

Dative Arguments in Maltese

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This paper focusses on the syntactic expression of three argument verbs in Maltese and specifically on the class of ditransitive predicates in which the third argument is typically a beneficiary or recipient argument. Despite the relatively large literature on classes of ditransitive predicates crosslinguistically, the expression of such event types in Maltese has received very little attention. Maltese is from the South Arabic branch of Central Semitic, with a Maghrebi/Siculo- Arabic stratum, a Romance (Sicilian, Italian) superstratum and an English adstratum.

Working within the framework of LFG's Lexical Mapping Theory, Kibort (2008) offers a typology of the patterns of alignment of arguments to syntactic grammatical functions for such ditransitive predicates, distinguishing between the dative shift construction (in which the beneficiary or recipient argument outranks the theme/patient argument), a canonical dative construction and an oblique recipient/beneficiary construction.

We provide an extensive description of a range of ditransitive constructions in Maltese arguing that the language has both canonical dative constructions and dative shift constructions, with the latter construction being available for only a small number of predicates, and show how the approach to ditransitive constructions which Kibort (2008) develops provides a suitable framework for modelling the Maltese data.

This talk builds on joint work with Maris Camilleri (University of Essex).