Future, injunctive and purpose subordinating conjunctions. 
The case of Maltese halli, ħa and biex¹

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1. Introduction

The three markers of Maltese, halli, ħa and biex, partly share synchronically the functions of future tense, injunctive mood and purpose conjunctions. Nevertheless some of their semantic, syntactic, and sociolinguistic properties draw them apart from each other. There are thus partly polysemous morphemes which occur in two different grammatical categories, as verbal auxiliaries and as subordinating conjunctions. This paper focuses (1) on the transgategorial functioning that relates the semantic variation to syntax, i.e. the variation of the syntactic scope of the morphemes which produces their polysemy, (2) on the semantic properties of these markers that may also explain their polysemy as well as their semantic unity.

2. Origin of the markers

The origin of biex is directly linked with Maghribi Arabic bāš “in order to”, ultimately going back to bī ḥay štī “with what thing”. It is also linked with the particle of imminence māš, reduced form of the active participle māšī “walking”. In Jewish Tunisian Arabic for instance both māš and bāš have the value of imminence (Cohen 1975:258). Both radicals, because of their phonetic proximity, may have undergone semantic cross-influence.

Halli is originally the imperative singular form of the verb halla “to let”, a verb still used in Maltese, the normal outcome of Arabic xalla. When ħa, like halli, is an injunctive or a purpose conjunction one is entitled to consider it as the shortened form of this verb. But when it comes to the future value, the etymological aspect is more problematic. Maltese having undergone a merging of the velar x and the pharyngeal ħ into ħ, the plausible candidates for the etymology of the future function are numerous and none can be ruled out, a priori, as the full form halli has no future value. D. Cohen once stated (seminar EPHE 11.05.1984) that ħa could either come from ḥabba “to love”, ʾaxada “to take” or xalla “to let”, or even from ḥatta “until”, all four having been grammaticalised as future tense markers in Arabic dialects. However, the semantic ambiguity between future and injunctive values (§ 4), the semantic properties shared by both injunctive and future (§ 3 and 4), and the parallel evolution of biex (4)

¹ A fuller version (in French) of this paper is to appear in Martine Vanhove, “Auxiliaires, grammaticalisation et transcatégorialité : Le cas des marqueurs de futur et d’injonction en maltais”, in Polysémie, recatégorisation et échelles syntaxiques, S. Robert éd., Louvain, Peeters.
seem to favour the *xalla* etymological hypothesis. Still, one cannot totally rule out a case of homophony.

3. **Injunctive**

Semantically, injunctive value implies an “aim” to be achieved. The moment of the validation of the process is not specified and may be different from the moment of utterance. There may or may not be a gap between this moment and the fulfilment of the aim. In order to validate it, to perform it, the speaker calls to someone else. Thus, the context calls to both co-enunciators. The locator of the process is temporal, be it the moment of enunciation or an imaginary moment.

Only *halli* and *ha* may have this value.

- The use of *halli* for the injunctive is possible with first and third persons alike:
  1. *hállí nkómplu da?šéyn awnékk*  
     <INJ / we go on / a little / here>
     Let’s go on a little here
  2. *hállí yikber ikûn yâf*  
     <INJ / he grows up / he is / he knows>
     Let him grow up, he’ll know

- In my data the use of the shortened form *ha* is only possible with the first persons:
  3. *ha mmá?dru ná?ra l-frančézi narâw š t’îd martîn*  
     <INJ / we despise / a bit / the-French+pl / we see / what / she says / Martine>
     Let’s despise the French a little, we’ll see what Martine says

In Aquilina’s dictionary one finds examples of the literary language in which the verb at a third person follows the shortened form *ha*. In my data, speakers use instead the full form of the particle or the conjugated form of *halla* followed by an object suffixed pronoun. The following is taken from Saydon’s translation of the Bible:

4. *ha jissallab*  
   <INJ / he is crucified>
   Let him be crucified(Math. 27,22):

4. **Future**

- Future, just as injunctive, can be described in terms of an aim to be accomplished at a moment different from the moment of utterance. For both values, the locator is a moment of the process. The difference between them is twofold: with the future the subject does not call to someone else to fulfil its aim, and the nature of the aim is different: a moment of the process for the future, the validation of the process for the injunctive.

- *ha*, and only this shortened form, also has in addition to the injunctive value, a value of future of certainty or of imminence. At the first persons, my informants often

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3 Examples taken from written texts have been kept in the Maltese orthography.
offered both translations for a same written utterance. But in oral speech, the different intonative patterns most often allow to choose between the two values.4 Such an ambiguity is not surprising considering the semantic peculiarities that have just been described. The specific problem of the first persons is that the co-enunciator is in the background with “I” and “we”. At the injunctive, the speaker(s) may give an order to himself/themselves, but in the future the difference between “I” and “you” is not taken into account. The value of future does not imply an intersubjective context. Anyhow, in most contexts, the future value is clear: in a negative sentence (ex. 5), in co-ordinated sentences where the first verb is marked by another non-ambiguous future particle (ex. 6), with a temporal marker in the sentence (ex. 7), in interrogative sentences (ex. 8), in co-ordinated sentences after a verb at the perfect form:

5. *ma-nāf-š š ḥa ništrī-l-*a

I don’t know what I’ll buy for her

6. *ū se yūže tu ẓu yūzn ḥa nišhu fū?, ḥa nūbnī appartamént fū?*

He’ll take the ground floor and I’ll take the upper one, I’ll build a flat on the upper floor

7. *mēla ḍārba mīnn-*om ḥa nâmll-*l-*a čāyta

Well, one day, I’ll play a trick on her

8. *idt š wāhdī dīn ḥa nīb?* "āl ṣmr-i awnēkk?!*

I said: What is this all about, shall I stay here all my life?!

- With second and third persons *ḥa* always has a value of future or of imminence:

9. *ḥa tʿāddī l-hwēyyēg?*

Will you iron your clothes?

- *Biex* and the expression of imminence

Whatever the temporal context, the construction is made up of the verb *wasal* “to arrive”, always at the perfect tense, followed by the final conjunction *biex* and a verb always at the imperfect tense. The reference to the past may be specified by the use of *kien* “he was”, head of the whole periphrasis. The use of *wasal* clearly specifies that a first process (expressed or not in the context) must come to an end before the aim in the second process can be fulfilled and that there is no severing from the moment of utterance:

10. *f-dīn ir-relaccyōni ma* *māra īllī wāslet bīāš tispīčča*

In this relationship with a woman that is about to finish


I am about to loose my temper!

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4 Alexandra Vella p.c.
In the dialect of Sannat (Gozo) one finds an interesting example in the texts published by Puech. His translation could lead to the conclusion that biex used without wasal is also on the way of expressing imminence. Whether settled or not in the linguistic system, it seems interesting to mention the possibility of such an evolution which is in line with the semantic values of ha and that of bāš in Jewish Tunisian Arabic (§ 2):

12. uṃbèːːː tu kën eμ dʒw u νò, nò:dṣul, këllu ʒeʃ dʒivintèːũ bēʃ jìmùːrru jìstūːdjàːu pài:jɛːū (Puech, p. 41)
<Then / he was / there / young man / man / he had / two / young men / so that / they go / they study / province-his>
Then there was a young man, a man, who had two young men getting prepared (“s’apprètant à”) to study in his province

5. Purpose conjunction

As with injunctive and future, a complex sentence with a clause of purpose involves the fulfilment of an aim: the predicative relation of the main clause has to be fulfilled or was fulfilled in order to accomplish the aim intended in the purpose clause. The main clause is then the locator of the subordinate clause. Syntactically, the scope of the finale conjunction is the whole clause, not a verb. All three markers are concerned.

5.1 Halli and ha

These two markers are always followed by a verb at the imperfect form whatever their semantic value.

• Syntactically halli appears in a short majority (53%) of sentences which have an imperfect verb in the main clause. 30% of the halli-s follow a main clause verb at the imperative form, and only 17% at the perfect. Halli is mainly found in intersubjective contexts (77%) , i.e. when the subject of the final clause is a first or a second person (singular or plural) and when the verb of the main clause is at the imperative form.

13. gḥidtek dàŋ koɭl u häl lí / hál táɡhráʃ tǐlqá’ rũhek (Aquiline)
<İ said-to-you / this / all / so that / you know / you meet / soul-your>
I told you all that so that you’ll know how to protect yourself

14. ḥa nǐʃ’el suforia, ta, ђallí nàra ‘al ñhím û
<FRU / I light / match / hum / so that / I see / for / time / he>
I’ll light a match so that I can see what time it is

The clause order is main clause - subordinated clause, but very rarely, the clause with halli may be the head of the complex sentence. The only example found is a generic sentence, severed from the enunciative situation, a characteristic which may explain this unusual order:

15. hál lí jkolína ɪd iʃjed jehtie nàḥdmú iʃjed
<so that / we have / wealth / more / it is necessary / we work / more>
In order to have more wealth we must work more (Aquiline)

• With the shortened form ha, in contrast with halli, one finds a majority of imperative verbs in the main clause (59%) and less perfect and imperfect verbs (24%
and 17% respectively). \textit{Ha} seems to be more restricted than \textit{hallî} to intersubjective contexts (83\% of the sentences). The order is always main clause - finale clause:

16. \textit{Itāh ha nara xi bramt!} (Calleja, p. 57)
<open / so that / I see / what / you pinched>
Open up so that I can see what you pinched!

17. \textit{l-Ốda mort ha nára Ád-u-š hay yîôna}
<the-morrow / I went / so that / I see / still-him-if / alive / I>
The following day I went to see if it was still alive

5.2 \textit{Biex}

\textit{Biex} is the most common purpose conjunction in my data: 88\% of the utterances are with \textit{biex} as against only 7\% with \textit{hallî} and 5\% with \textit{ha}.

The use of \textit{biex} is not restricted to any particular context, although it very seldom appears after a verb at the imperative form (2.5\%) contrary to \textit{hallî} and \textit{ha}. There is a majority of sentences with third person subjects (66\%) and a fairly good proportion of sentences in intersubjective contexts (44\%) but it should be noted that the proportions are reverse to what they are with \textit{hallî} and \textit{ha}.

\textit{Biex} is very commonly followed by the imperfect, but in some cases (11.5\%) it may be followed by the perfect when the speaker wants to specify that the action intended has been accomplished (ex. 19). This possibility does not exist with \textit{hallî} and \textit{ha}.

18. \textit{yîán kánt štrayt ší affâriyyáít bîoš nîshu mîá-i}
<I / I was / I bought / some / clothes / so that / I take / with-me>
I had bought some clothes in order to take them with me

19. \textit{Kelli nhallas paga ta’ xaghrejn biex xtrajtu} (Calleja, p. 113)
<I had / I pay / salary / of / two months / so that / I bought-him>
I had to pay two months salary in order to buy it

The preferential order is main clause - purpose clause, but one also commonly finds the reverse order, i.e. in 25\% of the utterances, but, as with \textit{hallî}, the context is also a generic sentence or the expression of a habit:

20. \textit{bîoš iš-šémîs ma-tahtîf-ô-š malâyr kîônî yâ’mlu t-tîbên imšârrab fû’ il-béyt}
<so that / the-sun / NEG-she burns-him-NEG / quick / they were / they put / the-straw / wet / on / the-terrace>
In order to prevent the sun from burning it quickly, they were putting wet straw on the terrace

\textit{Biex} can also be used after declarative verbs and verbs of feelings (not \textit{hallî} and \textit{ha}):

21. \textit{u ?et-t’îd-l-i bîoš nibza’ alî-k}
<and / PROG-you say-to-me / so that / I fear / for-you>
And you are telling me to take care of you

or after a nominal sentence (not \textit{hallî} and \textit{ha}):

22. \textit{diffîcli bîoš tá’bd-u}
<difficult / to that / you grab-him>
It is difficult to grab it
6. Conclusion

All three values of purpose conjunction, injunction, and future refer semantically to an aim to be accomplished. Thus, they do not belong to the domain of assertion. It is then no surprise that the markers all go back, etymologically, to non-asserted utterances: interrogation for biex, imperative for halli and ha.

The reasons for the polysemy of the markers are summed up in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>markers</th>
<th>ha, halli, biòš</th>
<th>ha, halli</th>
<th>ha, biòš</th>
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<tr>
<td>value</td>
<td>conjunction</td>
<td>injunction</td>
<td>future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>validation by someone</td>
<td>not necessary</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nature of the aim</td>
<td>process</td>
<td>validation</td>
<td>moment of</td>
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<td>the process</td>
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<td>main clause</td>
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<td>the process</td>
<td>the process</td>
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<td>clause</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intersubjective</td>
<td>biòš : - yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>context</td>
<td>ha(lli) : + yes</td>
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<td>process</td>
<td>beginning of p2</td>
<td>continuity</td>
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Bibliography


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