘I don’t know how but I ended up defending his sister.’

(6) PRF+PRF:

<i>Bħal</i>	<i>dejjem,</i>	<i>spiċċ-ajt</i>	<i>iddefend-ejt-u</i>	<i>jien.</i>
as	always	end up-1SG.PRF	defend-1SG.PRF-3SG.M	I

‘As always, I was the one to end up defending him.’

spiċċa – Terminative Meaning

(7) IPFV+IPFV:

<i>Forsi</i>	<i>n-ispicċa</i>	<i>n-aqra-h</i>	<i>illejla</i>	<i>l-ktieb.</i>
maybe	1SG.IPFV-finish	1SG.IPFV-read-3SG.M	tonight	DEF-book.SG.M

‘Maybe I will finish reading the book tonight.’

(8) *IPFV+PRF:

<i>*La</i>	<i>n-ispicća</i>	<i>qr-ajt-u</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>n-istrieñ.</i>
as soon as	1SG.IPFV-finish	read-1SG.PRF-3SG.M	FUT	1SG.IPFV-rest

‘As soon as I finish reading it I will rest.’

(9) PRF+IPFV:

<i>Issa</i>	<i>spicć-ajt</i>	<i>n-aqra</i>	<i>l-gazzetta.</i>
now	finish-1SG.PRF	1SG.IPFV-read	DEF-newspaper.SG.F

‘I have just finished reading the newspaper.’

(10) *PRF+PRF:

<i>*Fl-añhar</i>	<i>spicć-ajt</i>	<i>qr-ajt-u</i>	<i>l-artiklu.</i>
finally	finish-1SG.PRF	read-1SG.PRF-3SG.M	DEF-article.SG.M

‘I finally finished reading the article.’

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