

Maltese

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1 Language

Maltese is the national language of Malta. It is a Semitic language spoken by almost 400,000 people[1]. Maltese is a descendant of the *Siculo-Arabic* dialect developed in Sicily and Malta, later to be heavily influenced by Italian, Sicilian and English vocabularies.

2 Phonetic inventory

2.1 Consonants

	Labial	Dental	Post-Alveolar	Velar	Palatal	Laryngeal
Nasals	m		n			
Stops	p b	t d		k g		ʔ
Affricates		ts dz	tʃ dʒ			
Fricatives	f v	s z	ʃ			h
Trills		r				
Approximants	l				j	

Additionally, the voiced labial-velar approximant /w/.

2.2 Vowels

2.2.1 Monophthongs

	Front		Central		Back	
High	ɪ	i: i:			ʊ	u:
Mid	ɛ	ɛ:			ɔ	ɔ:
Low			ɐ	ɐ:		

I will normally use /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/ to denote /ɐ/, /ɛ/, /i/, /ɔ/, /u/, respectively.

2.2.2 Diphthongs

Seven diphthongs exist in Maltese: /eʊ/, /ɐi/, /ɛʊ/, /ɛi/, /ɪʊ/, /ɔi/ and /ɔʊ/.

3 Syllable inventory

	Word Initial		Word Medial		Word final	
V	<u>u</u> .nɔ:r	'honour'	—		—	
CV	<u>k</u> i.tɐp	'he wrote'	meh. <u>m</u> ʊ.dʒi:n	'dirty (pl.)'	ip. <u>k</u> i	'cry (Imp.)'
VC	ip. <u>k</u> i	'cry (Imp.)'	—		—	
CVC	pɛt. <u>n</u> ɛ	'comb'	ɔ.rɛn. <u>d</u> ʒɔ	'orange'	ɪ. <u>b</u> ɛs	'hard'
CV:	<u>d</u> ɛ:rɛ	'her house'	bɪʔ. <u>z</u> ɪ:ʔɛs	'with pigs'	ɐtʃ. <u>t</u> ʃɛt.tɐ:	'he accepted it (f.)'
CCVC	tlɪf. <u>t</u> ɛ	'I lost it (f.)'	ɐtʃ. <u>t</u> ʃɛt.tɐ	'he accepted'	ʔɔ.rɔ. <u>b</u> lɔk	'it (m.) has drawn nearer in time'

Many more syllable structures are allowed; Borg-Azzopardi [1] define the canonical syllable as (C)(C)(C)V(C)(C) for monosyllabic words and (C)(C)V(C) for multisyllabic words.

3.1 Generalizations

- Vowel-only V syllables are only allowed on word initial positions. – $*\sigma[V]_{\sigma}$
- Only permitted word-final clusters are CC . – $*CCC]_w$
- Word-final long vowels are prohibited. – $*V:]_w$

Data sources

- [1] BORG, A., AND AZZOPARDI-ALEXANDER, M. *Maltese*. Descriptive Grammar Series. Taylor & Francis Group, 1997.