

Spring School in Languages and Linguistics of the Mediterranean

University of Malta

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Aspects of the descriptive linguistics of Maltese

The course consists of the presentation of and subsequent seminar on selected topics of the descriptive linguistics of Maltese. Each day is dedicated to a different topic and divided in two. The introduction to the day's topic will come in the shape of a formal talk of 45 minutes. After the talk another 45 minutes are reserved for the discussion of the presentation and the topic in general among the participants and the teacher. The topics selected for the course are representative of the research projects that have been conducted at the linguistics department of the University of Bremen (which also hosts the Malta centre). Participants should be familiar with the principles and methodology of current descriptive linguistics (the teacher himself has leaning towards linguistic functionalism). It might prove helpful if the participants have an inkling of the basics of Maltese language structures. The participants will have to fulfil practical tasks during the seminar part of the course.

Topics

- Reduplication in Maltese and in its Mediterranean neighbourhood

Under this heading we will look at the formal and functional properties of total reduplication in Maltese. The Maltese facts are compared to reduplication in a variety of other languages in order to determine to what extent (if at all) Maltese reduplication is special. Italian and Modern Greek, for instance, employ total reduplication to a comparable extent so that a question arises whether the phenomenon in Maltese is a general feature of Mediterranean languages.

Recommended reading:

Haiman, John. 1983. Iconic and economic motivation, *Language* 59, 781–819.

Stolz, Thomas; Stroh, Cornelia & Urdze, Aina. 2011. *Total Reduplication. The Areal Linguistics of a Potential Universal* (= Studia Typologica 8). Berlin: Akademie, pp. 206–330.

- The system of possession in Maltese – typological and areal perspectives

The possessive system of Maltese differs considerably from that of standard average European languages. In the NP there is a distinction of alienable vs inalienable concepts. In the domain of predicative possession optional distinctions are made whose nature are still largely unclear. In this domain Maltese is again strikingly different from languages such as English, French, and German. Nevertheless, Maltese reflects patterns which are widely common crosslinguistically.

Recommended reading:

Heine, Bernd. 1997. Possession. *Cognitive sources, forces, and grammaticalization*. Cambridge: CUP.

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria. 1996. Possessive noun phrases in Maltese: alienability, iconicity, and grammaticalization, in: *Rivista di Linguistica* 8(1), 245–274.

Stolz, Thomas; Kettler, Sonja; Stroh, Cornelia & Urdze, Aina. 2008. *Split possession. An areal-linguistic study of the alienability correlation and related phenomena in the languages of Europe* (= SLCS 101). Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 44–110.

- The mystery of the short-long opposition of Maltese personal pronouns

Maltese allows for the coexistence of long and short forms of personal pronouns in the singular. Their distribution is often described in terms of free variation. An attempt is made at getting a better understanding of the factors which govern the choice of the long and short allomorphs.

Recommended reading:

Stolz, Thomas & Saade, Benjamin. 2016. „On short and long forms of personal pronouns in Maltese”. In: Gilbert Puech & Benjamin Saade (eds.), *Shifts and pattern in Maltese*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 199–268.

- Towards the grammar of Maltese prepositions

The exact number of prepositions in Maltese has not been determined yet. In the extant literature certain very frequent prepositions are relatively well described whereas the grammar of the bulk of candidates for the status of preposition is still an open question to the linguists. We will look at the formal and functional aspects of being a preposition in Maltese. The Maltese facts are interpreted against the backdrop of the typologically inspired theory of adpositions.

Recommended reading:

Hagège, Claude. 2010. *Adpositions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Saari, Rami] המלצות היחס-מילות. 2002. סערי. [The Maltese Prepositions]. Jerusalem: Carmel.

Stolz, Thomas & Ahrens, Carolin. 2017. „On prepositional ellipsis and the factors which block its application in Maltese”. In: Benjamin Saade & Mauro Tosco (eds.), *Advances in Maltese Linguistics* (= Studia Typologica 21). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 121–147.

- Zero-marking of spatial relations in Maltese and beyond

General location comprises spatial relations such as Place, Goal, Source, and Path. In Maltese Source and Path are almost always encoded overtly by prepositions whereas for Place and Goal there is the additional option of zero-marking. However, zero-marking is impossible with pronominal complements, it is disfavoured with common nouns but it is widely common in constructions involving toponyms. The exact rules for the application and/or blocking of zero-marking are still under discussion. The Maltese situation resembles a huge number of cases of other languages worldwide. We will look at possible explanations for these similarities among genetically unrelated languages.

Recommended reading:

Lemaréchal, Alain. 1997. *Zéros(s)*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Stolz, Thomas & Lestrade, Sander & Stolz, Christel. 2014. *The Crosslinguistics of Zero-Marking of Spatial Relations* (= Studia Typologica 15). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 225–278.