

Maltese Dialects: the Effects of Globalization and Changing Attitudes on Malta's Linguistic Diversity

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My three weeks in the country of Malta during July of 2011 was an enlightening linguistic-anthropological experience, but one that I left with more questions than when I arrived. Thus, my analysis of Maltese dialects tries to be more than just an insightful examination. In taking note of the linguistic situation today, I pose questions about how it will be tomorrow. The collection of my research varied from conversations I had with different Maltese people, my observations, notes, scholarly literature, and even Facebook groups supporting different dialects. My research is largely linguistic-anthropological, but as Bucholtz and Hall explain, this field is shifting to “describe not merely kinds of speech but kinds of speakers, who produce and reproduce particular identities through their language use,”(2004; 369). Therefore, I focus on the formation of varying Maltese social identities with regard to native dialect. Specifically, I ponder how these identities may change with changing trends in communication. Ultimately, in this essay I attempt to temporally theorize about the potential future of Maltese linguistic variation within an ethno-historical framework, using anthropological concepts of globalization.

While the Maltese language has been official for less than a century, its formation has been going on for thousands of years. The legal standardization of the Maltese language as a result of national independence, combined with factors of contemporary globalization, has illuminated the surprising diversity of the small country. Although always having been susceptible to outside influence, these factors have forced the traditional Maltese society to explicitly define, and redefine itself. Most obviously, this happens on a national level, which establishes Maltese culture through the economic motive to sell concepts of Maltese-ness (with food, souvenirs, etc.), as seen in the dominant tourist industry. Besides cultural symbols with economic importance, the wide use of English, officially and unofficially, is another way that tourism and job opportunities have driven the solidification of a distinct Maltese identity. However, the dominating use of English, officially and unofficially, is now dividing Maltese identity instead of uniting it. While the past few decades have been relatively easy for the Maltese people to define themselves as a nation, personal identity within Maltese communities is very much dependent on one's place of birth. Although geographically close, the different towns of Malta have their own traditions, customs, saints, and most noticeably (among each other): dialects. Globalization has forced non-mainstream dialect groups to face issues of identity, pride, and inferiority in light of new opportunities. This potential for mobility has regularized the linguistic subordination of some dialects to others. Indeed, minority Maltese dialect communities are facing new obstacles and challenges in preserving their local identities and also in reshaping them. This is a result of both long-held attitudes and the way that each community is coping with contemporary forces of globalization.

It is fascinating how so many different dialects and accents exist in a country of only 400,000 people. During my research I tried to learn as much as I could about the different dialect communities. The most distinct difference is between the inhabitants of the larger island, also called Malta, compared to the smaller one of Gozo. While Gozitan and Maltese (from the island of Malta, not the country as a whole) may be considered themselves single dialects with variations, I will consider each variation a dialect in its own right for reasons of clarity throughout this paper. However, I not only recognize the similarity of all Gozitan dialects to each other, as I recognize the commonalities among Maltese dialects, but it is because of this particular distinction that I have chosen to compare these two different groups. I would also like to note that my flexible use of the term dialect should not undermine its meaning. Another one of my main goals in this paper is

to emphasize the diversity of Maltese by showing that the Maltese language, Gozitan in particular, does indeed have dialects, in that certain variations are so different from the standard I am taking the viewpoint that all ways of speaking a language can be considered a dialect, even the spoken form of the legally official, and arbitrarily chosen standard. In my linguistic and cultural analysis of Maltese dialects, my focus will mainly be on the differences between the dialects of Maltese, and those of Gozo. Gozo, the smaller of the two inhabited islands, has a group of similar dialects that share similar linguistic patterns, making them notably different from the more widely used Maltese dialects. While I will be discussing in large the differences of these two groups, I will also talk about distinctions within each island. Through this linguistic comparing and contrasting process, I hope to shed light on the diversity of the Maltese people and language.

Maltese people are, in many ways, living proof of Malta's uniquely disparate past. While every culture is vulnerable to diffusion and change, Maltese culture is not just influenced by outside forces, but rather is in itself a mixture of outside forces that have been combined and slightly altered to be Maltese. This is definitely a result of Malta's geographic position and small size. Malta is an archipelago, consisting of two inhabited islands, with many convenient natural bays. Located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, it has served as a bridge between Europe, Asia, and Africa. The lack of isolation has prevented the development of an independent Maltese culture, and its lack of natural resources has left its people dependent on outside support. Malta's central locality, convenient bays, and small geographic and demographic size are why it has been extremely vulnerable to outside influence.

This influence is very noticeable in the Maltese language. Historically, it has been advantageous for the Maltese people to allocate the language of whichever dominion was in control of the region at any given time. After thousands of years of this, with influence from dozens of different dominions, the linguistic aspects of various occupiers resulting from periods of intense contact have crept into Maltese speech, at different variations. Being a Semitic language, Maltese's Arab roots are one of its most noticeable aspects, having for a long time been referred to as "...corrupt Arabic," (Grotto of St. Paul at Malta 1853; 145), and is still sometimes considered an Arab dialect. (Maltese has in the past also been referred to as a dialect of its closest neighbor, Sicily). Under Malta's unique historical circumstances, the Maltese language today can be defined as a contact language, in that it resulted "...from situations of social contact, of varying durations and degrees of intensity, among speakers of two or more

previously existing languages” (Garrett 2004; 48). It has also evolved so that it is unintelligible to speakers of any other language, including those from which it derived. Contact languages are unique in that they give rise to new cultural and social identities. But even though Maltese did not become an official language in Malta until 1934, it was recognized as being an indiscernible language hundreds of years before contemporary colonization. One may even argue that it has been in development for thousands of years, since the arrival of its first people around 5200 B.C from Sicily.

The first major Mediterranean dominion that discovered the convenience and value of the location of Malta were the Phoenicians, in about 1000 B.C. The harbors offered an important orientation from which to oversee sea traffic, often related to trade. Ethnic Phoenicians settled on the islands with the existing inhabitants, and ruled for several hundred years. During this time, many Greeks immigrated over, and eventually the Carthaginians took control of the island. Although it is still debated, this may have been the first, but longest lasting and most salient mark on the Maltese language today. As a Semitic language, it is often assumed that the Maltese is derived from their Arab colonizers many centuries later. But Punic, which is also a Semitic language may have played a role in the formation of Maltese (Ager 2011). Since both Arabic and Punic have Semitic roots, telling which one had more influence on the contemporary language is insoluble.

In light of the Punic war, Malta fell under the Roman Empire in the third century B.C., initiating adoption of the less strong, but still apparent Latin elements in Maltese. Between the fourth and ninth centuries B.C., Malta was ruled by the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire. The inhabitants also saw many other linguistic, ethnic, and cultural groups passing through, possibly including some Germanic tribes. With the arrival of the Fatimids in the ninth century, the Arabs introduced many cultural and linguistic elements, including the Siculo-Arabic used at that time, which is believed to have had the strongest impression on the Maltese language today. The next few centuries saw a fluctuation of domination by various dominions, including the Normans, during which time Malta was considered a remote extension of Sicily, which would occur several more times throughout its history (thus explaining the close linguistic and cultural similarity to the southern Italian island that is seen in Malta today). When the Order of the Knights of St. John was given the island by the Spanish crown in the sixteenth century, they contributed their Latin-based languages to the Maltese lexicon. It was during these early encounters that the first written accounts, detailing the perceived

incomprehensibility of the Maltese language, appeared. So before many Romance languages had had time to make an imprint on the Maltese language that is known today, it was already unto itself something distinct.

Michelle Cini’s summary of Malta’s colorful history can be interpreted as a translation of Malta’s linguistic history, and is worth quoting at length, “In the evolution of a Maltese nationality and identity, the ‘Western’ layer (the Knights of Malta) had settled on and permeated into the former ‘Southern’ layer (the Sicilian Normans and later feudal lords), which itself had bitten into and camouflaged the earlier ‘Arabic’ layer, which in turn had superseded the Greco-Roman legacy after the Phoenician one. The ‘Western’ layer, carrying over in a continuum from the ‘Southern’ one- over a span of six centuries- was the most significant, for during its tenure, modern Malta came into being as a small European state.” (Cini 2002) The author’s use of the term “layers” in the construction of Maltese identity effectively demonstrates how centuries of cultural and linguistic blending, or layering, has created the Maltese person of today. Also, her stress on the Western influence is especially salient in our discussion on contemporary Maltese dialects.

Over time, the French, the Italians, and most recently the British all maintained some level of influence and control of Malta, all contributing greatly to the Maltese lexicon. Today, about half of the Maltese vocabulary comes from Italian and Sicilian words, with debatably as high as twenty percent from French and English (more from the latter), while roughly a third comes the Semitic Siculo-Arabic base. Assuming that the majority of the non-Semitic influence on modern Maltese came starting from the time of the Knights, to the present day (therefore, about six hundred years) I find it remarkable that the Maltese lexicon has transformed itself by as much as three quarters of what it originally was before this time period. This estimation, however, is rather high, considering the continuous Italian influence on Malta throughout history. Nevertheless this high lexical turnover rate is representative of the extreme malleability of the Maltese language. This high susceptibility to outside linguistic influence is vital to understanding not just what the differences are between Maltese dialects, but why they exist.

Despite the susceptibility of Maltese language and culture to change, both have remained rather conservative and grounded in traditional values, especially for a European country. This is probably at least partially a result of the (until recently) little movement of Maltese people to towns or regions outside of their own (let alone outside of Malta). Maltese from Malta, both the language and people, have modernized and adapted much more quickly to the more

recent British (and older Italian) occupiers, which is why linguistically, this Maltese is more European sounding. Indeed, Gozo is much less occupied than Malta, where the capital city is the main port of entry. Thus, historically rural Gozitan culture and language have been relatively uninfluenced by modern European colonizers because of their lack of contact. Maltese people from the island of Malta, on the other hand, have enjoyed more social prestige and opportunities by adopting the language of the occupier, which after a period of time was more influential on their variation of Maltese. A closer look at some specific dialects from both islands can shed light on this point.

While Siculo-Arabic created a distinct foundation for the Maltese language, the post-Arabic period, when Romance languages were introduced during the time of the Knights, was also a vital time for the resulting variations of Maltese. This contact occurred most frequently in Malta's capital city, Valletta. The two natural harbors here, the Grand Harbor and Marsamxett Harbor, curve around Valletta so that the land forms an easily accessible peninsula, through which the many dominions that came in contact with Malta had their first and main impressions. With the creation of Fort St. Elmo around Valletta during the time of the Knights, it became a military base. The building of the St. John Co-Cathedral (also by the Knights) and many other churches placed it as a strong Catholic center in the Mediterranean. The later establishment of the University of Malta, just a few kilometers away, allowed for the growth of an intellectual culture, along with the establishment of many hospitals, courthouses, and other economic, artistic, and politically stimulating sectors.

Historically, the locals in this capital region had the most direct contact with the Knights as well as other foreigners and dominions, so that they more readily adopted the religious, linguistic, economic, and social customs. Being the main cultural point of entry for the rest of Malta, these customs and habits would eventually trickle across the island, lastly and with the least potency to Gozo (although many other harbors throughout both islands did indeed serve as ports). Because of their convenient geographical position around Valletta, locals here were given opportunities for political and social mobility by adopting the language of the colonizer in such spheres of influence. While using their native tongue was typically just left for Maltese-with-Maltese interactions, the Maltese language in and around the capital city more readily picked up Romance language elements. Thus, many Western linguistic elements were added to the already Siculo-Arabic mixture that is the base of the Maltese language.

The official language of Malta today, Standard Maltese, reflects this cultural blooming. Including the capital

district of Valletta, the area considered Greater Valletta encompasses the neighboring towns of Birkirkara, Qormi, Zabbar, San Gwan, Fgura, and Hamrun. While Valletta is the official capital and remains historically salient, these districts and towns immediately surrounding this region are historically and contemporarily similar in culture and dialect. Located on the east, central coast of the island, the dialect spoken in Greater Valletta is closest to Standard Maltese. While there are some variations, (such as in Qormi, which I will return to later) in and around this densely populated capital region, the pronunciation and vocabulary used most resembles this official Standard Maltese, that is considered the most proper form, and thus, is the basis of Maltese language education.

Many Gozitans I spoke with pointed out how Maltese in Malta is more similar to Italian in its pronunciation, lexicon, and vowel usage. They say that it's more "European sounding", because it incorporates more linguistic elements from Romance languages. And while the orthography of the Standard Maltese written language is relatively consistent, people from the Greater Valletta are considered to be more consistent with "proper" standard linguistic rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation. While any spoken form of an official written language is always subject to interpretation, I could like to note that even the most "correct" variety of spoken Maltese must still be considered a dialect. Yet the rapid forces of globalization alongside the traditional tendency of the Maltese people to linguistically adapt for social mobility has sometimes resulted in a stray from the standard, but in a very different way than Gozitan.

Despite the end of British colonization in 1964, there remains a high concentration of English-speakers in Greater Valletta all year round; the institutional, economic, and social ties of Malta to Britain are far from being severed. In addition, many foreigners come to the University of Malta to learn English because this is the main language of instruction. With the rise of tourism and technological communication, this consistent prevalence of English has infiltrated the Maltese language and culture profoundly. As a result, in 2005, the National Council of the Maltese Language was developed in light of the Maltese Language Act. This act and council were created to create a cultural, linguistic, and national identity. It recognizes Maltese as "...an essential component of the national heritage, being constantly developed in the speech of the Maltese people, distinguishing the Maltese people from all other nations and giving the same people their best means of expression." (Garrett 2004; 2-3) Notably, the Act was also created because English words have been rapidly incorporated into the Maltese language at a very high

rate, and have frequently been replacing Maltese words. Therefore, the Act is a way of regulating the introduction of new (typically English) words into the Maltese vocabulary. Remarkably, this incorporation has continued to occur despite Malta's independence from Britain, undoubtedly as a result of Malta's establishment as an English-speaking place in the Mediterranean.

A divergence from the Standard dialect has occurred in Greater Valletta, although most notably in the towns of Sliema and St. Julian's, to the north of Valletta. In contrast to the Gozitan dialect, which recalls older, more Semitic versions of the Maltese language, the high use of English in this dialect is reflective of Malta's more recent history and contemporary state as a product of globalization.

In St. Julian's (and to a slightly lesser extent in Sliema), the Maltese tendency to adopt foreign linguistic elements can be seen at its extreme. According to a contact of mine, Linda, Maltese from this area often will greet each other extendedly in English. While switching from English to Maltese is a part of life for the Maltese people, it almost never intentionally occurs when a Maltese person is speaking with a non-Maltese person. The St. Julian's dialect, however, has become its own distinct variation of Maltese in that people from this area will often incorporate English words, phrases, or entire sentences into conversation. My contact noted, for example, how one could often overhear greetings exclusively in English, and then a conversation occurs in Maltese, with high implementation of English phrases. At other times, the two languages are combined within a single sentence, creating what is sometimes referred to as Maltenglish or Minglish. While the extent to incorporating English may vary, I consider it a dialect of Maltese because of the social context in which it is used, and because it is most often a unique mixture of the two languages, rather than being one or the other. While this does not occur solely in St. Julian's, or by all residents of this area, this socio-linguistic construct has deemed its users, as well as Maltese who speak exclusively Maltese, as tal-pépé. This term comes from the Italian *per bene*, which refers to being very well off, having a lot of money, and being highly educated. This is because wealthy Maltese inhabitants of this area have historically bought homes here after World War II. Also, the capital area's geographic history as a place of much cultural and linguistic commerce has certainly played a role. And according to an informant of mine, Linda, there have been many English people living here, especially those left over from the British navy. Thus, English has been particularly dominant in this affluent neighborhood for some time, which most likely resulted in the psychosocial conception of tal-pépé.

Being tal-pépé, like many stereotypes, it is now considered

a derogatory term for someone who speaks Minglish. Even several Maltese people I spoke to from Greater Valletta wrinkled their nose in reference to the "snobs" that speak English when they don't have to. Indeed, it would be rare to find someone who considered him or herself tal-pépé, because of its derogatory nature. While Gozitan, on the contrary, has more of an actual dialectic community, it is interesting how these two varieties stand at extreme endpoints of Maltese; one being (arguably) its most primitive form, evidence of Malta's Arab history and most threatened today, in contrast to the other being a rare case of a new, developing dialect. Yet they both receive criticism from their use due to the social implications of one as being too inferior and the other too superior. Interestingly, Minglish is arguably the only of all Maltese dialects that is not vulnerable to extinction, in that it is a product of contemporary globalization, instead of being threatened by it. While Minglish is less a fully recognized dialect and more a trending speech pattern, it may one day be, and still serves as an interesting comparison point to older dialects, as well shedding light on the transforming linguistic situation in Malta.

If Gozitans speak a version of Maltese that is historically closer to its roots and less impeded upon by recent foreign influences (French, Italian, and mostly English), which is now what standard Maltese is, perhaps the standard is the vulgarization and Gozitan is a more accurate representation of the Maltese language. After all, there currently is a large issue among Maltese language advocates who complain about the loss of the Maltese language due to the rate at which new contact words are being incorporated, and the original Maltese ones are being lost (which led to the creation of the Maltese Language Act). But on the other hand, language is continuously diffusing over time. And so to choose a particular point in the past (or present) and say that all the temporally and culturally specific concepts of a linguistic unit represent the complex formation of the language, fails to articulate the multifaceted aspects of that language. Therefore, a debate over what is a "true" representation of a language is a historically informative, yet subjective one that must not be regarded with great deference.

Qormi

While Standard Maltese is the most common dialect on the larger island, variations of it exist in association with different regions or towns, as with any language. While my main focus is on the differences of Maltese and the Gozitan dialect group, it is important to remember that Maltese culture and dialects are not so black and white. Also, a brief

assessment of other dialects helps to paint a clear picture of the little-understood diversity of the Maltese language. One well-documented dialect of Maltese is that of the town Qormi and its surrounding area. This large town is located to the southwest of Valletta, but not far, on the interior part of the island. What is distinct linguistically about this region is the flexibility given in vowel usage. While this dialect strays from the Standard less than other dialects of further regions, there is, however, typical regulations for when and how certain vowels can replace others, which depends on the word itself, the context, and the sentence structure. It is thus, not nonsense mispronunciation of the standard Maltese words, but rather, has a clear and innate purpose to the inhabitants of this region, and thus, further justifies the point of view of the existence of multiple dialects of Maltese. For example, in the Qormi dialect, the “a” that occurs in the beginning of a word often changes to a “u” sound or even an “o” sound if it is at the end of a word. For example, the Maltese word for potato, “patata” is phonetically pronounced more like “patuta”. The vocal “o” sound also can sound more like a “u” such as in the word for the town and dialect itself, “Qormi”, which sounds more like “Qurmi” when pronounced by locals. It is important to note, again, that these phonetic changes occur only in speech, and the spelling stays the same otherwise. While speaking to a Qormi native during my time in Valletta, I was informed that this “thick accent” occurs more among the older generations, and that the younger generations speak a Maltese that is more similar to the Standard that is spoken in the nearby capital. This issue of endangered dialect diversity will be more thoroughly addressed later. Continuing south, southeastern Malta is known for having a very unique dialect, which can generally be called the Żejtun dialect. It persists throughout the town of the same name, as well as neighboring regions such as Marsaxlokk and Birżebbuġa. Here, there is a similar vowel change to that which occurs in the Qormi dialect. Often times, vowels will consistently change, such as the “a” in a word being replaced with an “e” or even a “u”. Notably, some words don’t just have vowel change, but are completely different altogether from the standard. This does not occur as often in the Qormi dialect, which is geographically closer to the capital area where the Standard dialect persists. Thus, in analyzing the linguistic shifts as we head geographically further away from the capital, one can observe a dialect continuum occurring.

When I’d ask my contacts why they believed a certain dialect formed, they’d often just explain some variation of how that’s just the way it always had been. Indeed, it’s hard to understand why one’s dialect is one’s dialect, since often times people have a hard time viewing their way of

speech as different, which is the feeling the just the word dialect may elicit. Furthermore, understanding how and why dialects form can sometimes only be speculated about. Given my interest in Malta’s historical adaptability and influence from foreign powers, I revert back to this in pondering over the vowel changes in the Żejtun dialect. While in Arabic, consonants are the vital phonetic elements in speech, Italian, on the other hand, places great importance on which vowels are used in a word. Being the two fundamental linguistic groups from which Maltese is derived, it seems that this southern dialect pays more homage to its dominating Semitic ancestor, must like the Gozitan dialect. Perhaps that Gozo and Żejtun are geographically the furthest regions of the country from the capital area where Italian has most evidently influenced the Maltese language is a result of this. Yet Gozo and Żejtun are also furthest from each other, and so a follow-up study of the relation of these two dialects would have interesting implications for the historical realization of these dialects. The northern region of the island of Malta is known for having a dialect similar to Gozitan. In order to understand this dialect region, we must first clarify the main speech community distinction in this paper: that between the people of the island of Gozo and those of the island of Malta. Again, Gozitan can actually be considered a group of dialects, all reigning from the smaller island of Gozo. Yet some would say that they have enough linguistic similarities with each other that they can be considered distinct. With a few exceptions, one may say that they are a variety of geographically-based accents, with a different accent associated with a different town, but all part of the same Gozitan dialect. This is more the linguistic perspective of a Maltese person. While any Gozitan could immediately tell where another Gozitan comes from as soon as he or she opens his or her mouth, because of their lack of exposure to these varieties, Maltese people, interestingly, cannot make such distinctions. One day I was sitting down at Xlendi bay and chatting with my contact, Niki, who is originally from Malta and recently had moved to Gozo. I asked him if he could detect from which town in Gozo a nearby group of Gozitan boys came by listening to them speak. He couldn’t, and then explained to me that it is hard for him, or any Maltese, to do so. But having been living in Gozo for eight months at the time of our meeting, he said that he was beginning to learn the distinctions. Although it is not an actual variety from the island of Gozo, the dialect spoken in northern Malta is more easily identifiable in that it is a linguistic and cultural bridge between the commonly used Standard dialects of Greater Valletta, and Gozitan. The northern town of Mellieħa is known for being similar to Gozo for several reasons. The name of the town can

refer to the arabic-derived word for “salt pans”, which in Standard Maltese is “salini”, like the Italian word “sale” for salt. Thus, the very name of the town itself reflects how its Semitic roots have not altogether been covered up by English and Western influence, unlike dialects closer to Greater Valletta. Culturally, Mellieħa is similar to Gozo because of the less persistence of a city mind-set. Like Gozo, it is has more open land and is distinctly far from the capital region. Its geographical nature as having the most frequented ferry harbor connecting the island of Malta and Gozo make this possible. That Mellieħa shares linguistic similarities with Gozitan and the Standard way of speech, again, makes evident the dialect continuum.

Although just five kilometers of sea separate Malta from its smaller sister island, Gozo, it has made all the difference. Gozitan history had differed slightly from its more attention-gaining older sister. Certainly with exceptions, Gozo has generally been overlooked in comparison to Malta by the various occupying dominions. This is evidenced by the lack of development on the island. Also, the lifestyle, economic structure, dialects, and even genetic make-up of its people today are vastly different from Malta. As a rural, historically poorer island, family farms have been passed down for many generations, with much less opportunity for higher education, social or financial mobility. This is the stereotype that perpetuates the Maltese perspective of Gozitan people. While culturally this view is beginning to change, it still strongly exists among the other generations, and is far from being forgotten.

Gozitan is undoubtedly the most similar to Maltese’s archaic Semitic ancestor. The Maltese recognize this distinction, but, again, have a hard time to tell the difference between the different dialects. As I mentioned, my contact, Niki, who in his early-sixties, had moved to Gozo prior to our first meeting, because he desired the slow-paced, tranquil lifestyle that characterizes Gozo. He described the Gozitan dialect as being “Maltese, but twisted”, a term Niki often used in reference to Gozitan. To a Maltese person’s ears, Gozitan seems “improper Maltese”, “vulgar”, “brutish”, and definitely “more similar to Arabic”. Niki gave me several salient examples of how Gozitan differs from Maltese (again, “Maltese”, here refers to the commonly spoken and taught form of the Standard). One example is how, like the Żejtun dialect, Gozitans have a tendency to disregard Italic-rules such as the importance of vowel consistency. In pronunciation, Gozitans will also switch out one vowel for another in a systematic way (although in which way often depends on which dialect of Gozitan). But uniquely to Gozo, the Gozitan dialect elongates vowels, such as in the word “mija” which is Maltese for “one hundred”. While written the same, the word is pronounced

in Gozo as having a double “i” and “a”, instead of a single of both, and so there is a double vowel elongation for this word. Niki wrote out the Gozitan pronunciation as “mijjaa” in my notebook. Another example he gave me deals with the English phrase “up there”, which is written in Maltese as “hemm fuq”. While the “h” is silent anyways, Gozitans will drop the pronunciation of the letter “e”, and then elongate the “u” in the proceeding word, to create a phrase that phonetically would appear as “mm fuuq”. Thus, the vowel of the first word is eliminated all together, and that of the second word is elongated. In addition to different pronunciation, Gozitan has an abundance of vocabulary words of Arabic origin.

In exploring the different dialects of Gozitan, I tried to uncover patterns consistent with what I already knew of its strong Semitic resemblance. Although I may not have had enough time on the island or knowledge of the language itself, I think it’s worth point out some of my ideas about the foundations of the different dialects on Gozo, in that they reflect my experience there and the vastly different individuals and perspectives I’d encountered. One family who worked as carpenters, that I came across in the relatively untouristy, interior town of Xewkija, told me that when Arab-speakers come, they have a relatively easy time understanding the residents here, although this is somewhat more difficult for them on the main island. A woman from Victoria, the bustling center of the island, who I later spoke to laughed as she told me how other Gozitans sometimes think she’s from Xewkija by the way she speaks. When I asked her why this happens to her, she didn’t really know. In a later conversations with Niki, he explained how “true, rural” Gozitan is the “harshness” to his ears, because of its even closer similarity to archaic Arabic. Giving the example of the lack of distinction between the “q” and “k” in Gozitan pronunciation of Maltese written words, I speculated on why the Victorian woman may get mistaken for a Xewkija resident. In Gozitan, these two letters maintain a similar, guttural sound, similar to the English pronunciation of “k”, which draws on Gozitan’s Arabic roots. In Standard Maltese, however, the “q” is pronounced as a glottal stop, and thus, is a slight, breathy noise. I’d recalled that the Victorian woman who gets mistaken as being from Xewkija wrote down an example a word that she used to have trouble spelling, “baqra”, meaning “cow”. She sometimes spells it with a “k” in place of the “q”. I began speculating about this difficulty in spelling a seemingly easy word. Maybe people confuse her with being from the more rural, more “authentically” Gozitan town of Xewkija, because the Gozitan dialect spoken here is more Arabic in its spoken form than a typical Gozitan dialect such as in the comparatively metropolitan Victoria. And since

this Victorian woman seems to possess a stronger Arabic resonance in her way of speaking, evident with her letter confusion, I wondered if this is why people mistake her from being from the less contacted town of Xewkija. While my limited knowledge of the Maltese language and its complexities allow me to only speculate, it seems as though there is a negative correlation of dialectic persistence of Arabic with integration of global forces and modernization in a dialect community.

Evidence of this can be seen regarding probably the most distinct of all the Gozitan dialects (and certainly hardest for Maltese to understand), spoken in one of the oldest towns on the island, Gharb. Located on the west side of the island, it is geographically the furthest area of Gozo from Malta. As a Gozitan dialect, it maintains the typical aspects such as elongated vowels, and especially Arabic words. In fact, it is sometimes considered the purest, oldest form of Gozitan, in that it is so similar to its Arabic ancestor. While the dialect of Gharb is intensely Semitic in its character, like all Gozitan dialects, its isolation has resulted in the formation of a dialect unique to all the rest on the island. One Gozitan woman, named Maria, described this to me as the "Gharb special language." She said that her husband could speak it, but that even many Gozitans have trouble understanding it. Therefore, it is extremely different from Maltese. Maria gave me some examples of these differences, such as the word for door in Gharb is *boxxla*, but in Maltese, *boxxla* means compass needle. Paradoxically, the word for little in Gharb, *ħafna*, means many in Maltese. Evidently, the complexity and diversity of Maltese and Gozitan dialects are extremely deep-rooted.

In linguistically studying these dialects, one may paint an ethno-historical picture of their corresponding regions. In addition, learning the contemporary linguistics of a dialect is inseparable from learning the contemporary politics, attitudes, and institutions associated with that dialect. While the loss of Maltese words to borrowed ones remains a national and linguistic heritage issue, there is another issue that runs along the channel that divides the two islands, and thus the two dialect groups. During my research process, I began to realize how many of these issues resulting from linguistic variation are played out in Maltese society through questions of power and identity. Ideologically, the fundamental "us versus them" mentality that drives the human survival instinct is often conceptualized in emotional reactions of fear and hostility. These reactions are instantiated in various ways. Therefore, social attitudes of superiority are one mode through which sociolinguistic variation is dealt with by a society. Hearing different sentiments that Gozitans and Maltese people felt towards each other helped explain this divide.

Today, with an ever-increasing rate of globalization, it is easy to see how the cultural, and thus linguistic, gap has been bridged, between Gozo and Malta. As such a small nation, Gozitan and Maltese sentiments about each other, in language and culture, seem to escape any foreigner. I recall one Gozitan man from who I hitchhiked a ride told me that he was Gozitan, after I asked, but followed it up by saying, "But it does not matter. Gozitan, Maltese, we are all the same." I don't know if he was saying this to appease me (the tourist) and my assumed ideal of this vacation destination to have all happy locals that get along. Perhaps he was trying to spare me of the reality of the complexities within Maltese society so that I may once again return, and contribute to the tourist sector that practically runs the country. Or maybe he truly did not perceive the gap between the Maltese subculture and that of Gozo to be quite so big. Although today this cultural bridge is being more and more of a reality, I was able to hear, first and second hand, of interesting accounts of what the two islands inhabitants think of each other. In these historical and contemporary contexts, I was better able to understand the sentiments behind the dialect variation between the two islands. In addition, by studying not only dialect patterns, but various attitudes towards the existence of these patterns, their speakers, and related norms reveals social rules such as the social formality of code switching, that is established between speakers and the prestige of a particular dialect. At the crafts village, outside of Xewkija, I met a Gozitan who had lived in Canada for twenty years. His aging mother would make and sell her silk as an income for the family, and he had never had a formal education. This man spoke extremely vehemently about his opinion of the Maltese people from Malta. According to him, the Maltese are jealous of Gozitans for being smarter, yet they look down on Gozitans "like ants". He said that "Maltese people are more open, but stupider". He continued to criticize the politics going on in Malta, the corruption of wealthy Maltese, and how "hard-working" Gozitans have to pay the price of such wealth. Him, and several other Gozitans all described Maltese people as being more showy, extravagant, and pretentious. These all seemed to be commonly held perceptions that Gozitans had toward the Maltese. Similarly, it was common knowledge for Gozitan that Maltese people "always speak as if they are in a rush". This pace of speech is a universally noticed distinction between the Maltese and Gozitan dialects, which also reflects the stereotyped cultural lifestyles of both; Gozitans being slow-paced farm people, and Maltese being quick-tongued urban dwellers. During my short time in Sliema, I spoke with a British woman of Maltese origin, Linda (who I'd mentioned

earlier) who had moved back and learned the Maltese language as an adult. Upon hearing the prejudices that strongly existed in her grandmother's day, I developed a better understanding of the rather notorious anti-Gozitan sentiment among Maltese. She described to me how the Maltese saw Gozitans as "cunning" people who would deceive you if it meant more money in their pocket. An old Maltese phrase that her grandmother told her efficiently demonstrates the sentiments that Maltese held towards their neighbors: "If you mix a guy from Rabat with a Jew, you end up with a Gozitan." In addition to being frugal, Gozitans are also perceived as being very old-fashioned. This paradoxical Gozitan-Maltese resentment has invaded the social stereotypes of each respective subculture. But according to Linda, within the last twenty years, this intensity and hatred is quickly disappearing. Children of Gozitan farmers are going to the university now, "but the culture stays in you". The negative connotation with the way that Linda said this further proves the Maltese superiority of their own culture to that of Gozitans. Similarly, Niki was uninhibited in sharing his belief that Gozitans have "twisted" proper Maltese words because of their ignorance, being "dumb farmers". Thus, while Maltese people now accept Gozitans within institutional and educational environments, the lingering negative cultural stereotypes, probably resulting from fear of difference, still remain. Bucholtz and Hall's essay may help to shed light on the ideological stance of my analysis. According to concepts of Irvine and Gal, iconization is a process of creating a unified cultural identity among a group due to shared iconic linguistic features. Iconization is formed in, "practice through ideology," (Bucholtz and Hall 2004; 380) in that this unity is an ideal construct that is ingrained by creating a practiced reality. Iconization of a sociolinguistic identity in Malta can be observed as the results of nationalism giving rise to the standardization of the Maltese language. The practice of it occurs through Gozitan codeswitching into the standard Maltese dialect for formal or institutional interactions. It is initiated by the institutions, and infiltrated into societal habits. The practice is the conception of an imposed ideology through conventional speech norms, thus creating some sense of order, oneness, and a national Maltese linguistic identity. In the last several decades, Gozitans have more and more become assimilated in such institutional spheres, mostly through commuting to the island of Malta. The more frequent interaction between Gozitans and Maltese has had a number of consequences. Something that has always been the case, however, for Gozitans in Malta, is the former's engagement in codeswitching. The regularized change of speech patterns is what is referred to as codeswitching,

which Kathryn Woolard defines as, "an individual's use of two or more different language varieties in the same speech event or exchange." (2004:73-74) She makes note that this can, but is not limited to, bilingualism, hence, her use of the term language varieties to highlight the inclusions of different "way(s) of speaking." (2004:74) Gozitan must regularly engage in codeswitching between their natural, Gozitan dialect, and standard Maltese. This is occurring more and more as modernization and new opportunities has forced many Gozitans out of their traditional roles as rural farmers. Thus, Gozitan identity and lifestyle is now changing, as they must adapt to modernization by traveling to the island of Malta on a regular basis for work, school, and other political and economic reasons. These kinds of social situations that occur now more than ever have constructed social norms where Gozitans cannot speak in their own dialects. According to my contact who I'd previously mentioned, Maria, "we have to learn two languages: our Gozitan dialect, and formal Maltese." Deconstructing these speech realms in an ethnographic context may help to shed light on the dynamics of this traditional society facing rapid modernization. Asif Agha's essay "Registers of Language" breaks down the different discourse types, or registers, within a society based on different pragmatic, or contextually meaningful situations. While in classes, on official business, at work, or simply just passing through, Gozitans codeswitch into standard Maltese. These are all different registers in which Gozitans know they must switch their linguistic repertoire. According to Agha, different repertoires are used depending on the social actors involved, the conduct, or activity that is occurring, and the relationship between the actors (2004:23). So a Gozitan speaking to a Maltese friend at home may use a Gozitan dialect because of their familiarity. But a Gozitan shopkeeper speaking with a Maltese customer in the shop (even if it were in Gozo) would use formal Maltese. Therefore, the repertoire used by a Gozitan speaks to of the context occurring. Also, this last example demonstrates how codeswitching into standard Maltese is not reserved just for speaking to Maltese people in Malta, but for any formal situation not between two Gozitans. A certain "value-judgment" (2004:26) takes place for knowing the appropriate time and place to codeswitch. This linguistic default that is normative in Maltese society speaks to the social and linguistic dominance of those who do not have to codeswitch into standard linguistic etiquette. This reminded me of one afternoon at a restaurant in Xlendi with my Maltese contact, Niki. He was friendly with the Gozitan owner, and after a brief conversation with him, explained to me how the owner always speaks to him in formal Maltese, even though we were in Gozo.

Because Niki is Maltese, the Maltese dialect is chosen, thus demonstrating that Gozitan codeswitching does not only occur when Gozitans go to Malta. Any formal situation, or any interaction with a Maltese person elicits the use of Maltese, whether in Gozo or not. I began to wonder what this did for Gozitan identity. This necessity of codeswitching between dialects today must reinforce the inferiority that is already associated with being Gozitan. At one point, Niki commented to the waitress about how wonderful Gozitan cheese is, to which she expressed surprise at his compliment of anything Gozitan. When I asked Niki, and others, what would happen if a Gozitan spoke in his or her native dialect in a social situation that would require using Maltese, I received many surprised looks, even some laughs at the thought. Clearly, this speech practice is so readily expected, or implicit, that thinking about it in a different seems absurd to Maltese people. As Agha explains it; "Although such metapragmatic data are necessarily overt – in the sense of palpable, perceivable – they may or may not be linguistically expressed; and, if linguistic in character, such behaviors may or may not be denotationally explicit with respect to the properties ascribed to the register's forms"(2004:16). Therefore, while the necessity of codeswitching into standard Maltese may be spoken about, what is engrained at a deeper cognitive level is the consequences of not codeswitching. It is a socio-linguistic taboo. To not follow these social rules, one would receive social punishment such as being laughed at, not taken seriously, being frowned upon, or simply being perceived as rude and uneducated. Therefore, the sociolinguistic ideology of codeswitching is an engrained, habitual practice of Gozitans, but is still a rather forced, or learned social practice.

While learning when it is appropriate to codeswitch into standard Maltese is taught through socialization, the actual language itself is taught at school. One of my contacts named Miriam, an educator and supporter of dialect pride, told me, Gozitan children, who are still learning the rules of society, and have not linguistically or socially learned how and when to use Maltese, often can be laughed at and bullied for speaking in his or her dialect at school. This is more likely to occur in Malta than in Gozo, since in Gozo everyone, usually including the teacher, is Gozitan, and therefore speaks a Gozitan dialect at home. She said that speaking in a dialect in school may be more tolerated in Gozo, but it is more important that these children learn standard Maltese, which spoken, is closer to the dialects that Maltese children are raised speaking. Therefore, while she feels it is important to learn the standard, according to Miriam, the education system is one power system, which Gozitan children form a linguistic identity that tells them that they are inferior.

Today, codeswitching is occurring more now than ever for Gozitans due to technological improvements, new opportunities, increased education, and modernization. Some worry that with so many Gozitans using standard Maltese in their daily lives, and many moving to the larger sister island, that their Gozitan dialects are at risk for extinction. This, perhaps, is an example of iconization becoming less iconized, and more of a reality as the gap between practice (Gozitans assimilate) and ideology (one Maltese identity) may be closing. Yet it is these same products of globalization that may actually be doing good things for the persistence of dialects. Thus, I would like to take this last part to examine the cultural and linguistic crossroads at which the various dialects of Maltese currently stand. In regarding globalization from the macro, inter-cultural level, to the micro, intra-cultural level, I will analyze two seemingly parallel, yet opposing linguistic phenomena that ultimately suggest two very different possibilities for the future of Maltese dialects.

From the perspective of an anthropologist, there is an assumption that homogeneity as a result of globalization today is the most vital issue to be examined. With the evolution of technology, mediums of communication such as media, social networking sites, even travel (and thus, tourism) are more easily accessible now more than ever, moving us to a social and material world of shared, borrowed, but most importantly re-created information. All over the world, language extinction is occurring, by choice and by force, although the choice is often made out perceived social and economic necessity. Miriam, and many others, believes that Gozitan codeswitching is threatening the existence of Gozitan dialects. At the most extreme, if Gozitans continue to move to Malta, then their children will be raised speaking a dialect closer to standard Maltese, and their cultural and linguistic heritage may be forgotten. Also, the cultural shame of being Gozitan lends more motivation for individuals to betray their rural roots in the hopes of climbing the social and economic ladder. Again, this is most clearly integrated and accepted into Maltese society through codeswitching.

While the threat to dialect extinction is an important topic I will return to, it is worth mentioning again how this threat goes to the Maltese language itself. The high level of tourism on which the Maltese economy depends makes it hard for the now independent country to not adapt themselves for the tourists. While speaking Maltese is persistently used at home, the case of the St. Julian dialect where Maltese-English codeswitching occurs between Maltese people is evidence of the historical and contemporary influence, or threat, of English.

While the touristy town of St. Julian's may be at fault for the English integration, the Maltese education system itself is another culprit. English is not only a subject taught in school, but the language in which all other subjects were taught. Miriam told me that when she taught elementary-aged children in the nineteen-seventies, and that teaching English in public schools was not nearly as important and enforced as it is now, (although the balance of how much should be taught in English or Maltese is often debated). Meanwhile, all private schools use English, to which many foreigners come to Malta to attend. Thus, having English-speaking schools that attracts foreigners is economically advantageous for the country. What upset Miriam most about how the University of Malta is run, is how most of the classes are taught in English. English is necessary for Maltese people to learn in order to get a job not only in the global work force, but right at home, working at a vendor selling pastizzis. This extreme infiltration of English culture and language into those of Malta, I think, is remarkable, even compared to other countries that are effected by the globalization of tourism.

Ironically, attempts at initiating linguistic pride of the Maltese language could further hurt and threaten its own diversity. With nation building and the establishment of various institutions, the Maltese language has become standardized. In the last century, recognition of the Maltese language, linguistically and politically, has come with its eventual independence as its own country. In 1924, a modern system of orthography of the Maltese language was introduced in the first edition of a Maltese language rulebook. It, and English, were recognized as the official languages in 1934, with total independence from Britain coming several decades later, in 1964. English and Maltese have been the languages of instruction since 1946, when attending primary school became mandatory. Again, the creation of the Maltese Language Act was a way to standardize and unify the Maltese people. While globalization has always been the situation in Malta, with independence the people have an opportunity to officially distinguish themselves from the rest of the world, probably the first time in their history. While the opportunity for social cohesion through linguistic standardization is important for the Maltese people as a whole, language regulation can overlook Malta's linguistic diversity. Nationalizing language like this is a kind of bond, or grouping of Maltese people, that, "is a process not merely of discovering or acknowledging a similarity that precedes and establishes identity but, more fundamentally, of inventing similarity by downplaying difference," (Bucholtz and Hall 2004; 371). The authors of this essay continue in the same paragraph about how the creation of this common

identity conversely also highlights differences between the in-group (mainstream Malta) and other minority groups (Gozitans), which is evidenced in our case through Gozitan codeswitching. (While the benefits of nationalization are understandable, I would like to acknowledge that the intentions are typically not to create homogenization. I am simply pointing out the disadvantages of this process on cultural diversity.) So, as threatened and regulated as Maltese language and culture is as a nation, Gozitan, being the minority group of dialects, seems to be at a worse position. When speaking English, Gozitans travel two diglossias, two cultures, two worldviews away from their rooting socio-linguistic identity. I exaggerate slightly in this statement, as Gozitan and Maltese are linguistically and culturally only slightly different, when looked at from a broader, outside perspective. But it is exactly this broad, global, worldview that is why people come live in Malta for twenty years and never learn a word of the language, let alone its different dialects.

Everywhere I had traveled prior, I always made an effort to learn the local language, even just a few words, and I always saw at least a few other tourists doing the same. Even Maltese people told me not to try, that there was no point, and that people would even laugh at the notion. It seems that the people of Malta had accepted the isolated and threatened nature of their language, resulting from globalization. Again, perhaps the desired ideology by larger Maltese institutions for a single linguistic identity is not only practiced, but also internalized. Also, Malta is a modern representation of the persistence of lingua francas in previously colonized countries. Also, the lack of formal education in many parts of the country for such a long period of time, combined with the relative isolation of Gozo and other communities may have lead to such linguistic diversity among such a small population of people. In addition, this diversity probably persists because Malta has been officially unified for less than a century, and therefore, much like the situation in Italy, one's dialect is very closely tied to one's region of origin. So, despite contemporary happenings that suggest linguistic homogenization, perhaps Maltese society is further from this potential reality than originally speculated.

Cultural stereotypes, homogenization, linguistic standardization, modernization, and nation-building, that is going on in the country of Malta all point to the inevitable demise of Gozitan dialects. This was the hypothesis I took when I first chose to study the cultural ramifications of the Maltese dialects. Indeed, the obvious assumption of minority dialect endangerment is a natural reaction with regard to the effects of globalization. While pursuing this idea, I found something out that was completely contrary

to this, and rather inspiring. When I brought this topic up with a fantastic Gozitan friend of the program, Mario, his response was completely not what I expected. Although it is just at the beginning stages, as Mario described it to me, speaking in one's own dialect is now being looked at as something of a positive nature among young people, according to him. It is "cool" and for this generation of to expresses and define one's own uniqueness by speaking in his or her own dialect. Instead of being passive victims, having their identity of low self-esteem and inferiority created for them, perhaps Gozitans, (and all Maltese dialect speakers, for that matter) are instead agents of free will, creating their identity. After all, every town, all over Gozo and Malta, has its own unique traditions and dialect. It is amazing, looking online, how many websites and organizations have popped up in just the last few years, promoting a town's unique heritage. Maria elaborated on this point that Mario first presented me with: "Some of my Maltese friends insist that we (Gozitans) speak with our dialects because they believe they sound so beautiful." It's interesting that she used the word "insist" because this reflects how cognitively engrained codeswitching is for Gozitans, so that progressive Maltese friends must aggressively request for the breaking of a cultural norm, so that Gozitans may speak in a natural way. She also said that some Maltese people enjoy hearing the slower, more sing-song pace of Gozitan. Instead of looking down on the Gozitan dialect, some Maltese are appreciating the diversity of their own language, and so perhaps the promotion of dialects does something not only for Gozitan identity, but for Maltese identity as well. And so now, to speak Gozitan, to be Gozitan, and to be different, is not only beginning to lose its negative stereotype, it is becoming accepted, and even cool. I speculate that globalization, while being the cause of the demise of dialects, in other ways works to do the opposite, in that it contributes to the mindset that embraces dialect, and cultural, diversity.

Bucholtz and Hall present another concept of Irvine and Gal through which identity is formed that may explain this new trend of dialect reemergence through modernized society. Fractal recursivity (Bucholtz and Hall 2004; 380) points to icons as explaining the development of multiple identities. So the icon of codeswitching that according to iconization is a practice to create ideological one-ness and a single Maltese identity, in fractal recursivity is used as a marker of distinction, not sameness. According to this view, it is because of this practice that Gozitans have their own linguistic identity. So although they both speak standard Maltese, because Maltese people do not practice this icon (since they already naturally speak the standard), their linguistic identity is therefore ideologically distinct,

not similar to that of Gozitans. So, this rising practice of speaking in one's own dialect can best be views through the emerging ideology in Maltese society of dialect pride. This ideology has been introduced resulting from globalization. Generally, in the multi-cultural world that we live in today, tolerance and diversity are being taught more now than in the past, and more and more are being embraced. In reflecting on why this is, I am led to globalization, and acceptance of it as the cause. Indeed, this phenomenon can be observed, but is not exclusive, nor all-inclusive, to developed, Western societies. And while global economic and technological forces have had a grip on the world since industrialization that marked the 19th century, the past few decades have seen an accelerated rate of cultural and ideological diffusion. And so the process of globalization is often referred to as Westernization. Contemporary anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's Five Scapes of the social imaginary describes several realms in which psycho-cultural views become integrated and flow through the global social subconscious (Appaduri 1990). When traveling across cultural borders, these scapes are often translated to be culturally relevant. Ideoscapes, (Appaduri 1990; 575) deals with the underlying psychological ideologies of a group, often political, that are developed and shared to represent that state's power. Literary and political ideas of democracy, capitalism, and self-determination from the modern Western world translate into economic, social, media, and cultural ideologies. Booming of the market economy, along with the diversification of technological mass communication, aids the flow of ideoscapes. I believe that it is through this historical politico-economic process that ideologies of uniqueness, individualism, and expressing oneself have become mainstream fads in many developed societies. Despite this ideologies' explicit status in society, differentiation (ironically) remains prevalent in our collective subconscious. In Malta, a country known for its traditional way of life, this ideology is already present in globalized commercial goods, marketing ads, and through various media outlets. Therefore, speaking in one's own unique dialect is an up and coming fad, having seeped into the social imaginary of today's young people. As ideas of individualization and regional pride are now more than ever it is now being accepted, their conceptualization is occurring through the celebration of Malta's linguistic and cultural diversity.

While Appaduri's scapes give us a broad understanding of how globalization occurs today, I would like to speculate on how these processes are specifically happening in Malta. First, I think that the most recent generation has not as directly, or harshly felt the prejudices that exist against Gozitans. While Gozitans' codeswitching shows

that this is only partly true, Miriam's open-minded Maltese friends demonstrate how this norm may be beginning to change (after all, culture, even its seemingly permanent taboos, are forever evolving). Also, while historical negative sentiments with regards to economic disparity still exist between Gozitans and Maltese, new and extended education opportunities are closing this gap. Finally, today's generation is continuously propelling our modernizing global society through the consumption and spreading of new products, information, and ideologies. So even though showing off one's individual linguistic identity is perhaps just picking up speed across speech communities, it is even evident in media. Mario told me that several Maltese television stations feature people speaking in dialect. Most notably, one talk show hosted a dialect-speaking celebrity. This "improper" use of the Maltese language in the mass media has received some negative criticism from older generations, reminding us that despite changing perceptions, traditional Maltese ideology does still persist.

Ultimately, my goal in introducing the dichotomy of globalization either facilitating dialect extinction, or supporting its revival (or both) is to establish a dichotomy of ideologies with regards to Maltese linguistic identity. With dialects coming more popular and changing attitudes among young people, the country of Malta is beginning to find itself at a cross-roads with conventional social stratification evidenced through regional dialect and the resulting establishment of switching norms. Will dialects no longer be associated with vulgarity, ignorance, and lack of education? Miriam certainly hopes so. The Djaletti (dialects) Festival that Miriam and her confederates ran this fall took place at the Gharb Folklor Museum in Gharb, Gozo. While I unfortunately was no longer in Gozo to attend, during a phone interview in August, Miriam told me about the organization and its intentions. This festival has only been going on for a few years, and is held to "show off" the rich dialect variation of Gozo.

One way that this is done is through the presentation of traditional ghana, or folk singing. This singsong, conversation-like rhyming of ghana is traditionally accompanied by a guitar, accordion, and a few other basic instruments depending on the region (although today usually just the guitar is used). Historically, it was used as a form of entertainment after a hard day of physical work tending to crops, caring for the animals, and maintaining the rural economy. Ghana was an important part of the lives of the rural working class, and thus has been an important part of Gozitan identity (this tradition exists in parts of Malta, as well). As Miriam explained to me, wealthy Maltese looked down on folk singing, since it

was an activity that the lower class were attracted to. The lyrics are traditionally sung exclusively in local dialects, since this custom became a part of rural life long before Maltese was standardized. Thus, ghana songs, dialects, and instruments vary regionally. These songs were sung in the ten old villages of Malta, which were the parishes before the Knights arrived in 1530. Today, however, many folksingers that perform, such as for the Fourth of June Festival, sing in standard Maltese. As Miriam told me, this is because of the persistent taboo against using dialects at national events. Miriam and her friends started the Djaletti Festival so that ghanas could be sung and appreciated in their traditional dialects in public spaces. She claims that already hundreds of Gozitan words have been lost to Maltese, and that by celebrating and taking pride in dialects, instead of shunning them, is the best way to slow this process. She believes that dialects represent the rich diversity of all Maltese people, who should take pride in their heritage and use them without shame. By having people from different Gozitan towns get together and speak their own dialects, she's hoping that something humorous will be made out of this rare kind of exchange that over time will hopefully break the taboo. Also, people who use their own dialect will be able to tell a kind of story of their own experience, not just in what they're saying but how they're saying it. Indeed, the Djaletti Festival is one example of a fractal recursivity practice.

Currently, Miriam is working on recording and preserving Maltese and Gozitan dialects. For two years, along with a few linguist professors, she has been studying dialect distinctions such as the short and long vowels (which I mentioned earlier), hoping to create a linguistic map of many dialects, before they disappear. When I asked her what she saw in the future for dialects, she said, "from the highest authority, they have eliminated Maltese from the most prestigious part, and so that is a bad omen, so from the official side, I don't see good things, I hope that Maltese (people) learn to love our language and continue to speak it, and we hope to continue our struggle to continue speaking dialects in public"(Miriam). Activists like Miriam and her friends who are publicly trying to promote, preserve, and celebrate diversity are beginning to appear more and more. This attitude suggests a bright future for Maltese and Gozitan dialects.

Throughout this essay, I have greatly stressed the historical events that have created the unique and unrecognized diversity of Maltese culture. For such a small, vulnerable land, the Maltese have done a remarkable job at appropriating outside influences and making them their own. What so many non-Maltese people fail to notice about the islands is how being a national "Maltese" is only the

outside layer of identity of any person from this country. Indeed, Maltese people are familiar with themselves and each other based on one's regional origins, which is revealed through the associated dialect. But with recent independence and standardization of the language, Maltese linguistic identity is undergoing a dynamic process of dialect disappearance resulting from factors relating to globalization and the creation of a national identity, as well as a resurgence of dialect pride through the development of grassroots organizations, such as festivals and dialect awareness organizations. Gozitans, in particular, are at risk of losing their distinct identity, because this isolated dialect group now more than ever must integrate into mainstream Maltese society by traveling to the larger island for education and jobs. For Gozitans, formation of this identity can be seen in the complexity of linguistic-social codes based on historical attitudes, where acknowledging diversity means acknowledging social stratification. Just as I suggest that globalization is both causing and preventing the disappearance of dialects, I propose that the concepts of iconization and fractal recursivity, respectively, are two ways in which paradoxical Gozitan identity is formed as a result. So while attempts to prevent the disappearance of the Maltese language as a whole may suggest dialectic homogenization, these same global forces perhaps are transferring ideologies that support dialect and diversity. As Appaduri says, "The central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization," (Appaduri 1990; 572). It is my hope that this critical linguistic-ethnographic analysis of the current dialect situation in the country of Malta may speak to the complexities of changing cultural identity in light of global forces.

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