

Maltese

SAGIE MAOZ
Department of Linguistics
Tel Aviv University

sagiemao@mail.tau.ac.il

1st Draft
November 6, 2012

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 Monophtongs

	Front		Central		Back	
High	ɪ	ɪː			ʊ	ʊː
Mid	ɛ	ɛː			ɔ	ɔː
Low			ɐ	ɐː		

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

2.2.2 Diphthongs

Seven diphthongs exist in Maltese: /ɐʊ/, /ɐɪ/, /ɛʊ/, /ɛɪ/, /ɪʊ/, /ɔɪ/ and /ɔʊ/.

3 Syllable inventory

	Word Initial	Word Medial	Word final
V	<u>u</u> .nu:r 'honour'	—	—
CV	k <u>i</u> .tɛp 'he wrote'	mɛh.m <u>u</u> .dʒi:n 'dirty (pl.)'	ip.k <u>i</u> 'cry (Imp.)'
VC	ip.k <u>i</u> 'cry (Imp.)'	—	—
CVC	pɛt.n <u>ɛ</u> 'comb'	ɔ.r <u>en</u> .dʒɔ 'orange'	ɪ.b <u>ɛs</u> 'hard'
CVV	dɛ: <u>r</u> ɛ 'her house'	bɪʔ.z <u>ɪ</u> .ʔɛs 'with pigs'	ɛtʃ.tʃɛt.t <u>ɛ</u> : 'he accepted it (f.)'
CCVC	tɪl <u>f</u> .tɛ 'I lost it (f.)'	ɛtʃ.tʃɛt.t <u>ɛ</u> 'he accepted'	ʔɔ.rɔ.bl <u>ɔk</u> '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.

4 Generalizations

TODO

Data sources

[1] Azzopardi-Alexa. *Maltese*. Descriptive Grammars. Taylor & Francis, 1996.