

From Language to Ethnolect: Maltese to Maltraljan – a case study in Cross Continental Lexicography

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**From Language to Ethnolect : Maltese to Maltraljan --
A case study in Cross Continental Lexicography**

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Abstract

This paper looks into the first ever formal compilation of a select glossary, of one of a number of newly emergent ethnolects, within an Australian socio-linguistic environment: a direct result of Australia's multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic demographic composition.

All the lexical items extracted from the written form presented here, were selected solely from Maltese émigré literature¹ originating within Australia. The material from the spoken idiom is my personal record, noted during face to face meetings with individuals in normal day to day conversations, at various formal community gatherings, as well as from Maltese language radio programmes from different regions within Australia.

I adopted the dictionary form as my preferred approach, it being the most scientific methodology for the glossary discussed in this paper. It features many of the more salient language traits of the lexical material collated. It also facilitates for further delving into this particular language deviation while laying the groundwork for a more comprehensive record for future similar lexical research.

¹ The term is used in its broadest meaning to include even common household flyers.

Glossary abbreviations:

A	Australia, ~n
Akk	Akkademja tal-Malti (Official Journal)
anal	analogy
Aq	Aquilina, Maltese-English Dictionary
Ar	Arabic
AE	Australian English
adj	adjective
BT	Bovingdon Tapes
brk pl	broken plural
cf	confer
col	collective
comp	comparative
CT	Caruana Tapes
CTM	Cotba Ta Taghlim Bil Malti
diff	difference
E	English
ESI	Erin Serracino Inglott, Il-Miklem, Maltese-Maltese 9 Vol. Etymological Dictionary
et al	and others
f	feminine
infl	inflection
inv.	invariable
It	Italian
JMS	Journal of Maltese Studies, University of Malta
m	masculine
M	Malt-a; ~ese
MA	Maltese Australian
Mel	Melbourne
MEM	Maltese English Maltese Educational Publications
MH	The Maltese Herald
M'jan	Maltraljan
MNB	Manwel Nicholas Borg, Maltese-Australian author
morph.	morpholog-y; ~ical
MR	Maltese Radio
N	Take note
n	noun
obs	obsolete
OT	Official Translations
patt.	pattern
pers. pron.	personal pronoun
phonol.	phonology; ~ical
pl.	plural
pp	past participle
R	Romance
ref.	refer
reg. assim.	regressive assimilation
S	Sydney
s	singular
sem.	Semantic; ~ally
StM	Standard Maltese.
suff.	Suffix
syll	syllable
TVMA	The Voice of Malta and Australia (Newspaper)
v	verb
v.i.	verb intransitive
v.t.	verb transitive
var.	variant
Z	Zammit paper (Maltese-Australian author)

1. Introduction

1.1 General background

In a geopolitical sense Australia lies firmly within the Asia-Pacific region of the world. Even ethnically, from time immemorial, this nation correctly fits the claim, at least partially, of belonging to the Asiatic-Pacific family of nations. The indigenous Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands populations testify to this fact. Linguistically therefore, this island-continent again qualifies as belonging to the same regional beginnings of its Asian-Pacific neighbours.

The past two centuries have drastically reshaped the demographic physiognomy of the relatively young multiethnic and multilingual Australian society. But even during this brief period in Australia's history of European settlement, there was always a constant inflow of peoples from the numerous countries in the immediate geographical Asia-Pacific neighbourhood.

The more populous and advanced countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong have a long history of migration to Australia. More recently, since the sixties and seventies from the last century onwards, the multiethnic composition of Australia's population was further enriched with large numbers of new settlers from neighbouring Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. Also a constant trickle of Pacific Islanders seeking work on the sugar cane plantations and in the pearl industry in the northern regions of Australia cannot be overlooked as a significant injection of permanent settlers from this geopolitical region.

One of the more significant contributions this cosmopolitan mixture of ethnic origins brought to the Australian continent is the kaleidoscope of languages. Such a rich addition to Australia's linguistic geography is strongly reflected in the numerous non-English language newspapers, journals, magazines and just as many regular radio and television programmes as a common feature of everyday life in today's Australian society.

1.2 Maltese Language history

Among the great migrant hordes which settled in Australia from the last century, the contingent from the Mediterranean island-nation of Malta ranked as one of the numerically larger groups. Today these old settlers, together with their descendants, from the point of view of language adherence, are believed to exceed 200,000 Maltese speakers² (Cauchi, 1990; Bovington, 2001).

The Maltese language can trace its early beginnings from the Arab invasions of the latter part of the ninth century, around 870AD³ (Aquilina, 1960, Bovington, 2003). The direct Arabic linguistic influence lasted well into the fifteenth century and long after the formal expulsion of the Arabs from the island by the invading Normans in 1127AD (Cassar, 2000). With the advent of the Normans during the first millennium, the first linguistic influences of Romance from the Latin culture of continental Europe slowly began to find its way into the local idiom. From 1450 onwards when the Knights of the Order of St John took over the administration of the central Mediterranean island of Malta, the linguistic infiltration of Romance took a firmer hold and gradually became an intrinsic part of a superstructure over the Arabic based Maltese language.

Today's Standard Maltese is acknowledged as the indigenous language of the people of Malta with English enjoying the shared status of a national language. It has firmly asserted its linguistic maturity in keeping abreast of an ever changing scientific and technological world. In this linguistic ambience the English language is sharing its sphere of influence upon Maltese with Italian, as the two most significant current linguistic influences⁴.

As a separate language Maltese has aptly acquired international recognition as one of the world's modern languages, with linguistic structures which enable it to continue to flourish within the ambits of a rapidly changing world community⁵.

2 The actual number of persons of Maltese origin permanently resident in Australia, in contrast to actual Maltese language speakers, is thought to exceed the 400,000.

3 Brincat 1994 and Agius 1996 propose a Sicilian-Arabic origin.

4 The Arabic grammatical and morphological base remains rock solid to this day as the main structural foundation while Italian and English are making considerable inroads into the Semitic make-up of the language physiognomy .

⁵ Maltese is recognized as an official language of the European Union.

1.3 Migration and settlement

The earlier batches of Maltese settlers to migrate to Australia hailed from the northern rural regions of Malta and the sister island of Gozo. These were the young unemployed men, of little or no formal education, together with those who were accustomed to hard labour and long hours in their tiny family fields and the odd labour intensive jobs in the local building industry and the stone quarries.

Most of those new settlers who were sought and accepted by Australia, found employment in the sugar cane fields along the northern coastal townships of the State of Queensland. Others sought their future on the Sydney and Melbourne wharves, in the steel works of New South Wales and South Australia, laying railway tracks in different parts of the continent and in the mines of Tasmania and Broken Hill in far western New South Wales. These first groupings arrived in the 1920's. As the greater majority of these early groups mostly originated from common geographical regions of Malta, the northern extremities of the island and well as from the sister island of Gozo, they shared similar linguistic affinities in their dialectal variations from Standard Maltese.

The later waves of migrants from Malta to settle in Australia, by far the largest numerical concentrations, were those belonging to the nineteen fifties and sixties. In contrast these migrants hailed from the urban regions of Malta and tended to migrate in family clusters rather than the unattached young men of the former era. Also their educational background frequently included a secondary level of education. The majority of these men folk from this latter group were from a blue collar, skilled and semi-skilled worker category.

1.4 Language skills

Linguistically the first group of settlers from the 1920's brought with them their local dialectal speech-form rather than the Standard Maltese, with very little to no knowledge of English. In contrast to this group, those of the fifties and sixties who had received a workable level of education had also been exposed to the basic levels of English by direct interaction with personnel from the British armed forces and their families.

All these factors contributed to the later development of *Maltraljan*; the ethnolect discussed in this lexicographical monograph.

1.5 Compiling a glossary

In 2001 my work on *Maltraljan* was published⁶. It is the first academic representation of a select glossary of this relatively new ethnolect, following a number of previous brief introductory articles on the same subject, published in different language journals⁷.

One of the principle features of a lexicon (dictionary) is that headwords are classified according to word class grammatical rules. Even though in the said work I made a serious attempt at following a dictionary format, owing to the underdeveloped and linguistically incomplete nature of the *Maltraljan* ethnolect, a proper dictionary presentation could not be attained and was neither intended. Hence I refer to the collated lexical material in this work as a glossary and the entire corpus as an ethnolect⁸, rather than a dialect or a language.

In order to preserve originality, I rigidly adhered to recording all lexical items in the form in which I had heard or read them. Attempting to apply the conventional diachronic-synchronic dictionary and grammatical approach to the compilation of this glossary, with its syntagmatic-paradigmatic internal relations, would have necessarily entailed artificial contrivances. Such exercise would have considerably reduced the essential objectivity and thereby weaken the scientific value of the entire work.

1.6 New language forms

During the course of the history of languages throughout the world, while several old established ones have completely died out, new language forms have appeared on the world language

⁶ Some of my reviewers have less correctly referred to this book as a dictionary.

⁷ A common complaint emanating from all migrant communities in Australia is that any material, spoken or printed, originating from the homeland is becoming more difficult to understand owing to the rapid changes occurring in the mother tongue as well as within the Australian ethnolects itself.

⁸ A more appropriate term of reference in preference to dialect or idiolect.

map. This is quite a natural process which continues until present times.

The ancient language of the Romans, Latin, is one of the more obvious examples of language extinction. Yet out of this defunct language, which is still studied by scholars of certain academic disciplines, sprung a whole family of Romance languages. These include some of humanity's more aesthetically productive language forms such as French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. And English, a Germanic tongue, has borrowed copiously from Latin!

Similarly a number of Middle Eastern languages belonging to the Semitic family, as do Phoenician and Punic for instance, were already extinct in the heydays of Latin! Yet even from this language group, humanity is still reaping the benefits of that rich linguistic baggage as evidenced within the highly productive life of Arabic and indeed Maltese as an offshoot from Arabic!

Hebrew on the other hand, in its original biblical form, remained alive for many centuries in the sacred texts of the Jewish people. Yet today's Israel has managed to revive and develop this almost forgotten tongue as a spoken medium, into a modern and viable national language!

As languages have disappeared, as in the case of several of the South American indigenous tongues, others have sprung up in different regions of the world. In South Africa, Afrikaans is a good example from relatively recent times, of a new language coming into existence and being adopted as one of that nation's official languages. A similar situation exists in New Guinea, where Pidgin was elevated to an official national language alongside the indigenous Motu and the adopted English language.

2. A new language environment

The tens of thousands of new settlers from Malta to choose Australia as their new country of adoption, not unlike their Mediterranean counterparts from Italy and Greece, sought and found their social survival within their new but alien Australian society, by forming close community bonds. The closely similar socio-economic backgrounds of these settlers from the Maltese archipelago to those of their Mediterranean

neighbours, acted as a strong communal catalyst in preserving that all important sense of belonging. Yet by far the strongest common denominator, above every other consideration, including religious adherence, was their respective languages, in this case Maltese.

Employment wise, the best opportunities for these semi-literate and sometimes totally illiterate early settlers, were the labour intensive jobs in the sugar cane plantations along the north Queensland coastline, on the wharves and in the motor car factories of Melbourne and Sydney, in the great mining ventures of Broken Hill in the desert country of far western New South Wales, in the rugged deep mountain ranges of Tasmania, as well as in the steel works at Whyalla in South Australia and Port Kembla near Sydney.

It was within this ambience where the first traces of the *Maltraljan* ethnolect were born! Notably, the Greek and Italian communities which were frequently to be found in the same regions where Maltese settlers had formed their little colonies, experienced the same ethnic bonding in the solace of their national languages! Hence two other identifiable ethnolects, Australoitalian (Ryan, 1974, Andreoni, 1971) and Australian-Greek (Moraitis, 1977), also know their respective beginnings from around the same time period and within the same geographical regions of Australia as that of and concurrently with Maltraljan.

2.1 Maltese lexicography in perspective

The first documented dictionary of Maltese, which remained in manuscript form and has never been published, was written around 1640 by a French Knight of the Chivalric Order of St John, known as the Knights of Malta; the ruling power of the day.

Other similar works of perhaps an earlier period are referred to in old documents but no traces have ever been found to date. An impressive achievement nonetheless, considering the renowned *Dictionary of the English Language* by Samuel Johnson was not published until 1755 and the *Accademia della Crusca* of Italy produced its first dictionary in 1612. In contrast to these initiatives, the Arab world had been producing dictionaries and glossaries of its ancient rich tongue from as early as the fifth century and even from earlier times!

The first comprehensive and serious attempt at Maltese dictionary compilation was Mikiel Anton Vassalli's renowned *Lexicon*, printed and published in Rome in 1796. It was this major lexicographical work which set the pace for all the many later attempts which followed until contemporary times.

2.2 First traces of Maltraljan

In 1929 one of the more enterprising Maltese to settle in Sydney, Australia, George Parnis, began publishing a quarterly bilingual (Maltese and English) magazine aimed specifically at the immediate needs of his fellow countrymen dispersed around the wide expanses of the vast Australian continent. The main emphasis of his writings in this magazine consisted of items of interest to farmers and workers in the sugar producing industry. This pioneering work was embellished with brief news items from Malta with the addition of brief news reports from the local scene, giving the magazine a more general readership appeal.

A remarkable additional feature inserted in Parnis' magazine, which is of particular significance to this monograph, was the initiative shown by the editor of this quarterly publication, in documenting in written form the first glossaries of a Maltese-Australian terminology. He further proceeded to add to these word lists, a series of contrived conversations interspersed with Maltraljanisms between two imaginary local Maltese interlocutors, for didactic purposes.

These quarterly magazines, which I appreciatively discovered in the archives of the Library of New South Wales, Mitchell Library Section, constitute the first documented traces of the newly emerging Maltese-Australian ethnolect! Although their collator was not himself a linguist, he was sufficiently sensitive to these language deviations to register them in print and ventured one important step further by actually applying them in these fictitious conversational examples!

Considering the first large scale migrations from Malta to Australia had only commenced a decade or so prior to this first Maltese language venture in journalism, it is noteworthy how relatively *early*, these linguistic deviations began to appear within these relatively recent Maltese settlements. The first Maltraljan lexemes had already become sufficiently

widespread and accepted into the local “Maltese-Australian” idiom by 1929 as to feature prominently in print form. Such early development seems to indicate an even earlier origin to this new idiomatic phenomenon.

2.3 Language deviation

The Maltese language of Australia, like many other languages of minority groups which have settled within a different language ambience, has deviated considerably from the Standard Maltese spoken in the Maltese Islands. This language deviation from the “norm”, is a phenomenon which has occurred in all migrant communities⁹ where significant numbers of persons from the same ethnic origins have congregated. Geographical distances from the country of origin and the passage of time, in addition to other factors which I occasionally refer to *en passant* in this study, have left their indelible mark upon the idiom of the locals.

During the seventy year period from 1929, the year in which the first attempts in Maltese journalism in Australia began with the publication of Parnis’ quarterly magazine, until the year of the completion of my work in 1998, the mother tongue in Malta had itself moved onwards, altering the physiognomy of Standard Maltese, in adaptation with the social, technological and scientific demands of modern day living. In the meantime, while the Maltese mother tongue in Malta had undergone such changes, a healthy sign of any vibrant living language, the Maltese *language* of Australia, here identified as Maltraljan, had assumed its own linguistic adaptations within its newfound isolation. This new linguistic phenomenon is now acknowledged as a distinct ethnolect in its own right, with its own characteristic functionality.

But, as Maltraljan is not a fully developed dialect or language in that a complete syntactic construction is not possible in its present stage of development, it is unable to sustain itself in isolation from Standard Maltese. While Maltraljan is used universally throughout Australia wherever large groups of Maltese have settled, each region has in turn developed segments of its own vocabulary and adopted other language subtleties and nuances in keeping with their own individual exigencies.

⁹ The Turkish community in Germany, the Germans in South Australia, African Americans in New Orleans, etc.

For this reason it is always used in a code-switching manner, interspersed with Standard Maltese, or more accurately, with that form of Standard Maltese which the settlers imported with them upon their arrival in Australia¹.

3. Lexicographical sources

In the process of collating the lexical compilation of Maltraljan, the dictionary style enabled me to maximise my exposure of the primary and salient features of this fascinating language development unfolding before my eyes.

The written form of Maltraljan was the more readily available and more easily accessible. This material consists of leaflets and flyers circulated among the many Maltese social groups scattered around Australia, including the several religious publications issued by the Maltese clergy, numerous translations from English of official literature issued by Australian State and Federal Government bodies, Trade Unions, the business world such as commercial banks, social groups and the like.

Since the publication of my formal compilation in 2001¹⁰, I have observed a marked increase in the wider recognition and acceptance of this ethnolect among the Maltese-Australian community, as a practical means of effective communication, both in the local Maltese newspapers as well as in the various radio and television programmes and at public social gatherings. Even the official Federal Government monthly Social Welfare magazine *Age Pension News for Seniors* is increasingly adopting Maltraljan terminology in response to popular demands and as a more effect means of communication.

If there ever were the need to justify serious academic investigations into these minority language developments, the living evidence is extant in the cited documents, as well as on the sound waves of popular radio programmes and on the very tongues of the speakers themselves, the Maltese settlers in Australia.

¹⁰ The Maltese Language of Australia: Maltraljan -- A lexical compilation with linguistic notations and a social, political and historical background.

3.1 Lexicography and Linguistics

Modern day dictionary compilations, compared to some works of some decades ago, have of necessity evolved into a more comprehensive representation of a language's vocabulary. Dictionaries or lexicons have, in accordance with the demands of today's far more complex societies, developed into a more sophisticated representation of language involving an intricate web of disciplines.

Lexicography has combined with linguistics as an essential and intrinsic part of the whole exercise. A good dictionary today is expected to give, in addition to primary and implied meanings, other features which take us through the corridors of the history of a language and the intricacies of grammar and morphology. Authoritative dictionaries are expected to give the reader a phonetic rendition of each headword followed by word classification, etymology, examples of idiomatic usage and as wide a description as possible of the manner in which each word can be applied in any language situation. Also irregular language usage and other deviations are often considered as an intrinsic characteristic of a wholly comprehensive lexicon: not an impossible task with the facility of today's IT potentials. And as language is a constantly changing phenomenon, no lexicon is ever perfectly all inclusive. Words drop out of usage and even completely die out while others take on new meanings and archaic forms are often revived and given a new lease on life. Regular dictionary updates are a necessary feature of any living language.

With all the aforesaid in mind, as well as the likelihood of Maltraljan continuing to expand, to develop and to evolve for some time to come¹¹, according to current sociological trends within the Australian-Maltese linguistic ambience, in my presentation of the glossary, I chose to follow the most authoritative Maltese dictionary, the Aquilina version, to which this work can be a complementary adjunct.

In devising the dictionary layout as applied to my glossary, I had to consider particular circumstantial factors surrounding my lexical material, bearing in mind always, not to ascribe formal language attributes to this ethnolect. Thus for

¹¹ Since publication of this major work on Maltraljan in 2001 the author has continued to add new lexemes to the original glossary; a clear indication of an active living language system in process of development.

example one cannot assume, in this case, that verbs follow the regular Standard Maltese paradigm. The same approach must be followed with all word classes. Also other regular grammar and morphological structures applying to Standard Maltese must be recognised merely as a general guide and not as a formalised rule, lest one misses the innovative and frequently subtle qualities of such language formations in isolation from the mother tongue.

As this baggage comprises a relatively new register, I became more acutely aware of the need to validate authenticity of the work to the maximum detail possible. Also considering the high degree of present day lexicographical work, it is only proper that all new research material in the field satisfy the criteria under close scrutiny.

Here is an example of one of my *dictionary style* entries selected from my published glossary :

abgrejdja, /ɛbgrɛɪdjɐ/, v.i./t., A2, S, 1. to keep abreast of progress (*trid dejjem abgrejdja biex tlahhaq mal-ġdid*, you have to keep upgrading to keep up with innovations). 2. to promote to a higher post in one's job (*dis-sena jabgrejdwah it-tim għax sejjer tajjeb hafna fil-logħob*, this year I think they will upgrade the team as it is performing well at the games). N voicing of E aspirate [p]. cf. *abdejtja*. [< E *upgrade*]

4. Glossary layout of Maltraljan

In sequential order, unless otherwise stated, all entries begin with the headword, which appears in **bold** print, as the sole lexical item under scrutiny.

For consistency and ease I have applied a system of spelling following the Standard Maltese orthography. As the majority of lexemes appearing in this compilation do not occur in Standard Maltese, the orthography is consistent with my own phonological observations¹¹. In a number of instances I have also entered variations, according to the pronunciation and intonation expressed by the speaker/s in the spoken form or as documented in the written form.

A small number of headwords which do occur in Standard Maltese have been included in the glossary for special reasons. These citations have been accorded a special category.

Historically Maltese lexicography has not adopted the system of phonemic transcriptions, as is the preferred practice with the world's major languages. In this sense the publication of my glossary presentation has broken new ground in the compilation of Maltese lexicons¹².

Phonemic transcriptions, which also incorporate phonetic renditions in the glossary, include variations such as the most commonly occurring main stress and stress shifts, the lengthening of vowels, and open and closed syllables in word endings.

In the example given, the English term “*to upgrade*” has undergone the following transformations. Initial “u” in its transition from Australian English has transformed from back half open unrounded vowel /ʌ/ to back open unrounded vowel /ɐ/ when applied in Maltrajan. The consonant “p” which follows, in its Australian form, is rendered as bilabial plosive /p/ which in Maltrajan becomes bilabial plosive /b/ under the influence of the implosive velar consonant /g/¹³. This in turn is followed by main stress shift from its ultimate position in Australian English to the paroxytonal position in Maltrajan through the addition of the essential verbal suffix ~ja.

In its transitional process to Maltrajan, following the verbal patterning from Standard Maltese, the final open ended syllable /ja/ completes the transformation, in keeping with Standard Maltese Perfect Tense, third person singular masculine, verbal suffix. This is standard usage in all Semitic languages, in the absence of an infinitive form that corresponds with that of Romance languages.

The overall format for the rest of the lexical glossary follows this standard pattern for all headwords. Deviations from this sequential mode occur where there are instances of more than one main stress, in which case this is indicated immediately following the initial entry. In a very few cases, I had to contrive a fictitious form where a semantic or formal ambiguity arose. These occurrences are indicated by an asterisk. The actual version recorded then follows.

¹² Past lexicographers of Maltese have been heavily influenced by economics during the printing process owing to limited readership, unavailability of professional phoneticians at the time and unavailability of suitable fonts to cover IPA prior to today's computer technological facilities.

¹³ Such transformation in converting English /p/ to Maltese /b/ is lingering evidence of Maltese language substrate from earlier Arabic influence. Cf. – The name of the city of Tripoli in contemporary Arabic becomes *Tribulis*.

As the lexical material being dealt with here involves multiple language forms (Standard and dialectal Maltese, Maltraljan, British and Australian English, etc.) the phonetic transcriptions further elucidate phonological change by final analogy with Australian English accent variations¹⁴.

After each phonemic transcription, word classes give grammatical descriptions followed by alternative forms. For example, a noun is often used also in an adjectival form and verbs often derive from nouns and so forth. Such derivatives are always indicated when they are known to occur. At no stage did I make any assumptions about any linguistic developments without having actually encountered them in their written and/or spoken form.

4.1 Prior language exposure

Those Maltese émigrés who arrived in Australia during the nineteen fifties and sixties, to which I referred earlier on, had considerable exposure to British English, both from the educational system adopted in Malta under British influence, as well as from the daily interaction of the Maltese with the numerically large presence of British military personnel, at that moment of the colonial history of Malta.

In contrast to the earlier émigré groups from the 1920's, the educational background of this earlier wave was negligible and their direct contact with British personnel was minimal or non-existent. Such significant social and educational exposure clearly influenced the physiognomy of Maltraljan, with such characteristics becoming acutely obvious through the existence of archaic terms as well as forms alongside more contemporary developments. Hence the significance of these divergent traits in Maltraljan could not be ignored in classifying the lexical material I managed to record over a period exceeding three decades.

The latter group of Maltese who settled in Australia around the middle of last century, had not only begun to adopt a number of lexical terms from British English but more significantly, their morphological Maltese mould began to display a definite trend towards assimilating British English language influences. This trend was particularly evident in the

¹⁴ Extensive on-going research into Australian English is revealing distinct variations in the Australian idiom in different parts of Australia. Ref.: Australian Style, Dictionary Research Centre, National Office for the Information Economy, Canberra.

borrowings from an English vocabulary especially words common to everyday interaction. And such new blending was transported with this latter group of Maltese settlers to Australia. This British English exposure had to influence their speech form in their new environment, as the lingua franca of Australia was also English, albeit also with its own distinct variations some of their newly coined terminology from Malta was surprisingly the same as some of those adopted by their earlier counterparts. In contrast, the earlier batch of Maltese settlers who did not have the benefit of a prior British-English language exposure, had already devised their own linguistic adaptations as cited in the publications of 1929!

This infers that some of the vocabulary which crept into Maltraljan also managed to find its way into Standard Maltese in Malta concurrently with but also independently of Maltraljan; a factor to bear in mind in determining which lexemes were to be included in my glossary as Maltraljan terminology. To avoid overlappings with Standard Maltese as well as to more accurately isolate Maltraljan terminology, I excluded that portion of lexical items which may have been transported to Australia from Malta by the latter group of settlers. This was achieved by rigorously referring to Aquilina's dictionary, it being the most recent and most authoritative lexicon of Standard Maltese at the time, for each one of my lexical items. Thus any inclusions in Aquilina were deleted from my compilation unless obvious divergencies appeared.

This ambiguity arose out of Malta's long historical association with Britain, with the consequent English language influences gradually finding their way into a Standard Maltese vocabulary. In my final analysis I used Aquilina's dictionary as a constant guide. To reduce uncertainty to a minimum, I rigorously checked for some entries in Aquilina. Hence a number of lexical items which may occur in Standard spoken Maltese but were not recorded by Aquilina, were rightly included in my compilation if recorded within an Australian linguistic ambience. In my major work on Maltraljanⁱⁱⁱ, I have even cited instances of terminology being transported back to Malta from Australia by returning migrants!

Australian English, like its counterparts from other parts of the globe such as American English and South African English, has its own peculiar language traits. So that even those Maltese who, prior to landing on Australian soil, had

previously come into contact with British English, the idiom that awaited them in the new land, Australian English, had its own characteristic linguistic variations to contend with.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, during the interim period of settlement in Australia, Standard Maltese itself had continued developing, with its own other linguistic influences coming from the Italian mainland: a process which began several centuries earlier during the Middle Ages and continues until this day, almost unabated!

As a direct consequence of Australia's geographical isolation from Europe the Maltese language of Australia, Maltraljan discontinued and severed these Italian and British English language influences, abruptly and rather suddenly, at that precise moment the migrant parted from his/her homeland. And it is precisely at this juncture that the language divergence begins to evolve. Once the migrant departs from his homeland he is no longer subject to those same language influences he has been accustomed to. In the same time he still retains those more subtle morphological structures he transports with him and applies them to his new linguistic environment. Hence once in Australia, the direct British English and Italian linguistic influences which occur so naturally in Malta, once in Australia, abruptly cease to develop further while still retaining their assimilated British English structures; simultaneously Australian English takes over. A comparison of the Maltese idiom adopted by Maltese settlers in Britain with those who settled in Australia provides a distinct contrast with obvious differences.

4.2 Categorising lexemes

In the final analysis, when compiling the glossary of Maltraljan, I had to come up with a suitable method which would clearly allow for all these distinctions. And I devised a six tier category, each of which is sub-classified into a first or second grouping.

The first sub-classification refers to all those forms which have in some way been documented either in writing or in audio and audio-visual recordings. Sub-classification two accounts for all non-documented forms.

Here are the six categories I devised which would not normally be required for a standard dictionary:

Category A includes Maltrajan words not occurring in Standard Maltese and not recorded in Aquilina's dictionary:

e.g. (1): **hangri**, /'hɛŋgrɪ/, adj. inv., **A1**, Z, a miserly person (*titolbux karità lil dak għax m'hawnx min hu hangri daqsu*, don't ask him for charity as there's no meaner person than him around.) [< AE *hungry*]

e.g. (2): **inrid**, /ɪn'ri:t/, v.t., **A2**, S, I want (*nagħmel kif inrid jien*, I will do as I please). N this form is given by Vassalli but now considered archaic. Its revival among second and third generation MA points to (i) a lack of an updated knowledge of StM grammar, with (ii) hypercorrectness by omission of regressive assimilation of personal pronominal prefix with phonological dominant /r/ first root consonant [< StM *irrid*]

In these two examples given it can be observed that the categories differ. In the first instance **hangri** does not occur in StM, is not given by Aq and is of Australian colloquial origins. Furthermore it was documented by me in both the written as well as the spoken form. Hence its etymological derivation is given as Australian English, as distinct from British English. Since publication of my original study I have come across the feminine gender of this adjectival form in the spoken idiom as **hangri~ja**.

The next entry **inrid** is categorized as of the A2 type as it was only ever encountered in the spoken form. This type occurs on a regular basis among second and more distant generations of Maltese-Australians. Again, since going to print I have come across the term **inrabja** for **nirrabja**; a phenomenon which produces *interesting* though morphological confusing constructions.- Such is the nature of language!

Category B accounts for those terms not occurring in Standard Maltese but which have been included by Aquilina:

e.g. (1): farm-a*, **friema**, /'fri:me/, n.pl., **B1**, MH/ BT /CT / JMS Nos.19-20,p.112, Mackay/ Innisfail, farmer (*dak farma tal-ħxejjex mhux tal-bhejjem*, he's a market gardener not a stock breeder). N constructed on the pattern *Qormi / Oriema*. The author has never heard the singular form although it has been reported by others. The plural form is commonly used with a semantic difference. In Sydney it refers to *any type of farmer* while within its region of origin, along the north

Queensland sugar belt, it specifically means *cane farmer* in the sense of the *owner of a cane farm*. N Aq misquotes its semantics [< M'jan *farma* + StM brk. pl.]

e.g. (2): **betnibej**¹⁵, /betɲɪ'bɛɪ/, n.m.s., **B2**, Aq, a person of bad character (*dak taġħmilhiex miegħu għax minn ta' betnibej, you shouldn't mix with him as he's a jailbird.*) An interesting construction occurring in Aq but never encountered by author in A. [< AE *Botany Bay*]

Under the headword **friema**, there are a number of different provenance references cited. This word was one of the earliest instances I had noted. Its salient occurrence alerted my attention to a linguistically interesting development taking place independently from its mother language. The peculiar plural form given to the English word *farmer*, which to a non-educated Maltese ear is phonologically realised as /*farma*/ in the singular form, when pluralized correctly, renders the Semitic broken plural form. This entails an internal reconstruction of the singular form: from **farma** we derive **friema**. In this case the first vowel /a/ has shifted from its initial position following the first radical (consonant) and in the process has undergone an even more subtle transformation characteristic of Semitic languages. For here we encounter the correct application of the *imaala*; i.e. the narrowing of the open vowel /a/ into the semivowel /ie/ giving the hybrid sound /ie/, which in Maltese is treated as a single vowel¹⁶. Such language development, in isolation from its natural linguistic environment, is strongly indicative of the native speakers' "natural" tendency towards following established indigenous language pattern formations. And such developments further consolidate the existence and future development of the Maltraljan phenomenon.

Furthermore the semantic expansion of this new lexeme, in its transition from its original geographical confines along the sugar cane farming belt of north Queensland to the more southerly city of Sydney, clearly illustrates the adaptability of this ethnolect within the Maltese community of Australia. The sugar cane farmer and farm owners referred to as **friema**, once this word reached Sydney, some two thousand

¹⁵ Aq himself could not recall his source when I queried this word with him. Etym. it is strongly suggestive of an A origin. Botany Bay in S gained notoriety as the main landing site for the majority of convicts in the early days of A's colonial past. Its consequent connections with the infamous ill-treatment of convicts coupled with their lax behaviour, leaves no doubt about its sem. connotations. It is possible this term could have been passed on to Aq by early M settlers returning to M from A.

¹⁶ The full *imaala* process realizes itself finally as /i/ or /e/.

kilometres further south in the State of New South Wales, expanded its meaning to apply to all kinds of farmers and farm owners. Thus sugar cane farmers/farm owners (*friema*) within a Sydney environment came to include poultry farmers, pig farmers, market gardeners, cattle breeders, dairy farmers, etc. Hence the term **friema** was adopted as a generic term.

Example 2 from category B is a good illustration of Maltrajan terminology finding its way into a Standard Maltese vocabulary. In the Asian ambience of this gathering, those present who originate from such former British colonies as Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia will more easily relate to similar developments within their own language environments as direct effects from the British English linguistic influence upon their own languages.

Category C incorporates words encountered in Standard Maltese and recorded by Aquilina but with a different meaning:

e.g. (1): **tripla**, /'trɪplə/, n.f.s., var. **trippla**, ~er, **tribil**, **trebla**, **C2**, S, triple time payment (*illum tripla ghax il-Hadd xbin*, today it's a trebler mate, being Sunday.) N Aq *triplu* with semantic difference *three times as much*. [< AE *tripler*; *treble time*] - Note: Aq gives the masculine form **triplu** with the meaning *three times as much*.

e.g. (2): **ffrizja**, /'fɪrɪzjə/, v.t., **C1**, S, to freeze. (*idea tajba jiffriżjawlu l-assetti lil min igħix minn fuq id-drogi*, it is right to freeze drug pushers' assets). N M'jan use of Type D v.¹⁷, amongst many others in this compilation, as a common morph. device which has developed naturally both in M'jan as well as StM. cf. Aq < It. etymon *friza*. [< E *freeze*]

Category D gives lexical items of most recent use in contemporary spoken Standard Maltese but not given by Aquilina¹⁸:

e.g. (1): **kkomplejnja**, /kɔm'plɛɪnjə/, v.i., complain **D2**, S, (*tgħidx kemm ikkomplejnja fuq it-tingis*, you have no idea how

¹⁷ Mifsud Manwel, 1995.

¹⁸ To this day Maltese lexicography has relied solely upon the dedicated efforts of individuals for the compilation of Maltese dictionaries. Joseph Aquilina's mammoth lexicographical work still lacks the varied opinions of a formal academic and contemporary consultative body! Hence several words from English which were already current in Malta at the time of his compilation did not gain a mention in his dictionary.

much he complained about the pollution). [< E *complain*]

e.g. (2): **ssejvja**, /t's:ɛɪvjə/, v.i., **D1**, S/Z, 1. save up (*'kk tissejvja n-nofs jiena ntik in-nofs l-ieħor*, if you save half I'll make up the other half for you). 2. protect (*dak taparsi rrabja miegħek biex jissejvjak mill-qilla tal-kbir*, he only pretended to yell at you to protect you from the boss's anger). 3. memorise on computer (*dejjem issejvja qabel titfiha l-kompjuter*, always save your material before switching off your computer.) [< E *save*]

The pattern formation in these two verbs, *kkomplejnja* and *ssejvja* typify British English linguistic influences which the latter group of Maltese émigrés would have transported with them to Australia. Such formations would most likely not have been familiar morphological accretions to the linguistic baggage of the earlier groups from the twenties¹⁹. This factor would in turn partly explain the existence in Maltrajan of antiquated and even archaic forms persisting as a feature of this ethnolect.

What has transformed in these two instances is a relatively simple adaptation of an English word to fit comfortably into a Maltese linguistic mould. Hence, the English word stem *complain*, in its transformational process from English to Maltrajan, initially assumes a Maltese phonological realisation as *komplejn*. But this initial step on its own, only serves to facilitate the full transformation from one linguistic form into another while still lacking a semantic reference. This next step is achieved by firstly geminating the initial consonant (radical). This personalises the stem by reinforcing the beginning of the word with what appears to be some form of replacement of the essential personal pronominal prefix. For ease of pronunciation a euphonic *i* is usually inserted before the duplicated radical. Then, to complete the transformation of this new verb, at the end of the lexeme is added the all important Semitic suffix preceded with the Romance soft *j* sound, thought to be a remnant from the Italian and Sicilian infinitive endings [-a]~*re*, [-e]~*re* and [-i]~*re*.

Thus we end up with the two verbal forms as given here: (i)-*k-komplejn-ja* and (i)-*s-sejv-ja*. Once this structural evolvment is realised, the whole verbal paradigm can be

¹⁹ All Maltese dictionaries and grammars published up to the 1920's, the period during which the first batch of Maltese migrants settled in Australia, exclude all traces of British English linguistic influence on the language. The first major Maltese language study to consider British English influence was Aquilina's *The Structure of Maltese*, 1959.

formulated on the established verbal conjugations as in Standard Maltese. The initial euphonic *i* is only applied to ease pronunciation and is therefore not an intrinsic part of the verbal stem. – Such a productive evolvement in contemporary Standard Maltese, enabling the indigenous language to borrow and mould from English as much as from other languages, had not yet entered into the morphological structure of Maltese as a regular language form, at the time of the first mass migrations of the nineteen twenties.

In this patterning of verbal paradigms, Maltraljan now consistently follows the Standard Maltese trend. Hence when borrowings from English are encountered concurrently with Standard Maltese, it often becomes impossible to determine whether a lexeme of this nature originated initially from an Australian linguistic ambience or else contemporaneously with Standard Maltese. Using Aquilina's dictionary as a guide enables maximum filterage.

Category E embraces Maltese terms considered as obsolete or purist concoctions, which have been preserved, revived or contrived in Maltraljan, either as a mark of ethnic pride, or else as a forgotten remnant which has been fossilised in time and through geographical isolation.

e.g. (1): **bedghu**, /'bɛdɔʊ/, v.t., **E2**, S, for StM *bdew* (*bdj*) but treated as (*bdgh*), they started (*dawk ġa bedghu jilagħbu*, they have already started playing). N insertion of medial vowel *e* on the patt. *telghu*, may be incorrectly thought of as euphonic. It seems more likely to be a rare remnant of the Ar retention of medial vowels where StM has all but discarded such use in preference to the shorter version as in the forms *bdew*, *grew*, etc. Both Aq and ESI cite *bedghu* as a variant but they disagree on its etymon. Hans Wehr gives same root forms cited by Aq (*bdj*) **بَدَّ** and ESI(*bdie*) **بَدَّ** while Steingass gives only (*bdj*) **بَدَّ** cf. *ħbew/ħebghu*. [< StM *bdgh*]

e.g. (2): **hâra**, /'hɛ:rɛ/, n.f., **E1**, JMS Nos.19-20, p.112, vicinity; neighbourhood (*x'imkien f'din il-ħâra joqgħod*, he lives somewhere in this region). N M'jan tendency to revive disused vocabulary. Sem. it seems more likely to derive from Ar. **حارة** where the medial weak radical *w* has been elided and final radical *r* which commonly interchanges with its liquid partner *l* both in Ar as well as M. This claim stands in contrast to etymons given by Aq & ESI [< archaic M *hâra*]

Finally I felt the need to provide for one more category identified by the letters SC (Special Category). This group includes words from Standard Maltese and recorded by Aquilina, which have strong ethnic markings but which in Malta are frequently either given a pseudo-English form (e.g. *ravioli* instead of *ravjul*) or else terms which are habitually mistranslated into English (e.g. *pastizzi* which are incorrectly referred to by some Maltese as *cheese cakes*). -- Hence the need for this extra provision in my compilation.

e.g. (1): **ġbejniet**, /dʒbɛr'nɪ:t/, n.pl., SC, S, M cheese (*il-ġbejniet friski l-aħjar ticolhom*, the best way to eat *ġbejniet* is when they are still fresh.) [< StM *ġbejniet*] -- Note : Sometimes called *Maltese cheeses* but this definition lacks typological differentiation.

e.g. (2): **ravjul**, /rɛv'jʊ:l/, n. col., SC, S/Mel., *ravjul* (*immorru s'għand il-Malti nieklu ikla ravjul*, let's go to the M restaurant and have a meal of *ravjul*). N retention of StM form in contrast to StM tendency to use It. form when speaking to foreigners. ref. *pastizzi; ġbejniet*. [< StM *ravjul*]

Whenever possible, I always gave my source of information. For the spoken form this was a simple exercise in coding names of Maltese language newspapers, journals, magazines, books, community leaflets and the like produced in Australia. In recording my source from the spoken form, to preserve the privacy of my subjects, I merely stated either the locality where it was first heard or when the term was heard during a radio or television programme or at some formal gathering such as a church function, I cited it accordingly without revealing speakers' identities.

Meanings then followed according to the sequence illustrated in the examples given. If more than one meaning occurred, these were enumerated and examples given in phrase or sentence form, in Maltese first with an English translation, illustrating usage.

Salient features were then pointed out with a capital N, indicating noteworthiness. And any additional linguistic information worth noting which emerged during this final assessment, such as pattern formations, was highlighted by cross-referral for comparison, to similar occurrences within the same corpus. And finally, for a more comprehensive analysis,

etymological data is given in square brackets at the end of each separate entry.

5. A lexicographical glossary

Following is a random sample of lexemes from my published glossary. Had this compilation been intended as a lexicon it would have necessitated a great deal more detail to explain the intricacies of the language described. But in the manner in which this information is presented, it is indicative of a language during its formation, thus availing the scholar of a unique opportunity of studying this phenomenon in its synchronic state.

The main observations one may wish to note from the examples given, were highlighted earlier on.

bbażoffja, /ʔɪb:ɐ'zɔf:jɐ/, v.t./i., A2, S, to depart reluctantly (*waħdu bbażoffja kif induna li ħadd ma ried ikellmu*, he buzzed off when he realised no one took any notice of him). N Aq *bbażuffja* < diff. etymon. cf. *ppisoffja*. [< AE *buzz off*]

This is a typical example of the verbal formations in Maltraljan as explained previously in the examples *kkomplejnja* and *ssejvja*. The only difference here is that the Maltraljan term appearing as one word, is a composite of the verbal phrase (*to*) *buzz off*.

blinka, /'blɪŋkɐ/, n.f.s.,pl. ~as, ~i, var. ~er, pl. ~ers, A2, S, indicator (*Malta ma tantx iħobbu jużawhom il-blinkas*, blinkers are not widely used by Malta's drivers.) [< AE *blinker*]

Note the English suffix ~er is realised in Maltese (Maltraljan) as an open ended syllable with a high /a/.

bblinkja, /ʔɪ'b:ɪŋkjɐ/, v.t., A2, S, 1. to operate the car indicator (*qabel ma ddu dejjem ibblinkja biex is-sewwieq l-ieħor ikun jaf x'ha taħmel*, before turning always use your blinker so the other driver can tell what you're doing). 2. to flick the headlights at an approaching motorist (*ibblinkjalhom 'il dawn ħa jkunu jafu li hawn il-pulizija mat-triq*, blink at these drivers so they'll know there's coppers ahead. 3. to malfunction (*tmisshiex dik il-magna għax ibblinkjata*, don't touch that machine as it's on the blink.) [< AE *blink*]

bbornja²⁰, /ʔɪ'bi:ɔɾnjɐ/, v.t., A1, S/Saghtar, to be born (*lis-surmast għidlu li bbornjajt gimgha qabel Santa Marija*, tell your teacher you were born one week before the feast of St Mary.) [< E *born*]

It is interesting how this term, unique in this glossary, applies the English Perfective *born*, as an Imperfective in Maltraljan.

ddeċeduta, /ʔɪd:ɛtʃɛ'du:te/, pp., A1, TMC 1930, p.99, StM *deċiż*, decided (“*il-kwalità tal-ħamrija hija ddeċeduta...*”, the soil quality is determined).cf. *introduċuta*. [< StM *ddeċeda* + Old It. pp.f.infl. suff. *-uta/uto*]

Here we have a term, this time borrowed from Italian instead of English, where the gemination of the first radical sets the semantic process in motion. It is constructed on the old Italian ending *~uta*, which modern Italian prefers to avoid.

produċuta, /ʔɪp:rɔdu'tʃu:te/, pp., A1, CTM, produced. (“*...tinfluwenza d-domanda għall-werqa produċuta fuq torba different...*” influences the demand for the leaf produced from different soils.) cf. *ddeċedut*, et al. [< E *produced* through R]

This verbal construction again is based on the old Italian suffix *~uta*, while the initial portion of the word is prefixed by gemination of the first radical, as in words borrowed from English. Standard Maltese uses *deċiż*.

dengġer, /'dɛndʒɛr/ and /'dɛɪndʒɛr/, n.inv., var. **dejngġer**, n.inv., but also f. **a**, in fv. A2, S, peril (*it-tfal iż-żgħar ma jagħrfuhx id-dengġer*, *dejngġ-er*, *~a*, young children do not always recognise danger). der. *~uż*, *dejngġeruż*, adj., dangerous (*kmamar tan-nar dejjem dengġerużi*, *dejngġerużi*, fireworks factories are always dangerous.) [< E *danger*; *dangerous* through R]

In the absence of direct Italian language influence upon the Maltese language within an Australian linguistic environment, it is interesting how this noun has taken its adjectival form by adding the Romance suffix *~uz* from Italian *~oso* and *~uso*. This indicates the antiquity of the assimilation of this adjectival suffix form in Standard Maltese morphology. There is no equivalent term in Standard Maltese.

²⁰ Saghtar, Frar 1979, Għadd 61, p.30.

dipressat, /dɪprɛ'sɪ:t/, pp., n.m.s., f. ~a, pl. ~i, A2, BT/Mackay/S, 1. of low mood (*kien ilu dipressat qabel ma miet*, he had been depressed for a long while prior to his death.) 2. sluggish economy (*ilha dipressata l-ekonomija, m'hemmx li nirpiljaw*, our economy has been sluggish for so long, it's time we had a break.) [< E *depressed* through R]

Again in this participial formation we have the lingering morphological influence of old Italian upon Standard Maltese which in turn has persisted as an intricate part of the language structure in its transportation to its Australian language ambience. Standard Maltese would use *dipress*.

fens, /'fɛns/, n.m.s., pl. ~iet, ~ijiet, **fniesi**, A1, MEM Aug.1929, p.64, CTM, fence (“*fidiferru tal-fens...*”, fencing wire). **ffensja**, /'fɛnsjə/, v.t., S, to erect a fence (*kelli niffensja biċċa sewwa biex ma jaħarbulix il-baqar*, I had to fence a fair size of my property to keep the cows from wandering off.) N cf. StM *ċint/ċnut*. [< E *fence*]

This term ranks among one of the older batch of Maltrajan words, its rapid assimilation into the Maltese dialectal mould is due to its unisyllabical and analogous phonological closeness to Maltese. Hence its derivative verbal formation blended with natural ease. More interesting though is the broken plural formation *fniesi*, with its internal restructuring of its root.

ibrav, /'ɪbrɛv/, comp., A2, S, StM *aktar/iżjed bravu*, cleverer (*Pawlu ibrav għax jistudja iżjed*, Paul is smarter because he studies more).N on the patt. *twila/itwal*. [< StM *bravu*]

iċep, /'ɪtʃɛ p/, comp., var. ~jep, **ċipa**, A2, S/Mel., cheaper, (*jekk tixtri dirett mill-fabbrika toħodhom iċep, iċjep, ċipa l-affarijiet*, if you buy direct from the factory you get things cheaper.) N on patt. *ċar/iċar* and *fin/iffen*. Only a small sample of these comparatives has been included in this compilation. [< M'jan *ċip* through E + StM comp.]

ikmen, /'ɪkmɛn/, comp., A1, MH/S/MR/Akk. 1987 p.17, earlier (“*il-punt tat-tluq storiku tal-Maltin fl-Awstralja huwa ikmen mill-1838*”, the historical point of departure of the M in A goes back prior to 1838). N in addition to ling. purification for sociolinguistic & psychological reasons, as pointed out in earlier citations (viz. *iċep*, *ħâra*, etc.) these formations also point to a more sophisticated usage of traditional language

devices. [< StM *kmieni* + comp. infl. on patt. *kwiet* - *ikwet*]

ikwet, /'ɪkwet/, comp., A2, S, calmer/quieter (*bhala għalliem ikwet minn shabu*, as a teacher he's calmer than his colleagues). [< StM *kwiet* + comp. infl. on patt. *kbir-ikbar*]

iplet, /'ɪplet/, comp., A2, S, StM *aktar pulit*, 1. neater (*kont nagħmlek iplet minn hekk b'dal-kotba mxerrdin bla ordni*, I thought you were neater than this with these books spread about in disorder). 2. More refined (*dan iplet minn huh bil-manjieri helwin tiegħu*, this one is more sophisticated than his brother with his sweet mannerisms.) N on StM patt. *Sabiħ-isbaħ*. cf. *dijer/idjer*. [< StM *pulit*]

These four examples attracted the attention of some of my colleagues in their apparent productiveness. Since going to print I also heard the term *istramb*, meaning *more eccentric than*. The comparative is never used in isolation but is always accompanied by the participle *minn* after it. While the comparative in Standard Maltese seems to have its days numbered, it remains the preferred method of forming comparisons in Maltrajan.

kemmhom, /'kɛmːɔm/, inter. adv., A2, S, how much are they? (*għidli kemmhom u nħallsek*, tell me the asking price and I'll pay it.) N on patt. *fejnhom*. cf. *x'inhom*. [< StM *kemm huma*]

x'inhom, /'ɪnɔm/, inter. adv., A1, S/JMS Nos.19-20, p.111, what are they? (*x'inhom iġħidu bejniethom?* what are they saying on the quiet?) N on patt. *fejnhom*. cf. *kemmhom*. [< StM *xinhuma*]

These two entries are remarkable for their originality in that they only have a mere couple of similar constructions in Standard Maltese upon which to base their unusual construction.

kommjunità, /kɔmːjunɪ'tɛ/, var. **komjunità**, n.f.s., pl. ~**jiet**, A2, BT, community (*il-kommjunità tagħna qiegħda tnin*, our community is dying out.) N phon. anal. with E medial syll. *mu* /mj/. cf. *kontribjut* [< E *community* through R]

The *j* in *kommjunità* derives from the English combinational sound of [mu] in *community*.

maçurità, /metʃurɪ'tɛ/, n.f., A2, S, maturity (*l-età mhux bilfors*

tindika maċurità, age doesn't necessarily indicate maturity). N E unvoiced [t] followed by [u] in A becomes voiced [ɕ]. In M'jan. cf. *opportunità*. [< E *maturity* through R]

opportunità, /ɔp:ɔrtʃunɪ'tɛ/, n.f.s., pl. ~**jiet**, A2, S, the right moment (*ma' l-ewwel opportunià applika għax hemm hafna oħrajn jikkompetu*, at the first opportunity apply as there are several others in the race). N E [t] before [u] realising as [ɕ] in M'jan. cf. *maċurità* [< E *opportunity*]

Note the colloquial Australian-English sound /tʃ/ in *opportunity* is wholly transposed into its Maltrajan counterpart. The same has happened in the term *maturity* where the [tu] combination is colloquially pronounced as /tʃ/.

pierjid, /'pɪ:rʃɪd/, n.m.s., pl. ~**s**, D2, S/OT, menstrual period (*nahseb li tqila għax ili sitt gimghat bla pierjid*, I think I must be pregnant as it's been six weeks since my last period). cf. *gangier*; *opienjin*. [< E *period*]

This construction is interesting in that it introduces into Maltese linguistics the *imaala* sound, though not morphologically related. The /ie/ combination in Maltese is a single vowel sound and not a diphthong.

poetrija, /pɔɛ'trije/, n.f., A1, MNB/S, poesy (*jekk tikkombina l-poetrija mal-mużika taf tagħmel kemxa*, if you combine the art of poetry with music you stand to make a bit of money). cf. *adulterija*. [< E *poetry* through R]

kemistrija, /kɛmɪs'trije/, n.f., A2, S, chemistry, (*il-kemistrija xjenza preċiża*, chemistry is a precise science). cf. *adulterija* et al. [< E *chemistry*]

groċerija, /grɔtʃɛ'rije/, n.col.f., A1, MEM May 1929, p.6, obs., var. **groserija**, TVMA May 22,1931, 1. groceries (“*hawnhekk tixtri l-aqwa proviżjonijiet u groċerija...*”, here you can buy the top products and groceries...). 2 grocery store (*il-groċerija tal-Maltin*, the M grocery.) [1. < E *grocery* through R; 2. < E *grocery* + R suff. *-ija*]

My interest in these final three examples lies in their suffix ending. This ~ija suffix occurs just as commonly in Semitic languages as in Romance; the two main influences in Maltese word structure. Hence its application in Maltrajan is quite a natural development despite their unusual occurrence in

these particular instances.

Standard Maltese equivalent for *poetrija* is *poetika*. In the case of *kemistrija* in Standard Maltese it becomes *kimika* while *groċerija* is now an obsolete term in Standard Maltese.

5. Conclusion

Since the very earliest beginnings of human society, language has developed and moved forward on equal par with the prevailing levels of sophistication and societal complexities. In this age of artificial intelligence and the information technology revolution, we are confronted with linguistic challenges which are in keeping with new scientific insights and knowledge. So complex has modern day society become that no single overall dictionary can accommodate any one language at a time. The necessity to specialize and provide dictionaries or lexicons that cater for specific needs and subjects provides one way of dealing with the constant and ever expanding demand upon lexicographers as much as language itself.

In the light of these developments in our modes of linguistic communication, I find it rather puerile to talk of a future world having one homogeneous language, as if words can be exchanged between one language and another without losing the very soul which makes different languages what they are: the life, the history, the very soul of a particular group within a society. And I console myself in the thought that a new and revived Europe is giving particular and specific attention to this question of minority languages within its reaches, in recognition of this very sentiment I have just expressed towards human language as a reflection of our very selves as the privileged beings among all primates.

This is why scholars have gone to the trouble of collecting such language deviations like the one discussed here. That is why I have felt the need to delve into the development and future potentials of this ethnolect while other scholars in various parts of the globe, have ventured into the intricacies of new language forms coming into existence as other languages vanish into oblivion.

As indicated earlier on, new languages are still being

born today. This unique form of human communication is essential to enable humanity to survive and keep abreast of the forward thrust of the human intellect. Languages remain alive so long as its users remain alive. Languages die when their users feel they no longer serve their needs, their very *raison d'être*²¹. The Berber language for instance, which is so widespread over the entire north African coast and the immediate hinterland, has survived its Arab domination for several centuries and lives to this day. Yet the many Australian Aboriginal languages which existed only two hundred years ago have all but vanished. Meanwhile in migrant countries like Canada, Australia, Britain, Germany, the USA, France, Italy and others, where thousands of migrants from all over the world have settled, new ethnolects and eventually languages, are constantly being formed, in keeping with the spiritual needs of the societies which use them.

Maltraljan is one of these language developments; as proof of the living soul of a society within a society. And to do honour to those who use Maltraljan as their everyday language, my *mini-lexicon* stands as the register of a people's self-respect. For a lexicon, far more than just a collection of lexemes with their similes and meanings, is the story of a society's entire livelihood with all its idiosyncrasies and achievements: the sole witness to that society's humanity.

²¹ Viz: Yiddish! Ladino!

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