

Word Order in the Clauses of the Narrative Sections in P.P. Saydon's Bible Translation in Maltese (2)

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2.3 The Data

Unit No	Text	Ref	Type	Struc	Modl
1	U saret il-ghaxija...	{1,13	Decl	1	1
2	U ghamel Alla iż-żewġ	1,16	Decl	1	1
3	U saret il-ghaxija	1,19	Decl	1	1
4	U temm Alla fis-seba' jum....	2,2	Decl	1	1
5	I-ebda sigra ... ma kien..hemm	2,5	Decl	2	1
6	U hawwel il-Mulej...ġnien...	2,8	Decl	1	1
7	U qal il-bniedem: 'Din.....'	2,23	Decl	1	1
8	Kien is-serp l-aktar hâni	3,1	Decl	1	0
9	Qal is-serp lill-mara	3,4	Decl	1	1
10	..imma jaf Alla.....	3,5	Decl	1	1
11**	..li minnha inti mehud...	3,19	Decl	2	0
12	Qal il-Mulej Alla.....	3,22	Decl	1	1
13	Gharaf Adam il-martu...	4,1	Decl	1	0
14	Qallu l-Mulej....	4,15	Decl	1	1
15	Twieled.... lil Henok Ghirad	4,18	Decl	1	1
16**	U isem huh Jubal	4,21	Decl	2	1
17	U hekk kienu l-jiem kollha...	5,8	Decl	1	1
18	Kellu Enos disghin sena	5,9	Decl	1	1
19	Kellu Qajman sebghin sena	5,12	Decl	1	1
20	Kellu Mahalalel hamsa u	5,15	Decl	1	1

Editorial Note This is the second part of the Dissertation that the author has written for an MA in Linguistics from the Department of Linguistic Science of the University of Reading in England during the academic year 1996-1997. The first part of the dissertation was published in *Melita Theologica* LIII/1(2002)3-26. The second part of the dissertation consists mainly of the data from the sources mentioned in paragraphs 1.4.4.1 and 1.4.4.2 and of an evaluation of these data. As the amount of the data (2000 clauses, one thousand from the writings of Prof Saydon and one thousand from the expressions of contemporary Maltese) is by far too great to reproduce within the framework of a review, and as the sources are available for the readers to consult, the author of this abridged version of the dissertation decided to reproduce only a small part of this data, the first entries from the Saydon data, gathered from Genesis 1-30. He is reproducing them only by way of example of how he analysed the data gleaned from the sources.

21	Ghâx Lamek..hames mija..	5,30	Decl	1	1
22	Meta bdew il-bnedmin joktru	6,1	Decl	1	1
23	...kien hemm..ġorfijiet	6,4	Decl	1	1
24	Tidhol fl-arka int u wliedek....	6,18	Decl	1	1
25	Ghamel Noê kollox.	6,22	Decl	1	1
26	..biex jibqa' nisel fuq l-art....	7,3	Dep	1	1
27	U hakem l-ilma u kotor..	7,18	Decl	1	1
28	U miet kull hajj li jimxi...	7,21	Decl	1	1
29	U hakem l-ilma fuq l-art..	7,24	Decl	1	1
30	Ftakar Alla f'Noê	8,1	Decl	1	1
31	Kellem Alla lil Noê u qal..	8,15	Decl	1	1
32	U hareġ Noê u wliedu....	8,18	Decl	1	1
33	Xamm il-Mulej ir-riha tfuħ	8,21	Decl	1	1
34	U qal Alla.....	9,13	Decl	1	1
35	Malli jkun hemm il-qaws	9,16	Decl	1	1
36	Dawn it-tlieta huma wlied N.	9,19	Decl	2	1
37**	...torri, rasu tilhaq sas-sema	11,4	Dep	2	1
38	li ma jifhimx il-wiehed ilsien	11,7	Dep	1	1
39	Dan huwa nisel Sem	11,10	Decl	2	1
40	Meta kellu Sem mitt sena...	11,11	Dep	1	1
41	Kellu Nahor disa' u ghoxrin	11,24	Decl	1	1
42	Miet Aran quddiem Terah....	11,28	Decl	1	1
43	U ha Terah l-Abram ibnu...	11,31	Decl	1	1
44**	... li int ohti	12,13	Dep	1	0
45	Rawha wkoll il-kbarat ta' F.	12,15	Decl	1	1
46**	... hi ohti....	12,19	Dep	1	1
47	Abram ghammar fl-art ta' K..	13,12	Decl	2	1
48	In-nies ta' Sodom kienu hżie..	13,13	Decl	2	1
49	..jekk jista' xi hadd jghodd...	13,16	Dep	1	1
50	Qala' Abram il-gharix	13,18	Decl	1	1
51	U raġa' ha Abram il-ġid t.....	14,16	Decl	1	1
52**	Imbierrek Abram minn Alla...	14,19	Decl	1	1
53	U wieġeb Abram lis-sultan.....	14,22	Decl	1	1
54	U niżlu t-tjur tal-htif għal	15,11	Decl	1	1
55 min-nies li huma jaqdu	15,14	Dep	2	0
56	Meta għabet ix-xemx	15,17	Decl	1	0
57**	Inti El Roy	16,13	Decl	2	1
58	Kellu Abram sitta u tmenin...	16,16	Decl	1	0
59	U Abram-intafa' għal wi"u...	17,3	Decl	2	0
60**	...il-għaqda tiegħi miegħek	17,4	Decl	2	1
61	Qal Abraham lil Alla: Jalla...	17,18	Decl	1	1
62	..li tilidlek Sara....	17,21	Dep	1	1

63	Kellu Abraham disa' u dis....	~ 17,24	Decl	1	0
64	Abraham u Sarah kienu xjuh..	18,11	Decl	2	1
65**	Ewwilla xi haġa tqila għall-...	18,14	Inte	2	1
66	Qal il-Mulej: Sa nahbi jien...	18,17	Decl	1	0
67	U qal (Abraham):	18,32	Decl	1	0
68	Waslu ż-żewġ angli Sodoma	19,1	Decl	1	1
69	...in-nies tal-belt..dawwru d-..	19,4	Decl	2	1
70	Hareġ Lot lejhom fil-bieb...	19,6	Decl	1	1
71**	Ara dil-belt fil-qrib biex	19,20	Decl	2	1
72	Kienet tielgħa ix-xemx fuq ...	19,23	Decl	1	0
73	U ħarset mart Lot warajha..	19,26	Decl	1	1
74	Qal Abraham għal Sara martu	20,2	Decl	1	1
75	Mhux hu qalli....?	20,5	Inte	2	1
76	Bakkar Abimelek filghodu....	20,8	Decl	1	1
77	Kellu Abraham mitt sena....	21,5	Decl	1	0
78	U kiber il-wild	21,8	Decl	1	1
79	Għela hafna Abraham għal...	21,11	Decl	1	0
80	U qal Alla lil Abraham....	21,12	Decl	1	1
81	U ha Abraham ghanem	21,27	Decl	1	1
82	..li haffirt jien dal-bir	21,30	Dep	1	0
83	Hawwel Abraham bruka f'Bir	21,33	Decl	1	0
84	U rafa' Abraham ghajnejh...	22,13	Decl	1	1
85	U sejjah l-Anglu tal-Mulej....	22,16	Decl	1	1
86	U raġa' Abraham lejn iż-ż....	22,19	Decl	1	1
87	..li hu għanduf 'tarf il-għalqa	23,9	Dep	2	0
88	Ghefron kien qieghed qalb....	23,10	Decl	2	1
89	Wieġeb Ghefron lil Abraham	23,14	Decl	1	1
90	U hekk il-għalqa....waqgħet...	23,17	Decl	2	1
91	U ha l-qaddej ghaxart iġmla	24,10	Decl	1	1
92**	Għalhekk it-tifla...lilha tkun...	24,14	Decl	1	1
93	U ġera l-qaddej jilqagħha....	24,17	Decl	1	1
94	Dahal ir-raġel id-dar.....	~24,32	Decl	1	1
95	Il-Mulej bierek lil sidi qatigh	24,35	Decl	2	1
96	li jien inghammar f'arthom	24,37	Dep	2	1
97	Malli sama' l-qaddej ta' Abr..	24,52	Dep	1	1
98	U hareġ il-qaddej hwejjeg.....	24,53	Decl	1	1
99	..il-Mulej tâ' r-risq lil triqti	24,56	Decl	2	1
100	..U jzomm in-nisel ...bwieb...	24,60	Perf	1	1
101	U lil ulied...tâhom Abraham..	25,6	Decl	1	1
102	U difnuh Iżakk u Ismagħel...	25,9	Decl	1	1
103	Dan hu nisel Ismagħel, bin A.	25,12	Decl	2	1
104	Kibru t-fal, u sar Ghesaw....	25,27	Decl	1	1

105**	...ghax jien ghajjien	25,30	Dep	1	0
106	U qal Ġakobb...	25,33	Decl	1	1
107	U kiber ir-raġel,	26,13	Decl	1	1
108	U qal Abimelek lil Izakk...	26,16	Decl	1	1
109	Haffru wkoll il-qaddejja ta' Iz	26,18	Decl	1	1
110	U ġġieldu ir-rġhajja ta' Gerar	26,20	Decl	1	1
111	Dak in-nhar gew il-qaddejja...	26,32	Decl	1	1
112	Kienu dawn ta' mrar ghal ruh	26,35	Decl	1	1
113	Ara, jien xjieht	27,2	Decl	2	0
114	U qal Ġakobb lil missieru...	27,19	Decl	1	1
115	U resaq Ġakobb lejn Izakk...	27,24	Decl	1	1
116	...biex tberkek ruhi	27,25	Dep	1	1
117	Wieġeb Izakk missieru	27,39	Decl	1	1
118	Ara, Ghesaw...irid jithallas....	27,42	Decl	2	1
119	U qalet Rebekka lil Izakk...	27,46	Decl	1	1
120	U sejjah Izakk il-Ġakobb....	28,1	Decl	1	1
121	U hawn jien mieghek.....	28,15	Decl	1	1
122	Bakkar Ġakobb fil-ghodu....	28,18	Decl	1	1
123	...ikun il-Mulej Alla tieghi	28,21	Decl	1	1
124	Malli sama' Laban ahbar ~.	29,13	Dep	1	1
125	Kellu Laban żewġt ibniet....	29,16	Decl	1	0
126	Wieġeb Laban....	29,19	Decl	1	1
127	Sama' l-Mulej li m'jiniex	29,33	Decl	1	1
128	Meta rât Rahel.....	30,1	NaD	1	1

3.1 Statistics

3.1.1 General Figures on Constituents' Sequence in the Data Clauses

We shall first give the distribution figures of the Subject-Verb-Object and the Verb-Subject-Object sequences in the two sets of data reproduced in part two of the dissertation. As the position of the object in the sentence is irrelevant for our enquiry, we shall not include mention of the object in the ensuing figures. Out of one thousand clauses

*in the *Saydon Data*:

708 clauses carry the Verb-Subject sequence (= 70.8%)

292 clauses carry the Subject-Verb sequence (= 29.2%);

*in the *Contemporary Maltese Data*:

167 clauses carry the Verb-Subject sequence (= 16.7%)

833 clauses carry the Subject-Verb sequence (= 83.3%).

3.1.2 *Distribution of Clause Types*

Out of one thousand clauses

* in the *Saydon Data*:

672 clauses are Declarative Clauses	(= 67.2%)
153 clauses are Dependent Clauses	(= 15.3%)
125 clauses are Performative Clauses	(= 12.5%)
037 clauses are Conditional Clauses	(= 03.7%)
012 clauses are Interrogative Clauses	(= 01.2%)
001 clause is an Exclamatory Clause	(= 00.1%)
1000 clauses	(= 100%)

* in the *Contemporary Maltese Data*:

700 clauses are Declarative Clauses	(= 70.0%)
256 clauses are Dependent Clauses	(= 25.6%)
001 clause is a Performative Clause	(= 00.1%)
013 clauses are Conditional Clauses	(= 01.3%)
025 clauses are Interrogative Clauses	(= 02.5%)
005 clauses are Exclamatory Clauses	(= 00.5%)
1000 clauses	(= 100.0%)

3.1.3 *S-V//V-S Distribution in the Various Types of Clauses*

* In the *Saydon Data*:

- out of 672 *Declarative Clauses*

482 carry the V-S sequence	(= 71.7%)
190 carry the S-V sequence	(= 28.3%)

- out of 153 *Dependent Clauses*

105 carry the V-S sequence	(= 68.6%)
048 carry the S-V sequence	(= 31.4%)

- out of 126 *Performative Clauses*

82 carry the V-S sequence	(= 65.0%)
44 carry the S-V sequence	(= 35.0%)

- out of 37 *Conditional Clauses*

28 carry the V-S sequence	(= 75.7%)
09 carry the S-V sequence	(= 24.3%)
- out of 11 <i>Interrogative Clauses</i>	
06 carry the V-S sequence	(= 54.5%)
05 carry the S-V sequence	(= 45.5%)
- only one <i>Exclamatory Clause</i> is found (.....)	
It carries the V-S sequence	
* In the <i>Contemporary Maltese Data</i> :	
- out of 700 <i>Declarative Clauses</i>	
101 carry the V-S sequence	(= 14.4%)
599 carry the S-V sequence	(= 85.6%)
- out of 256 <i>Dependent Clauses</i>	
47 carry the V-S sequence	(= 18.3%)
209 carry the S-V sequence	(= 81.7%)
- only one <i>Performative Clause</i> has been identified (no.1381) and it carries the V-S sequence (.....)	
- out of 13 <i>Conditional Clauses</i>	
5 carry the V-S sequence	(= 38.4%)
8 carry the S-V sequence	(= 61.6%)
- out of 25 <i>Interrogative Clauses</i>	
10 carry the V-S sequence	(= 40.0%)
15 carry the S-V sequence	(= 60.0%)
- out of 05 <i>Exclamatory Clauses</i>	
02 carry the V-S sequence	(= 40.0%)
03 carry the S-V sequence	(= 60.0%)

The reader should note that the figures in percentages have been slightly rounded.

3.2 General Observations

From the data that has been gathered above and sifted mainly for the variable of the S-V//V-S order of the constituents, there emerge at least two generalizations:

3.2.1 Sharp Contrast in the Preferences for Word Order

While Saydon in his Bible translation tends to prefer the Verb-Subject sequence of constituents, Contemporary Maltese, as represented in the data that has been collated, tends to prefer the opposite order of the Subject and the Verb constituents in the sentence. A few samples for illustration:

no 01: U *saret* il-ghaxija...(Gen 1,13)

And came(past) evening

And evening came

no 24: *Tidhol* fl-arka int u wliedek (Gen 6,18)

shall enter in the ark you and your sons

You and your sons shall enter in the ark

no 58: *Kellu* Abram sitta u tmenin...(Gen16,16)

had Abram eighty six...

Abram was eighty six ...

.....

no 1008: ..u s-saqaf tal-Knisja *jaqa'* (As 1)

..and the roof of the church will fall

..and the roof of the church will fall

no 1365: ..li t-Tabib *kellu* pjan...(Ag 44)

..that the Doctor had a plan

.. that the Doctor had a plan

no 1982: Il-bejgh *naqas* drastikament (Mu 9)

Business has fallen drastically

Business has fallen drastically

In the first set taken from what we termed the *Saydon Data*, the verb constantly precedes the subject in the sentence and this phenomenon takes place in 71.7% of the sentences we are calling Declarative Clauses and in 68.6% of what have been labelled Dependent Clauses. These are by far the two largest groupings of clauses in the two sets of data. Declarative and Dependent Clauses form 82.5% of all the clauses in the *Saydon Data* and 95.6% of all the entries in the *Contemporary Maltese Data*. In the latter set of data on the other hand the Subject-Verb sequence is found

in 85.6% of the Declarative Clauses and in 81.7% of all Dependent Clauses. The same tendencies may be registered as present also in the minor groupings of the two sets of data. Thus, out of the one thousand clauses(1000) in the *Saydon Data*, one hundred and twenty six (126) have been identified as Performative Clauses. Of these, eighty two (82) which are equivalent to 65% of the total have the verb preceding the subject, while forty four (44) have the subject preceding the verb. In the *Contemporary Maltese Data*, the largest among the minor groupings is that of the Interrogative Clauses; it consists of twenty five (25) clauses, a mere 2.5% of the entire collection. In sixty percent(60%) of clauses in this category, the subject precedes the verb as in the majority of this set taken from contemporary writers composing literary and journalistic pieces. So one may conclude, standing by the information furnished by the sets of data that have been gathered, that Saydon tends to prefer the Verb-Subject sequence in contradistinction to contemporary Maltese writers who favour rather the Subject-Verb order in all the types of clauses gleaned from our sources. As the sampling of data in both sets have been random, one may perhaps generalize these tendencies to all the narrative sections in Saydon's Bible on the one hand, and to all narrative genres in literary works of contemporary writers of Maltese as well as in Maltese writings of a journalistic nature.

3.2.2 Typology of the Clauses in the Data

In this sub-paragraph we shall focus somehow on the typology of the clauses that has been included in the two sets of data. Some of the information that is here being examined has already been given in the previous sub-paragraph, but it needed to be included here for the sake of completeness. By far the most common of clauses in both sets of data are what we termed, with Sadock and Zwicky, 'Declarative Clauses', through which languages "convey assertions, expressions of belief, reports, conclusions, narratives, assessment of likelihood, expressions of doubt, and the like" (Sadock/Zwicky in Shopen 1985:165). Indeed we shall not elaborate as Sadock and Zwicky did(cf *Ibid.*, pp. 165-167)by distinguishing between 'marked' and 'unmarked' declarative clauses even though this distinction would somehow bear upon the word order in the sentence. Out of the one thousand clauses in each of the two sets, six hundred and seventy two (672) have been identified as Declarative Clauses in the *Saydon Data*, while in the *Contemporary Maltese Data* seven hundred (700) belong to the same category. This constitutes 67.2% and 70.0% of each set respectively. One may venture to say that perhaps Declarative Clauses are the most typical of both Saydon's material as well as of the material written by contemporary Maltese authors.

Discussing the second largest grouping of clauses in both sets of data is a complicated matter. Hoards of issues are involved which we cannot even mention here. The present writer will focus only on two questions, that somehow relate to his enquiry in this dissertation. There is first of all the issue of defining what a Dependent Clause is. The terminology is taken from the traditional grammar of English. In modern functional grammars there is some reluctance to use this nomenclature as there exist misgivings to employing the traditional term 'sentence'. Halliday for instance prefers the terms 'clause' and 'clause complex', the latter replacing the term 'sentence'. The clause complex is defined as "a Head clause together with other clauses that modify it." "There is the same kind of relationship between the sentence and the clause as there is between group and word: the sentence has evolved by expansion outwards from the clause"(Halliday1994:215). From Halliday's quotation one may venture a preliminary definition of a dependent clause: it's a clause that lives for the sake of the Head clause which it somehow modifies. According to Halliday "there are numerous kinds of modifying" (Ibid:215), and this may mean that there are numerous kinds of dependent clauses; but the present writer refuses to venture deeper into this theoretical discussion and refers the reader to chapter seven of Halliday's book referred to in this context, to the seventh chapter of (Comrie:1989), and to the contribution by Sadock and Zwicky in the third section of the first volume of *Language Typology and Syntactic Description* edited by Timothy Shopen (Shopen: 1985).

There is then the fact that the phrase 'Dependent Clause' as used in this dissertation is functioning rather as an umbrella nomenclature clustering together what probably constitute different 'types' of dependent clauses. Using traditional grammar terminology, we may say that some entries are subordinate clauses, while others are relative clauses. No such distinction was drawn while we were sifting the data for the constituent sequence they carry. But a superficial reading of the clauses marked as 'Dependent' will reveal that, for instance, some of them are final clauses (nos 26;38;116), others temporal clauses (nos 40;923;1532), others still causal clauses (nos 820;825;1066); but the greater part of Dependent Clauses are relative clauses introduced by the relative pronouns *li*, which may carry the meaning in English of 'who, whom, and that', *min* which more or less carries the meaning of 'who/whom', and *xi* which means 'what/whatsoever'. In a number of relative clauses, the relative pronoun replaces the noun Head which the clause is qualifying (cfr Comrie1989:145-146) so that in these clauses the relative pronoun is actually the subject of the clause (nos 1018;1022; 1025). In other clauses, however, the relative pronoun *li* is evidently not the agent but the patient of the transitive action

described in the relative clause. Thus, for instance, in clause no 62, *li tilidlek Sara*, “whom Sarah will give birth to” (Gen 17, 21), the subject/agent is Sara while the object/patient is the child which is here represented by the relative pronoun *li* (cfr also nos 87;1221; 1227). In other cases still *li* is simply a marker that a subordinate clause is being opened; here *li* carries the meaning of ‘that’ while the subject of the clause would be another word/concept. In no 44 Abram asks Saray to tell the Egyptians who might be interested in her *li int oħti* ‘that you are my sister’ (Gen 12,13). The clause in Maltese is a nominal clause which drops the verb in the predicate so that the subject is *int* ‘you’, while the noun phrase *oħti* ‘my sister’ constitutes the predicate (Cf. nos 105;820). Though here the clause is causal introduced by adverbial *għax*. In no 1026 the clause reads *li t-teatru jgħinna* ‘that theatre helps us’ (As 15); the subject is not that clause-initial *li*, but the subject/agent *teatru*. There seems to be a tendency for this form of the clause to be more common in the sources from contemporary Maltese writers (Cfr 1022;1029;1055; 1062). For a sample of dependent clause introduced by relative pronoun *min* I would refer the reader to no 1071, and for a clause with *xi* at the opening of the clause, to clause no 1124.

The point of the above descriptive exercise in this sub-paragraph is to show that notwithstanding the typological variety of the clauses, the prevalence of the V-S sequence in the *Saydon Data*, and the prevalence of the S-V sequence in the *Contemporary Maltese Data* is quite evident. This means that the choice of the constituent sequence in these data did not depend much upon the type of the clause if there was any dependence at all. On the other hand, if the S-V sequence is so prevalent in the sources from contemporary writers, composing consciously literary and non-literary Maltese pieces, this sequence could be seen as part of a convention, while Saydon’s consistently employing the V-S sequence might have been intended as a conscious flouting of an established convention, carried out with the intention of enforcing an alternative convention. This was probably done because Saydon, like other semiticists (Sutcliffe for instance, cfr 1936:210), believed that the V-S-O word order was to be considered as the normal order, more consonant with the semitic character of the Maltese language. The issue at hand now is to establish whether Saydon and his specialist colleagues were correct or not in considering the V-S sequence of clause constituents as the normal sequence.

3.3 Unmasking a historical linguistic blunder?

In this concluding section of the dissertation, the present author will attempt to answer a number of questions: Is Maltese a basic word order or a free word order

language (Cf. Comrie1989:88 for the two concepts of basic word order language and free order language). While this study and those in Shopen1985 were the ones that helped the present writer for the theoretical considerations to be made in the following paragraphs, one should be aware that word order was the object of a number of other studies, as for instance Li1975; Givón1983; Tomlin1986)? In case the answer will be that Maltese is a basic word order language, what is the basic order of the constituents in a clause? How does the word order that has been discovered as characterizing the *Saydon Data* used for this short study, relate to the basic word of Maltese? Suppose it will be found that the prevalent order in the Saydon material which is presumed to adequately represent Saydon's entire translation of the Bible, differs from the established basic word order in current Maltese, what linguistic judgement/s may one venture to make on the word order consciously chosen by the eminent translator for his translation?

3.3.1 *The contribution of Prof Albert Borg*

As Prof Albert Borg's contribution in chapter 5 of his monograph on Maltese grammar, *Ilsienna* (1988:114-148), on 'the order of constituents in the sentence', is the only one of its kind on the Maltese language of which the present writer is aware of, we have to start this linguistic discussion on the word order in Saydon's Bible translation and in contemporary Maltese, with a brief examination of Borg's contribution. Two preliminary remarks may be in order:

- 1) Borg expresses his conviction that the results of his study in this regard are provisional in character, that more research is indeed needed, and that what he discovered were 'tendenzi' (tendencies) rather than 'regoli fissi li ma jjiçcaqilqu gatt' (fixed and unchangeable rules) (pp.128-129,148).
- 2) The generalization of what Borg arrived at may be vitiated if one takes too seriously his contention that the results of his research are valid only for 'id-djalett tieghi' (my dialect) rather than for Standard Maltese (The present writer has already touched this issue in sub-paragraph 1.4.1). In the introduction to the monograph (p.xiii), Borg contends that his linguistic discussion focuses on his own dialect that may be taken to be a "varjant ta' dak imsejjah 'Pulit'" (a variant of what is called "Educated Language"). In other words, his dialect is another breed of the Standard Maltese (cf. sub-paragraph 1.4.1 for bibliography on this issue). Although minor variations may be said to exist between one dialect and another, as Borg contends (cf. pp.1-23 of his book), the present writer, who lives less than ten miles away from Prof Borg, and in an area which is very similar to his, sociolinguistically, does not perceive of any substantial differences in language structure between Borg's dialect, his own dialect, and that of

Standard Maltese. So that the statements Borg makes concerning his dialect may well be taken to hold for the dialect of the writer of this dissertation as well as for Standard Maltese.

Prof Borg's monograph is addressed mainly to undergraduate students of linguistics at the University of Malta; this attention to the target readers determined in part both the speed and the level of his argumentation. The main characteristic of his work is clarity of exposition. This chapter is made up of twelve short subsections of which the first four may be considered as exploratory. His *exposé* opens with an explanation of what he means by the constituents of the sentence (pp.114-116). He refrains from entering into a detailed discussion of what he terms 'figures of speech', referring his readers to his own work of 1981. In the second subsection(pp.116-118), he lists 'all the mathematical possibilities' of arranging the order of constituents in a sentence taking the sentence *It-Tifel laqat il-kelba* (The boy hit the bitch) as paradigm. He identifies the six possibilities also mentioned in (Comrie1989:35):

1. *It-tifel laqat il-kelba* (SVO)
The boy hit the bitch
2. *It-tifel il-kelba laqat* (SOV)
The boy the bitch hit
- 3.* *Laqat it-tifel il-kelba* (VSO)
Hit the boy the bitch
4. *Laqat il-kelba t-tifel* (VOS)
Hit the bitch the boy
5. *Il-kelba laqat it-tifel* (OVS)
The bitch hit the boy
6. *Il-kelba t-tifel laqat* (OSV)
The bitch the boy hit

Each word order involves the use of particular intonation and perhaps pause (p.117; this issue of intonation is treated on its own merits in the next subsection,pp118-120). Only the sequence in the third sentence is considered by Borg as unacceptable in his own dialect, hence the asterisk according to the convention in the literature (p.117).The peculiar intonation as well as the different word orders leave Borg with no doubt "that we have a difference in the form of these sequences. What we need to explore is what kind of difference there may exist in their meaning, and, supposing this difference does exist, whether it should lead us to say that the sequences...realize different sentences, or whether we should consider them as different versions of the same sentence"(p.120). Another goal set by Prof Borg in this study was to explore whether there do exist descriptive rules

that would regulate the relative order of the constituents in the sentences.

In section 5 Borg compares Maltese to English and Latin where word order in the sentence is concerned. In English the sentence-initial position is normally (that is, in unmarked word order) reserved for the Subject constituent, since in this language the relative order of the constituents has syntactic relevance (p.121). In Latin, on the other hand, the syntactic function of the constituents is grammaticalized in the morphology of the constituents themselves:

(7) *Filius amat patrem*

(8) *Patrem amat filius*

These two sentences (7) and (8) are identical notwithstanding the constituents 'filius' and 'patrem' exchange places within their relative order in the sentence. Word order carries lighter syntactic weight than it does in English. Maltese is quite different in this regard from both English and Latin. "This is so because the transitive relationship between the boy and the bitch is identical in the five (acceptable) sequences, independently from the relative order of the constituents. Besides, the speaker of Maltese will find no difficulty to identify the Subject or the Object expression in each sequence, even though there exists no morphological suffix to distinguish one expression from another" (p.122). The qualification 'acceptable' has been added by the present writer. In the next paragraph, Borg qualifies this final statement slightly, in that Maltese has the preposition *lil* what is often used to identify the object/patient element in the clause (pp.122-123). This he discusses in the following chapter.

In the next few subsections of the chapter, Borg services his readers by placing his grammatical discussion within the context of modern linguistics with special reference to discourse analysis and pragmatics. With generative grammarians Borg arrives to the conclusion that in Maltese the syntactic structure of the sentence reflects its semantic structure (p.124). Then he leads his readers into a short but clear discussion on the information structure of the clause ('sentenza' in Maltese) (pp.125-130), the 'cooperation principle' as formulated by H.P.Grice (1975, 1978, 1981) (pp. 130-131), and the thematic structure of the sentence (pp.131-136). From time to time Borg refers in his text to 'technical literature', but he never identifies any modern representative of discourse analysis as his source of theoretical information for the arguments under discussion. But the work of Brown and Yule (1983) is certainly in the background of his discussion.

What Prof Borg writes in sections 10 and 11 (pp.136-146) is of great interest

even though the present writer is not all that happy with how the author treats some details of the data. The title of section 10 runs as “The Agreement of the verb with the subject and with the object.” What he says about the agreement of the verb with the subject is more or less traditional grammar and needs not be repeated here:

It-tifel laqat il-kelba
The boy hit the bitch

It-tfal laqtu il-kelba
The children hit the bitch

(Please notice that while the singular *tifel* in Maltese carries the meaning of ‘boy’ or ‘child’, the plural *tfal* carries only the second meaning). When he says that the verbal expression agrees with the object Borg alludes to the pronominal suffix that may join the verbal element in the predicate even though the object/patient constituent is overt.

It-tifel laqatha l-kelba
The boy hit it the bitch

It-tfal laqtuha l-kelba
The children hit it the bitch

It is a mistake to say that it is the verbal expression that agrees with the object/patient; it is rather the pronominal suffix which enters the sentence for some reason or another and somehow influences the structure of the clause. Borg does not elaborate on the function of this pronominal suffix in the sentence and on why it exercises the structural influence it is shown to have. For while Borg insists again and again that the VSO sequence is unacceptable in his own dialect, when the pronominal suffix is affixed to the verb, the sequence is saved:

Laqatha t-tifel il-kelba (V+suff-S-O)

Hit it the boy the bitch

Laqatha l-kelba t-tifel (V+suff-O-S)

Hit it the bitch the boy

Prof Borg does not furnish any explanation for this phenomenon; but it is evident that one function played by the pronominal suffix is that of identifying clearly the object/patient of the action in the clause. Its absence in the verb-initial clauses

Borg considers unacceptable in his dialect, as in *Laqat it-tifel il-kelba* (Hit the boy the bitch), renders the clause rather ambiguous because, as Maltese is a pro-drop language, the subject of the verb *laqat* may be someone else other than 'the boy' which would then appear as the object of the verb rather than its syntactical subject. This explains why the clause *Laqat it-tifel il-kelba* would sound clumsy to any native speaker of Maltese and is consequently judged unacceptable by Borg. But once an element is introduced which would distinguish for their different roles the two nominal phrases *it-tifel* and *il-kelba*, the clause gains in clarity, and it needs no longer be deemed ambiguous and unacceptable either in Borg's dialect or in Standard Maltese. One such element is the pronominal suffix. *Laqatha t-tifel il-kelba*: the pronominal suffix *-ha* is cataphoric of a feminine noun phrase and not of a masculine one. This would automatically exclude *it-tifel* which is masculine; the pronominal suffix *-ha* affixed to the verbal predicate refers necessarily in this clause to *il-kelba*, and the clause is thus disambiguated. Unfortunately, no such explanation is offered in Borg's discussion; this lack of explanation would have made Saydon's Bible translation, where, as we have seen the V-S-O sequence predominates, look 'ungrammatical' [One should note that on p.141 (cf. also p.147) where Borg discusses the negative form of the clauses with the possible versions of word order in the clause, he reiterates that the VSO order of constituents in the sentence is impossible to have, which means that such order is absolutely unacceptable which is not very far from saying that it is 'ungrammatical']]. But suppose the action described in the clause is intransitive? One may quote instances from the *Saydon Data* collated in part two of this dissertation: *U saret il-ghaxija* (no.1); ...*kien hemm...gorfijiet* (no. 23); *U ħareġ Noê u wliedu* (no.32); etc. Or the action could be transitive but some syntactical element is introduced as explained above. Thus, in no. 30 of the *Saydon Data* the transitive verb *ftakar* takes the preposition *fi* (literally 'in'), here in abridged form *f* for reasons which we will not discuss in this essay; or the next clause, no. 31, where the verb *kellem* (spoke) takes the preposition *lil* (to) thus clearly distinguishing between the subject *Alla* from the addressee *Noê*. And these examples may be multiplied. Clauses therefore which are verb-initial, with the second constituent being the subject, are not absolutely anredeemable, are not absolutely ungrammatical.

In the last section (pp.140-146), Borg examines other types of clauses. He first reviews the negative formulation of clauses 1 to 6 as given above, and concludes that five out of six possibilities are allowed in his dialect while the negative form of the clause with the VSO sequence is again unacceptable (After clause no.1, only the negative formulation is given; for the rest of the positive formulation of the

clauses the reader is referred to nos.2-6 on p. 101 of this dissertation):

1. *It-tifel laqat il-kelba* (SVO)
 1a. *It-tifel ma laqatx il-kelba*
 the boy has not hit the bitch
 2a. *It-tifel il-kelba ma laqatx* (SOV)
 the boy the bitch has not hit
 3a. **Ma laqatx it-tifel il-kelba* (VSO)
 has not hit the boy the bitch
 4a. *Ma laqatx il-kelba it-tifel* (VOS)
 has not hit the bitch the boy
 5a. *Il-kelba ma laqatx it-tifel* (OVS)
 the bitch has not hit the boy
 6a. *Il-kelba it-tifel ma laqatx* (OSV)
 the bitch the boy has not hit

As in the positive formulation, intonation plays an important role for the identification of the syntactical/semantic role of each constituent in the clause (p.141). After this, Borg reviews the interrogative formulation of the same clauses; basically the interrogative form may be the same as the declarative as long as the intonation is correct: *It-tifel laqat il-kelba* (Declarative formulation); *It-tifel laqat il-kelba?* (Interrogative formulation). Again, word sequence no. 3 is excluded as unacceptable unless some element like the pronominal clause attached to the verb is included:

3. **Laqat it-tifel il-kelba*
 3b. **Laqat it-tifel il-kelba?*
 3c. *Laqatha t-tifel il-kelba?*

Finally Borg studies a small number of transitive interrogative clauses introduced by the interrogative pronoun *min*, who.

9. *Min laqat il-kelba?* (SVO)
 Who has hit the bitch?

He attempts to vary the order of the constituents following the sequence in nos. 1 to 6, but without any positive results (p.144). When the pronominal suffix is affixed to the verb, only the SVO (*Min laqatha l-kelba?*) and the OSV (*Il-kelba min laqatha?*) are clearly possible.

This variety of constituent orders in the clause led Borg to suspect "that there

are formal and systematic factors that are regulating upon the structure of the clause, besides the pragmatics factors that we have spoken about”(p.145). In order to prove this point the author tries to build a handful of clauses, with the interrogative *min* being put in the position of the object/patient(Since we have been using the same phrase for some time the translation has not been considered necessary):

10. *It-Tifel laqat 'il min?*
11. *It-tifel 'il min laqat?*
12. * *Laqat it-tifel 'il min?*
- 13 *Laqat 'il min it-tifel?*
14. *'Il min laqat it-tifel?*
15. *'Il min it-tifel laqat?*

According to Borg, in this version of constituent order it is not possible to introduce the pronominal suffix with the verb as in the declarative clauses:

- 16.* *It-tifel laqtu 'l min ?*
- 17.* *It-tifel laqatha 'l min?*

(We cannot explain here a number of smaller details of morphology and phonology in these sentences as for instance the abridged form of the preposition *lil*). The reason (16) and (17) are excluded is formal: since the pronominal suffix refers to the object in the clause and here we have only the interrogative pronoun *min*, in these clauses the pronominal suffix remain without a proper referent and hence the clauses are ungrammatical (Cf. p.146 for a slightly different formulation of the explanation; Borg persists in making the verbal expression agree with the object, which is incorrect since the agreement of the verb is only with the subject. Anyhow, the affixed pronominal element with a cataphoric relationship to an overt object needs further study, in the light of both Romance and Semitic languages). The use of the interrogative pronoun *min* restricts the possibility of structural variation in the clause, as we have seen, and prescribes the use of the third person masculine singular morphology in the verb:

18. *Min laqat il-kelba?*
19. * *Min laqtet il-kelba?*
(3rd person feminine singular)
20. * *Min laqtu l-kelba?*
(3rd person masc/fem plural)

3.3.2 A Short Critical Evaluation of Prof Borg's Contribution

We have given a rather long and detailed account of Prof Borg's discussion of word order in the clause in Maltese, both because, to our knowledge, it is the only one of its kind, and also because it constitutes a very good beginning. The author was correct in insisting upon the provisory character of his study; to say the least, this good attempt at describing the linguistic phenomenon involved, suffers from the drawback which is endemic of grammars and linguistic discussions of this type: limited extent of data that may be used to exemplify the points that the author wants to make. Borg's clauses sound artificial even though he succeeds somehow in contextualizing the utterances in real life. Besides, they are admittedly limited to the extreme in numbers and variety.

Close reading of Prof Borg's discussion as a whole and especially of his concluding section on pp.146-148, may create in the reader divergent impressions. On the one hand he/she may conclude that for Borg the structural explanation for word order is decisive. After all, he/she reads that the six word orders that are possible when, say, a pronominal suffix is attached to the verb to identify conclusively the object/patient of the action in the clause, are simply "different pragmatical versions of the same sentence"(p.147). In other words, there exist "formal and systematic factors that regulate upon the structure of the clause, besides the pragmatics factors of which we have already spoken" as Borg had written on p.145. On the other hand, the pragmatics explanation seems to prevail in Borg. On pp.147-148 we read that "the result seems clear enough that in a transitive, declarative clause, the initial position in the clause is reserved for that expression which serves the pragmatics function of the theme. Neither the grammatical function of subject or object, nor the pragmatics function of new or old information seem to have any special relationship with this position in this type of clause." Is not Borg's contribution, to say the least, slightly ambiguous? Equally nebulous is his concluding suggestion: "Probably, in the present state of these studies, it's more convenient that we make no strict distinction between grammatical differences and other differences suggested by pragmatics. Instead, any difference in form (whether it is in intonation alone or in the relative word order alone, etc.) which we consider as corresponding to some difference in meaning (independently whether this meaning is grammatical in character or comes from pragmatics), we should consider as a(well formed) clause"(p.148).

This study of Prof Borg does not answer clearly the question as to whether

Maltese is a basic word order or a free order language. But what he says about the five constituent sequences, numbered in this dissertation from 2 to 5, that they are versions of one and the same clause that carries the SVO sequence; what he says about interrogative clauses introduced by the interrogative pronoun *min*, that the pronoun sticks to its clause-initial position, and allows no other word orders unless some new element is introduced, like the accusative marking preposition *lil*, that would ensure that *min* is specified as the object of the action; what he says about the VSO sequence as being absolutely unacceptable in his own dialect unless the object-identifying pronominal suffix is affixed to the verb; all these statements make it clear that Maltese is a basic word order language and that the basic order of the constituents, or at least the most frequently used constituent order (cfr Comrie 1989:87-88 for this latter concept) is the SVO sequence. And this is confirmed by the data from the sources of Contemporary Maltese in this dissertation, where 83.3% of the clauses have this sequence. Work remains to be done over the other 16.7% of the clauses in the *Contemporary Maltese Data* to establish in how many of these clauses the change in the order of the constituents from the ordinary SVO sequence has not been due to topicalisation.

3.3.3 *And what about the word order that is prevalent in Saydon's Bible?*

Two statements seem permissible:

- a) Given that the basic or at least the most frequent word order in Maltese is the SVO sequence, and that 70.8% of the clauses in the *Saydon Data* has the VSO order as to allow the generalization that Saydon preferred this word order for his translation of the Bible, one may be allowed to state that in his Bible translation, Saydon constructed his clauses with a constituent order that differs from the general norm in modern written Maltese. This may explain the difficulty for understanding this Bible that has been experienced by Maltese readers without long and previous acquaintance with it. And when one considers the close relationship between spoken and written language [Lyons defines writing as "essentially a means of representing speech in another medium" (1968:38)], one may have an explanation also as to why Saydon's Bible remained difficult to listen to and to understand by the common speaker of Maltese, even when it was 'cleansed' of the more rare and extinct vocabulary items [This factor may have been the decisive element for the decision of the Catholic Church authorities in the sixties to prefer a completely new translation in "current Maltese vocabulary, structure and style, refined and polished according to the literary principles of a dynamic translation in function of public reading in worship"]

(Sant1988 in Sant1992:162), to Saydon's translation which had been known to the general public for a number of years]. One should note that in his other literary writings (the reader is referred to, for instance, Saydon's contributions in the anthology compiled by J.Aquilina in Aquilina1976:141-153), Saydon does not adhere to the preference of this word order in the construction of the clauses. Why should he have opted for this order of the constituents in his translation of the Bible, were it not that the cultural factors listed in the subparagraph 1.2.2 as possible influences upon Saydon's work as translator, were actually operative?

- b) May one speak of this issue of the prevalent word order in the Bible translation of Saydon (The reader should not forget though that in 29.2% of the clauses taken from this translation, the SVO is found; naturally one has to verify whether it was pragmatics exigencies or the imitation of the *Vorlage* which dictated these changes in the order of constituents) vis-à-vis the prevalent word order in contemporary Maltese in terms of grammaticality/ungrammaticality and acceptability/unacceptability?

As the dissertation is becoming rather long, the present writer shall avoid a detailed discussion of what is meant by grammatical/ungrammatical and acceptable/unacceptable, and shall rely upon the considerations of Haegeman, Lyons, and the concerted work by Smith and Wilson. According to Lyons (1968:137) the term 'acceptable/ unacceptable' is the more primitive or pre-scientific term of the two, in that "it does not depend upon any technical definitions or theoretical concepts of linguistics." For Lyons "An acceptable utterance (the reader should note that at this stage of the book, Lyons is using 'sentence' and 'utterance' as practically synonymous terms, cf. p.52) is one that has been, or might be, produced by a native speaker in some appropriate context and is, or would be, accepted by other native speakers as belonging to the language in question. It is part of the linguist's task, though not the whole of it, to specify as simply as possible for the language he is describing what sentences are acceptable, and to do this in terms of some general theory of language-structure" (1968:137). Haegeman takes 'grammaticality' as a theoretical notion. "A sentence is grammatical if it is formed according to the grammar of (the language concerned) as formulated by the linguist. 'Acceptability', on the other hand, is the term which characterizes the native speaker's intuitions about the linguistic data" (1994:7; the discussion of Smith and Wilson in the first two chapters of Smith/Wilson1979 has also been found very helpful for understanding the issues under study here). Grammaticality and acceptability do not coincide (cf. Lyons1995:132-135 and Haegeman1994:8 for utterances which

are grammatical though unacceptable).

May one describe Saydon's use of the VSO sequence as the 'basic word order' in the clauses of the narrative sections of his Bible translation, as 'ungrammatical'? While it is true that the 'normal' order of the constituents in the clauses of modern Maltese is the SVO, as our data indicate, describing the word order in Saydon's Bible as 'ungrammatical' would be definitively too strong. After all, standing by what Prof Borg writes, the VSO sequence is not absolutely prohibited in Maltese; there we read that if in a declarative transitive clause, another element is added to the subject, verb and object of the clause, which would specify the syntactic and the pragmatics function of the object/patient, the VSO sequence is possible indeed (cf. Borg 1988: 139). So this order of the constituents in a clause is not unknown in Maltese, though, we have to admit, its use would probably involve topicalization of the verbal element in the clause. Besides, Saydon, together with a number of contemporary writers and scholars, seems to have worked with the hypothesis that the prevalent element in the make-up of Maltese was the semitic one, and therefore giving to Maltese syntax what seemed to be a characteristic of semitic syntax, could have appeared as the most natural option. For Saydon and his specialist colleagues, the VSO word order was grammatical even though it was not the word order one would commonly find in other written expressions of the language. One should notice that grammarians and Maltese linguists judged the sentence structure in Saydon's Bible as idiosyncratic, but not ungrammatical (cf. Aquilina 1973:343). But one may be justified in considering the use of the VSO as the prevalent order of clause constituents in a literary work of the dimensions of a Bible translation, as 'unacceptable' since this differs from the way Maltese build their clauses when they speak or write.

3.3.4 Results Attained. In Brief

- 1) The prevalent order of constituents in the clauses of the narrative sections of Saydon's Bible translation is the VSO.
- 2) Maltese is a basic word order language.
- 3) The prevalent order of constituents in a clause expressive of contemporary Maltese is SVO; alterations from this basic word order are effected by the exigencies of pragmatics.
- 4) The differences in word order between Saydon's Bible and contemporary Maltese may explain why Maltese readers experience Saydon's Bible as rather hard to understand even when vocabulary issues are settled beforehand.

- 5) There may have been several factors that could have influenced Saydon's option for the VSO order in the clauses of his translation of the Bible: translation ethos in the first half of the twentieth century; the movement for semitic Maltese; a mistaken judgement of the semitic ingredient in the constitution of the Maltese language...

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