

# Maltese 'collective nouns': A typological perspective

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In Maltese, as in Arabic in general, a small class of nouns possesses, in addition to singular and plural, a third form, which is commonly referred to as the "collective". However, in the general linguistic literature, the term "collective" is used with a variety of distinct meanings, raising the question: what, exactly, is the Maltese "collective" noun?

This paper proposes an answer to the above question, in the form of a semantic characterization of the Maltese "collective" noun. As a preliminary step, a semantically-based typology of number and quantification is outlined: within this typology, the primary distinction is between mass, singular and plural expressions; in turn, a plural expression may be interpreted as individual or set, and independently, as additive or non-additive, while a mass or plural expression may be interpreted as generic or non-generic. Next, the variegated usages of the term "collective" are mapped out with reference to the proposed typology: among the most common usages are those denoting mass, set, non-additive, and generic interpretations. Finally, the Maltese "collective" noun is examined within the perspective of the proposed typology, and is shown to be characterizable as a non-singular noun, which, when heading an NP, imparts it with a mass and/or plural interpretation, in accordance with the noun's countability preference.

## 1. Introduction

Descriptions of the Maltese noun generally distinguish, alongside singular and plural, a third form, exhibited by a relatively small class of nouns, commonly referred to as 'collective' (see, for example, Aquilina 1965:71-73, Fenech 1978:47,49, Bugeja 1979:92, Borg 1992, and Mifsud 1995, this volume). Some examples of nouns exhibiting singular, plural and 'collective' forms include *kartuna* / *kartuniet* / *kartun* 'cardboard [singular / plural / collective]', *nahla* / *nahliet* / *nahal* 'bee [singular / plural / collective]', *ħuta* / *ħutiet* / *ħut* 'fish [singular / plural / collective]', and *baqra* / *baqriet* / *baqar* 'cow [singular / plural / collective]'.

Terminologically, Maltese grammarians follow the practice of their Arabic counterparts. Thus, 'collective' nouns have been described in Classical Arabic (Haywood & Nahmad 1962:29,366-367), and in its modern regional dialects, for example Moroccan (Harrell 1965:191), Tunisian (Talmoudi 1980:131-132), Egyptian (Mitchell 1962:42-43), Chadian (Kaye 1976:104), Sudanese (Trimingham 1939:26), Syrian (Cowell 1964:297-302), Iraqi (Erwin 1969:328-330), Gulf (Qafisheh 1975:144-145), and Hijazi (Sieny 1978:10-11).

However, in general linguistic parlance, the term 'collective' is used in diverse contexts and with apparently different meanings. Moreover, from the available descriptions, it is not at all obvious how the Maltese 'collective' fits into the broad spectrum of usages of this versatile term.

The present paper attempts to shed some light on the semantic nature of the Maltese 'collective' noun. Section 2 puts forward a semantically-based typology of number and quantification. Section 3 maps out the variegated usages of the term 'collective' with reference to the proposed typology. And section 4 examines the Maltese 'collective' noun within the perspective of the proposed typology, arguing that it is most appropriately characterized as a non-singular noun, which, when heading an NP, imparts it with mass and/or plural interpretations, in accordance with the noun's countability preference.

## 2. A typology of number and quantification

The typology presented below draws upon a large body of literature in traditional grammar, linguistic typology, model-theoretic semantics and natural-language philosophy. The typology is semantically-based, pertaining to meanings, rather than forms. The meanings involved are most commonly associated with NPs, though they may also be associated with expressions belonging to other syntactic categories. The typology consists of four partially independent distinctions, making reference to various notions involving number and quantification. Its focus is on those notions that play a role in the various uses of the term 'collective'.<sup>1</sup>

Within the typology of number and quantification, the most important distinction is a three-way one, between mass, singular, and plural. This distinction is illustrated by the direct-object NPs in example (1) below.

- (1) a. Jimmy ate *apple* [mass]  
 b. Jimmy ate *an apple* [singular]  
 c. Jimmy ate *apples* [plural]

In (1a), the NP *apple* denotes a homogeneous undifferentiated mass; in (1b), the NP *an apple* refers to a single unit of characteristic size and shape; and in (1c), the NP *apples* picks out a multiplicity of such units.<sup>2</sup>

A variety of morphosyntactic strategies are available to force mass, singular and plural interpretations; an adequate description of such strategies is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>3</sup> Worthy of note, however, is the fact, exemplified in (1a), that the simplest form, a morphosyntactically

bare noun, is associated with the simplest meaning, mass – that which is devoid of an additional partitioning into units making counting possible.

Whereas in (1), each NP falls into exactly one of the three semantic types, in other constructions, ambiguities arise, resulting in the coalescence of mass, singular and/or plural interpretations:

- (2) a. Jimmy ate *one or more apples* [singular/plural]  
 b. Jimmy ate *the apple* [mass/singular]  
 c. Jimmy ate *fish* [mass/plural]

Thus, *one or more apples* is ambiguous between singular and plural, *the apple* may be interpreted as mass and singular, and *fish* is both mass and plural. In some cases, all three types coalesce:

- (3) Jimmy ate *the fish* [mass/singular/plural]

In the above example, *the fish* is ambiguous between mass, singular and plural interpretations: it may accordingly be characterized simply as unmarked with respect to the mass/singular/plural distinction, or general.<sup>4</sup>

Examples such as those in (2) and (3) above result from a variety of unrelated morphosyntactic factors, whose effect is to neutralize the distinctions between mass, singular and plural interpretations. Among these factors are the existence of a general definite article unmarked with respect to the mass/singular/plural distinction, and the defective number morphology of nouns such as *fish*.

In other languages, ambiguities such as the above occur more readily than in English. In particular, in many languages, morphosyntactically bare lexical items, corresponding to English bare nouns, may be assigned mass, singular or plural interpretations; they may accordingly be characterized as general.<sup>5</sup>

- (4) *Tagalog*  
 Mansana ang kinain ni Boy  
 apple TOP PT:PFV-eat PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy ate apple / an apple / apples' [mass/singular/plural]

- (5) *Vietnamese*  
 Su' ăn táo  
 Su eat apple  
 'Su ate apple / an apple / apples' [mass/singular/plural]

In the above examples, Tagalog *mansana* and Vietnamese *táo* are interpreted as general: they may be understood as mass, singular, or

plural. Thus, whereas in English, bare nouns are associated with the semantically simplest of the three types, namely mass, in Tagalog and Vietnamese, bare lexical items are simply unmarked with respect to the mass/singular/plural distinction.<sup>6</sup>

The semantic distinction between mass NP *apple* in (1a) and general expressions *mansana* and *táo* in (4) and (5) is a subtle one.<sup>7</sup> We shall therefore consider two diagnostic tests highlighting the distinction between mass and general interpretations.

The first diagnostic involves predicates whose meanings make crucial reference to the individual units underlying count interpretations, for example, predicates of size, shape, and the like: such predicates may accordingly occur in construction with general but not mass expressions. The following example is obtained from (1) by insertion of the adjective *big* before the noun *apple(s)*:

- (6) a. \* Jimmy ate *big apple* [(mass)]  
 b. Jimmy ate a *big apple* [(singular)]  
 c. Jimmy ate *big apples* [(plural)]

Since the adjective *big* describes a property of units, it is consistent with the singular and plural interpretations of the NPs in (6b, 6c), but inconsistent with the mass interpretation of the NP in (6a) (which is, accordingly, indicated in parentheses). Now let us add the adjective *big* to the general NP *the fish* in (3):

- (7) Jimmy ate *the big fish* [(mass)/singular/plural]

Since *the fish* may be interpreted as mass, singular or plural, addition of the adjective *big* selects the singular and plural interpretations, while ruling out the mass interpretation (indicated again in parentheses). Thus, adjectives such as *big* provide a diagnostic distinguishing mass expressions, such as *apple*, from general expressions, such as *the fish*: only the latter may occur in construction with such adjectives. Let us now apply this diagnostic to *mansana* and *táo*:

- (8) *Tagalog*  
 Malaking mansana ang kinain ni Boy  
 big-LIG apple TOP PT:PFV-eat PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy ate a big apple / big apples' [(mass)/singular/plural]
- (9) *Vietnamese*  
 Su' ăn táo to  
 Su eat apple big  
 'Su ate a big apple / big apples' [(mass)/singular/plural]

As the above examples clearly show, *mansana* may occur in construction with *malaki* 'big'; similarly, *táo* may occur in construction with 'big'. In this respect, *mansana* and *táo* resemble NPs such as *the fish*, while differing from NPs such as *an apple*. The diagnostic accordingly supports the characterization of *mansana* and *táo* as general, rather than mass.

A second diagnostic distinguishing mass from general expressions is provided by the ability to function as distributive-key: an expression with wide scope, over which another expression, the distributive-share, may distribute.<sup>8</sup>

- (10) a. ?\* *Apple* is fifty cents each [(mass)]  
 b. \* *An apple* is fifty cents each [(singular)]  
 c. *Apples* are fifty cents each [(plural)]

In the above constructions, the distributive-key quantifier *each* is coindexed with the subject NP, assigning it a distributive-key interpretation; the predicate *is fifty cents* is then marked as distributive share. However, only plural expressions, such as *apples* in (10c), may function as distributive-key: singular expressions, such as *an apple* in (10b) cannot, and mass expressions, such as *apple* in (10a) are very awkward in such a role. Consider, now, general expressions:

- (11) *The fish* are fifty cents each [(mass)/(singular)/plural]

As noted in (3), *the fish* is general: it may be interpreted as mass, singular or plural. The availability, *inter alia*, of a plural interpretation enables *the fish* to function as distributive-key: the construction is therefore acceptable, distributivity forcing a plural interpretation on *the fish*, and ruling out alternative mass and singular interpretations (indicated in (11) in parentheses). Thus, the ability to function as distributive-key provides a diagnostic distinguishing mass from general expressions: only the latter may function as distributive-key. Let us now apply this diagnostic to *mansana* and *táo*.<sup>9</sup>

- (12) *Tagalog*  
 Tigasampung piso ang mansana [(mass)/(singular)/plural]  
 DIST-ten-LIG piso TOP apple  
 'Apples are ten piso each'
- (13) *Vietnamese*  
 Táo mỗi quả năm trăm đồng  
 apple each CL five hundred dong  
 'Apples are five hundred dong each'

As is evident from the above examples, *mansana* and *táo* may indeed function as distributive-key; their behaviour resembles *the fish* in (11) rather than *apple* in (10a). Thus, the distributivity diagnostic provides further support for distinguishing between general expressions such as *mansana* and *táo*, and mass expressions such as *apple*.

The distinction between mass, singular and plural interpretations is a property of phrases, not of lexical items. However, different lexical items may enter more or less readily into phrases associated with different types of interpretations. For example, in English, various classes of nouns occur more naturally as the heads of singular NPs than as the heads of mass or plural NPs: among these are proper nouns, such as *Jimmy*; abstract nouns, such as *applehood*; and other nouns whose reference is characteristically to a unique object, such as *linguistics*.

Of particular interest are various classes of words that occur more readily as the heads of mass, or, alternatively, count (singular or plural) expressions. The following constructions resemble those in (1), except that the noun *apple* is replaced by *water* in (14) and by *dog* in (15):

- (14) a. Jimmy drank *water* [mass]  
 b. ? Jimmy drank *a water* [singular]  
 c. ? Jimmy drank *waters* [plural]
- (15) a. ? Jimmy saw *dog* [mass]  
 b. Jimmy saw *a dog* [singular]  
 c. Jimmy saw *dogs* [plural]

As evident above, the noun *water* does not occur readily in a singular or plural NP: in order to interpret *a water* in (14b) and *waters* in (14c), one must have recourse to an atypical context, perhaps construing singular and plural as involving quantification over kinds. Conversely, the noun *dog* does not occur readily in a mass NP: again, in order to make sense of *dog* in (15a), one must introduce an unusual (and, in this case, from a canine perspective, rather unfortunate) context, such as ... *all over the driveway*, or ... *in the casserole*. Thus, *dogs* is of higher countability preference than *apple*, which in turn is of higher countability preference than *water*.<sup>10</sup>

The countability preferences of lexical items are governed by various cognitive factors, some universal, others culture-specific, determining the ways in which we perceive and conceptualize various entities such as dogs, apples and water. Countability preferences are thus semantic in nature. However, as illustrated in (14) and (15) above, countability preferences may bear a variety of formal consequences, pertaining to the types of constructions into which expressions of varying degrees of countability preference may enter.

In other languages, countability preferences may have fewer formal correlates; in such languages, expressions of high and low countability may enter more readily into the same types of constructions. Consider the Tagalog and Vietnamese versions of English (14) and (15):

- (16) *Tagalog*  
 a. *Tubig* ang ininum ni Boy  
 water TOP PT:PFV-drink PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy drank water/a portion of water/portions of water'  
 [mass/singular/plural]  
 b. *Isang* tubig ang ininum ni Boy  
 one-LIG water TOP PT:PFV-drink PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy drank a portion of water'  
 [singular]  
 c. *Mga* tubig ang ininum ni Boy  
 PL water TOP PT:PFV-drink PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy drank portions of water'  
 [plural]

- (17) *Tagalog*  
 a. *Aso* ang nakita ni Boy  
 dog TOP PT:PFV-see PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy saw dog/a dog/dogs'  
 b. *Isang* aso ang nakita ni Boy  
 one-LIG dog TOP PT:PFV-see PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy saw a dog'  
 [singular]  
 c. *Mga* aso ang nakita ni Boy  
 PL dog TOP PT:PFV-see PERS:DIR Boy  
 'Boy saw dogs'  
 [plural]

- (18) *Vietnamese*  
 a. *Sự* uống nước Su drink water [mass/singular/plural]  
 Su drink water  
 'Su drank water/a portion of water/portions of water'  
 b. *Sự* uống một cốc nước Su drink one CL water [singular]  
 Su drank a glass of water'  
 c. *Sự* uống các nước Su drink PL water [plural]  
 Su drank portions of water'

- (19) *Vietnamese*  
 a. *Sự* xem chó Su see dog [mass/singular/plural]  
 Su see dog  
 'Su saw dog/a dog/dogs'  
 b. *Sự* xem một con chó Su see one CL dog [singular]  
 Su saw a dog'  
 c. *Sự* xem các chó Su see PL dog [plural]  
 Su saw dogs'

Whereas in English, *water* and *dog* exhibit different morphosyntactic behaviour, in Tagalog and Vietnamese, the corresponding lexical items occur in a similar range of constructions. Thus, in Tagalog, although *tubig* 'water' is of lower countability preference than *aso* 'dog', the two words occur readily in the same environments: bare, in (16), (17a); in construction with a numeral, in (16), (17b); and with a plural marker, in (16), (17c). Similarly, in Vietnamese, although *nu'óc* 'water' is of lower countability preference than *chó* 'dog', the two lexical items occur freely in the same constructions: bare, in (18), (19a); in construction with a numeral-plus-classifier expression, in (18), (19b); and with a plural marker, in (18), (19c). Thus, in Tagalog and Vietnamese, different countability preferences are not reflected straightforwardly in different morphosyntactic behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

However, Tagalog and Vietnamese differ in one salient respect. Vietnamese is well-known as a 'numeral-classifier language': as exemplified in (18), (19b), in order for a lexical item in Vietnamese to be quantified by a numeral, the numeral must occur in construction with a numeral classifier. In this respect, Vietnamese lexical items bear a superficial resemblance to English nouns of low countability preference such as *water*, which also require the use of a unit-denoting expression, for example *one cup of water*. This in turn would seem to suggest that all Vietnamese lexical items should be understood as denoting masses. For example, just as, in (18b), *nu'óc* must be understood as meaning 'water-mass' and the expression *một cốc nu'óc* accordingly interpreted as 'one glass-unit (of) water-mass', so, in (19b), *chó* might be glossed as 'dog-mass', and the expression *một con chó* accordingly interpreted as 'one animal-unit (of) dog-mass'.<sup>12</sup> However, such a global characterization of Vietnamese lexical items as mass-denoting would be inconsistent with the interpretations associated with expressions headed by such nouns. As shown above, bare lexical items such as *nu'óc* in (18a) and *chó* in (19a) may be interpreted not only as mass, but also as singular and plural. In fact, since the lexical item *chó*, like its English counterpart *dog*, is of high countability preference, the preferred interpretations of *chó* in (19a) are count – notwithstanding the Vietnamese penchant for cooked dog. Thus, although in Vietnamese, numerals occur in obligatory construction with numeral classifiers, the countability preferences of lexical items in Vietnamese do not differ systematically from the countability preferences of corresponding lexical items in other languages, such as Tagalog and English.<sup>13</sup>

The phenomenon of lexical countability preferences suggests that the ternary distinction between mass, singular and plural NPs might be more appropriately viewed as consisting of two binary distinctions: the first between mass and count, the second, within count, between singu-

lar and plural. Logically, however, the notions of mass, singular and plural may be grouped in any of the following four ways (Figure 1):

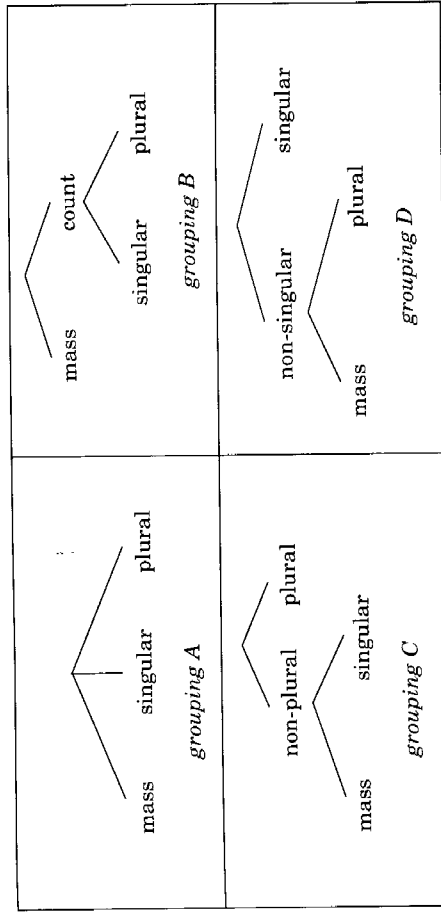


Figure 1. Mass, Singular and Plural: Four Groupings

Whereas Grouping A consists of a simple ternary branch, Groupings B, C and D involve two binary branches. In fact, as suggested by the paradigm in (2) above, each of the latter three groupings enjoys its share of supporting evidence.

Grouping B, characterizing singular and plural as count, to the exclusion of mass, is, as mentioned above, supported by the existence of lexical countability preferences making reference to the distinction between count and mass. In addition, it is supported by the predicates of size and shape which cooccur with count but not mass expressions – see examples (6)–(9) above. Further support for this grouping is provided by various quantifying expressions which effect count but not mass interpretations. In English, for example, such expressions include distributive-key universal quantifiers such as *every* and *each*, downward-entailing quantifiers such as *few*, and *less than three*, and disjunctions such as *one or two* and *one or more*, as in (2a). And finally, in 'numeral-classifier languages' such as Vietnamese, count but not mass expressions may contain numeral classifiers.

Grouping C, associating mass and singular to the exclusion of plural, is supported, in numerous languages, by the occurrence of identical 'singular' number morphology on mass and singular expressions. For example, in English, mass and singular nouns are marked as singular, as in (2b), and control singular agreement of demonstratives, verbs, and bound pronouns.

Grouping D, lumping mass and plural to the exclusion of singular, is supported, in various languages, by the existence of quantifying expressions effecting non-singular interpretations. For example, a large quantity, unmarked for mass or plural, can be specified by English *lots of*, Tagalog *marami*, Vietnamese *nhieù*, and Maltese *ħafna*. Similarly, exhaustiveness, unmarked for mass or plural, can be expressed by English *all*, Tagalog *lahat*, Vietnamese *tất cả*, and Maltese *kollha*. In particular, as suggested below, generic interpretations can be assigned to either mass or plural NPs. In English, mass and plural are also associated by the availability, for indefinite NPs, of a bare noun construction, as in (2c). Finally, as argued in Section 4 below, it is the grouping together of mass and plural as non-singular that provides a unified semantic characterization of the Maltese 'collective' noun.

Thus, although the weight of the evidence may perhaps point tentatively towards the traditional grouping of singular and plural as count, languages provide ample evidence in favour of alternative, conflicting groupings. However, for the purposes of the present paper, it is not necessary to adjudicate between these competing groupings. Accordingly, we shall remain with the null hypothesis, Grouping A, positing a simple ternary distinction between mass, singular and plural interpretations.

The second distinction within the typology of number and quantification is specific to plural interpretations: this is the binary distinction between individual and set interpretations. Consider the following examples:

- (20) a. Jimmy photographed *each of the boys* [individual]  
 b. Jimmy photographed *a group of boys* [set]

Whereas in (20a), *each of the boys* is assigned an individual interpretation, in (20b), *the group of boys* is assigned a set interpretation. Accordingly, while in (20a) Jimmy will have several pictures each featuring a single boy, in (20b) he will have one or more pictures each portraying all the boys.<sup>14</sup>

Similar contrasts may be induced by means of adverbial operators:

- (21) a. Jimmy photographed *the boys* individually [individual]  
 b. Jimmy photographed *the boys* collectively [set]

While in (21a), *the boys* is interpreted individually, in (21b), it is interpreted as a set. Another way of inducing similar contrasts is by selectional restrictions involving the transitive verb:

- (22) a. Jimmy kissed *the boys* [individual]  
 b. Jimmy collected *the boys* [set]

Since it is practically impossible to kiss more than one person at once, the verb in (22a) forces an individual interpretation on its direct object. Conversely, since it is logically impossible to collect a single item, the verb in (22b) forces a set interpretation on its direct object.

Nevertheless, the most common situation is that in which an NP is ambiguous between individual and set interpretations:

- (23) Jimmy photographed *the boys* [individual/set]

In (23), *the boys* may be assigned either an individual or a set interpretation; it is therefore unmarked with respect to the individual/set distinction, or, in other words, a simple plural.

The two distinctions considered above, between mass, singular and plural interpretations, and between individual and set interpretations, both permit an expression to be either marked with respect to the distinction in question, or unspecified. The next two distinctions, to be considered below, differ, in that they assume the form of a binary feature, obligatorily marked as plus or minus, with no possibility of un specification.

The third distinction within the typology of number and quantification is also specific to plural interpretations; it pertains to the binary feature of additivity. Specifically, plural expressions may be either additive or non-additive. Consider the following contrast:

- (24) a. Jimmy photographed *the boys* (= (23)) [additive]  
 b. Jimmy photographed *the team* [non-additive]

In the above example, both direct-object NPs are semantically plural, and both may be interpreted in either individual or set fashion. However, whereas in (24a) the semantic plurality of *the boys* stems from the plural suffix *-s*, in (24b) the semantic plurality of *the team* is due to the meaning of the word *team*. Accordingly, even though *the boys* may be coextensive with *the team*, the latter NPs says more, namely that the boys are organized in a particular fashion. In other words, the whole is more than the sum of its constituent parts: it is non-additive.

Non-additivity is characteristically effected by particular lexical items, denoting a plurality of objects endowed with some form of additional structure. Among the many such lexical items in English are *committee*, *family*, *herd*, *collective*, and *archipelago*. Alternatively, various grammatical devices may induce non-additivity. For example, in Tagalog, one of the functions of the ambifix *ka- -an* is to form non-additive expressions, such as *kapuluan* 'archipelago' from *pulo* 'island', and *kabahayan* 'group of houses in a certain district or community' from *bahay* 'house'.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas in the preceding cases, the non-additive semantic component is idiosyncratically determined by the lexical item in question, in other cases, a grammatical marking of non-additivity may leave the nature of the non-additive meaning unspecified, to be filled in by context. In Hebrew, numerals in construction with nouns may occur either in simple form or with the nominalizing suffix *-iya* (in conjunction with internal vowel changes); when nominalized, their effect is to induce a contextual non-additive interpretation:

- (25) *Hebrew*
- |    |                   |                      |                |
|----|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| a. | cilem             | <i>šloša</i>         | <i>ne'arim</i> |
|    | Tsvi photographed | three-M              | boy-PL:M       |
|    |                   | [additive]           |                |
| b. | cilem             | <i>šlišiyat</i>      | <i>ne'arim</i> |
|    | Tsvi photographed | three-NML:CON        | boy-PL:M       |
|    |                   | 'three-some of boys' | [non-additive] |

Whereas in (25a), *šloša ne'arim* is additive, in (25b) *šlišiyat ne'arim* is non-additive: specifically, it entails that the three boys were related in some way, to be determined by context. For example, the form *šlišiya* is commonly used for triplets, or for a trio of singers. In the absence of a specific context, use of the NP *šlišiyat ne'arim* would be incongruous.<sup>16</sup>

The characterization of non-additive expressions such as *the team* as semantically plural is actually a half-truth: at a higher level, they may also be viewed as semantically singular.<sup>17</sup> Thus, non-additive expressions exhibit a semantic duality, referring to a plurality of objects organized into a singularity. This of course is why only plural expressions can be subcategorized as additive or non-additive.

In various contexts, the plural and singular aspects of a non-additive expression may exhibit different degrees of relative salience. In some cases, typically involving animate expressions, this may be reflected by the morphology, as when an NP controls either singular or plural verbal agreement, and licenses either singular or plural anaphors:

- (26) a. *The team* are rehearsing their strategy.  
 b. *The team* is rehearsing its strategy.

Whereas in (26a), the plural morphology highlights the multiplicity of *the team*, in (26b), the singular morphology emphasizes its unity. Different lexical items may also be associated with different degrees of plurality and singularity. Ultimately, the plurality of a non-additive expression may peter out, as, for example, in names of cities and countries, usually understood as singular, but still retaining vestigial plural interpretations.

By highlighting the whole while downplaying the constituent parts, non-additive interpretations resemble set interpretations. Indeed, there is a tendency for non-additive interpretations to be associated with set interpretations. However, these two notions are logically independent. Thus, in (24), (25b), the non-additive NPs are ambiguous between individual and set interpretations just like their additive NP counterparts in (24), (25a). Even in (26), both versions allow for both an individual interpretation, in which each team member is rehearsing strategy by himself, and a set interpretation, in which the team is rehearsing strategy together.

The fourth and final distinction within the typology of number and quantification is a binary feature applying to mass and plural interpretations: the distinction between non-generic and generic. Consider the following contrasts:

- (27) a. Jimmy ate *apple* (=1a) [non-generic]  
 b. Jimmy eats *apple* [generic]
- (28) a. Jimmy ate *apples* (=1c) [non-generic]  
 b. Jimmy eats *apples* [generic]

Examples (27) and (28) illustrate mass and plural direct-object NPs respectively. Within each example, the first sentence, with past tense verb, associates a non-generic interpretation with its direct object, whereas the second sentence, with present tense verb, imposes a generic interpretation on its direct object.

Genericity is a particular case of universal quantification; however, not all universally quantified expressions are generic:

- (29) a. *All the ravens* are black [non-generic]  
 b. *All ravens* are black [generic]
- (30) a. *Each raven* is black [non-generic]  
 b. *Every raven* is black [generic]

As suggested by (29), NPs with *all* tend to be non-generic in the presence of the definite article, but generic in its absence. As evidenced by (30), NPs with *each* are usually non-generic, while NPs with *every* are most often generic.<sup>18</sup>

In order for an NP to be interpreted as generic, it must involve universal quantification over an arbitrarily large domain. Thus, the direct object NPs in (27), (28a) are non-generic because the simple past tense of the verb specifies a punctual activity, which, by implication, could not affect an arbitrarily large amount of apple(s). Similarly, the

subject NPs in (29), (30a) are non-generic because they are both coindexed with a set of ravens provided by discourse context: in (29a) by means of the definite article, and in (30a) by dint of the anaphoric nature of the quantifier *each*.

The typology of number and quantification presented in the preceding pages may be summarized in the following diagram:

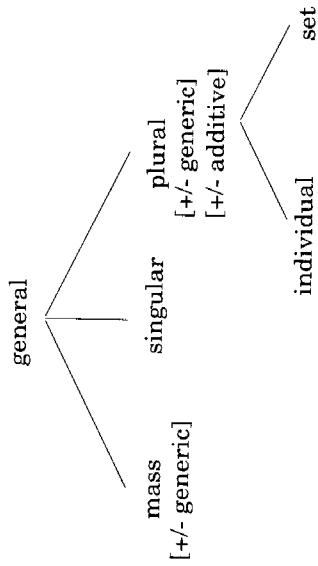


Figure 2. The Typology of Number and Quantification

In accordance with the typology, an expression may be interpreted as mass, singular or plural; alternatively, it may be unspecified with respect to the mass/singular/plural distinction, or general. A plural expression may in turn be interpreted as individual or set; alternatively, it may be unspecified with respect to the individual/set distinction. Independently, a plural expression is either additive or non-additive. Finally, a mass or plural expression is either non-generic or generic.<sup>19</sup>

3. 'Collective': the variegated uses of a term

In the presentation of the typology, in the preceding section, use of the term 'collective' was avoided.<sup>20</sup> This was not because the term has never been associated with the notions of number and quantification under discussion. Quite the contrary: the term has been associated with these notions in too many ways. In fact, the term 'collective' has been used in the context of each and every one of the four distinctions underlying the typology. Specifically, various scholars have used the term 'collective' in any or all of the following four ways:

- (31) a. 'collective' = mass
- b. 'collective' = set
- c. 'collective' = non-additive
- d. 'collective' = generic

Other scholars have used the term 'collective' in yet additional, more idiosyncratic ways. In particular, a variety of scholars have used the term as a designation not of a particular kind of meaning but rather, a particular kind of form-meaning relationship; specifically, a singular form with plural reference.

While some scholars have been quite clear in attributing to the term 'collective' just one of the above meanings, others have explicitly distinguished between different 'types' of collectives, while yet others have vacillated back and forth between different meanings, or foundered in terminological ambiguity and obscurity.

This section surveys some of the many uses and abuses of the term 'collective' in the literature, with reference to the typology of number and quantification. Its aim is to map out some of the most common uses of the term 'collective', and clarify some of the terminological confusion, thereby setting the stage for an examination of the 'collective' in Maltese.<sup>21</sup>

The first use of the term 'collective' pertains to the distinction between mass, singular and plural interpretations: the term is used to denote mass interpretations, as distinct from their singular and plural counterparts. The use of 'collective' as mass occurs in Goodman (1966:54), who defines 'collective predicates' such as *is pure gold* in a way that clearly identifies them with mass NPs.

The second use of the term 'collective' relates to the distinction between plural interpretations of the individual and set varieties: here, the term is used to refer to set interpretations, as opposed to individual ones. The use of 'collective' for set interpretations may be found in Vendler (1967:70-96), Dik (1972:208-215), and Wierzbicka (1980:260-264). More recently, it has assumed currency within the framework of model-theoretic semantics, as, for example, in Scha (1981), Link (1983), and Lønning (1987).<sup>22</sup>

The third use of the term 'collective' makes reference to the distinction between plural interpretations of the additive and non-additive types: in this case, the term is used to denote non-additive interpretations, as distinct from additive ones. Some examples of this usage may be observed in F.R. Palmer (1976:77-78) and Allan (1980:550). In traditional English grammar, this would appear to be the most common use of the term, as evident in Curme (1931:539-540), Pence and Emory (1947:200-201), Strang (1963:90-91), Albaugh (1964:41), and Langendoen (1970:122). In his historical survey, Michael (1970:301-302) cites similar uses of 'collective' dating back as far as Entick (1728:6) and Kirkby (1746:65).

Whereas the above uses of the term 'collective' fall neatly into one of the types specified in (31), other scholars distinguish clearly between different types of collectives. For example, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech



and Svartvik (1972:190) define three types of collectives: 'specific', including words such as *committee* and *herd*; 'unique', containing expressions such as *Parliament* and *The Arab League*; and 'generic', comprising phrases such as *the clergy* and *the intelligentsia*. In terms of the typology, their first two types are both non-additive, while their third type is generic.<sup>23</sup> Somewhat differently, Hoeksma (1983) follows the model-theoretic tradition in using the terms 'collective predicate / conjunction / reading' for set interpretations, but then reverts to the traditional grammarians' usage of the term 'collective' noun to refer to 'non-additive' expressions.

In other cases, however, different usages of the term 'collective' are conflated without explicit acknowledgement of the differences between them. In what is considered to be the classical reference grammar of Biblical Hebrew, Kautzsch (1910) uses 'collective' to include non-additive expressions such as *ʔorħo* 'caravan' and *dɔɔɔ* 'shoal of fish' (§122s); generic expressions such as *ħoʔoyev* 'the enemy' and *ħoʔarye* 'the lion' (§126m); and also expressions such as *ʔoʔom* 'man/men' and *maqgel* 'staff/staves' (§123b), which, from a semantic point of view, are unexceptional – their only peculiarity being morphological, namely that a singular form may convey either a singular or a plural meaning.

The use of the term 'collective' to denote a singular form with possible plural meaning recurs as a leitmotif alongside other, purely semantic usages of the term. Thus, Zandvoort (1957) uses 'collective' for singular forms with plural meanings such as *cattle* (pp. 100-102), but also for non-additive expressions such as *crowd* (pp. 258-260). Similarly, Link (1991) uses 'collective' for words such as *cattle* (p.134) alongside the usual model-theoretic usage for set interpretations (pp. 142-148). A detailed discussion of such forms is provided by Allan (1976), who, under the overall rubric of 'collective', distinguishes between 'collection nouns' such as *cattle*, with only singular form, and 'collectivized nouns' such as *elephant* (as in *They bagged three elephants*), with may occur in either singular or plural forms. However, in the same article, the term 'collective' is also used for mass expressions such as *coffee*, *sugar* and *tea* (p. 108).

In addition to the above-mentioned usages of the term 'collective', an array of less common usages can be observed. Reference grammars of various languages note the existence of so-called 'collective numerals'; however, from the descriptions that are provided, it is frequently difficult or impossible to ascertain in what ways 'collective numerals' differ in their interpretations from their ordinary counterparts. Thus, in a reference grammar of Chuvash, Krueger (1961:175-176) cites forms such as *viśśěš* 'a three of them, a group of three', derived from *viśšě* 'three', characterizing collective numerals as denoting 'an accumulation

of uniform objects'. It is not at all clear how this characterization distinguishes between ordinary numerals and 'collective' ones.

Another usage of the term 'collective' recurs in some studies of Amerindian languages. Drawing upon reports by various specialists, Corbett (1992:15-17) distinguishes between 'distributive' and 'collective' plurals, citing examples such as the following, from Papago: distributive *daddaikuđ* 'several chairs (from several households – one or several chairs per household)', vs. collective *dadaikuđ* 'several chairs (from a single household)'. According to Corbett, distributive plurals are associated with different loci, whereas collective plurals are associated with a single locus – the notion of locus being at least partially culturally determined. In fact, Corbett (1995, this volume) also makes use of term 'collective' to characterize similar forms in the Caucasian language Budugh and in Italian. This use of the term 'collective' does not correspond to any of the notions discussed above.<sup>24</sup>

Some idiosyncratic uses of the term 'collective' can be found in an extensive study of Tagalog morphology by Lopez (1937). In one passage (pp. 81-83), the term 'collective' is used to characterize the prefix *ka-*, deriving forms such as *kausap* 'fellow conversationalist' from *usap* 'converse', and *kaibigan* 'friend' from *ibigan* 'like'. In these cases, the prefix applies to a word denoting an activity or relationship, in order to derive a word denoting a person or thing reciprocally associated with another through that activity or relationship.<sup>25</sup> And in another section (p.30), an apparent oxymoron 'distributive-collective' is introduced for reduplicated numerals such as *isaisa* 'one by one' whose interpretation is clearly distributive-share; beneath these, the term 'unitary collective' is proposed for forms such as *mamulo* 'ten each' which are also clearly distributive-share.<sup>26</sup>

Many more such examples could be cited. But the point has been made: the term 'collective' has a chequered history of use and abuse. A few scholars, however, have explicitly addressed the terminological confusion, and taken a stand. In a discussion of mass nouns, Quine (1960:91) alludes to Goodman's characterization of them as collective, and then states:

"I should indeed prefer 'collective term' to 'mass term' for words like 'water' and the like, were it not too apt to suggest such unintended cases as 'flock', 'army', etc."

Thus, Quine prefers the use of the term 'collective' for mass interpretations, but recognizes its use for non-additive interpretations as being more prevalent.

Some interesting terminological reflections concerning the 'collec-

itive' can be found in Jespersen (1913). While recognizing the non-additive meaning, as in *army*, as the 'usual type of collective', he also considers morphologically singular forms such as *cattle* to be collective, adding that they 'approach mass words' (§4.811-§4.972). And in another passage, referring to set interpretations, as in *All the angles of a triangle are 180°*, he notes that 'many logicians distinguish this meaning of the plural as a 'collective plural'. However, in the preface, in a general discussion of terminology, Jespersen acknowledges a single case of terminological confusion in his own writings – none other than the 'collective':

"In the final revision I have endeavoured to get rid of all traces of earlier drafts, some of them written many years ago, before my present views on grammar and terminology had matured. Unfortunately, however, I find that I have retained in a few passages [...] the loose employment of the word 'collective', which I thought I had discarded everywhere. I may perhaps here state succinctly what I think should be the proper distinction between a collective and a 'mass-word'. From a logical point of view, a collective, such as *family* or *clergy*, is at once singular and plural, while a mass-word, such as *water*, *measles*, or *pride*, is neither singular nor plural – no matter which number the linguistic form may happen to indicate" (pp. viii-ix).

Thus, Jespersen ultimately favours the use of the term 'collective' for non-additive interpretations. But even Jespersen found it difficult to sort out the variegated uses of the term.<sup>27</sup>

One may speculate on the existence of some 'invariant meaning' underlying the assorted uses of the term 'collective', perhaps along the lines of Tobin's (1990, 1992) notion of 'semantic integrality'. However, even if such a common thread does exist, it is a unity born out of diversity. It is therefore incumbent upon anybody wishing to make use of the term 'collective' to make clear which of its diverse specific meanings is intended.

#### 4. The Maltese 'collective' noun

Where, then, is the Maltese 'collective' noun positioned, within this terminological morass? To begin, it seems clear that in the everyday practice of Maltese grammarians, the term 'collective noun' is used simply to refer to a particular nominal form, standing in a paradigmatic relation to other nominal forms. For example, Mifsud (1995, this volume) explicitly characterizes the Maltese 'collective' as a 'morphological' category. Specifically, it is used to refer to the form with zero suffix, in

contrast to the singular form, with suffix *-a*, and plural form, with suffix *-iet*. Analogous observations hold also of Arabic grammarians, dealing with similar forms in Classical Arabic and its modern dialects.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, in Maltese, the term 'collective noun' is used to define a formal category rather than a semantic one. In this respect, its usage differs from the multifarious semantic uses of the term 'collective' surveyed in the preceding section. However, it resembles the use of other semantically-based terms to denote formal categories in general linguistic theory and in the descriptions of individual languages.<sup>29</sup>

Although the Maltese 'collective' noun defines a formal category, it is of interest to determine the range of meanings that may be associated with it.<sup>30</sup> As we shall now see, Maltese 'collective' nouns may be semantically characterized as non-singular. Specifically, when heading an NP, a 'collective' noun associates it with mass and/or plural interpretations, in accordance with the noun's countability preference.

Consider the following examples:

- (32) a. Pietru għandu *kartun* [mass]  
Peter have-PRES:3:SG:M cardboard  
'Peter has cardboard'  
b. Pietru għandu *kartuna* [singular]  
Peter have-PRES:3:SG:M cardboard-SG  
'Peter has a cardboard'  
c. Pietru għandu *tmin* [plural]  
Peter have-PRES:3:SG:M eight *kartuniet*  
'Peter has eight cardboards' cardboard-PL
- (33) a. Pietru ra *naħal* [mass/?plural]  
Peter see-PAST:3:SG:M bee  
'Peter saw bee / bees'  
b. Pietru ra *naħla* [singular]  
Peter see-PAST:3:SG:M bee-SG  
'Peter saw a bee'  
c. Pietru ra *ħames* [plural]  
Peter see-PAST:3:SG:M five *naħliet*  
'Peter saw five bees' bee-PL
- (34) a. Pietru kiel *ħut* [?mass/plural]  
Peter eat-PAST:3:SG:M fish  
'Peter ate fish'  
b. Pietru kiel *ħuta* [singular]  
Peter eat-PAST:3:SG:M fish-SG  
'Peter ate a fish'  
c. Pietru kiel *tliet* [plural]  
Peter eat-PAST:3:SG:M three *ħutiet*  
'Peter ate three fish' fish-PL

