

The lexical *ta'* construction

Fabri (2009) explores the notion of a compound word applied to Maltese, and tentatively identifies a number of potential candidates for compounds, while exploring in some depth the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of A+N compounds (e.g., *abjad karti* 'as white as paper; pale'; lit 'white papers'). One such candidate mentioned but not further analysed in Fabri (2009) is the *ta'* compound, illustrated below, which can appear in typical NP slots without an N:

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1a) Ta-l-laħam qal-li... | b) Tal-ħobż ġie. |
| of-DEF-meat told-me | of-DEF-bread came |
| 'The butcher told me...' | 'The bread wo/man is here.' |

This paper explores these constructions, first attempting at a characterisation of this constructions in terms of their morpho-syntactic and semantic (referential) properties. We then try to classify the various types of *ta'* constructs. Thus, for example, the following two turn out to have different properties from those in (1).

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2a) Ta-n-nuċċali telqet | b) Ta-l-ghageb dan il-kantant! |
| of-DEF-glasses (spectacles) | of-DEF-wonder this DEF-singer |
| 'The one with the glasses left.' | 'This is a great singer!' |

Moreover, this construction will be compared to the 'productive' (syntactic) PP construction, which generally has a possessive interpretation, but can also have other interpretations, as shown in (3).

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3a) Id-dar ta-l-ġara inbiegħet | b) Is-sewwieq ta-t-taxi wasal |
| DEF-house of-DEF-neighbour was.sold | DEF-driver of-DEF-taxi arrived |
| 'The neighbour's house was sold.' | 'The taxi-driver has arrived.' |

The aim is to establish the status of this construction in Maltese grammar as a lexical item (complex word/compound) or a phrase (PP). This paper contributes towards a further characterisation of compounding in Maltese, while exploring the theoretical implications for the syntax-morphology interface, and complementing other work being carried out on prepositions in Maltese.

Fabri (2009) Compounding and adjective-noun compounds in Maltese. In: B. Comrie, R. Fabri, M. Mifsud, E. Hume, M. Mifsud, T. Stolz and M. Vanhove (eds) *Introducing Maltese Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 207-231

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