Free Relatives in Maltese
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Abstract

This paper makes a contribution to our understanding of free relative clauses (FRCs) in Maltese, in particular so-called plain, standard or non - *ever* free relative clauses. We demonstrate that such FRC are interpreted as definites, consistent with the findings in much previous literature on other languages. However, we also show that Maltese has not one but two strategies for plain (realis or definite) FRCs: alongside FRCs formed using a *wh*-word we also find FRCs introduced by the complementising element *li*, inconsistent with the seemingly widespread assumption that FRCs necessarily involve a *wh*-word. Both strategies give rise to definite interpretations. Additionally, we argue that definite or realis *wh*-FRCs are to be distinguished from a different (but apparently structurally identical) type, the so-called irrealis free relative clause or modal existential construction, which has not been previously identified for Maltese. We show that this subset of free relatives exhibit the properties associated with the modal existential construction crosslinguistically. We then demonstrate the existence of a subtype of headed relative clauses in Maltese which also share a number of the properties which we identify in the Maltese modal existential construction.

Keywords: Maltese, Free Relative Clauses, Modal Existential Construction

1   Introduction

This paper makes a contribution to our understanding of free relative clauses (FRCs) in Maltese.[1] In order to keep our discussion within reasonable bounds, we focus entirely in this paper on so-called 'plain', or 'standard' free relative clauses (and mainly on standard DP-like free relatives) and we will have nothing to say about the counterparts of *-ever* free relatives (*Kim voted for whoever was at the top of the ballot*) or constituent unconditionals (Rawlins, 2008) (also known as free adjunct free relatives, (Izvorski, 2000a,b)) such as *Whoever goes to the party, it will be fun*, both of which are found in Maltese. We demonstrate that plain DP-like

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FRC are interpreted as definites, consistent with the findings in Jacobson (1995), Grosu and Landman (1998), Izvorski (2000b) and Caponigro (2003) (among others) for languages including English, Bulgarian, Italian, Romanian and others. We also show that Maltese has two strategies for plain FRCs: alongside FRCs formed using a *wh*-word we also find FRCs introduced by the complementising element *li*. The crosslinguistic literature on plain FRCs is virtually free of any discussion of non-*wh* strategies for free relatives, largely because it is generally focussed on either the syntax or the semantics of non-interrogative *wh*-clauses, and the majority of this literature starts out from the (sometimes tacit) assumption that FRCs always involve a *wh*- word.[2] We further argue that definite or realis *wh*- FRCs are to be distinguished from a second (structurally identical) type, the so-called irrealis free relative clause or modal existential construction. The modal existential construction (henceforth MEC) has not previously been identified for Maltese in the literature. We consider the properties identified with MECs in other languages and demonstrate the existence of a subtype of externally headed relative clause in Maltese which shares these properties, and which we consider to be a closely related construction.

The paper is structured as follows. In order to provide some necessary background and context for our subsequent discussion, we provide a brief overview of the structure of headed relative clauses in Maltese in Section 2. Section 3 discusses the plain realis FRC in Maltese, which has not hitherto been described in any detail in the literature. Section 3.1 establishes the key syntactic properties of plain *wh*-FRCs in Maltese and Section 3.2 describes a second sort of plain FRC using the complementiser *li*. In Section 3.3 we show that both types of FRC are interpreted as definites.

In section 4 we turn to plain *wh*-FRCs which are not interpreted as definites, but as indefinites. We outline the properties characteristic of the irrealis FRC or Modal Existential Construction (MEC) crosslinguistically. We then consider a subset of plain *wh*-FRCs in Maltese which show these properties, discussing in turn the semantic properties of the construction (in 4.3), and other core properties of the construction (4.4), as well as a range of syntactic differences between definite FRCs and the indefinite MEC construction in relation to topicalisation structures, the matching requirement and transparency to extraction.

Section 5 argues that the recognition of an irrealis MEC in Maltese casts some light on some otherwise puzzling headed relative clauses in the language, briefly dis-

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[2]In an interesting study of free relatives and *wh*-words, Caponigro (2003) in fact limits the definition of 'free relative' by taking the occurrence of a *wh*-word as criterial.

cussed in Camilleri and Sadler (2016). Here we argue that these relatives clauses share the characteristic properties of MECs.

2 Headed Relatives

Maltese has two main strategies for forming relative clauses (both non-restrictive and restrictive); a complementiser strategy (using the complementiser *li*) and a *wh*-strategy.[3] Of these, the complementiser strategy has the widest distribution.

The complementiser strategy is used in both short and long-distance relativisation, in combination with both gaps and resumptives, and in relativisation on a wide range of grammatical functions.[4] The following are representative examples from Camilleri and Sadler (2011).[5]

(1) It-tifel   li   ra-ni   lbieraħ
     DEF-boy COMP see.PFV.3SG-1SG.ACC yesterday

     the boy who saw me yesterday

(2) It-tifel   li   qal-u-l-i   li   (hu) kien
     DEF-boy COMP said-3PL-DAT-1SG COMP he   was.3SGM
     ra-hom
     see.PFV.3SGM.3PL.ACC

     the boy who they told me that saw them

(3) Iltqat-t   mat-tifel   li   kellem
     meet.PFV-1SG with.DEF-boy COMP speak.PFV.3SGM

     I met with the boy he spoke to.

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[3]For detailed discussion of relative clause formation in Maltese, see Camilleri and Sadler (2016). That paper also identifies a number of additional minor strategies, in particular in relation to non-restrictive relative clauses. Among the minor strategies, they note a highly restricted use of the form *ma* 'what', in relative clauses. This *wh*-pronoun cannot be used in interrogatives.

[4]Maltese exhibits the Highest Subject Restriction on the distribution of resumptives, and requires a resumptive in some other positions (such as the object of a preposition) but gaps and resumptives are not always in complementary distribution).

[5]See the list of abbreviations at the end of this paper. Glossing in some examples in this paper has been changed from the original source in order to increase consistency.

(4) It-tarbija li   n-af   '1 omm-ha
DEF-baby COMP 1-know.IMPV.SG ACC.mother-3SGF.ACC

the baby whose mother I know

(5) it-tifel   li   kon-t   miegħ-u
DEF-boy COMP be.PFV-1SG with-3SGM.ACC

the boy that I was with

(6) il-forn   li   ħmej-na   l-ħobż   fi-h
DEF-oven COMP bake.PFV-1PL DEF-bread in-3SGM.ACC

the oven, in which we baked the bread

The second strategy is the *wh*-strategy. The grammatical distribution of this strategy is much more restricted that that of the complementiser strategy, and indeed Camilleri and Sadler (2016) note that descriptive grammars of Maltese make no (Borg and Azzopardi-Alexander, 1997) or very scant reference (Aquilina (1973, 295,337) and Sutcliffe (1936, 183)) to the occurrence of *wh*-words in relative clauses. The use of this strategy in standard Maltese is limited to positions low on the Keenan and Comrie Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie, 1977, 650), that is, where the relativised element corresponds to a human or non-human oblique argument or adjunct. It is used in both short and long-distance relativisation, in combination with a gap.[6] This means that the *wh*-word generally occurs as the complement of a (fronted) preposition or fused with it. Relevant examples are given in (7)-(10).

(7) (ir)-raġel   ma'/fejn/għand min ħsib-t   li
(DEF)-man with/near/at   who think.PFV-1SG COMP
raj-t-ek
see.PFV-1SG-2SG.ACC

the/a man with/near/next to whom I thought I saw you   CS 2011: 114

(8) It-trav-i   ma' xiex j-i-d-dendl-u   l-qniepen,
DEF-beam-PL with what 3-EPENT.VWL-PASS-hang.IMPV-PL DEF-bell.PL
is-sadd-u.
REFL-rust.PFV.3-PL

The beams on which the bells are hung rusted.   MLRS

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[6]Modulo syntactic islands, where it combines with a resumptive.

(9) (it-)triq   minn fejn/mnejn   n-għaddi
(DEF-)street from where/from.where 1-pass.IMPV.SG

Lit: The/a street from where I pass
the street I go along   CS 2011: 114

(10) il-ġnien   ħdejn fejn   n-o-qgħod
DEF-garden near   where 1-FRM.VWL-stay.IMPV.SG

the garden which I live next to

Many preposition + *wh*-pronoun forms have been lexicalised in Maltese, and should probably be considered to be single words. (11) lists a number of such forms, which are used in relatives and in interrogative constructions (Camilleri and Sadler, 2016, 135).[7]

(11)
fuqhiex > fuq xiex	'on what'
fiex > f'xiex	'in what'
biex > b'xiex	'with what'
mniex > minn xiex	'from what'
għalxiex	'for what'
mnejn > minn fejn	'from where'

Compared to Standard Maltese, the use of the *wh*-strategy is less restricted in dialectal varieties such as North-Eastern Naxxari. In such dialectal varieties the *wh*-pronouns *min* 'who' and *'l min* 'who.ACC' are grammatical in relativisation of direct (term) grammatical functions, so long as the antecedent is definite or specific (Camilleri and Sadler, 2016, 135). On the other hand, the non-human *wh*-pronoun forms *x'/xi/xiex* 'what' cannot be used for relativisation on direct (term) grammatical functions in either standard or dialectal varieties. This contrast between *min/'l min* and *x'/xi/xiex* is illustrated in the constrasting grammaticality of (12) and (13), both from the Naxxari dialect.

(12) ir-raġel/*raġel min fetaħ-l-i   il-bieb.
DEF-man/*man who open.PFV.3SGM-DAT-1SG DEF-door

the man who opened the door for me

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[7]Several additional fused forms occur in interrogatives but not in relatives.

(13) *Smaj-t   l-aħbar   xiex/x'għaġb-it-ha.
      hear.PFV-1SG DEF-news.SGF what.surprise.PFV-3SGF-3SGF.ACC

      Intended: I heard the news which surprised her.
      CS 2016, 137

The following table based on Camilleri and Sadler (2016, 138) gives a schematic overview of the occurrence of *wh*-elements in relative clauses:[8]

Antecedents	Prn type	Comment
DEF + Human	*min*	subject, dialect only
DEF + Human	*'l min*	object/indirect object, dialect only
Human	P + *min*	oblique and adjunct functions
Human	Fused P + *min*	oblique and adjunct functions
Non-Human	P + *xiex*	oblique and adjunct functions
Non-Human	Fused P + *xiex*	oblique and adjunct functions
	fejn, P + *fejn*, *mnejn*	'locative' oblique and adjunct functions

Table 1: Distribution of wh-relatives

3   Realis Free Relatives

In this section we turn to so-called 'plain' or 'standard' free relative clauses. By plain FRC we mean examples such as the English FRC shown in (14). These FRCs involve 'bare' or non-complex *wh*-words in English, and admit of paraphrases with definite NPs and PPs. (14a) may be paraphrased as *Kim ate the food which Adam had cooked her.* and (14b) as *You can't smoke in the place where the children are playing.* Plain FRC are distinct from *-ever* FRC, illustrated in (15) and other constructions such as constituent unconditionals (16), and we exclude the Maltese correlates of these constructions from consideration here.

(14) a. Kim ate what Adam had cooked her.

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[8]A reviewer asks how the set of pronouns found in relative clauses relates to the set of *wh*-interrogative pronouns. Discussing this point in detail would take us too far afield. In brief, the majority of the interrogative pronouns are found in *wh*-relatives, subject to the restrictions discussed above. A number of additional forms corresponding to 'why' occur as interrogative *wh*-elements but do not introduce headed relative clauses, including *għalxiex* lit 'for what'; *għalfejn* lit: 'for where' and the Southern dialectal form *għalfiex* lit: 'for in what'. Additionally, the *wh*-determiner *liem* 'which' occurs in interrogatives, but not in restrictive relative clauses.

b. You can't smoke where the children are playing.

(15) a. John grabbed whatever was on the table

  b. I'll go wherever you go

(16) Whatever Marcia buys, it will be good to eat.

The observation that plain FRCs can be replaced by definite DP or PP paraphrases is key to the majority of approaches to their semantics (see Jacobson (1995), Caponigro (2003) and Caponigro et al. (2012), *inter alia*, for discussion of the status of plain FRC as definites). We return to further discussion of this point below.

3.1 Wh- Free Relatives

(17), (18) and (19) provide initial examples of plain FRC in Maltese, which the *wh-*element *xi/x'* 'what'. In (17) and (18) the FRCs occur as matrix subject and object respectively while the more complex example in (19) involves a long distance dependency within the FRC.

(17) X'qal-l-i   kien   vera bla   sens.
    what.say.PFV.3SGM-DAT-1SG be.PFV.3SGM true without sense

    What he told me was truly senseless.

(18) Kil-t   x'ħalle-w   waraj-hom   it-tfal.
    eat.PFV-1SG what.leave.PFV.3-PL after-3PL.ACC DEF-children

    I ate what the children left (behind them).

(19) Ma   staj-t-x   n-a-qra   sew
    NEG able.PFV-1SG-NEG 1-FRM.VWL-read.IMPV.SG well
    x'reġa'   beda   j-i-pprova
    what.repeat.PFV.3SGM start.PFV.3SGM 3-EPENT.VWL-try.IMPV.SGM
    j-i-kteb   bil-m-a-għqud.
    3-FRM.VWL-write with.DEF-PASS.PTCP-FRM.VWL-knot.SGM

    Lit: I was not able I read well what he repeats he starts he tries he writes in knots
    I couldn't read very well what he started to try to scribble down again.

Note that although the *wh*-pronoun *xi/x'* 'what' is systematically excluded from term grammatical functions in headed *wh*-relative clauses, as shown in section 5, it is completely felicitous in FRCs. As well as the (non-human) *wh*-word *xi/x'* 'what', the *wh*-word *min/'l min* 'who' also occurs in plain *wh*-FRCs as shown in examples (20)-(23). Again, this is in sharp contrast to the restricted occurrence of this *wh*-word in headed relatives (in Standard Maltese). In (23), the FRC occurs as object of the preposition *għal* 'for' in the matrix clause.

(20) Min qal-l-ek hekk giddieb.
who say.PFV.3SGM-DAT-2SG like.this liar.SGM

Whoever told you so is a liar.

(21) Ma j-ħobb-u-x 'l min j-i-sraq.
NEG 3-love.IMPV-PL-NEG ACC who 3-FRM.VWL-steal.IMPV.SGM

They don't like those who steal.

(22) Bgħat-t l-ittra 'l min rid-t għal
send.PFV-1SG DEF-letter DAT who want.PFV-1SG for
dax-xogħol.
DEM.SGM.DEF-work

I sent the letter to the one I wanted for work.

(23) J-i-sgħobbi-ni għal min
3-EPENT.VWL-be.sorry.IMPV.SGM-1SG.ACC for who
qal-u-l-i li qed i-bati.
say.PFV.3-PL-DAT-1SG COMP PROG 3-suffer.IMPV.SGM

I am sorry/feel sorry for the one who they told me is suffering.

In most cases, FRCs such as these involve a gap within the relative clause, however if the relativised position corresponds to a non-selected dative we find a resumptive (shown in boldface), as in (24).[9] Similarly, there is a resumptive (again, in boldface) in (25) since Maltese does not permit preposition stranding. Notice that the occurrence of a resumptive in these contexts is wholly consistent with what we know about the gap/resumptive distribution in other constructions in the language, but is at odds with the suggestion (see Caponigro (2003, 10)) that occurrence of a gap is a *definitional* property of free relative clauses.

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[9]See Camilleri and Sadler (2012) for an approach to non-selected datives in Maltese.

(24) T-af   li   ħi-ja,   kien,   ’l   min
2-know.IMPV.SG COMP brother-1SG.GEN be.PFV.3SGM DAT who
girf-u-**l-u**   l-karozza!
scratch.PFV.3-PL-DAT-3SGM DEF-car

Do you know that it was my brother was the one whose car they scratched!

(25) Ma mor-t-x   għal/għand min kel-l-ek
NEG go.PFV-1SG-NEG for/at   who be.PFV.3SGM-DAT-2SG
t-mur   għal-i-**h**/għand-**u**   int.
2-go.IMPV.SG for-EPENT.VWL-3SGM.ACC/at-3SGM.ACC you

I didn’t go for (i.e. pick up) who you had to go for (i.e. pick up)/I didn’t go
to the person’s place you had to go to.

Much of the syntactic literature on plain FRCs focuses on the existence of match-
ing effects, which are taken to be typical of FRCs. The discussion of matching
plays a crucial role in relation to arguments within that literature as to whether the
plain (definite) FRC should be analysed in constitutent structure terms as a NP/DP
dominating a CP or as a CP alone. Our concerns here are not primarily syntactic,
however we note that the Maltese realis FRC are consistent with the assumption of
a matching effect. For example in (25) both the matrix predicate and the predicate
within the relative clause subcategorise for a PP: the FRC appears as the nominal
dependent of the matrix preposition *għal* ‘for’ or *għand* ‘at’. Similarly, in (26)
both matrix and embedded verbs require an oblique PP argument. (26) contrasts
with the examples in (27) which violate the matching requirement: in these ex-
amples the matrix verbs subcategorise for a DP object and the verb in the FRC
requires a oblique PP.[10]

(26) Iltqaj-t   ma’ min t-kellim-t.
take.PFV-1SG with who REFL-talk.PFV-1SG

I met with (the one) who I talked to.

(27) a. *ħad-t   ma’ min iltqaj-t   saċ-ċinema.
take.PFV-1SG with who meet.PFV-1SG till.DEF-cinema

Intended: I took who I met to the cinema.

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[10]The syntax of ‘prepositional’ FRCs have received considerable attention within the generativist
tradition, especially in relation to determining the constituent structure of FRCs: for differing views
see for example Grosu (2003) and Larson (1987).

b. *Qed in-kellem   ma' min iltqaj-t   il-festa.
   PROG 1-speak.IMPV.SGM with who meet.PFV-1SG DEF-feast

   Intended: I am talking with who I met at the feast.

In connection to the matching issue, we note that the following example may also provide evidence that realis FRCs in Maltese are subject to matching. Maltese makes some limited use of a synthetic genitive construction in which the morphological form of the possessum is the construct state (as opposed to the absolute state) - compare *mara* 'woman' with *mart ħija* 'my brother's wife'. The synthetic genitive construction is used notably in the expression of body part and kinship relations in Maltese, and the dependent position is limited to DP/NP possessors. As the example in (28) shows, this position may be filled by a FRC.

(28) Mart   min ġab   dal-ktieb
     woman who bring.PFV.3SGM DEM.SGM.DEF-book
     t-af-ni   sew.
     3-know.IMPV.SGF-1SG.ACC well

     The wife of the one who got this book knows me well.

3.2   Complementiser Free Relatives

Maltese has a second productive strategy for realis (definite) FRCs, using the complementiser *li* which is found in headed relative clauses, exemplified in Section 5.[11] (29) and (30) illustrate its use in subject FRCs denoting human and non-human entities respectively.

(29) Li   xtra-t   mingħand-ek,   ġie-t   s'għand-i
     COMP buy.PFV-3SGF from.at-2SG.ACC come.PFV-3SGF till.at-1SG.GEN
     illum.
     today

     The one who bought (something) from me came to me today.

(30) li   qal-l-i   kien   tal-ġenn
     COMP say.PFV.3SGM-DAT-1SG be.PFV.3SGM of.DEF-craziness

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[11]This complementising element, which we take to be cognate to teh forms *illi/lli/alli* found in relative clauses in contemporary Arabic vernaculars, is also used in Maltese to introduce other types of subordinate clause, including complement clauses.

What he told me was incredible (in a good sense)

In other, non-subject, functions, *li*-FRCs cannot denote human entities, and this restriction accounts for the contrast in grammaticality between (31) and (32). As with the *wh*-strategy, complementiser - introduced definite FRCs may involve gaps or resumptives, depending on the relativised position — ((33) contains a resumptive).

(31) Għamil-t   li   għid-t-l-i.
     do.PFV-1SG COMP   say.PFV-2SG-DAT-1SG

     I did what you told me.

(32) *Li n-af   lil omm-u,   kellim-ni
     LI   1-know.IMPV.SG ACC mother-3SGM.GEN   talk.PFV.3SGM-1SG.ACC

     Intended: The one whose mother I know talked to me.

(33) Li   kil-na   fi-h   aħna kien   vera tajjeb.
     COMP   eat.PFV-1PL   in-3SGM.ACC   we   be.PFV.3SGM true good

     The one we ate in was really good.

While *wh*- headed relative clauses have received appropriate attention in the theoretical literature, the same cannot be said for non-*wh* FRC and indeed it appears to be generally assumed that the presence of a *wh*-element is obligatory in FRCs. The evidence from Maltese shows that this is certainly not the case (and similar examples can be found in descriptive grammars of the Arabic vernaculars). The productive existence of this non-*wh* strategy poses a number of interesting issues and challenges for syntactic analysis. In examples such as (29) - (33) if *li* is a complementiser, as we argue elsewhere, then the FRC seems to involve a null nominal (rather than a wh-element). An argument against a nominal status for *li* itself is suggested by the impossibility of pied piping (as an alternative to the use of a resumptive, as in (33) - this would be absolutely ungrammatical).[12]

A further intriguing aspect of *li* FRCs is that the complementising elment *li* has fused with the preposition *minn* 'from', giving rise to a partitive interpretation, as illustrated in (34). Similar uses of *milli* are found in headed relative clauses (see Camilleri and Sadler (2016)). We leave discussion of such examples to future research.

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[12]A reviewer points out that similar data is found in Modern Hebrew, where the element *asher* is considered to be a relative complementiser, and does not permit pied-piping.

(34) ħad-t   milli   għid-t-l-i   biex
      take.PFV-1SG from.COMP say.PFV-2SG-DAT-1SG in.order.to
      t-ħalli-l-i   ftit   minn-u.
      2-leave.IMPV.SG-DAT-1SG a.little from-3SGM.ACC

      I took (some) from what you told me you were going to leave me part of.

3.3 Free Relatives as Definites

The general consensus in the literature is that plain free relatives should be treated semantically as definites (see, for example, Jacobson (1995), Rullmann (1995), Grosu and Landman (1998), Izvorski (2000b), Caponigro (2003) and Tredinnick (2005), among many others). [13] The guiding intuition behind much of this work is that a realis FRC denotes the maximal entity (contextually available) which satisfies the description. Depending on the context, this may be a singular entity or a 'plural entity' - on the semantics for singular and plural definite DPs proposed by Link (1983) (and applied to the semantics of FRCs in Caponigro (2003), building on Jacobson (1995)) plural entities result from forming groups by joining together atomic or plural entities by means of a **sum** ($\oplus$) operation. Entities thus include other entities - the inclusion relation ($\leq$) is reflexive, transitive and anti-symmetric. Given this lattice structure, there is always a maximal entity, and this is what the realis FRC denotes. Hence in *Kim ate what Adam cooked*, *what Adam cooked* denotes this maximal element, which may be a singular or a plural entity, depending on the particular context.

In this section we demonstrate that plain (*wh-*) free relatives in Maltese also exhibit a range of properties which are consistent with status as definite NPs.[14]

Paraphrasability

In terms of paraphrasability, an example such as (35) is naturally paraphrasable as (36), which involves a headed relative clause, in the context in which Mary brought with her a single companion.

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[13]In earlier work Cooper (1983) argued that they are ambiguous between universal and definite interpretations, and see Berman (1994) and Wiltschko (1999) for alternative proposals under which they are interpreted as indefinites.

[14]We will sometimes illustrate our points with *li*-FRC examples and sometimes with *wh*-FRC. Our conclusions concerning the definite interpretation of FRCs is equally valid for FRCs using each of these strategies.

(35) Kulħadd   sar   j-ħobb   'l   min Marija
    everyone become.PFV.3SGM 3-love.IMPV.SGM ACC who Marija
    ħad-et   magħ-ha.
    take.PFV.3SGF with-3SGF.ACC

    Everyone started to love who Mary took with her.

(36) Kulħadd   sar   j-ħobb   ir-raġel li   Marija
    everyone become.PFV.3SGM 3-love.IMPV.SGM DEF-man COMP Marija
    ħad-et   magħ-ha.
    take.PFV.3SGF with-3SGF.ACC

    Everyone started to love the man Mary took with her.

Some empirical evidence that the plain FRCs in Maltese behave like definite DPs
rather than as quantificational nominals may come from the following contrast
which emerges in the complement of the partitive.[15] As the English data in (37)
shows, definites and FRC may occur in the complement of a partitive, but not
quantificational nominals.

(37) Most of [what is on the table]/[the books]/*[every/many/some
    books(s)]is/are expensive.

The following Maltese data show the same contrast in the complement of a parti-
tive.

(38) a. Il-maġġoranza tal kotba   fuq dil-mejda
       DEF-majority of book.PL on DEM.DEF-table
       j-i-swe-w   'l   fuq minn elf   lira
       3-FRM.VWL-cost.IMPV-PL ALL on from thousand pound

       The majority of/most of the books on this table cost more than a thousand
       pounds

    b. Il-maġġoranza ta' li/x'hawn   fuq dil-mejda
       DEF-majority of COMP/what.EXIST on DEM.DEF-table
       j-i-swe-w   'l   fuq minn elf   lira
       3-FRM.VWL-cost.IMPV-PL ALL on from thousand pound

13

The majority of/most of what is on this table costs more than a thousand pounds

c. *Il-maġġoranza ta' xi/ħafna   kotba   j-i-swe-w
   DEF-majority   of some/a.lot book.PL 3-FRM.VWL-cost.IMPV-PL
   iktar minn ħames lir-i
   more from five   pound-PL

*Most of some/many books cost more than five pounds

Lack of Scopal Interaction with Universal Quantifiers

If free relatives are interpreted as definites, then we expect that they would not show scopal interaction with quantifiers. Consider an example such as (39): the interpretation which it receives is that there is a contextually salient maximal (singular or plural, depending on context) individual who Mary brought and who everyone started to love.

(39) Kulħadd sar   j-ħobb   'l   min Marija
     everyone become.PFV.3SGM 3-love.IMPV.SGM ACC who Marija
     ħad-et   magħ-ha.
     take.PFV.3SGF with-3SGF.ACC

Everyone started to love who Mary took with her.

Similarly with the non-human *wh*-element *x'* 'what' in (40), the interpretation is that there is a contextually salient maximal thing that Mary does, and everyone is talking about that maximal individual. Similar interpretations (that is, a similar failure to show the ambiguity characteristic of scopal interaction) arise with (41) and (42), using the complementiser strategy for FRCs.[16]

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[16]For a reason that we do not understand, *x'/xi* FRCs are sometimes unexpectedly ungrammatical: the counterpart of (41), shown in (i), is a case in point. Note that (18), which is similar in many respects, is fine. We leave further investigation of this matter for future research.

(i) *Kulħadd kiel   x'sajjar   Pawlu.
    everyone eat.PFV.3SGM what.cook.PFV.3SGM Paul

Everyone ate what Paul cooked.

(40) Kulħadd j-i-xtieq
  everyone 3-FRM.VWL-wish.IMPV.SGM
  j-i-t-kellem   dwar
  3-EPENT.VWL-RECIP-talk.IMPV.SGM about
  x't-a-għmel   Marija.
  what.3-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV.SGF Mary

  Everyone wishes to talk about what Mary does.

(41) Kulħadd kiel   li   sajjar   Pawlu
  everyone eat.PFV.3SGM COMP cook.PFV.3SGM Paul

  Everyone ate what Paul cooked.

(42) Kulħadd ħa   interess f'li kitb-et   Marija
  everyone take.PFV.3SGM interest in.LI write.PFV-3SGF Mary

  Everyone took an interest in what Mary wrote.

In examples such as (43) the naturally arising interpretation is that each person, they chose a (potentially) different person to speak to, so that the definite appears to scope below the universal quantifier. However this effect arises because of the pronominal *hu* bound by the quantifier itself, and hence is independent of the issue at hand.

(43) Kulħadd kellem   'l min xtaq   hu.
  everyone speak.PFV.3SGM ACC who wish.PFV.3SGM he

  Everyone spoke to whoever he wished

Lack of Scopal Interaction with Negation

The interpretations which arise in the context of negation are also compatible with their status as definites. If realis FRCs are interpreted as universals then we would expect them to exhibit scopal interaction with negation, and in particular to allow readings in which the universal scopes under the negation (Dayal, 1997). Thus a sentence such as (44a) is compatible with the continuation shown in (44b). Definites, on the other hand, are not compatible with such continuations (44c) (Tredinnick, 2005, 55-59).

(44) a. I did not like everything that Paul cooked

b. I did not like everything that Paul cooked, but I liked some/most of it

c. I didn't like the books Sue recommended..... # but I liked most of them

As Tredinnick observes, plain relatives behave like definites — they should not be compatible with continuations implying "not all of the sum". Our impression is that this is true for the following examples in Maltese: continuations implying "not all of the sum" (such as *but I ate the vegetables* in (45)) are infelicitous, because they are imcompatible with the maximality associated with a definite. [17]

(45) Ma kil-it-x   li   sajjar   Pawlu
     NEG eat.PFV-3SGF-NEG COMP cook.PFV.3SGM Paul

     She didn't eat what Paul cooked.

Similarly (46) does not permit a continuation in which I conveyed to them some of the things my mother taught me, and (47) is incompatible with the continuation that I read one small article of his.

(46) Ma rnexxi-l-i-x   n-għaddi-l-hom
     NEG manage.PFV.3SGM-DAT-1SG-NEG 1-pass.CAUSE.IMPV.SG-DAT-3PL
     x'għallm-it-ni   omm-i
     what.teach.PFV-3SGF-1SG.ACC mother-1SG.GEN

     Lit: I didn't manage to pass to them what my mother taught me.
     I didn't manage to convey to them what my mother taught me.

(47) Ma rnexxi-l-i-x   n-a-qra
     NEG manage.PFV.3SGM-DAT-1SG-NEG 1-FRM.VWL-read.IMPV.SG
     li/x'kiteb   Pawlu fuq il-gazzetta
     COMP/what.write.PFV.3SGM Paul   on   DEF-newspaper

     I didn't manage to read what Paul wrote in the newspaper

(In)definiteness restriction environments
By Definiteness Restriction Environments we refer to environments which permit indefinites but in which (unmodified) definites are anomalous (that is, environments displaying what is generally called a definiteness effect). If we established

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[17]Again for a reason which we do not understand the counterpart of (45) with *x'* 'what' in place of *li* COMP is ungrammatical, although *x'* is seemingly fine in (46) and (47).

the existence of such environments in Maltese, we might expect plain FRCs to be systematically excluded from them, if such FRCs are definite. One such environment in English is created by existential *there* insertion: a sentence such as **There is what she baked on the table* is ungrammatical on an existential *there* interpretation. However, the Maltese existential predicate *hemm* is not subject to a definiteness restriction, and hence (48) and (49) (the latter involving a FRC formed using the *li* (non-*wh*) strategy) are both grammatical.[18] We note that the *wh*-counterpart of (49) in (50) is ungrammatical, but this is likely to be because of restrictions, which we do not yet understand well, on the distribution of the *wh*-word *x'/xi* itself.

(48) Hemm l-ikel   fuq il-mejda.
      EXIST DEF-food on DEF-table

      The food is on the table.

(49) Hemm li   xtara   Carl dalgħodu,   fuq il-mejda.
      EXIST COMP buy.PFV.3SGM Carl DEM.SGM.DEF.morning on DEF-table

      We have what Carl bought this morning, on the table.

(50) *Hemm xi   xtara   Carl dalgħodu,   fuq il-mejda
      EXIST   what buy.PFV.3SGM Carl DEM.SGM.DEF.morning on DEF-table

      (We have what Carl bought this morning, on the table.)

On the other hand, there are several environments in Maltese which *exclude* indefinite NPs, and show that realis FRCs occur felicitiously in these environments, consistent with the idea that they are interpreted as definites.[19] The first such case is the pre-verbal subject position, which excludes indefinite NPs but where realis FRCs are perfectly grammatical. The data in (51) and (52) illustrate this point.

(51) a. Ġie   tifel/it-tifel   ilbieraħ.
        come.PFV.3SGM boy/DEF-boy yesterday

        The boy/A boy came yesterday.

---

[18]A reviewer suggests that Maltese *hemm* might be construed as a locative predicate (locative *there* + *be* in English permit both strong and weak NPs). However this is not the case - *hemm* is a true existential in Maltese and the copula *qed/qiegħed* serves as a locative predicate.

[19]But note, of course, that universally quantified NPs are equally grammatical in these contexts, so these observations do not provide unequivocal evidence in favour of the claim that realis FRCs are interpreted as definites.

b. *tifel ġie   ilbieraħ.
   boy   come.PFV.3SGM yesterday

   Intended: A boy came yesterday.

c. It-tifel   ġie   ilbieraħ.
   DEF-boy come.PFV.3SGM yesterday

   The boy came yesterday.

(52) Min kien   għand-ek   ilbieraħ. ġie   ħdej-ja,
     who be.PFV.3SGM at-2SG.ACC yesterday come.PFV.3SGM next-1SG.ACC
     wara.
     after

     The one who was at your place yesterday came to me, afterwards.

Secondly, indefinite DP/NPs cannot occur as left dislocated, clitic-doubled topics
(see (53)), while realis FRCs are perfectly grammatical in this construction, as in
(54) and (55).

(53) Il-ktieb/*ktieb, Marija qattgħ-et-u
     DEF-book/book Marija tear.CAUSE.PFV-3SGF-3SGM.ACC

     As for the book, Mary tore it.

(54) 'L   min inzerta   fil-bieb,
     DAT who happen.PFV.3SGM in.DEF-door,
     sellim-t-l-u.
     greet.CAUSE.PFV-1SG-DAT-3SGM

     The one who happened to be at the door, I greeted him.

(55) Li   kien   hemm fuq il-mejda, Marija kil-it-u.
     COMP be.PFV.3SGM EXIST on DEF-table Mary   eat.PFV-3SGF-3SGM

     What was on the table, Mary ate it.

Anaphora

The behaviour of plain FRCs with respect to anaphoric reference also supports
their status as definites, and argues against viewing them as universal quantifiers.
As Jacobson (1995) observes, the referent of a free relative can be referred to

anaphorically by *it*, but universal NPs do not allow this kind of anaphora. The following example (Jacobson, 1995) illustrates this point, where (56a) and (56b) contrast with (56c).

(56) a. *John read everything that Bill assigned, although I don't remember what it was, but I do know that it was long and boring.

 b. *Everyone who went to every movie the Avon is now showing said it was very boring.

 c. Everyone who went to what (whatever movie) the Avon is now showing said it was very boring.

It is not possible to reproduce this directly in Maltese, because positive universal quantifiers such as *kulħadd* 'everyone' and *kollox* 'everything' cannot occur as the the anchor for restrictive relative clauses (Camilleri and Sadler, 2016, 120) and so (57) is excluded for independent reasons.[20] Note that the corresponding FRC example in (58) is completely grammatical, as expected if it has the interpretational properties of a definite, so that the pronominal *-h* is understood as anaphorically related to *the thing/film that was being shown in the hall*.[21]

(57) *Marija qra-t   kollox li qal-l-ha   John u
      Mary   read.PFV-3SGF all   LI say.PFV.3SGM-DAT-3SGF John CONJ
      tassew sab-it-u   interessanti
      really find.PFV-3SGF-3SGM.ACC interesting.SGM

      *Mary read everything that John told her and found it interesting   RRC

(58) Kulmin mar   j-a-ra   x'kien
     all.who go.PFV.3SGM 3-FRM.VWL-see.IMPV.SGM what.be.PFV.3SGM
     qed   j-i-nt-wera   fis-sala
     PROG 3-EPENT.VWL-PASS-show.IMPV.SGM in.DEF-hall

---

[20]A reviewer asks whether the ungrammaticality of (57) arises because of a simple number mismatch between the quantifier and the anaphoric pronoun. This is not the case - the quantifier *kollox* 'all' is 3SGM in Maltese and so no number mismatch arises in this example.

[21]The subject of the matrix clause in (58) takes the form of a *wh-ever* FRC, but that is not directly relevant here.

ħasb-u-h   kien   xi   dramm tas-snin
think.PFV.3-PL-3SGM.ACC be.PFV.3SGM some drama of.DEF-year.PL
sittin
sixty

Everyone who went to see what was being shown in the hall thought-it was
some drama of the sixties

However, some caution is required in interpreting the facts above, as (59) in which
the universal combines with nominal anchor for a relative clause, which is then
picked up for subsequent anaphoric reference, is fully grammatical.

(59) Marija sellm-et   'l   kull tifel$_i$ li kellm-u
     Mary   greet.PFV-3SGF ACC all   boy   LI talk.PFV.3-PL
     hut-i,   u   wara spicca-t
     sibling.PL-1SG.GEN CONJ after end.PFV-3SGF
     t-i-t-kellem   miegh-u$_i$
     3-EPENT.VWL-RECIP-talk.IMPFV.SGF with-3SGM.ACC
     /t-kellm-u$_i$ hi   ukoll
     /3-talk.IMPV.SGF-3SGM.ACC she as.well

     Mary greeted every boy that my siblings talked (to) and then she herself
     also ended up talking with him/talking to him.

Negative Polarity Items

A further difference between universals and definites is that the former license
negative polarity items (NPIs) (in their restriction) and the latter do not license
NPIs at all, and so we can ask whether plain FRCs pattern like universals or like
definites with respect to the licensing of NPIs.

In (60), the NPI *qatt* 'ever' in the restrictive relative clause is licensed by the
universal quantifier in the anchor/head of the relative clause *dak kollu* 'all that'.
The plain FRC in (61) does not license an NPI, a behaviour which is expected if
(61) is interpreted as a definite. Notice the clear difference here between the plain
FRC in (61) and the *wh-ever* FRC counterpart in (62) which *does* licenses an NPI.

(60) Ġie   fl-inkwiet   minħabba dak   koll-u   li
     come.PFV.3SGM in.DEF-trouble because   DEM.SGM all-SGM COMP
     qatt   qal.
     never say.PFV.3SGM

     He got into trouble because of everything he ever said.

(61) *Ġie   fl-inkwiet   minħabba x'qatt   qal.
     come.PFV.3SGM in.DEF-trouble because   what never say.PFV.3SGM

     Intended: He got into trouble because of what he ever said.

(62) Ġie   fl-inkwiet   minħabba kulma   qatt   qal.
     come.PFV.3SGM in.DEF-trouble because   all.what never say.PFV.3SGM

     He got in trouble because of everything he ever said.

Degree Modification

A further property which distinguishes between universals and definites is that the former, but not the latter, permit modification by elements such as *absolutely, almost, practically, nearly* (see Tredinnick (2005) for discussion of this test in relation to English free relatives).[22] The expected pattern of behaviour is also found in Maltese, providing further evidence for the claim that FRCs have the status of definites in that language. (63) shows that a FRC involving a *wh-ever* item can be so modified, and (64) shows the same for a universally quantified noun phrase. The contrasting examples in (65) and (66) show that this is not possible with a plain FRC, consistent with the assumption that the latter shows the behaviour of a definite NP. (67) demonstrates the impossibility of modifying a definite NP.

(63) F'kważi/prattikament/assolutament kulma   j-sajjar,   (jiġifieri
     in.almost/practically/absolutely   all.what 3-cook.IMPV.SGM that.is
     kulma   hu   ħażin   għas-saħħa), j-i-tfa'
     all.what COP.3SGM bad.SGM for.DEF-health 3-FRM.VWL-throw.IMPV.SG
     xebgħa   melħ.
     smacking salt

     In almost/practically/absolutely whatever/all that he cooks, i.e. everything that is bad for the health, he throws a lot of salt.

(64) Kważi kull   raġel li n-af,   i-ħobb
     almost every man LI 1-know.IMPV.SG 3-love.IMPV.SGM
     i-sajjar,   id-dar.
     3-cook.IMPV.SGM DEF-house

     Almost every man I know loves to cook at home.

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[22]Compare: *Almost everything you asked me was easy* with **Nearly the people that want to can ride a bike*.

(65) *Se   n-a-għmel   kważi x'n-i-sta'.
     PROSP 1-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV.SG almost what.1-FRM.VWL-can.IMPV.SG

     Intended: I will do almost all that/whatever I can ...

(66) *Aqbad   u   għid-l-u   assolutament li
     catch.IMP.2SG CONJ say.IMP.2SG-DAT-3SGM absolutely   COMP
     t-af.
     2-know.IMPV.SG

     Intended: Tell him absolutely all that/whatever you know.

(67) *Assolutament ir-raġel   'l   min n-af,   tassew edukat.
     absolutely   DEF-man ACC who 1-know.IMPV.SG indeed educated.SGM

     Intended: *Absolutely the man who I know is educated.

In this section we have considered a range of constructions and tests discused
in earlier literature in order to cast some light on the question of whether or not
free relatives in Maltese involving plain *wh-* words and those introduced by *li*
are interpreted as definites. On the basis of the patterns of behaviour which we
observe, we conclude that they are indeed interpreted as definites. In section 4,
we will show that there are plain *wh*-FRCs which exhibit a different behaviour.

4   Free Relatives as Indefinites

Section 3 established both plain *wh*-FRCs and FRCs formed using the complemen-
tiser strategy with *li* are interpreted as definites. In this section, we will show
that this is not in fact the case for *all* plain *wh*-FRCs. Consider examples such as
(68) and (69). These clearly do not share the definite interpretation exhibited by
the FRCs discussed in the previous section. In fact, these FRCs are interpreted as
indefinites.

(68) M'għand-i-x   x'n-i-lbes
     NEG.at-1SG.GEN-NEG what.1-FRM.VWL-dress.IMPV.SG
     għall-Milied.
     for.DEF-Christmas

     I don't have anything to wear for Christmas.

22

(69) Għand-na   x'n-a-qra-w.
    at-1PL.GEN what.1-FRM.VWL-read.IMPV-PL

    We have something to read.

In this section we will argue that these *wh*-FRCs, which have an indefinite inter-pretation, are in fact instances of a construction which is described in the litera-ture as the irrealis free relative clause (or IFRC) (Grosu and Landman, 1998) or modal existential constructions (henceforth MEC), Grosu (2004)), amongst other terms. This construction is characterised crosslinguistically by a number of shared properties, but has not so far been identified in Maltese. For a discussion of the construction in a variety of languages see Plann (1980), Pesetsky (1982), Suñer (1983), Rudin (1986), Rappaport (1986), Rivero (1986), Grosu (1994), and in particular Grosu and Landman (1998), Izvorski (1998), Izvorski (2000b), Grosu (2004), Caponigro (2004), and Šimík (2011) for observations concerning the se-mantic properties characteristic of the construction. Caponigro (2003), Grosu (2004) and Šimík (2011) all provide substantial discussion from a crosslinguis-tic perspective. We start with a brief characterisation of the properties of the construction, which we will refer to as the MEC.

4.1   Characteristics of Modal Existential Constructions

English is a language which lacks a MEC. An example such as (70) with an in-definite NP has both a deontic necessity reading and a non-deontic possibility reading.[23]

 (70) There is/I have something to do.

On the other hand, a language with MECs have a construction in which the deontic reading is lacking. An example is the Modern Hebrew MEC in (71) (Izvorski, 1998).

 (71) Yeš   [ma laʔasot].
       be-3SG what do-INF

       There is something to do.   HEB: Izvorski 1998, 159

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[23]As a reviewer points out, a language which has a MEC may also have an ambiguous construc-tion. Modern Hebrew also has a construction corresponding to English (70) which is ambiguous between deontic and non-deontic readings.

Examples such as (71) are limited to an existential modal force of possibility, and express a modal flavour which is variously characterised in the literature in terms of accessibility, circumstantial possibility or related notions. We will follow Izvorski (2000b, 27-28) and Šimík (2011, 55) here in characterising the modal flavour as being one of circumstantial possibility.[24] Examples such as (72) in Spanish and (73) in Romanian receive similar interpretations of circumstantial possibility.[25]

(72) Juan no tiene [a quien escribir].
     Juan not has   to who   write-INF

     Juan has no one he can write to.   SP: Grosu 2004, 422

(73) Maria nu   găseşte [cu cine   ieşi].
     Maria NEG finds   with whom go.out.INF

     Maria doesn't find anyone with whom to go out.   ROM: Grosu 1994, 138

In addition to the particular modal flavour of the construction, three further key characteristics are identified in the literature. The first is that it is limited to the complement or internal argument position of predicates which assert existence, most commonly existential and/or possessive predicates. The examples (71), (72) and (73) above from Hebrew, Spanish and Romanian, respectively, all involve predicates in this class. A second key characteristic is that the indefinite free relative contains an irrealis verb form, typically an infinitive or subjunctive. Finally, the indefinite free relative must contain a *wh*-item.

Beyond these key common characteristics, a number of syntactic differences have been identified in various languages between (realis) FRC and MECs. For example, on the basis of data from Romanian and Hebrew, Grosu and Landman (1998) state that they do not obey the matching effects which were seen to be characteristic of realis FRC (which have a definite interpretation) in section 3, and show that in some languages, they may permit multiple *wh*-phrases, and extractions. Further syntactic properties typical of MECs include the fact that they generally do not occur as subjects (being limited in general to the internal argument position of a

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[24]Izvorski (1998, 160) offers an alternative characterisation where there is an existential modality restricted by a bouletic accessibility relation. Since our concern is not to provide a precise semantic account of the modality of this construction, we will leave this matter to one side here.

[25]A reviewer points out that with this matrix predicate the MEC is more acceptable with the subjunctive mood in Romanian, rather than the infinitive shown in this example.

class of existential predicates, as noted above), and that the subject of the MEC is generally referentially dependent (and typically not syntactically expressed), with a 'strong and apparently universal tendency for coreference with the matrix subject' Šimík (2011, 60). Various exceptions to this tendency are found: in Šimík (2011)'s language sample, MECs with the subjunctive mood may permit a referentially independent subject in Serbo-Croatian, as in (74).[26] Caponigro (2003, 97) shows that infinitival MECs in Italian may take the *wh*-element as a referentially independent subject (see (75); the *wh*-element may also be the subject of the MEC in Spanish and Portuguese, and in this case the subjunctive mood is used rather than the infinitive (see (76).

(74) Unan   čime   da očistiš   ruke.
     have.1SG what.INST SBJ clean.2SG hands

     I have something with which you can clean your hands.
     SC: Šimík 2011, 60

(75) Anna Maria ha già   chi le   cura   i bambini.
     Anna maria has already who to-her.CL takes-care-of the children

     Anna Maria already has somebody who takes care of her children.
     IT: Caponigro 2003, 90

(76) Eu não tenho quem faça   isto.
     I   NEG have who do.SBJ this

     I do not have anyone who could do this.   PT: Šimík 2011, 188

Grosu (2004) provides some crosslinguistic discussion of the MEC, mainly (but not entirely) focussed on the syntactic properties of the construction, which he takes to be typical of the Balkan (Modern Greek, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Romanian and Albanian), Romance and Slavic languages, though also attested in Hungarian and Modern Hebrew. For Classical Arabic he provides the single example in (77) (and no further discussion of its interpretive properties).

(77) Laysa lī   mā afʕalu
     is.NEG to.me what do.IND.IMPV.1SG

     There is nothing I can do.   CA: Grosu 2004, 423

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[26]Other languages in his sample permitting the MEC subject to be referentially independent are Greek and Bulgarian (Šimík (2011, 193)). Unlike Serbo-Croatian, these languages lack an infinitive form.

Caponigro (2003) (which focusses mainly on developing a semantic analysis) extends the crosslinguistic data slightly, including single examples from Estonian, Yiddish and Finnish and a more extensive exemplification of the construction in Italian:

(78) Carlo non ha dove nascondersi in caso di pericolo.
Carlo not has where hide.INF-CL.REFL in case of danger

Carlo doesn't have a place where he can hide in case of danger
NOT There is a place where Carlo can hide in case of danger, but he doesn't
have it.   IT: Caponigro 2003, 92

In an relatively extensive crosslinguistic study of the MEC, Šimík (2011) proposes a number of absolute universals, general tendencies and implicational universals on the basis of a 16 language sample. This work further substantiates the observations concerning the restrictions on the class of embedding predicates, non-indicative (infinitival or subjunctive) form of the verb in the MEC and the particular modal flavour (which he describes as circumstantial possibility). On the basis of the language sample, he also observes a cross-linguistic tendency for the use of bare (interrogative) *wh*-words in the MEC and formulates an implicational hierarchy over the use of specific *wh-* words in the MEC (Šimík, 2011, 62).

To our knowledge, Izvorski (1998) is the first to show in any detail that some free relatives (the IFRC or MEC) have the semantic properties of a weak NP rather than those of a definite NP. As she points out, the fact that they are allowed in the complement of existentials is itself consistent with a weak rather than a strong NP status.

Izvorski (1998) shows that their scoping behaviour with respect to other operators is that of a weak NP, so that they obligatorily scope below quantifiers and negation (see also Plann (1980) for an early observation (for Spanish) that MECs scope very low). This is shown in (79) and (80) for Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian respectively.

(79) Vseki ima kakvo da čete.
everyone have-3SG.PRES what SBJ read-3SG.PRES

Everyone has something to read.   BUL: Izvorski 1998, 164
$\forall x[\text{person}'(x) \rightarrow \exists y[\text{thing}'(y) \wedge \diamond \text{read}'(x,y)]]$
$\neq \exists x[\text{thing}'(x) \wedge \forall y [\text{person}'(y) \rightarrow \diamond \text{read}'(y,x)]]$

26

(80) Jovan nema   čto čitati.
Jovan not.have.3SG what read-INF

Jovan doesn't have anything to read.   SC: Izvorski 1998, 164
$\neg \exists$ x[thing$'$(x) $\land$ $\diamond$ read$'$(j,x)]
$\neq \exists$x[thing$'$(xx) $\land$ $\diamond$ read$'$(j,x) $\land$ $\neg$ have$'$(j,x)]

She also demonstrates that they do not outscope modals or intensional (proposi-
tional attitude) verbs: in (81) and (82), for Bulgarian, *de re* readings in which the
wh-word outscopes the intensional verbs do not occur. Again, this stands in sharp
contrast to other plain FRCs.

(81) Marija može da ima   kakvo da   čete.
Marija may SBJ have.3SG what SUBJ read.3SG

It is possible that there is something that Marija can read.
NOT: There is something such that it is possible that Marija can read it.
BUL: Izvorski 2000, 46

(82) Ana vjarva   če Ivan ima   kakvo da vete.
Ana believe.3SG that Ivan have.3SG what SBJ read.3SG

Ana believes that there is something that John can read.
NOT: There is something such that Ana believes that John can read it.
BUL: Izvorski 2000, 46

Other studies, notably Caponigro (2003) and Šimík (2011), confirm these obser-
vations that in indefinite free relatives (MECs), the *wh*-word obligatorily scopes
low, for example, below a universal quantifier in the main clause, as shown in the
Czech examples (83)-(84) from Šimík (2011).[27]

(83) Mám   každému studentovi co   říct.
have.1SG every   student.DAT what say.INF

For every student there is something I can tell that student.
NOT: There is something such that I can tell it to every student.
CZ: Simik 2011, 58

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[27]Šimík (2008) further demonstrates that they may scope even below MEC internal quantifiers,
although this is not true in all languages with MECs, such as Portuguese (Šimík, 2011).

(84) ?Mám   co   říct   každému studentovi
     have.1SG what say.INF every   student.DAT

     For every student there is something I can tell that student.
     NOT: There is something such that I can tell it to every student.
     CZ: Šimík 2011, 58

4.2   Does Maltese have a Modal Existential Construction?

We are now in a position to return to Maltese examples such as (68) and (69) above and similar examples in (85) and (86) and consider whether they are in fact instances of a modal existential construction in Maltese.

(85) M'għand-i-x   /ma   kel-l-i-x
     NEG.at-1SG.GEN-NEG /NEG be.PFV.3SGM-DAT-1SG-NEG
     x'n-i-lbes   għall-Milied
     what.1-FRM.VWL-dress.IMPV.SG for.DEF-Christmas

     I don't have/didn't have anything to wear for Christmas.

(86) Hemm x'n-a-qra-w
     EXIST what.1-FRM.VWL-read.IMPV-PL

     We have something to read.

The embedded *wh*-clause in each of these examples occurs as the complement of a possessive or existential predicate and clearly it contains a *wh*-element, both key properties of the MEC crosslinguistically. All of the examples involve an imperfective verbform in the FRC. We will argue below that the imperfective form which is found in these examples is in fact consistent with the crosslinguistic observation that MECs typically exhibit non-finite or subjunctive forms, given that Maltese lacks infinitives. Most importantly, these examples receive a particular interpretation, highly consistent with the *circumstantial possibility* modality described in the literature. In particular, the interpretation which arises in (86) is that something is available to be read, and not that we have something which we are required to read.[28]

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[28]However, examples with the pseudo-verb *għand-*, which is both a deontic modal and the means to express clausal possession in Maltese, have both a deontic necessity reading and a possibility/availability readings. An obligation reading for (86) can emerge with the addition of an adjunct such as *għal qabel l-eżami* 'for before the exam'. We return to this issue below.

Maltese verbal morphology reflects a paradigmatic opposition between perfective and imperfective forms (the latter typically expressing a habitual aspect). These forms may combine with the perfective and imperfective forms of the auxiliary *kien* 'be' and a number of preverbal particles (in combination with the imperfective auxiliary) to express a range of temporal, aspectual and mood distinctions. Since Maltese lacks a distinct infinitival form, it uses the imperfective form quite systematically in a number of temporally dependent environments in which we find infinitival or participial forms in English. One such place is as the complement of a number of aspectual predicates, as in (87) (and in the complement of control and modal predicates, although this is not an obligatory requirement).

(87) a. Beda   j-i-kteb
          start.PFV.3SGM 3-FRM.VWL-write.IMPV.SGM
          He started to write.

      b. *Beda   kiteb
          start.PFV.3SGM write.PFV.3SGM
          Lit: *He started he wrote

The imperfective is also the form which is required in environments which may select irrealis mood or subjunctive forms in other languages. For example, it is used in conditional and counterfactual constructions. In these constructions, illustrated in (88) and (89), it does not, of course, receive its normal interpretation as a habitual.[29]

(88) Jekk n-i-rbaħ   il-lotterija   n-i-xtri
     if   1-FRM.VWL-win.IMPV.SG DEF-lottery 1-FRM.VWL-buy.IMPV.SG
     dar
     house
     If I win the lottery I will buy a house   Fabri 1995, 337

(89) Kieku   n-i-rbaħ   il-lotterija
     COUNTRFACT 1-FRM.VWL-win.IMPV.SG DEF-lottery
     n-i-xtri   dar
     1-FRM.VWL-buy.IMPV.SG house

---

[29]Fabri (1995, 337) interprets such examples as a future tense, but we think it is more accurate to characterise this as a more general irrealis mood marker.

If I won the lottery I will buy a house   Fabri 1995, 337
Our trans.: If I were to win the lottery, I would buy a house

The use of the imperfective (and indeed, the limitation to the imperfective) in these examples is wholly consistent with the crosslinguistic observation that MECs involve infinitival or subjunctive forms.

In the following section, we will show that the *wh*-clauses in examples such as (68)-(69) and (85)-(86) are interpreted as indefinites.

4.3   Semantic Properties

In this section we show that these free relatives have the properties of indefinites, consistent with their status as instances of a MEC in Maltese.

Narrow scope reading under a universal

Consider first example (90), which involves the matrix existential predicate and imperfective complement which we associate with the MEC in Maltese. If the free relative is interpreted as an indefinite, we expect it to take narrow scope in relation to the universal in the matrix clause, and this is indeed the case. It has the interpretation such that every student has some (potentially different) person who they can talk to, rather than a wide scope interpretation (for the *wh*-item). This is consistent with the notion that such examples are in fact MECs.

(90) Kull   student   għand-u   ’l   min j-kellem
      every student.SGM at-3SGM.GEN ACC who 3-talk.IMPV.SGM

      Every student has someone to talk to.

Narrow scope with respect to negation

Similarly, this class of embedding predicates (with imperfective complements) give rise to interpretations in which the *wh*-element has narrow scope with respect to negation. The interpretation of (91) is that it is not the case that there is something to do which I found.

(91) Ma   sib-t-x   x’n-a-għmel
      NEG find.PFV-1SG-NEG what.1-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV.SG

      I didn’t find anything to do.

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Narrow scope in Intensional contexts

The example in (92) receives an interpretation in which the *wh*-element in the complement of this class of existential embedding predicates also has narrow scope with respect to the propositional verb, scoping below the 'belief' predicate.

(92) N-emmen/n-a-ħseb   li s-sib   ħafna
     1-believe.IMPV.SG/1-FRM.VWL-think.IMPV.SG LI 2-find.IMPV.SG handful
     x't-a-għmel,   hux   hekk?
     what.2-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV.SG TAG.NEG like.this

     I believe/think you find a lot to do, isn't it so?

4.4 The Class of MEC Predicates in Maltese

The first question we can ask is, what is the class of embedding predicates which, in combination with an imperfective complement (and an unexpressed subject) give rise to these narrow scope indefinite interpretations with a modality of *circumstantial possibility* which crosslinguistically characterise the MEC?

In an extensive crosslinguistic study of the MEC, Šimík (2011) divides languages into two groups, so-called *stative* MEC *embedders*, where the MEC appears only in the complement argument position of *be* and *have*, and so-called *dynamic* MEC *embedders* in which the MEC may also occur as a complement of verbs such as *find, look for, seek, choose, give, take, get, send, bring, buy, build* and sometimes *arrive, appear, occur*.[30]

We can establish clearly that free relatives with indefinite interpretations *only* occur in the complement of a restricted set of verbs. The most typical verbs/pseudo-verbs which take such free relatives as complements are *għand-* lit.'at' meaning 'have' and *kel-* lit. 'be' (followed by a DAT) meaning 'have' and *hemm*, which is an existential predicate. These are all predicates which meet the criteria for stative embedders, as they are predicates of possession and existence.

A verb such as *kiel* 'eat' (which does not figure in Šimík's list of dynamic embedders) can never receive the indefinite interpretation characteristic of the MEC and

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[30]Šimík's crosslinguistic investigation shows that this is not a clear categorical distinction, with languages differing as to the precise subset of dynamic embedding verbs they may permit. In this study of 16 languages the most commonly found matrix verbs, alongside *be* and *have* were *find*, *seek* and *choose*. The languages investigated were Czech, Polish, Slovenian, Serbo-Croat, Russian, Bulgarian, French, Spanish, Romanian, Portuguese, Italian, Catalan, Greek, Hebrew, Latvian and Hungarian.

lacks the crucial modal flavour of a MEC. For such a verb, notice that both perfective and imperfective complements are possible and that there is no important interpretive difference of the relevant sort between the imperfective (93) and the perfective (94).

(93) Dejjem n-i-spiċċa   n-iekol   xi
      always 1-EPENT.VWL-finish.IMPV.SG 1-eat.IMPV.SG what
      j-ħall-u   waraj-hom   it-tfal
      3-leave.IMPV-PL after-3PL.ACC DEF-children
      I always end up eating what the children leave (behind).

(94) Kil-t   x'ħalle-w   waraj-hom   it-tfal
      eat.PFV-1SG what.leave.PFV.3-PL after-3PL.ACC DEF-children
      I ate what the children left (behind).

Beyond this, it is clear that Maltese should be classified amongst the languages in which the MEC occurs with at least a substantial subset of the dynamic embedders identified in Šimík (2011)'s crosslinguistic study. In contrast to a verb such as *kiel* 'eat', verbs such as *xtara* 'buy', *ta* 'give', *għażel* 'choose' (that is verbs that express notions of coming into being, view, availability, and allied notions) give rise to narrow scope indefinite interpretations with imperfective complements, as in (95).

(95) a. Xtraj-t-l-ek   x't-i-ekol
        buy.PFV-1SG-DAT-2SG what.2-eat.IMPV.SG
        I bought you something to eat.

     b. Taj-nie-hom   x'j-a-għml-u
        give.PFV-1PL-3PL.ACC what.3-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV-PL
        We gave them something to do.

     c. Għażil-t-i-l-kom
        choose.PFV-1SG-EPENT.VWL-DAT-2PL
        x't-i-stgħ-u   t-i-lbs-u
        what.2-FRM.VWL-be.able.IMPV-PL 2-FRM.VWL-wear.IMPV-PL
        I chose you something you can wear.

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d. Sib-t-l-ek   x't-a-qra
   find.PFV-1SG-2SG what.2-FRM.VWL-read.IMPV.SG

   I found you something to read.

When the complement is perfective, only a definite reading is possible. The examples in (96) illustrate this point.[31]

(96) a. Taj-nie-k   x'kon-na   xtraj-na
        give.PFV-1PL-2SG.ACC what.be.PFV-1PL buy.PFV-1PL

        We gave you what we had bought

     b. Sib-t   x'mor-t   n-għid,   jien, ukoll!
        find.PFV-1SG what.go.PFV-1SG 1-say.IMPV.SG I   as.well

        Lit: I found what I went I say, I as well
        In retrospect I see that what I said, shouldn't have been said.

We have seen that Maltese lacks an infinitive form, and makes systematic use of the imperfective form in circumstances in which infinitives are often used in other languages. As a result, the imperfective form itself is essentially ambiguous between a finite and a non-finite interpretation. This in turn raises the question, therefore, of whether examples such as (95) may also be interpreted as regular, definite, realis FRCs. Our impression is that in fact this *is* possible for examples with verbs from the class of so-called dynamic embedders, but does not arise with the stative verbs of possession and existence. The pair in (97) illustrate a dynamic embedder giving rise to both definite and indefinite interpretations (in the presence of an imperfective verbform). This contrasts with the stative predicates of assertion of existence in (98) which receive only indefinite, MEC interpretations.

(97) a. Fittix-na   'l   min soltu j-i-t-kellem
        search.PFV-1PL ACC who usually 3-EPENT.VWL-REFL-talk.IMPV.SGM
        miegħ-u.
        with-3SGM.ACC

        We searched for the one who usually talks with him.

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[31](96b) is hightly colloquial. Such an utterance is always said in retrospect and the FRC is clearly definite.

b. Fittix-na   'l   min j-i-sta'
   search.PFV-1PL ACC who 3-FRM.VWL-be.able.IMPV.SGM
   j-għin-na.
   3-help.IMPV.SGM-1PL.ACC
   We searched for someone who can help us.

(98) a. Għand-i   xi   n-għid-l-ek.
     at-1SG.GEN what 1-say.IMPV.SG-DAT-2SG
     I have something to tell you.

   b. Hemm ma' min t-i-ltaqa'.
      EXIST with who 2-EPENT.VWL-meet.RECIP.IMPV.SG
      There is someone to meet.

A final note on the question of which verbs license what we argue are MEC con-
structions in Maltese concerns the verb *ried* 'want'. Previous literature claims
that no language allows verbs meaning *want* to occur in the MEC because such
verbs are associated with a modality of desire, while the MEC is argued to dis-
play a different modal force. However we find examples in Maltese in which
an imperfective (subject-controlled) *wh*-FRC complement to *ried* gives rise to the
characteristic (indefinite) interpretation: for such examples, we tend to the view
that a more accurate translation of the meaning of the embedded predicate in such
cases is *need* or *require* as shown in (99).

(99) Ir-rid   x'n-iekol
     1-want.PFV.SG what.1-eat.IMPV.SG
     I need something to eat.

We have now established that the MEC is found with a range of verbs, consistent
with the distribution of this construction reported for other languages. It is found
with the stative predicates of existence and possession, and with at least some of
the dynamic embedders identified by Šimík (2011). The indefinite interpretations
characteristic of the MEC arise in *wh*-FRCs with imperfective verbforms. In con-
trast, *li*-FRCs with these embedding predicates always give rise to definite FRCs
with imperfective verbs, as one would expect. In these cases, the imperfective is
serving as a finite verb form in the regular way.

(100) a. Sab　　　　li j-i-xtieq.
　　　　find.PFV.3SGM LI 3-FRM.VWL-wish.IMPV.SGM

　　　　He found what (i.e the thing) he wishes (to have).

　　b. Se　　t-a-għżel　　　　　　li　　t-rid.
　　　　PROSP 3-FRM.VWL-chose.IMPV.SGF COMP 3-want.IMPV.SGF

　　　　She will choose what (i.e. the item) she wants.

　　c. Agħżel　　　　li j-o-għġob　　　lil Marija.
　　　　choose.IMPER.2SG LI 3-please.IMPV.SGM ACC Mary

　　　　Choose what (i.e. the one that) Mary likes.

Crosslinguistically, it is generally the case that in the MEC the embedded clause is infinitival and the MEC subject is referentially dependent on an argument of the embedding predicate, and hence is unexpressed. The controlling argument is typically the subject of the embedding predicate (which is, in the case of the stative embedders (predicates of assertion of existence) the only available controller). This general tendency (for the embedded subject to be referentially dependent) is also attested in the Maltese MEC. (95c) and (95d) above have already illustrated cases in which the embedded subject is referentially dependent on a non-subject argument of a dynamic predicate (with *għażel* 'choose' and *sab* 'find' respectively), and (101) illustrates a similar case with *bagħat* 'send'.

(101) Bgħat-t-l-ek　　　　x't-iekol
　　　send.PFV-1SG-DAT-2SG what.2-eat.IMPV.SG

　　　I sent you something to eat

The tendency for MEC complements to involve referentially dependent subjects is not completely exceptionless in Maltese, for it is possible for the *wh*-item itself to correspond to the embedded subject as in (102) (repeated from (97b) above), and (103) which involves the principal stative predicate corresponding to 'have' *għand-*.[32]

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[32]A further note concerning (103) is that the additional intervening predicate *seta'* 'be able to' is absolutely required here for this example to be grammatical. We currently cannot offer any speculations as to why this might be the case.

(102) Fittix-na   'l   min j-i-sta'
       search.PFV-1PL ACC who 3-FRM.VWL-be.able.IMPV.SGM
       j-għin-na.
       3-help.IMPV.SGM-1PL.ACC

       We searched for someone who can help us.

(103) M'għand-i-x   min j-i-sta'
       NEG.at-1SG.GEN-NEG who 3-FRM.VWL-be.able.IMPV.SGM
       j-i-ġi   dal-ħin.
       3-FRM.VWL-come.IMPV.SGM DEM.DEF.SGM-time

       I don't have anyone who can come at this time

Similar exceptions to the typical pattern in which the embedded subject is refer-
entially dependent on a matrix argument are found in languages such as Spanish
and Portuguese, in which the MEC is not limited to infinitival embeddings. Both
these languages use the subjunctive when the *wh*-element is the subject within the
MEC as in (104).[33]

(104) El Coronel no tiene   quien le   escriba.
        the colonel not have-3SG who   him write-3SG.SBJ

       No one writes to the colonel (lit: The colonel has no one to write to him.)
       SP:Izvorski 1998, 159

(105) El Coronel no tiene   quien te   ayude.
        the colonel not have-3SG who   you help-3SG.SBJ

       The colonel doesnt have anyone to help you.

Such *wh*-subjects require the use of the subjunctive, which is not otherwise used
in Spanish MEC. Other that the *wh*- element, no other subjects are permissible.[34]

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[33]A reviewer speculates that the presence of the clitic *le*, which is coreferential with the matrix
subject, might play a key role in determining the felicity of (104), as it does in Romanian. However,
this is not the case in Maltese, and Spanish informants found (105) to be perfectly fine.

[34]Our speculation at this point is that this may also be the case in Maltese. If so, any cases in
which a non-*wh* subject is independently expressed should receive definite interpretations as realis
FRCS.

(106) *No tengo   qué leas.
      NEG have1SG what read.SBJ.2SG

      I don't have anything for you to read.   SP: Šimík 2011, 48

Further, some (Balkan) languages which lack an infinitive generally permit the subject of the MEC to be referentially independent, as in (107) and (108). We do not think that Maltese shows this degree of freedom.

(107) Den exo   ti   na foresi   i   Vassiliki sti   jiorti   tis.
      NEG have.1SG what SBJ wear.3SG the Vasiliki at.the name.day her.GEN

      I don't have anything that Vasiliki could wear on her name-day.
      GK: Šimík 2011, 193

(108) Namerih s   kakvo da izčistiš   poda.
      found.1SG with what   SBJ clean.2SG floor

      I found something with which you can clean the floor.
      BUL: Šimík 2011, 193

4.5 Syntactic Properties

Unlike definite FRCs, MECs are limited in their distribution to internal argument (or non-subject) positions of certain classes of predicates - they do not occur as subjects in Maltese (or many other languages in which they are attested). They are also excluded as CLLD topics, while definite FRCs occur freely in such positions, and hence (109) is ungrammatical.

(109) *X't-i-lbes   ma
      what.2-FRM.VWL-dress.IMPV.SG NEG
      sib-t-u-l-ek-x.
      find.PFV-1SG-3SGM.ACC-DAT-2SG-NEG

      Intended: Something to wear, I didn't find-it for you.   *MEC

In contrast to the definite (realis) FRCs discussed in section 3, modal existential free relatives are not subject to the matching requirement. This is true of both stative and dynamic MEC embedders. The pseudo-verbal predicate *għand-* lit. 'at' selects an NP/DP complement and is ungrammatical with an oblique argument headed by *ma'* 'with' (see (110)). However the MEC in (111) is completely acceptable (and gives rise to the expected narrow scope interpretation for the FRC).

(110) a. Jien għand-i lista sħiħ-a ta' affar-ijiet.
　　　　 I at-1SG.GEN list.SGF solid-SGF of thing-PL

　　　 I have a full list of things.

　　 b. *Jien għand-i ma' Marija.
　　　　 I at-1SG.GEN with Mary

　　　 Intended: I have with Mary.

(111) Kull student għand-u ma' min
　　　 every student.SGM at-3SGM.GEN with who
　　　 j-i-t-kellem.
　　　 3-EPENT.VWL-RECIP-talk.IMPV.SGM

　　 Every student has someone to talk to.

(112) shows that dynamic MEC embedding predicates equally do not impose a matching requirement. In all of these cases, the embedding predicate expects a nominal (NP/DP) argument rather than a prepositional oblique.[35]

(112) a. Se n-ġib-l-ek f'xiex
　　　　 PROSP 1-bring/get.IMPV.SG-DAT-2SG in.what
　　　　 t-i-sta' t-a-ħsl-u.
　　　　 2-FRM.VWL-can.IMPV.SG 2-FRM.VWL-wash.IMPV.SG-3SGM.ACC

　　　 I will get you something in which you can wash it.

　　 b. Ta-na fuqxiex n-a-ħsb-u.
　　　　 give.PFV.3SGM-1PL.ACC on.what 1-FRM.VWL-think.IMPV-PL

　　　 He gave us something to think about.

　　 c. Daqt n-i-bgħat-l-ek ma' min t-kun
　　　　 soon 1-FRM.VWL-send.IMPV.SG-DAT-2SG with who 2-be.IMPV.SG
　　　　 t-i-sta' t-għid kelma.
　　　　 2-FRM.VWL-can.IMPV.SG 2-say.IMPV.SG word

　　　 I will soon send you someone with whom you can talk.

---

[35]Note that contrary to the observation in Grosu (2004, 440), MECs with the verb *xtara* 'buy' are no more restricted or subject to particular pragmatic contextualisation than MECs with other dynamic embedders in the language.

d. Xtraj-t-l-ek   fuqxiex/f'xiex   t-qegħd-u.
   buy.PFV-1SG-DAT-2SG on.what/in.what 2-place.IMPV.SG-3SGM.ACC

   I brought you something to place it on/in.

The literature reports that extraction from a MEC may be easier than extraction from a definite FRC. This contrast is evident in the following examples: (113) is a MEC construction and (114) is a definite FRC, in which the fronted *fuqxiex* 'on what' is a dependent of the embedded verb *għen* 'help'.

(113) Fuqxiex m'għand-ek-x   ma' min
      on.what NEG.at-2SG.GEN-NEG with who
      t-i-t-kellem?
      2-EPENT.VWL-RECIP-talk.IMPV.SG

      Lit: On what not you have with who you talk
      What is it that you have no one to talk to about?   MEC

(114) *Fuqxiex t-ħaddid-t   ma' min
      on.what   RECIP-talk.IMPV-2SG with who
      j-i-sta'   j-għin-ek?
      3-FRM.VWL-be.able.IMPV.SGM 3-help.IMPV.SGM-2SG.ACC

      Intended: With what did you talk with the person/one who can help you?

5   Headed Indefinite Wh-Relatives

In this section we will argue that the recognition of a sub-class of FRCs in Maltese which correspond to MECs may cast some light on a set of headed relative clauses in the language which are otherwise anomalous given the wider limitations on the occurrence of *wh*-elements in headed relative clauses, as described in Section 2 (and see Camilleri and Sadler (2016) for a fuller description). We will argue that the additional, otherwise exceptional, data presented in this Section may begin to fall into place, or at least appear less anomalous if we consider them to be closely related to MECs. We begin with a brief overview of *wh*-relatives in the language.

In Section 2 we saw that *xiex/x'/xi* is otherwise systematically ungrammatical in (headed) relative clauses on direct (term) functions and *min/'l min* 'who' in direct (term) grammatical functions is found only in dialectal Maltese, and then only with definite or specific antecedents. However, there is one set of circumstances

in which these *wh*-pronouns do freely occur in both standard and dialectal Maltese Camilleri and Sadler (2016, 138). These grammatical examples all exhibit three specific characteristics. The first is that relative clause contains an imperfective verbform - the verb cannot be perfective in form. The second is that the antecedent of the relative clause is always indefinite, which is in marked contrast with the use of *min/'l min* 'who' in dialectal Maltese in relativisation on definite, and only definite, (term) arguments (as in (12) above). The third condition is that the construction is limited to a small class of matrix predicates, the most typical examples being predicates with an existential component, as illustrated in examples (115)-(118), all of which involve predicates which occur with the MEC in Maltese.

(115) Ma sib-t-x   ktieb   tajjeb
     NEG find.PFV-1SG-NEG book.SGM good.SGM

     x'(n-i-sta')   n-a-qra.
     what.1-FRM.VWL-can.IMPV.SG 1-FRM.VWL-read.IMPV.SG

     I didn't find a good book which I can read.   CS 2016, 138

(116) M-għand-i   'l   ħadd 'l   min n-afda.
     NEG-at-1SG.GEN ACC no.one ACC who 1-trust.IMPV.SG

     I don't have anyone to trust/I trust.   CS 2016, 137

(117) Ir-rid   biċċa ħobż/xi   ħaġa x'n-iekol.
     1-want.IMPV.SG piece bread/some thing what.1-eat.IMPV.SG

     I want/need a piece of bread/something to eat.

(118) Hemm xi   ħadd   min j-i-sta'
     EXIST some no.one who 3-FRM.VWL-can.IMPV.SGM
     j-għin-ek.
     3-help.IMPV-2SG.ACC

     There is someone to help you.   CS 2016, 137

A similar connection between MECs and some relative clauses headed by indefinites is found in other languages. To our knowledge, Plann (1980) was the first to

explicitly discuss a connection between indefinite headed infinitival relatives embedded under a small class of verbs including *tener* 'have' and *encontrar* 'find' in Spanish, and the MEC in that language (Plann, 1980, 128).[36]

(119) María no tiene a   nadie de quien fiarse.
       Maria NEG has ACC nobody on whom rely.INF

       Maria does not have anyone to rely on.   SP: Šimík 2011, 87

(120) María no   tiene de quien fiarse.
       Maria NEG has   on whom rely.INF

       Maria does not have anyone to rely on.   SP: Šimík 2011, 87

Šimík (2011) shows that these constructions are also transparent for extraction in Spanish, which is a further similarity to the MEC. The same is in fact true of the Maltese data, as shown in (122), which contrasts with 'regular' RRCs in this regard, but which parallels the extraction possibilities for (headless) MECs.

(121) ¿Con quién ya   no tiene   (ningún libro) de qué hablar?
       with whom already NEG have.3SG (any   book) of what speak.INF

       Which person is such that there is no longer any book that you can speak
       about with that person?   SP: Šimík 2011, 265

(122) Fuqxiex m'għand-ek   'l   ħadd ma' min
       on.what NEG.at-2SG.GEN ACC no.one with who
       t-i-t-kellem?
       2-EPENT.VWL-RECIP-talk.IMPV.SG

       Lit: On what not you have with who you talk
       What don't you have anyone to talk to about?

The three conditions determining the felicity of these headed indefinite wh-relatives are highly reminiscent of the characteristics of the MEC and in our view there is a close relationship between the indefinite *wh*-RRC construction and the MEC. Nonetheless, it would be premature to conclude that these are simply headed

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[36]As in Maltese *wh*-relatives discussed above, specific indefinites and definites are excluded from this type of infinitival construction.

MECs without further investigation of the syntactic properties of the headed indefinite construction. It is also clear that while the class of embedding predicates is closely related to the set of MEC embedders, it is not exactly the same: the predicate *xtaq* 'wish' expressing a modality of desire allows the headed indefinite relative clause, but not a MEC, as shown in (123).[37]

(123) a. N-i-xtieq   xi   ħaġa x'n-a-għmel
      1-FRM.VWL-wish.IMPV.SG some thing what.1-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV.SG

      I wish something I can do/to do

   b. *N-i-xtieq   x'n-a-għmel
      1-FRM.VWL-wish.IMPV.SG what.1-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV.SG

      Intended: I wish something/what to do

6 Conclusion

Free relatives in Maltese have received very little attention in previous literature. This paper contributes to our understanding of these structures within the wider crosslinguistic context. The focus of our study has been on plain (as opposed to *-ever*) FRCs. We have demonstrated that Maltese has two productive strategies for the formation of plain FRCs; alongside a *wh*-strategy we have identified a complementiser-introduced strategy with *li*. We have argued that both plain *wh*-FRCs and their complementiser-introduced *li* counterparts show the interpretive hallmarks of definites, and have made a range of observations in support of this conclusion. Further, we have argued that some superficially similar embedded *wh*-clauses in fact correspond to modal existential constructions (also known as irrealis FRCs), and are interpreted as indefinited. Because Maltese lacks an infinitival form, these constructions involve the imperfective form of the verb. The MEC has not been previously identified for Maltese. Recognising the existence of the MEC in Maltese in turn casts some light on the existence of a small group of otherwise anomalous headed relatives (with a very similar, but not identical set of embedding predicates), which we argue correspond to a closely related construction type.

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[37]We thank a reviewer for pointing out the relevance of predicate such as *wish*.

Abbreviations

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