

# Object Reduplication in Maltese

Object reduplication<sup>1</sup> (OR) is a syntactic phenomenon where the lexical object occurs with a co-referential pronominal clitic within the same clause, as in the following example from Romanian:

- (1) @grimcris azi l'am vazut pe  
[addressed.to-handle] today OBJ.PRON.3SG.M have.PRES.1SG see-PART.PAST DOM  
fanul tau, Grim :))  
fan-DET POSS.PRON.2SG.M [name] [emoticon]  
"@grimcris I saw your fan today, Grim :))"<sup>2</sup>

While considered one of the hallmarks of the Balkan *Sprachbund*<sup>3</sup>, OR has been described for Romance languages outside of the Balkans<sup>4</sup> and even for Berber and Lebanese Arabic<sup>5</sup>, where suffixed object pronouns assume the role of clitics. The phenomenon has also been noted to exist in Maltese (if not by name)<sup>6</sup> with the same modification as in Berber and Arabic:

- (2) Il-vettura raha ukoll il-kunsillier Francis Callus...  
DEF-vehicle see.PERF.3SG.M-OBJ.PRON.3SG.F also DEF-councilor [name]  
"Councilor Francis Callus also saw the vehicle..."<sup>7</sup>
- (3) fejn iridu jafu juzawha l bibja  
where 3.IMPF-want-3PL 3.IMPF-know-3PL 3.IMPF-use-3PL-OBJ.PRON.3SG.F DEF Bible  
biex jiggustifikaw id dhul tal klandestini.  
to 3.IMPF-justify-3PL DEF entry GEN-DEF illegal-PL  
"They know how to use the Bible to justify the entry of illegals wherever they want."<sup>8</sup>

Unlike its counterpart in Balkan languages, Maltese object reduplication has not yet been sufficiently studied and its syntactic and pragmatic properties are still poorly understood. For example, while OR in Maltese is associated - and indeed obligatory - with topicalization and the accompanying left dislocation of the direct object<sup>9</sup> (example 2), it can also be optionally employed in non-focus contexts (example 3), a fact not elaborated upon in previous works on Maltese syntax.

It is the aim of this paper to make first steps towards the full account of this phenomenon within the syntax of Maltese, employing, whenever appropriate, a broader comparative perspective.

<sup>1</sup>Also known as clitic doubling. We prefer the term above (see e.g. Friedman, "Balkan object reduplication").

<sup>2</sup>[http://twitter.com/Sixx\\_/status/10823172549](http://twitter.com/Sixx_/status/10823172549), retrieved on December 23rd, 2010.

<sup>3</sup>See e.g. Tomić, *Balkan Sprachbund*, 26.

<sup>4</sup>Such as Rioplatense Spanish, see Jaegli, *Topics*.

<sup>5</sup>Tsakali and Anagnostopoulou, "Rethinking the Clitic Doubling parameter," 331.

<sup>6</sup>Sutcliffe, *Grammar*, 179: "The direct suffixes are often used redundantly, but effectively."

<sup>7</sup>[http://lc.gov.mt/mediacenter/PDFs/1.Meeting%20minutes%2040-09\\_10.pdf](http://lc.gov.mt/mediacenter/PDFs/1.Meeting%20minutes%2040-09_10.pdf), retrieved on December 23rd, 2010.

<sup>8</sup><http://www.vivamalta.org/forum/archive/index.php/t-3812.html>, retrieved on December 26th, 2010.

<sup>9</sup>Sutcliffe, *Grammar*, 210-211; Borg and Azzopardi, *Maltese*, 124.

## References

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