SANDRO CARUANA

-ata *nominalisations in Maltese:*
a language contact perspective

ABSTRACT: The *-ata* derivational suffix is attested frequently in nominalisations in Italo-Romance languages and its functions related to 'event/single instance' nouns have been documented extensively. This affix with these functions is also present in the derivational morphology of Maltese, in which diachronic and synchronic developments of *-ata* nominalisations reflect the evolutionary paths of this language, characterised by contact. By investigating the etymology of verbal and nominal bases, this research provides a classification of forms which take the *-ata* suffix in Maltese to refer to events and single instances within them, through derivation involving contact with Italian, English and Sicilian base forms. *-ata* nominalisations resulting from etymologically Arabic bases will also be included in the classification.

KEYWORDS: Maltese, Nominalisation, Contact, Derivational Morphology, Semelfactives.

1. Introduction

While *-ata* nominalisations, and their forms and functions as 'event/single instance' nouns, are documented extensively for Italian (e.g. Gaeta 2002 2004 and 2015; Acquaviva 2005; Fiorentini 2010; Donazzan, Tovena 2017), with studies also carried out for other Romance languages (e.g. Aliquot-Suengas, Macchi 2003; Soare 2017, Gaeta 2015: 1177-1180), research on them is missing for Maltese. Since this language is characterised by copious borrowing from Italo-Romance, *-ata* nominalisations are attested and productive, both in formal and informal varieties.

This contribution is therefore dedicated to the *-ata* nominal suffix in Maltese and to the meaning and functions of the various forms in relation to events and to single instances within them (*nomina vicis*). While the main aim of my work is to reflect on their productivity from the perspective of a language, Maltese, which is heavily characterised by contact, another objective is also to extend the discussion on *-ata* nominalisations beyond Romance languages. To do so I will provide a brief introduction on contact in Maltese morphology, followed by reflections on some of the main issues mentioned in the literature dedicated to these nominalisations. This will serve as background for a classification of *-ata* nominalisations in Maltese, accompanied by notes regarding etymology and function.

2. Contact in Maltese morphology

The Constitution of the Republic of Malta (1974) recognises Maltese, a Semitic language, as the national language of the island, while both Maltese and English are official languages. Maltese presents characteristics of "layered" languages (Aikhenvald 2007: 4-7), as its structures reflect its evolutionary paths: this is especially evident in its vocabulary as the Arabic stratum of Maltese[1], introduced when the island was taken over by the Arabs (A.D. 870), was first exposed to Sicilian, which forms its superstratum, then to Italian, its first adstratum, and more recently to English, its second adstratum (Brincat 2011: xxxv)[2]. The vocabulary of present-day Maltese contains more words of Italo-Romance than of Arabic origin, although these tallies vary substantially because of calculations made on different corpora (Comrie, Spagnol 2016): terms of Arabic etymology are clearly more numerous in texts which deal with traditional sectors (e.g. fishing, architecture) and in literature, but obviously much less so in semantic fields related to modern developments and in everyday colloquial use. Most function words, including articles, conjunctions, prepositions and pronouns, belong to the Semitic stratum of Maltese. For this reason, Maltese remains largely unintelligible to speakers of Italian who have no knowledge of Arabic, although they will generally recognise and understand several words.

1. Although there has been some controversy in relation to the origin of the Arabic component of contemporary Maltese, today there is little doubt that the most important source of this is a variety of Maghrebi Arabic. Lucas, Čéplö (2020: 266) provide a short list of grammatical features to substantiate this, including the pan-Maghrebi extension to the singular of the first-person *n-* prefix of the imperfect verbal paradigm; the loss of gender distinction in the second person singular in pronouns and both perfect and imperfect verbs; variable re-articulation of the definite article on postnominal adjectives in definite noun phrases and the *-il* suffix of the numerals 'eleven' to 'nineteen' in determiner use. Also, see Fabri (2010) for a concise, yet comprehensive, description of contemporary Maltese.
2. Contact with Italo-Romance is the result of geographical proximity, which also led to significant religious and cultural influences. Contact with English, on the other hand, is mainly the product of political events, as Malta was ruled by the British between 1800 and 1964 (Hull 1993).

Contemporary Maltese is therefore a product of diachronic and synchronic contact between Arabic, Italo-Romance and English, and this is reflected in its inflectional and derivational morphology. As documented by Spagnol (2011), two morphological systems co-exist and manifest features which can be, by and large, retraced to their respective etymology: introflexive (non-concatenative) in the case of Arabic, concatenative for Italo-Romance.

Characteristics of Semitic languages are especially evident in root-based structures. Examples of this are readily found in nominal morphology, such as in the many patterns of the introflexive 'broken' plural (e.g. sing. *ktieb* 'book'; *żarbun* 'shoe' > plu. *kotba* 'books'; *żraben* 'shoes') and in the derivational templatic *binyanim*: for example, the triconsonantal root √*ksr* (*kiser* 'broke') produces the forms *kisser* (transitive), *nkiser* (passive), *tkisser* (reflexive). Concatenative morphological structures of Italo-Romance, however, are also both present and productive in derivational morphology: for example, suffixation on the stem *persuna* 'person' produces *persunaġġ* 'character' (noun), *personali* 'personal' (adjective), *(i)ppersonifika*[3] 'personify' (verb) and *personalment* 'personally' (adverb). This process mirrors derivation that occurs both in standard Italian and in Sicilian.

As expected, the two systems do not function in isolation as contact between them occurs in various grammatical categories. In verb inflection, as exemplified in Table 1, the imperfective Arabic prefix (in bold) is replicated on Italian and English stems:

Personal pronoun (subject)	Arabic (root-based) form √*tlb*: *talab* 'pray'	Italian verbal stem: *studja* 'study'	English verbal stem: *ixxuttja* 'kick a ball'
jien (jiena) 'I'	**n**itlob	**n**istudja	**n**ixxuttja
int (inti) 'you'	**t**itlob	**t**istudja	**t**ixxuttja
hu (huwa) 'he'	**j**itlob	**j**istudja	**j**ixxuttja
hi (hija) 'she'	**t**itlob	**t**istudja	**t**ixxuttja

Table 1: The formation of the imperfective in Maltese (singular persons)

Contact occurs in derivational morphology too, as exemplified in the following cases of Italo-Romance suffixation on Maltese terms of Arabic origin:

1) morpheme *-un* (Sic. *-uni*; It. *-one*)
   ġibjun 'reservoir, large well' (Mt. *ġiebja* 'cistern, resevoir')

---

3. The initial (i) is a euphonic vowel, hence its insertion within brackets.

2) morpheme *-uż* (Sic. *-uzzu* It. '*-oso*')
   (i)nkejjuz 'a person who teases' (Mt. *(i)nkejja* 'tease')

3) morpheme *-azz* (Sic. *-azzu*; It. *-accio*)
   sakranazz 'drunkard' (Mt. *siker* 'get drunk')

4) morpheme *-ata* (Sic. *-ata*; It. *-ata*)
   xemxata 'sunstroke' (Mt. *xemx* 'sun')

Nominalisations in *-ata*, of which (4) above is an example, present characteristics of concatenative morphology, which is not limited to Italo-Romance nominal and verbal base forms. Before going into detail on this, I present some characteristics of *-ata* nominalisations in Italian, albeit briefly, since my classification of Maltese forms is largely based on them. I also include a note on a quasi-homonymous Semitic suffix (*-at*) to distinguish it from *-ata* as used in nominalisations in Maltese.

3. *-ata* nominalisations in Italian

As Donazzan, Tovena (2017: 78) state, «in a number of Romance languages, a speaker can use *nomina vicis* forms to make reference to single instances of contingently delimited events. These are expressed through event nouns formed with the suffix -ata/-ada (…), that contribute a type of delimitation that is better described as aspectual boundedness». Acquaviva (2005), among others, provides a detailed account of the use of these forms in Italian by explaining how *-ata* nominalisations transform activity (dynamic and durative) predicates into semelfactive and perfective predicates. For example, *nuotare* 'to swim' is nominalized as *nuotata* 'a swim', but the stative (non-dynamic) *conoscere* 'to know' does not produce **conosciuta*. He adds that *nuotata* does not simply designate the *nuotare* activity but, more specifically, an instance (semelfactive character) within (perfective character) this activity: «in other words, an event» (Acquaviva 2005: 7, *my translation*).

These are flanked by derivations in *-ata* from nominal base forms (e.g. *ombrellata* 'to be struck by an umbrella') which are both highly productive and semantically rich in Italian. This class shares semantic properties with deverbals, from which it probably originates historically having gained autonomy over time, thereby becoming productive in its own right. These considerations are also at the basis of the discussion as to whether the *-ata* suffix is analogous to or distinct from the feminine participial suffix (e.g. *lei è andata*, 'she left'), also used in the passive voice (e.g. *la cena è stata consumata*, 'dinner was consumed')[4].

4. Gaeta (2015: 1177) states that «in diachronic terms, this word-formation pattern results from the

For the purposes of my contribution, it is noteworthy that Gaeta (2004: 339, *my translation*) remarks that «establishing the deverbal or denominal origin of some forms is difficult and maybe superfluous», quoting the -*ata* nominalisations *martellata* 'to be struck by a hammer' and *pedalata* 'the act of pedalling' which can derive from verbs (*martellare* and *pedalare*) or from nouns (*martello* and *pedale*). This point in relation to the degree of ambiguity between nominal and/or verbal base forms is, in fact, relevant to Maltese and it is indeed a difficulty encountered when classifying -*ata* nominalisations in this language.

The various nominalisations that result from these structures were aptly summarised by means of categorisations proposed by Gaeta (2002: 149), also included in Acquaviva (2005: 8):

i. *colpo di N* 'to be hit/struck by an object' (e.g. *gomito* 'elbow' – *gomitata* 'to be struck by an elbow');
ii. *azione tipica da N* 'a typical action of a noun' (e.g. *asino* 'donkey' – *asinata* 'a stupid action');
iii. *quantità contenuta in N* 'a quantity contained in a noun' (e.g. *cucchiaio* 'spoon' – *cucchiaiata* 'spoonful');
iv. *accrescitivo di N* 'augmentation of a noun' (e.g. *cancello* 'gate' – *cancellata* 'enclosed space with gate boundaries');
v. *periodo di tempo N* 'a period related to a noun' (e.g. *giorno* 'day' – *giornata* 'the span of the day');
vi. *singolo atto di V* 'a single act of a verb' (e.g. *mangiare* 'to eat' – *mangiata* 'a meal')

In the literature, categories (i), (ii) and (vi) are grouped as those which typically represent 'events' and/or *nomina vicis* determined by a verbal or nominal base. In addition to the above, "collective events" based on an item (e.g. *spaghetti* – *spaghettata* 'an event including a spaghetti meal') are also mentioned (e.g. Fiorentini 2010: 117-119). Furthermore, in yet some other cases (e.g. Scalise 1995: 489-491), reference is made to a *prodotto di N* 'a product of a noun': e.g. *peperone* 'pepper', *peperonata* – 'food obtained by grinding/smashing N', (Donazzan, Tovena 2017: 82).

---

reanalysis of an original inflectional form, the feminine form of the (Latin) past participle while the process of regrammaticalization is not yet well understood». On this matter, see also Donazzan, Tovena (2017: 82).

4. Nominalisations in Maltese and the *-at* suffix

It might be superfluous to point out that *-ata* nominalisations represent one option of noun formation because, as in the case of most languages, Maltese possesses several morphological strategies for this (Borg, Azzopardi-Alexander 1988: 12, 81, 147; Mifsud 2008: 152-3; Ellul 2016; Gatt, Fabri 2018; Saade 2019). For example, nominalisation of root-based structures in Maltese replicates the Arabic pattern (*nomen vicis*), as in the following structures:

root	*maṣdar* ('base' form)	*'ism al-marrat* ('noun of instance')
√*ħrġ*	*ħruġ* 'go out, exit'	*ħarġa* 'a (single) act of going out'
√*għwm*	*għawm* 'swim'	*għawma* 'a (single) swim'

Table 2: Root based 'nouns of instance'

The singulative *a-* nominal suffix in the two examples above, *ħarġa* and *għawma* also covers properties attributed to the Arabic *-at* intensifier suffix, as in the following two examples (Fassi Fehri, Vinet 2008:64):

5) Ar. *jaraa   jaryatan*
   ran run.unit.ACC
   Mt. *ġera   ġirj-a*
   ran run-SING
   'He ran a (single) run.'

6) Ar.   *raqasa   raqsatan*
      danced   dance.unit.ACC
   Mt.   *żifen   żifn-a*
      danced dance-SING
   'He danced a (single) dance.'

Furthermore, Maltese has an Arabic inflectional plural suffix *-at*, which is unrelated to the derivational *-at* being discussed here. This plural morpheme is used for a small class of nouns (e.g. *triq* 'road' – *triqat* 'roads'; *xemgħa* 'candle'- *xemgħat* 'candles'), including three root-based patterns on which I reflect further in Section 5.2: √*ksħ* (e.g. *kesħa* 'cold' – *ksuħat* 'silly, show-off acts'); √*blh* (e.g. *bluha* 'folly' – *bluhat* 'follies') and √*krh* (e.g. *kruha* 'ugliness' – *kruhat* 'ugly acts/things'[5]).

Nominalisation in *-ata* in Maltese is therefore distinct from the quasi-homonymous Arabic *-at* suffix, and it is limited to a relatively small number of lemmas, mainly because of multiple morphological processes involved in Maltese noun formation. Morphologically, it pertains to the class of Italo-Romance nominal suffixes,

---

5. See entries nos. 46, 51 and 52 in Table 5.2.

such as: *-ezza* (e.g. *ċert* 'certain' – *ċertezza* 'certainty'); *-ament* (e.g. *apprezza* 'appreciate' – *apprezzament* 'appreciation'); *-ar* (e.g. *kopja* 'a copy' / *(i)kkopja* 'copy' – *(i)kkupjar* 'the act of copying'); *-zzjoni* (e.g. *assoċja* 'associate' – *assoċjazzjoni* 'association') and *-atura*[6] (e.g. *spara* 'shoot' – *sparatura* 'an act of shooting')[7].

5. *-ata* nominalisations in Maltese

As stated in the introduction of this paper, the main objective of my work is to provide an overview of *-ata* nominalisations in Maltese and to explain the extent to which they are the result of contact. This will hopefully place Maltese on the linguistic map of these nominalisations, and possibly provide parameters for comparisons and further reflections in future studies. My data were collected from the following sources:

i. the *Korpus Malti* (https://mlrs.research.um.edu.mt, version 3.0, 2016), which is the most extensive corpus of Maltese (circa 250 million tokens), annotated with part-of-speech tags, lemmas and morphological roots. This *Korpus* is mainly based on written texts, dated 1998-2013;

ii. three dissertations carried out at the University of Malta. Camilleri (1993) lists Italo-Romance suffixes in Maltese, whereas Barbara, Scicluna (2002) and Scerri (2015) explore the language variety of youths, including several dysphemisms;

iii. a limited data collection carried out via email: I asked 26 colleagues at the University of Malta, who are either specialised in Maltese or in Linguistics, to list the first ten nominalisations in *-ata* which came to their mind. I received replies from 24 of them, and in 16 cases more than the ten requested examples were provided, leading to a total of almost 400 valid tokens from which I extracted 74 types;

iv. my own personal experience as a native speaker of Maltese: over a span of several months (February 2020-December 2021) I kept note of *-ata* nominalisations that I overheard during daily conversations, or came across on popular local means of communication, including social media. Frequency of use was taken into consideration, thereby eliminating idiosyncratic forms used only on one occasion by individual speakers.

---

6. This suffix is especially productive with monosyllabic lemmas of English origin (e.g. *puxx* 'push' – *puxxjatura* 'an act of pushing'; *weld* 'weld' – *weldjatura* 'an act of welding').

7. Gatt, Fabri (2018) focus on two of these derivational suffixes *-ar* and *-zzjoni* – which share a number of semantic and distributional characteristics. A corpus-based analysis showed that one of them, namely *-ar*, is likely to emerge as more productive in the long-term. Saade (2019) investigates the productivity of a number of Italian derivational affixes in Maltese, based on corpus data. *-ata* nominalisations, however, are not included.

Steps ii-iv allowed me to identify *-ata* nominalisations used in colloquial, informal varieties, including contemporary Maltese used by youths. In fact, since the *Korpus Malti* mainly covers written texts, some *-ata* nominalisations pertaining to spoken varieties are not included in it.

On the basis of the above, 100 *-ata* nominalisations with properties of events and/or *nomina vicis* frequently used in contemporary Maltese were listed and classified, with their respective base forms and with information on the origin of the lemma. Frequency was determined both on the basis of quantity but also by ascertaining that entries were found in more than one source of (i) to (iv) above. Corresponding *-ata* nominalisations in Italian or in Sicilian were sought to include the closest corresponding form/s. Admittedly, some etymological information I provide may not be exhaustive and could be subject to debate and further verification[8]. As often the case in Maltese, it also may be unclear as to whether some lemmas derive from contact with Italian or with Sicilian (or with both), especially when regional forms do not diverge substantially from the standard. This is the reason for providing both versions[9].

The main criterion used for my classification is the existence of a Maltese verbal base form (e.g. noun *passiġġata* 'a long walk' > verb *(i)ppassiġġa* 'walk' + *-ata*) or nominal base form (e.g. noun *paprata* 'a blunder' > noun *papra* 'duck' + -ata), which morphologically leads to derivation in *-ata* (Tables 3 to 7). Maltese, however, also includes forms for which such base forms are not identifiable (e.g. *ġurnata* 'day', borrowed from Italo-Romance as a lexical morpheme, since *ġurn / *ġurna* are not attested)[10]. These are included in my taxonomy at a later stage (Tables 8 and 9.1). Furthermore, my entries include those forms which present semantic properties outlined in Section 3, typically representing events and/or *nomina vicis* determined by verbal nominal base forms[11].

5.1. Deverbals

My data collection reveals that deverbals in Maltese *-ata* nominalisations represents a category which is limited to a relatively small number of entries, all of Italo-

---

8. See, for example, Brincat's (2009) contribution on Sicilianisms and pseudo-Sicilianisms.
9. Aquilina's (1987) dictionary was my main reference tool, although some recent *-ata* coinages are obviously not listed. I also referred to this dictionary to obtain etymological information, and I confronted this with Traina's (1868) historical dictionary and to Piccitto, Tropea, Trovato's (1977-2002) comprehensive work for Sicilian. For Italian, besides referring to several online tools (most notably the Treccani dictionary, https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/), I referred to Zingarelli (2000) and to Cortelazzo, Zolli's (1999) etymological dictionary. The main tool I used for Arabic is Milton Cowen's (1976) dictionary and Versteegh's (2008) Encyclopedia of Arabic languages and Linguistics.
10. Gatt, Fabri (2018) report that this is also the case for a number of nominalisations in *-ar* and *-zzjoni*.
11. There are several *-ata* forms in Maltese (e.g. *armata*, 'army'; *parata* 'parade' and *namrata* 'lover') which do not manifest these properties.

Romance origin. The entries included in Table 3 are related to events which are a direct product of a verbal base:

	-*ata* nominalisation	Verbal base	Notes on origin[12]
1.	*ċaċċrata* 'a chatter / talk'	*(i)ċċaċċra* 'chatter'	Sic. *chiacchiariata*; It. *chiacchierata*
2.	*majnata* 'a ducking (at sea)'	*majna* 'lower, lessen'	Sic. *ammainari;* It. *ammainare* 'to lower'
3.	*passiġġata* 'a long walk'	*(i)ppassiġġa* 'walk'	Sic. *passigghiari*; It. *passeggiata*
4.	*parlata* 'a long talk'	*parla* 'talk idly'	Sic. *parlata;* It. *parlata* 'a way of speaking / language variety'
5.	*pixxata* 'a long pee'	*pixxa* 'pee'	Sic. *pisciata*; It. *pisciata*
6.	*(i)rtirata* 'a retreat, recall'	*(i)rtira* 'retire, withdraw, retreat'	Sic. *rritirata* 'sound of trumpet to retreat'; It. *ritirata*
7.	*sussata* 'a mighty heave'	*issossa* 'push in'	(?)[13] Sic. *ajsari, isari*; It. *issare* 'to hoist'
8.	*xalata* 'merry-making, revelry'	*(i)xxala* 'enjoy oneself'	Sic. *scialata*; It. *scialare*
9.	*żuffjettata* 'a practical joke, prank'	*(i)żżuffjetta* 'to play the clown'	(?) Sic. *ciusciata;* It. *soffiata* 'to blow lightly'

Table 3: -*ata* nominalisations from a verbal base

A few more -*ata* nominalisations which are semantically (but not morphologically) related to verbs have also been identified, and will be presented in Table 8. These are forms for which a verbal base in Maltese was not identified, as they are borrowed from Italo-Romance as lexical morphemes.

5.2 Denominals

In Maltese, denominals are much more frequent and productive than deverbals, as evidenced from the following lists. Their categorisation follows, by and large, those presented for Italian in Section 3. The entries in Table 4 are based on actions performed by means of an instrument:

12. Meanings for the Sicilian/Italian entries are given when they differ (even minimally) from the Maltese version.
13. (?) denotes uncertainty regarding the origin.

	-ata nominalisation	Nominal base	Notes on origin
10.	*azzarinata* 'shot of a musket'	*azzarin* 'musket'	Sic. *azzaru*; It. *acciaio* 'steel'
11.	*bastunata* 'strike with a stick'	*bastun* 'stick'	Sic. *bbastunata / vastunata;* It. *bastonata*
12.	*kanunata / kannunata* 'shot of a cannon'	*kanun* 'cannon'	Sic. *cannunata*; It. c*annonata*
13.	*karabinata* 'shot of a carabine'	*karabina* 'carabine'	Sic. *carrubbinata;* It. *carabina*
14.	*martellata* 'strike with a hammer'	*martell* 'hammer'	Sic. *marteddu*; It. *martellata*
15.	*pinzellata / pinzillata* 'a stroke of a brush'	*pinzell* 'paint brush'	Sic. *pinzeddu*; It. *pennellata*
16.	*telefonata* 'a phone call'	*telefown / telefon* 'telephone'	Sic. *telefunu /telefuni*; It. *telefonata*; (possibly also from En. telephone)

Table 4: *-ata* nominalisations from an instrumental base form

Donazzan, Tovena (2017) provide information on instrumental semelfactives in Italian (e.g. *bastonare* 'to strike with a stick') which may have both semel and processive readings, the latter taken as one instance within a series of repeated activities[14]. The Maltese instrumentals *azzarinata* (n. 10)*, kanunata / kannunata* (n. 12)*, karabinata* (n. 13) and *pinzellata* (n. 15), however, only carry a semel reading, possibly because a corresponding semelfactive predicate is unattested[15].

Telefonata (n. 16) also carries a semel reading only: for Italian this is a deverbal, derived from the verb *telefonare* 'to telephone'. This verb has not been borrowed by Maltese, as *ċempel* is used, a form of uncertain etymology[16]. The singulative nomi-

14. Donazzan, Tovena (2017) base their arguments on forms which may be used to represent a specific instance (semels or *nomina vicis*) as opposed to others which also underline repeated instances of an activity (processive). The authors conclude that «*ata-* nominalisations can be subdivided into three groups: those denoting an instance of activity, (*nuotata*), those with a semel reading, (*ombrellata*), and those that have mixed properties, (*bastonata*)» (Donazzan, Tovena 2017: 95), with instrumental semelfactives often featuring in this last group. *Bastonata*, for example, can either refer to one specific event of 'being struck by a stick' or to a series of 'strikes': *Mario ha dato una bastonata al fantoccio, ma dopo qualche colpo il bastone si è rotto* 'Mario hit the puppet with a stick, but after a few blows the stick broke.'
15. An analytical form is used, such as *tagħti daqqa pinzell* 'give a stroke of a brush'.
16. Aquilina (1987:172) associates this to Italian *cimbalo* 'cymbal', the closest Sicilian form of which is *cimmalu* 'harpischord'.

nalisation *ċempila* 'a phone call' is attested too (see Table 2), alongside *telefonata*. One could argue that this nominalisation should be included among deverbals, with *telefonata* (noun) and *ċempel* (verb) both belonging to the same paradigm. Nonetheless, I include it among instrumentals based on the morphological criterion adopted, i.e., the identification of a lexical morpheme (Mt. *telefown / telefon*) from which the *-ata* nominalisation is derived. This represents a typical example of how establishing the deverbal or denominal origin of some forms is not plain-sailing, and it is very much in line with Gaeta's (2004) previously-cited observation for Italian (Section 3).

In contrast, semel and processive readings may be attributed to *bastunata* (n. 11) and *martellata* (n. 14)[17], although the latter reading is undoubtedly less probable than the semel one. An example of a plausible processive reading would be:

7) *B'martellata*   *tajba,*
   with.series.of.hammer.strikes-ata   good
   l-imsiemer   *kollha*   *daħlu*   *f'posthom*
   ART-nails   all   enter.PF   in.place.3pl.POSS
   'With a good series of hammer strikes, the nails were put into place'

The next *-ata* nominalisations are typical actions of nouns, with semel readings: they express a single action which occurs within a process and/or an event. Since these are numerous, I have divided them into two categories (Tables 5.1 and 5.2), based on their origin:

	-ata nominalisation	Nominal base	Notes on origin
17.	*barumbata / barambata* 'escapade, flighty conduct'	*barumbara* 'pigeon house'	(?) Sic. *palumbara*
18.	*bloggata* 'a blog entry'	*blogg*	En. blog
19.	*bravata* 'bravado'	*bravu* 'clever'	Sic. *bbravu*; It. *bravata*
20.	*brikkunata* 'rascality, roguery'	*brikkun* 'rouge, scoundrel'	Sic. *bbriccunata*; It. *bricconata*
21.	*buffunata* 'tomfoolery'	*buffu* 'clown'	Sic. *bbuffunata;* It. *buffonata*
22.	*ċuċata* 'a menial, insignificant or silly act'	*ċuċ* 'silly person'	Sic. *ciùciu* 'a simple person', lit 'external part of the vagina'; It. (Southern regions) *ciuccio* 'donkey'
23.	*diskursata* 'a long talk'	*diskors* 'speech'	Sic. *discursiata*; It. *discorso*

17. Verbs *(i)bbastuna* and *(i)mmartella* are attested in Maltese, although in both cases analytical forms, as in the example provided in footnote 15, are generally preferred.

24.	*faldata* (vulgar) 'an appalling, vulgar act'	*falda* 'edge, brim, vaginal labium (vulgar)'	Sic. *faudda*; It. *falda*
25.	*fanfarunata* 'a boastful, showy act'	*fanfarun* 'braggart'	Sic. *fanfaru*; It. *fanfarone*
26.	*ġakbinata* 'an act of treachery or deception'	*ġakbin* 'scoundrel, traitor'	Sic. *iacubbino* 'hot-head'; It. *giacobino* 'a person holding extremist views', lit. 'Jacobin'
27.	*grigalata* 'a storm, bad weather caused by a strong North-East wind'	*Grigal* 'North-East wind'	Sic. *gricalata*; *It. (vento) grecale*
28.	*imbeċillata* 'a silly, menial act'	*imbeċilli* 'imbecile'	Sic. *imbecilli*; It. *imbecille*
29.	*karnivalata* 'Carnival fun'	*Karnival* 'Carnival'	Sic. *carnalivarata*; *carnivalata* It. *carnevalata*
30.	*kazzata* (vulgar) 'an appalling, vulgar act'	*kazz* 'problem, setback', lit. '(vulgar) penis'	Sic. *cazzu*; It. *cazzata*
31.	*kretinata* 'a silly, menial act'	*kretin* 'cretin'	Sic. *cretinu*; It. *cretinata*
32.	*kuljunata* (vulgar) 'an appalling, vulgar act'	*kuljun* 'stupid person', lit. 'testicle'	Sic. *cugghiunata*; It. *coglione*
33.	*maltempata* 'a storm'	*maltemp* 'bad weather'	Sic. *malattimpata*; It. *maltempo*
34.	*paljaċċata* 'a clownish act'	*paljaċċu / paljazzu* 'clown'	Sic. *pagghiazzata*; It. *pagliacciata*
35.	*pappagallata* 'an action performed by repeating others'	*pappagall* 'parrot'	Sic. *pappagaddu / pappagallu*; It. *pappagallo*
36.	*paprata* 'a blunder'	*papra* 'duck'	Sic. *paparata*; It. *papera*
37.	*pastażata* 'a rude act'	*pastaż* 'a rude person'	Sic. *vastasata*
38.	*poddata* 'a podcast episode'	*podcast*	En. podcast
39.	*purċinellata / pulċinellata* 'a menial, insignificant act'	*purċinell / pulċinell* 'a silly person' lit.'Pulcinella'	It. *Pulcinella*
40.	*stupidata* 'a stupid, menial act'	*stupidu* 'stupid'	Sic. *stupitu*; It. *stupidata*
41.	*viljakkata* 'an act of cowardliness'	*viljakk* 'a cowardly, vile person'	Sic. *vigliaccu / vigghjaccu*; It. *vigliaccata*
42.	*vavata* 'a menial, insignificant act'	*vavu* 'a childish person'	Sic. *vavu* 'newborn, infant'
43.	*xenata* 'to make a scene'	*xena* 'scene'	Sic. *scena*; It. *scenata*

Table 5.1: Typical action of a noun - Italo-Romance and English origin[18]

18. Nominalisations derived from nationalities, such as *Amerikanata* 'an American-like action' and *Ingliżata* 'an English-like action', would also fit into this category.

Many of the above, including nominalisations derived from body-parts, are dysphemisms with connotations related to futile or unimportant actions (e.g. *buffunata, ċuċata, kazzata, paprata, vavata*, etc.).

Two commonly used forms related to weather conditions (*grigalata* and *maltempata*) are also included in this list. Although similar Italian forms are sometimes placed in a separate category (Fiorentini (2010: 9), for example, calls them *colpi di agenti atmosferici* 'hits/instances of atmospheric conditions'), they still represent an action based on a noun, albeit without a human subject. Interestingly, *Grigal* (North-East wind) is the only wind direction from which an *-ata* nominalisation is produced, possibly because the suffix acts as an intensifier to denote the saliency of this wind, which can be quite strong locally.

Similar forms are attested in which *-ata* nominalisations are the product of contact with etymologically Arabic nominal bases, although in some cases their origin requires further research[19]. One form (*żinnata*, n. 60) which presumably is a local formation is also included in this list:

	-ata nominalisation	Nominal base	Notes on origin
44.	*baħnanata* 'a foolish act'	*baħnan* 'a fool'	(?) Ar. *bahlūl* بهلول 'buffoon, clown'
45.	*bawxata* 'occasion for hilarious enjoyment'	*bawxa* 'a rogue's trick'	Ar. *bawš* نوش 'boisterous, shout, roar (crowd)
46.	*bluhata* 'an act of madness or foolishness'	*bluha* 'madness'	Ar. *balah* بله and بلاهة balāha 'stupidity, foolishness'
47.	*diksata* 'sudden sharp pain, twinge'	*diksa* 'waste, injury or ill-use of something'	(?) Ar. *dakaza* دكز 'to spur (a horse)' (Aquilina 1987:242)
48.	*ġennata / miġnunata* 'an act of madness or foolishness'	*ġenn* 'madness'	Ar. *junūn* جنون
49.	*ħamallata* 'an act of vulgarity, coarseness'	*ħamallu* 'a vulgar person, from a low class'	Ar. *ħammāl* حمال 'person who carries'; (cfr. also Sic. *camalu* 'porter' and Genovese *camallo* 'stevedore').
50.	*ħanżirata* 'a rude, uncouth act'	*ħanżir* 'pig'	Ar. *ḫinzīr* خنزير
51.	*kruhata* 'an ugly act'	*kruha* 'ugliness'	Ar. *karih* كره 'loathsome'

19. In two cases, *diksa* (n. 47) and *xadina* (n. 56), my research, including information retrieved from native speakers, did not take me beyond Aquilina's (1987) notes on the origin of the terms.

52.	*ksuħata* 'an act of silliness, showing off'	*kesħa* 'cold'	(?) Ar. *kasaħa* كسح 'to sweep, clean out', *kasiħ* 'to be lame', *mukassaħ* 'paralyzed'[20]
53.	*għoxxata* (vulgar) 'an appalling, vulgar action'	*għoxx* 'a stupid , naive person' lit. '(vulgar) vagina'	Ar. *'ušš* عش 'nest'
54.	*qaħbata* (vulgar) 'a vulgar action'	*qaħba* '(vulgar) prostitute'	Ar. *qaħba* قحبة (vulgar)
55.	*qżiżata* 'an act of showing off, making oneself unpleassant'	*qżież* 'annoying behaviour; the act of showing off'	Ar. *qazza* قز 'to loathe, detest'
56.	*xadinata* 'a monkey-like act, monkey business'	*xadin* 'monkey'	(?) Algerian Ar. *šādi* شادي 'monkey' (Aquilina 1987:1539)
57.	*xemxata* 'sunstroke'	*xemx* 'sun'	Ar. *šams* شمس
58.	*żbubata* (vulgar) 'an appalling, vulgar action'	*żobb* 'problem, setback' lit. '(vulgar) penis'	Ar. *zubb* زب '(vulgar) penis'
59.	*żiblata* (vulgar) 'a appalling, vulgar action'	*żibla* '(vulgar) woman of ill-repute' lit. 'a piece of rubbish'	Ar. *zibl* زبل 'manure, dung'
60.	*żinnata* 'an exaggerated, far-fetched act'	*żinn* 'exaggeration'	(?) possibly a local formation, through onomatopoeia

Table 5.2: Typical action of a noun - Arabic and/or local origin

Several dysphemisms are included in Table 5.2 (e.g. *ħamallata, għoxxata, qżiżata* etc.), most of them having similar connotations to those listed in Table 5.1. Morphologically these structures conform to the model wherein -*ata* is suffixed to a singular baseform, with the only exception of *żbubata*, where the introflexive (broken) plural (*żbub*) is used[21].

20. √*ksħ* in Arabic is semantically related to 'hardness, paralysis' and in Maltese it is used in a similar vein to En. 'freeze' e.g. *ksaħt meta rajt dik it-traġedja* 'I froze when I saw that tragedy'. The semantic extension to the literal meaning of 'coldness' seems to be a Maltese innovation, with a further extension then found in its relation to acts which denote silliness or showing off. Also, in Tunisian Arabic one says *raasu keesiħ* for a stubborn person, corresponding to Maltese *rasu iebsa* 'hard-headed' (lit. 'head.his hard').

21. An -*ata* nominalisations from the singular (*żobb*) is plausible, but very infrequent. The form *żubbata* was attested on one occasion, also to mean 'a problem, issue', in vulgar terms.

Three cases (nos. 46, 51 and 52) are morphologically distinct from the others collected in this work, namely *bluħata*, *kruħata* and *ksuħata* – these take a plural formation in *-at* (see Section 4), and their nominalisation is an extension of the singulative *-a* suffix (Table 2): *bluħat-a*; *kruħat-a* and *ksuħat-a*. The *-ata* form, reproduced at the surface, is therefore the result of syncretism, although semantically they pertain to nominalisations listed in Table 5.2.

In Table 6 *-ata* nominalisations based on collective events are presented. These are characterised by gatherings around meals, except for *fjakkolata, infjurata* and *każinata*. Arabic (nos. 61, 63, 65, 70) and English (n. 62) nominal bases are registered among these collective events, alongside those of Italo-Romance origin:

	-*ata* nominalisation[22]	Nominal base	Notes on origin
61.	*bebbuxata* 'a (large) meal of snails'	*bebbux* 'snail'	Ar. (Tunisian of Berber origin) *babbūš* بَبّوش 'snail shell'
62.	*ċipsata*	*ċips* 'chips'	En. chips
63.	*fenkata*	*fenek* 'rabbit'	Ar. *fanik* فنك 'desert fox'
64.	*fjakkolata* 'torchlight procession'	*fjakkola / fjakkla* 'flame, torch'	Sic. *ciacculiata*; It. *fiaccolata*
65.	*frawlata*	*frawla* 'strawberry'	Ar. *farāwila* فراولة
66.	*infjorata / infjurata* 'an event carried around embellishment made of flowers'	*fjura* 'flower'	Sic. *fiuri / ciuri*; It. *infiorata*
67.	*każinata* 'a gathering/celebration at a club'	*każin* 'club'	Sic. *casinu*; It. *casino* 'a brothel'
68.	*majjalata*	*majjal* 'pig'	Sic. *maiali*; It. *maiale*
69.	*mqarrunata*	*mqarrun* 'macaroni'	Sic. *maccarrunata / maccarruniata*; It *maccheroni*
70.	*għaġinata*	*għaġin* 'pasta'	Ar. *ʾjin* عجن 'to knead'
71.	*pastizzata*	*pastizz* 'Maltese savoury cheese cake'	Sic. *pastizzu* 'focaccaia or pastry, which can be filled with various ingredients'; It. *pasticcio* 'pastry'

---

22. Translations of individual items are not provided when they refer to 'a (large) meal of …', as exemplified in entry no. 61.

72.	*ravjulata*	*ravjul* 'ravioli'	Sic. *rravioli*; It. *raviolata*
73.	*spagettata*	*spagetti* 'spaghetti'	Sic. *spaghettu / spaghetti*; It. *spaghettata*
74.	*tortata*	*torta* 'pie'	Sic. *torta*; It. *torta*

Table 6: Collective events[23]

In the following table I present some forms, all of Italo-Romance origin, which can broadly be associated to quantity:

	-*ata* nominalisation	Nominal base	Notes on origin
75.	*furkettata* 'forkful'	*furketta* 'fork'	Sic *furchittata*; It. *forchettata*
76.	*furnata / fornata* 'ovenful'	*forn* 'oven'	Sic. *furnu*; It. *infornata*
77.	*naskata / niskata* 'a small amount', lit. 'a pinch of snuff'	*naska* 'sense of smell'	Sic. *naschiata* 'the act of smelling'
78.	*palata* in *tagħti palata* 'to give a hand, help' lit. 'a shovelful'	*pala* 'spade'	Sic. *pala*; It. *pala*
79.	*pipata* 'pipeful'[24]	*pipa* 'pipe'	Sic. *pipata*; It. *pipata*
80.	*piżata* 'amount weighed in one lot'	*piż* 'weight'	Sic. *pisata*; It. *pesata*

Table 7: Quantities contained in a noun

Three forms listed above, *furkettata* (n. 75), *furnata / fornata* (n.76) and *naskata / niskata* (n. 77, see example below) possess adjectival functions, a property which distinguishes them from others included in my classification:

8)   *b'dik*   *in-niskata*   *esaġerazzjoni*
       with.that   ART-slight   exaggeration
       'With that slight exaggeration'

23. A potential lemma that would fit in with this list is *risottata* 'a collective event based on a meal of rice' (from Sic. *rrisu* 'rice' It. *risottata*, as in *pasta risottata* 'pasta cooked like a risotto'). Although this has 4 tokens in the *Korpus Malti*, they all regard a single event held in 2008, after which no further attestations were registered. Hence its exclusion from the categorisation.
24. *Pipata* (rarely used) can also refer to the act of smoking a pipe and, with this interpretation, would also fit in the category "typical action of a noun" (Table 5.1).

5.3 -*ata* nominalisations as lexical morphemes

Several Italo-Romance -*ata* nominalisations which contain one or more of the properties explicated in Section 3 have been integrated into Maltese as lexical morphemes, so whereas -*ata* suffixation occurs in Italian (and/or Sicilian) corresponding forms, a verbal or nominal base form is not attested. *Burdata* (n. 82), for example, is an -*ata* nominalisation which does not allow segmentation, because the base noun **burd / **burda* does not carry meaning autonomously in Maltese. I therefore label these forms as 'pseudo -*ata* nominalisations', to distinguish them between those presented in Tables 1 to 7:

	-*ata* nominalisation	Notes on origin
81.	*battikata* 'an ordeal; an episode of physical and/or mental struggle'	(?) It. *batocchiata* 'strike of a bell's clapper'
82.	*burdata* 'mood'	(?) Sic. *bburdata*; It. *bordata* 'zig-zag navigation of a sailing boat'
83.	*ċamata*, in *tagħti ċamata* 'to scold, put down someone' lit. 'to give a call'	(?) Sic. *ciamata /chiamata*; It. *chiamata* 'a call'
84.	*fumata* 'a puff of smoke'	Sic. *fumata*; It. *fumata*
85.	*ġokata / ġugata* 'a bet, stake'	Sic. *iucata*; It. *giocata* 'a stake, a move in a game'
86.	*ħallata ballata* 'disorder'	Idiomatic local formation, based on two rhyming forms: *ħallata*, from *ħalat* 'to mix mingle' (Ar. *ḥalaṭa* خلط and Sic. *abballata* 'dance'; It. *ballata* 'a ballad')
87.	*kavalkata* 'cavalcade'	Sic. *cavarcata*; It. *cavalcata*
88.	*kruċjata* 'crusade'	Sic. *cruci*; It. *crociata*
89.	*passata*, in *tgħaddi passata* 'the act of teasing, belittling' lit. 'to pass over someone'	Sic. *passata*; It. *passata* 'a coating, look'
90.	*rabuxxata / rovexxata* 'a football overhead kick'	Sic. *rruvisciarsi* 'to throw up'; It. *rovesciata*
91.	*ruxxmata* 'a large amount'[25]	(?) Sic. *rrusciata*, 'a jet of water'
92.	*serenata* 'serenade'	Sic. *sirinata*; It. *serenata*
93.	*sfilata* 'a parade, fashion-show'	Sic. *sfilari* 'unthread'; It. *sfilata*

Table 8: Pseudo -*ata* nominalisations

Several nominalisations included in Table 8 are semantically similar to deverbals (Table 3) as they are related to events which are a direct product of a verbal base

---

25. As in the case of some forms in Table 7, *ruxxmata* is a modifier: e.g. *hawn ruxxmata tfal* 'there are many children'.

which can be attested in Italian and/or Sicilain but is absent in Maltese: *battikata, ċamata, ġokata / ġugata, kavalkata, kruċjata, passata, rabuxxata, serenata* and *sfilata*; others can be associated to quantities in a noun: *fumata* and *ruxxmata*; *burdata*, etymologically, refers to a typical action of a noun, but its meaning in Maltese is the product of a local extension. *Ħallata ballata* is an idiomatic expression, based on the assonance of two words, respectively of Arabic and Italo-Romance origin.

A category of morphologically similar forms can be grouped under the heading of 'periods related to a noun', attested in the taxonomy of Italian *-ata* nominalisations (Section 3). These all have equivalents of Arabic origin, namely, *sena* 'year'; *jum* 'day'; *għodwa* 'morning'; *xahar* 'month; *lejla* 'evening':

	-ata nominalisation	Notes on origin
94.	*ġurnata*[26] 'day'	Sic. *iurnata*; It. *giornata*
95.	*mattinata* 'morning' (only used idiomatically in the expression *is-sette mattinati*)[27]	Sic. *matinata*; It. *mattinata*
96.	*miżata*[28] 'a monthly occurrence'	Sic. *misi*; It. *mesata*
97.	*serata* 'evening, an occasion held in the evening'	Sic. *sirata*; It. *serata*

Table 9.1: Pseudo *-ata* nominalisations referring to a period related to a noun

	-ata nominalisation	Nominal base	Notes on origin
98.	*annata* 'year'	*annu* 'year'	Sic. *annata*; It. *annata*

Table 9.2: A period related to a noun (*annata*)

Annata (n. 94) is placed in a distinct table because it is not a pseudo *-ata* nominalisation, as *annu* represents its nominal base, the only one attested for the forms included in this category. Nevertheless, it is rarely used in Maltese today and accord-

26. The term of Arabic origin *jum* 'day' is also used alongside *ġurnata*, and it is interchangeable with it in most contexts, presenting a much subtler distinction than Italian *giorno – giornata*.
27. As in *qam mas-sette mattinati* 'he woke up early in the morning', lit 'he woke up at the chimes of seven o'clock in the morning'.
28. Although *miżata* refers to a period of time that occurs over a month, it generally only refers to a monthly payment.

ing to Aquilina (1987:30) it only refers to 'definite' dates as in *ta' liema annu int?* 'In which year were you born?', as opposed to the Arabic form (*sena*), which is both more generic and widespread. The entries in Tables 9.1 and 9.2 correspond to the category *periodo di tempo N* 'a period related to a noun' in Italian (Section 3), on which I base my taxonomy.

5.4 Products of nouns

The above documentation would not be complete without a brief mention of *-ata* forms which fall into the category termed 'a product of a noun' (Scalise 1995). Examples include *ċumnata / ċomnata* 'drink given to women in labour consisting of wine, honey and spices'; *farinata* 'flummery, pap, porridge'; *frullata* 'milk shake / a fruit squash'; *luminata* 'lemonade / soft drinks'; *prinjolata* 'a Carnival sweet with pine-nuts'; *ruġġata/ruġġjata* 'a drink made of water, almond and sugar' etc. These do not fall into the category of *nomina vicis*, as they are not 'event/single instance' nouns. Nevertheless, two exceptions are attested (Table 10), namely *kawlata* and *balbuljata*, names of local dishes, used metaphorically to refer to a mess or to confused situations:

	-ata nominalisation	Notes on origin
99.	*balbuljata / barbuljata* 'a mess, confusion' lit. 'dish with several ingredients, including onions, tomatoes, eggs'	(?) Sic. *bbarbugghiarisi* 'falter, stumble' It. *barbugliare* 'mumble, mutter, splutter';
100.	*kawlata lit.* 'a mess, confusion' lit. 'vegetable soup with pork'	Sic. *cavulu* 'cabbage'; It. *cavolata* 'stupidity, a silly mistake'

Table 10: Pseudo *-ata* nominalisations - *balbuljata* and *kawlata*

6. Discussion and conclusion

Literature concerning *-ata* nominalisations in Italian attests a high productivity, with different functions within broad semantic fields. Although *-ata* nominalisations are less frequent in Maltese, my data show that they cover many functions and meanings attested for Italian: the only exception being the category *accrescitivo di N* 'augmentation of nouns' (Section 3), which is absent in Maltese. *-ata* nominalisations are also not used systematically to describe actions associated to personalities, as commonly attested in Italian[29].

---

29. For example, *berlusconata* or *carrambata* (Fiorentini 2010), which refer to politician Silvio Berlusconi and to the former TV personality Raffaella Carrà. These derivational forms, which are the product of analogy, are the outcome of the high frequency of use of *-ata* affixation.

Divergence from Italo-Romance is also evident in the case of deverbals, as only a few of them are registered in Maltese. This is to be attributed to the process of deverbal nominalisation of root-based structures, the derivation of which occurs through the Arabic *-a* singulative suffix (the *nomina vicis* of Maltese), and to other forms of concatenative suffixation in deverbal nouns, as explained in Section 4 and as documented extensively in Ellul (2016), among others. These limit the range of predicates on which the *-ata* suffix is productive.

In denominals, on the other hand, contact occurs with the different strata that characterise Maltese etymologically. In most cases Italian and Sicilian nouns are replicated both in form and in function, although semantic changes occur regularly, as explicated in the meanings provided for the various forms listed in this contribution. Consequently, *-ata* nominalisations in Maltese provide a good example of productive morphological contact with Sicilian and/or Italian as well as with etymologically Arabic, and to a much lesser extent, English nominal base forms.

Language contact can be summarised as follows:

a) Contact with Italo-Romance, including forms which match Standard Italian, e.g. *passiġġata* 'a long walk' (It. *passeggiata*) and others which are either attested in regional varieties, e.g. *maltempata* 'a storm' (Sic. *malattimpata*), as well as forms only attested in Maltese, despite arising from an Italo-Romance stem, e.g. *ċuċata* 'a menial, insignificant act' (*-ata* + Sic. *ciùciu* 'a simple person');

b) Contact between *-ata* and an etymologically Arabic noun: e.g. *xemxata* 'sunstroke' (*-ata* + Ar. *šams* شمس , Mt. *xemx* 'sun'); *fenkata* 'a meal based on rabbit' (*-ata* + Ar. *fanik* فنك 'lit. desert fox', Mt. *fenek* 'rabbit');

c) Contact with English, limited to very few cases, e.g. *ċipsata* 'a meal based on chips' (*-ata* + chips).

Although (c) above is infrequent, there is evidence that it may increase because of the large quantity of English borrowings that are seeping into the language. The most recent *-ata* nominalisation is, in fact, *poddata* 'a podcast', which in 2021 was included by local media among popular words of recent formation, rendered widespread by an online podcast.

Diachronically it is plausible that *-ata* nominalisations were introduced to Maltese through its Sicilian superstratum and its Italian adstratum, extending by analogy to nominal bases of Arabic origin and, more recently, to English forms. Some *-ata* Italo-Romance forms, for which nominal or verbal bases are not attested in Maltese, have been integrated into the language. It is possible, although this is subject to verification, that these 'unsegmented' forms may have been among the first to be introduced into the language, possibly preceding the phase when *-ata* became a productive affix in Maltese.

In terms of its layering, the *-ata* suffix is another indication of how contact approaches the language to neighbouring Italo-Romance, providing further evidence

to back Mifsud's (2008: 149) observation that "Maltese may be the Arabic vernacular that has moved farthest away from its original structure".

In Maltese *ħallata ballata* (n. 86) is an idiomatic expression used to convey confusion and/or disarray. The taxonomy included in this contribution serves the purpose of providing some clarity in relation to the *ħallata ballata* of *-ata* nominalisations in Maltese, as well as providing further insights on language contact within the etymologically layered structures of Maltese. Admittedly this is only the first step and I acknowledge that the entries in my lists are not all-comprehensive. Further research on these forms may investigate their use through a corpus-based approach, as Gatt, Fabri (2018) and Saade (2019) did with other Italo-Romance derivational affixes. The saliency of many of these nominalisations, especially evident in dysphemisms in informal Maltese, could also be studied in terms of socio- and pragmalinguistic functions. As Gaeta (2015: 1177) states, these nominalisations possibly represent «the most complex case of interaction of verbal actionality with the word-formation patterns forming action nouns», and they therefore clearly lend themselves to research from different viewpoints, in addition to the language contact perspective used in this contribution.

List of abbreviations (including interlinear glosses)

ACC – accusative
Ar. – Arabic
ART – article
En. – English
It. – Italian
Mt. – Maltese
PF – perfective
plu. / pl – plural
POSS – possessive
Sic. – Sicilian
sing. – singular
SING – singulative

Bibliographical references

Acquaviva, P. 2005, *I significati delle nominalizzazioni in -ATA e i loro correlati morfologici*, in M. Grossmann, A. Thornton, (a cura di), *La formazione delle parole: Atti del XXXVII convegno della Società Linguistica Italiana*, Roma, Bulzoni: 7-29.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2007, *Grammars in contact: a cross-linguistic perspective*, in A.Y. Aikhenvald, R.M.W. Dixon (eds.) *Grammars in Contact: a cross-linguistic typology*, Oxford, OUP: 1-66.

Aliquot-Suengas, S., Macchi, Y. 2003, *Du même et de l'autre. Analyse contrastive de trois formes historiquement apparentées: les formes suffixales françaises -ade/-ée et la forme suffixale espagnole -ada*, in C. Lagarde (éd.), *La linguistique hispanique dans tous ses états. Actes du Xe colloque de linguistique hispanique*, Perpignan, CRILAUP: 141–156.

Aquilina, J. 1987, *A Maltese-English dictionary, volumes I and II*, Malta, Midsea.

Barbara, M., Scicluna, K. 2002, *Il-lingwaġġ taż-żgħażagħ bħala wieħed mil-lingwaġġi settorjali ta' Malta*, unpublished Bachelor of Education (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

Borg, A., Azzopardi-Alexander, M. 1997, *Maltese*, London and NY, Routledge.

Brincat, G. 2009, *Sicilianismi e pseudosicilianismi maltesi e il Vocabolario Siciliano*, in Trovato, G. (a cura di), *Studi linguistici in memoria di Giovanni Tropea*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso: 111-116.

Brincat, J. M. 2011, *Maltese and other languages: A linguistic history of Malta*, Malta, Midsea.

Camilleri, E. 1993, *Is-suffissi nominali rumanzi fil-Malti*, unpublished Bachelor of Education (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

Comrie, B., Spagnol, M. 2016, *Maltese loanword typology*, in G. Puech, B. Saade (eds.), *Shifts and patterns in Maltese*, Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton: 315–329.

Cortelazzo, M., Zolli, P. 1999, *Dizionario etimologico della lingua italiana*, Bologna, Zanichelli.

Donazzan, M, Tovena, L. M. 2017, *Pluralities of events: semelfactives and a case of 'single event' nominalisation*, in S. Perpiñán, D. Heap, I. Moreno-Villamar, A. Soto-Corominas, *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory*, Amsterdam and Philadephia, John Benjamins: 77-97.

Ellul, L. 2016, *In-Nomi Verbali fil-Malti*, unpublished Master of Arts dissertation, University of Malta.

Fabri R. 2010, *Maltese*, «Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire» [Online], 88(3): 791-816.
URL: https://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph_0035-0818_2010_num_88_3_7804
DOI: 10.3406/rbph.2010.7804

Fassi Fehri, A., Vinet, M. T. 2008, *Verbal and nominal classes in Arabic and Chinese*, «Recherches linguistiques de Vincennes» [Online], 37: 55-83.
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/rlv/1706;
DOI: 10.4000/rlv.1706

Fiorentini, I. 2010, *Pedalata, Carrambata, Spaghettata. Funzioni e produttività del suffisso –ata nell'italiano d'oggi*, unpublished Laurea Magistrale dissertation, Università degli Studi di Pavia.

Gaeta L. 2002, *Quando i verbi compaiono come nomi*, Milano, Franco Angeli.

Gaeta, L. 2004, *Nomi d'azione*, in M. Grossmann, F. Rainer (a cura di), *La formazione delle parole in italiano*, Tübingen, Niemeyer: 314-351.

Gaeta, L. 2015, *Action Nouns in Romance*, in P. O. Müller, I. Ohnheiser, S. Olsen, F. Rainer (eds.), *Word-Formation. An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*, Berlin and NY, Mouton de Gruyter, vol. 2: 1165-1185.

Gatt, A., Fabri, R. 2018, *Borrowed affixes and morphological productivity: A case study of two Maltese nominalisations*, in P. Paggio, A. Gatt (eds.), *The languages of Malta*, Berlin, Language Science Press: 143–169.

Hull, G. 1993, *The Malta Language Question. A case study in cultural imperialism*, Valletta, Said International.

Lucas, C., Čéplö, S. 2020, *Maltese*, in C. Lucas, S. Manfredi (eds.) *Arabic and contact-induced language change: A handbook*, Berlin, Language Science Press: 265-302.

Mifsud, M. 2008, *Maltese*, in Versteegh, K. (ed.): 146-159.

Milton Cowen, J. 1976, *A dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, NY, Spoken Language Services.

Piccitto, G., Tropea, G., Trovato, S.C. 1977-2002, *Vocabolario Siciliano*, Palermo, Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani.

Saade, B. 2019, *Assessing productivity in contact: Italian derivation in Maltese*, «Linguistics», 57(1): 59-86.
DOI: 10.1515/ling-2018-0031

Scalise, S. 1995, *La formazione delle parole*, in L. Renzi, G. Salvi, A. Cardinaletti (a cura di), *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione, vol. 3*. Bologna, il Mulino.

Scerri, R. 2015, *Il-Lingwaġġ taż-Żgħażagħ: Droga, Sess u Alkoħol*, unpublished Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

Soare, E. 2017. *Aspects of participial nominalizations in Romance*, «Italian Journal of Linguistics» 29(1): 101-116.

Spagnol, M. 2011, *L'integrazione delle costruzioni con il si in maltese*, in W. Breu (a cura di), *L'influsso dell'italiano sul sistema del verbo delle lingue minoritarie. Resistenza e mutamento nella morfologia e nella sintassi*, Brockmeyer, Bochum: 211-226.

Traina, A. 1868, *Nuovo vocabolario siciliano-italiano*, Palermo, Giuseppe Pedone Lauriel editore.

Versteegh, K. 2008 (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic languages and Linguistics*, Leiden and Boston, Brill.

Zingarelli, N. 2000, *Vocabolario della lingua italiana (dodicesima edizione)*, Bologna, Zanichelli.