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## **MALTESE COMPLEMENT SENTENCES TO NON-VERBS**

The present work builds on an earlier study on complementation in Maltese (Borg, Albert: forthcoming) which examines the situation arising when a sentence occurs as the argument of a predicate or verb, that is, when it occurs as the subject or object of that verb (cf. Noonan, 1985). Mention is made there of the expression 'li' which overtly marks some, but not all, sentential complements. Since this expression also marks relative clauses in Maltese the decision was taken to label the expression a mark of general subordination, rather than a complementiser (cf. Fabri, 1987). That study also examines sentential complements which can be nominalised, with or without the accompanying encoding of the original subject and/or object expression. It mentions the possibility also of such a nominalised complement being itself embedded in another nominalised complement. The study examines also sentence complements which can be adjectivalised, noting that such adjectivalised complements can, via their derivational morphology, allow to a certain extent either an active or a passive encoding of a given situation.

The present paper deals with subordinate sentences which are arguments of parts of speech other than the verb, notably of nouns, adjectives and prepositions, and to a smaller extent, of adverbs.

### **1. Sentential complements to nouns.**

As in other languages, Maltese has a class of nouns which can take a sentential argument, as can be seen from sentences 1, 2 and 3:

1. *L-idea li l-kelb seta' qatel it-tarbija kienet waħda tal-biża'.*

the-idea that the-dog he-could he-killed the-baby she-was one of-the-fear

"The idea that the dog could have killed the baby was a frightful one".

2. *It-tagħlima li aħna lkoll aħwa mhux ta' min wieħed jinsiha.*

the-lesson that we all brothers-and-sisters neg. of who one he-forgets-her

"The lesson that we are all brothers is not one which should be forgotten".

3. *Il-ħolma li fuq din l-għolja kellha tinbena belt ġdida, fl-aħħar twettqet.*

the-dream that on this the-hill she-had she-is-built city new in-the-last she-was-fulfilled

"The dream of having a new city built on this hill was at last fulfilled".

To start with, notice in these sentences that the sentential complement is obligatorily marked by the expression *'li* preceding it, and directly following the complement-taking nominal. This nominal occurs in subject position in sentences 1, 2, and 3, but it can also occur as the object of a matrix sentence as in 4:

4. *Is-surmast irraporta l-fatt li l-iskola kienet ġiet l-ewwel.*

the-headmaster he-reported the-fact that the school she-was she-came the-first

"The headmaster reported the fact that the school had been placed first".

As regards the relative order of the constituents in sentences 1 to 4 note that it is obligatory for the sentential complement to

immediately follow the nominal it is complement to, although other constituents can be moved around to achieve different pragmatic effects.

The complement taking nominal can itself be a nominalised sentence. Examining sentence 5:

5. *Ġanni stqarr li l-affarijiet ġraw hekk.*

John he-stated that the-things they-happened so  
"John stated that that was the way things happened".

the subordinate sentence marked with 'li' is the object argument of the verb 'stqarr'. The sentence 'Ġanni stqarr' can be nominalised as in 6:

6. *L-istqarrija ta' Ġanni*

the-statement of John  
"John's statement"

and this nominal can then take a sentential complement as in 7:

7. *L-istqarrija ta' Ġanni li l-affarijiet ġraw hekk ma emminha hadd.*

the-statement of John that the-things they-happened so neg. he-believed-her nobody  
"Nobody believed John's statement that that was the way things happened".

Some reflection is in order here over the expression 'li'. In so far as it occurs to mark the sentential complement of a verb, its use as a complementiser is distinct from its occurrence to mark relative clauses, as hinted in the introductory section of this study. But what of its obligatory occurrence to mark the sentential complement to a noun? Is a distinction between a complementiser and a relativiser function to be maintained even here? Compare sentence 2 with 8:

2. *It-tagħlima li aħna lkoll aħwa mhux ta' min wieħed jinsiha.*  
 the-lesson (li) we all brothers

8. *It-tagħlima li aħna ħadna mhux ta' min wieħed jinsiha.*  
 the-lesson (li) we we-took

In 2, the subordinate sentence '*li aħna lkoll aħwa*' was described as the sentential complement to the matrix nominal '*it-tagħlima*'. In 8, where the subordinate sentence '*li aħna ħadna*' appears in a parallel position with respect to the matrix nominal '*it-tagħlima*', the situation is in fact a different one. The subordinate sentence '*li aħna ħadna*' is in fact elliptical for '*aħna ħadna tagħlima*'. The object '*tagħlima*' in the subordinate sentence appears as the subject '*it-tagħlima*' in the matrix sentence and equi-deleted. Note that the deletion takes place even though the two nominals in question are not completely identical, the matrix subject being definite, a requirement arising out of the coalescence of the two sentences into one.

On the other hand, the subordinate sentence in 2, '*li aħna lkoll aħwa*', can stand on its own and preserve all its meaning independently of the matrix sentence, an operation entailing only the removal of the mark of subordination '*li*'.

In other words, in distinguishing between a subordinate sentence which is a relative clause, and one which is a sentential complement to a matrix nominal, one can make use of the criterion of equi-deletion, which is involved only in the case of the subordination of a sentence as a relative clause. But note that this criterion applies only in the comparison with sentential complements to nouns, since, as observed in my earlier study (Borg, Albert forthcoming), equi-deletion is in fact involved in

certain sentential complements to verbs. Thus the subject in sentences 9 and 10 is identical, and is

9. *Is-surmast qal...*  
the-headmaster he-said

10. *Is-surmast se jmur vaganza.*  
future he-goes holiday.

11. *Is-surmast qal li se jmur vaganza.*  
"The headmaster said he would be going on holiday"

equi-deleted in 10 when it becomes complement to the verb 'qal' as in 11.

Here however, confusion with relative clauses is out of the question as 'li' occurs following a verb, 'qal' and not a noun, as in sentence 8.

Sentential complements to nouns, as far as I can make out, occur always with 'li', and preserve their sentence-like structure, so that there are no nominalised complements to nouns. Neither, it would seem, are there adjectivalised complements to nouns, in spite of a sentence like 12:

12. *Il-katavru mtella' mill-baħar, għarfuh mill-ewwel.*  
the-corpse lifted (masc) from-the-sea, they-recognised-him from-the-first  
"The corpse (that was) lifted out of the sea was immediately identified".

Here, 'imtella' mill-baħar' is the adjectivalisation of sentence 13:

13. *Il-katavru ttella' mill-baħar.*  
the corpse he-was-lifted from-the-sea.  
"The corpse was lifted out of the sea".

which occurs as the subordinate relative clause in 14:

14. *Il-katavru li ttella' mill-baħar, għarfuh mill-ewwel.*

"The corpse that was lifted out of the sea, was immediately identified".

A comparison of sentences 12, 13 and 14 will reveal the operation of equi-deletion involved in subordinate sentences which are relative clauses, whether they are sentence-like in structure, as in 13, or adjectivalised, as in 12.

## **2. Sentential complements to adjectives**

Sentences 15 and 16 illustrate an instance where a subordinate sentence occurs as the complement of an adjective:

15. *Il-koka ferħana li tista' tieħu vaganza.*

the-cook happy that she-can she-takes a-holiday

"The cook is happy that she can have a holiday".

16. *It-tfal imdejġin li tilef it-tim tagħhom.*

the-children sad that he-lost the-team theirs

"The children are sad because their team lost".

Once again these complements are obligatorily marked by means of 'li', and as in the case of sentential complements to a noun, they obligatorily immediately follow their matrix adjective. A word is in order, however, about the nature of the matrix sentences, reproduced as 17 and 18 respectively, which lack a verbal form:

17. *Il-koka ferħana.*

"The cook is happy".

18. *It-tfal imdejġa.*

"The children are sad".

These sentences, in my view, encode synthetic predications studied in Borg, Albert 1987-88. Their structure in 17 and 18 lacks a copular expression, but an appropriate form of the independent personal pronoun can be interposed between the subject nominal and the predicate adjective as in 19 and 20:

19. *Il-koka hi ferħana.*

"The cook is happy".

20. *It-tfal huma mdejġin.*

"The children are sad".

The study just mentioned (Borg, Albert, 1987-88) attempts at least a partial explanation of the syntactic optionality of the personal pronoun with copular function, but the point doesn't concern us here. Observe, rather, that it is an adjective with predicative, rather than attributive, function, that takes a sentential complement.

The strings in 21 and 22:

21. *Hażin li qatt ma tobdi.*

bad(masc) that never neg. you-obey

"It's bad that you never obey"

22. *Mhux rakkomandabbli li tixrob minn din l-għajin.*

neg. recommendable that you-drink from this the-spring

"It is recommended not to drink from this spring".

offer apparent instances of sentential complements to adjectives. The structure of the strings in 21 and 22 would seem to suggest a subjectless matrix sentence whose only overt constituent is the predicative adjective. However I think a case can be made for the following analysis: each of the sentential complements in 21

and 22 can stand as nominals in subject position in the nominal sentences 23 and 24:

23. *Li qatt ma tobdi (huwa) hażin.*  
 "The fact that you never obey is bad"

24. *Li tixrob minn din l-għajn mhux rakkomandabbli.*  
 "Drinking from this spring is not recommended".

23 and 24 can now be seen as encoding synthetic predications in which the subject nominal happens to be a subordinate sentence. The structures in 21 and 22 result simply from the preposing of the predicate part (*hażin* and *mhux rakkomandabbli*) of the predication, to the position preceding the subject nominal of the predication, the resultant constituent order being quite frequent in other areas of the language (cf. Borg, Albert 1988).

Another point to note in connection with 21 and 22 is that the expression 'li' is optional here but obligatory in 23 and 24, a distribution for which I have no explanation at the present time.

Notice also that the predicative adjective is obligatorily singular masculine in this type of structure. Presumably the least marked form of the adjective is chosen to agree with a nominal which is in fact composed of a sentence rather than a noun with a particular gender.

The string in 25 exemplifies a structure related to that in 21, 22, 23 and 24:

25. *Hağa hażina li qatt ma tobdi.*  
 thing bad (fem) that never neg. you-obey  
 "It's a bad thing that you never obey".



The analysis for 25 should be seen in the light of its restructuring in 26:

26. *Li qatt ma tobdi (hija) haġa hażina.*  
"That you never obey is a bad thing".

26 is different from 23 and 24 in that the predication it encodes, rather than being simply a synthetic one is closer to an equative one, a type also studied in Borg, Albert 1987-88. However it has to be pointed out that the test for equative predications, namely the substitutability of the subject and the predicate expressions, works best if the predicate nominal in 26 is made definite, thus:

27. *Li qatt ma tobdi (hija) l-haġa l-hażina.*  
the-thing the-bad  
"The bad thing is that you never obey".

Overall one can therefore conclude that the subordinate sentences in 21, 22 and 25 are not, after all, complements to adjectives, as was the case in 15 and 16. Rather they constitute subject nominals with the structure of a sentence occurring within strings encoding synthetic or equative predications.

### ***3. Sentential complements to prepositions***

In this section we examine sentential complements to prepositions which are also obligatorily marked with 'li' and obligatorily follow the preposition they complement. These are exemplified in 28, 29, and 30:

28. *Wara li kiel kemm feleħ, qabad u telaq.*  
after that he-ate how-much he-could-manage he-took-up and he-left  
"After stuffing himself he just got up and left".

29. *Waqt li kien jiekol, waslitlu aħbar hażina.*  
while that he-was he-eats, she-arrived-to-him a-piece-of-news bad  
"He received some bad news while he was having lunch"

30. *Fuq li għamilli ma naħfirlux malajr.*  
 on that he-made-to-me neg. I-forgive-to-him qui\_kly  
 "After what he did to me, I won't forgive him easily".

It is noteworthy that the prepositions '*qabel*' "before" and '*bħal*' "like" take a sentential complement obligatorily marked with '*ma*' instead of '*li*':

31. *Qabel ma titlaq, mur ara 'l ħija.*  
 before you-leave you-go you-see obj. my-brother  
 "Before you leave, go and visit my brother".

32. *Bħal ma naf 'il missieru, naf 'il ommu wkoll.*  
 like I-know obj. his-father I-know obj. his-mother as-well  
 "I know his mother just as I know his father".

This expression '*ma*' functions, like '*li*', both as a complementiser and a relativiser, though exactly why the prepositions in 31 and 32 take '*ma*' and not '*li*' to mark their sentential complement is not clear.

#### 4. Sentential complements to adverbs

A case may finally be made for saying that certain adverbial expressions in the language take a sentential complement. Sentence 33 exemplifies one such instance:

33. *Mhux li kont tisma' minni.*  
 neg. that you-were you-hear from-me  
 "Would that you took heed of my advice".

Here '*li*' obligatorily marks the subordinate sentence occurring as complement to the negative expression '*mhux*'. Other adverbial expressions which take a complement obligatorily marked by '*li*' are illustrated in sentences 34, 35, 36 and 37:

34. *Aktarx li se jsiefer dalwaqt.*  
probably that future he-goes-abroad soon  
"He's probably soon going abroad".

35. *Għad li għejja, xorta baqa' jaħdem.*  
although that he-got-tired same he-remained he-works  
"He kept on working even though he got tired".

36. *M' għandix xi ngħid ħlief li ma naqbilx*  
neg. I-have what I-say except that neg. I-agree  
"I don't have anything to say except that I don't agree".

37. *Issa li laħaq, insiena.*  
now that he-reached he-forgot-us  
"Now that he has got on, he has forgotten us".

The sentential complements to some other adverbial expressions, on the other hand, are only optionally marked by 'li'.

38. *Certament (li) hekk għandu jsir.*  
certainly (that) so he-has he-becomes  
"That is certainly what should be done".

It seems that in general the subclass of adverbial expressions ending in '-ment' function as sentence adverbials rather than *ās* expressions qualifying a sentence constituent. This is so even when the presence of 'li' to mark the complement would sound highly unnatural as in 39:

39. *Fortunatament ma wegga' ħadd*  
fortunately neg. he-hurt nobody  
"Fortunately nobody was hurt."

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