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**ROMANO-ARABICA**  
XVI

**Modalities in Arabic**



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2016

*Editors:*

**George Grigore** (University of Bucharest, e-mail: gmgrigore@yahoo.com)

**Laura Sitaru** (University of Bucharest, e-mail: laura.sitaru@lils.unibuc.ro)

*Associate Editors:*

**Gabriel Bițună** (University of Bucharest, e-mail: gabrielbituna@gmail.com)

**Ovidiu Pietrăreanu** (University of Bucharest, e-mail: ovidiupietrareanu@yahoo.com)

*Editor in charge of this issue*

**Ovidiu Pietrăreanu** (University of Bucharest, e-mail: ovidiupietrareanu@yahoo.com)

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# THE DEHORTATIVE IN THE SPOKEN ARABICS OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

DAVID WILMSEN

The American University of Beirut

**Abstract.** A few authors mention a hortative mood in Arabic, formed in a variety of manners, usually involving a pre-verbal element and an unmarked imperfective verb, sometimes thought of as the jussive or subjunctive. Not an imperative, the Arabic hortative may apply to all three persons. Its opposite, the dehortative, similarly not a prohibitive, also applies to all three persons, and it, too, is expressed in a variety of manners, all involving the unmarked imperfective verb and preverbal elements, often not negators but expressing an inherent negation. It may also be formed with reflexes of the negator *miš* preceding an unmarked imperfective verb. Such negation has been remarked in Egyptian Arabic in five types of constructions: in contrastive, metalinguistic, and rhetorical negation, in negations of progressive aspect, and in the dehortative. Not restricted to Egyptian Arabic, verbal negation with *miš/muš/mhūš* occurs in Levantine Arabics, Tunisian Arabic, and the closely related Maltese.

**Keywords:** *dehortative, eastern Mediterranean Arabic dialects, hortative, jussive, modality, negatives, prohibitive.*

## 1. Introduction

Spoken Arabic is said to exhibit three morphologically marked moods: the indicative, the subjunctive, and the imperative (El-Hassan 2008), other moods being expressed with the assistance of preverbal elements. In fact, some varieties of spoken Arabic distinguish only two morphologically marked moods, in those varieties, the indicative and subjunctive being morphologically identical. In the eastern Mediterranean varieties of Arabic that mark the indicative mood with a prefix *bi-* on the imperfective verb, however, its absence marks a range of moods. Somewhat contrary to the usual understanding in linguistics, the subjunctive and its related moods in those varieties are labelled “unmarked” as opposed to the indicative, which is “marked” with the *bi-* prefix (cf. Brustad 2000: 233–256; Cowell 2005: 343):<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. is-sagāyir                      bi-ti-xrab                      biyūt  
the-cigarettes                      HAB-it/they-ruin(s)                      houses  
‘Cigarettes wreck homes’                      (Egyptian Arabic)
- b. yi-xrab                      bayt-ak                      šū                      ḥabb-ayt-ak  
it-ruin                      house-your                      how                      loved-I-you  
‘May your house be ruined; how I love(d) you!’                      (Lebanese Arabic)

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<sup>1</sup> Unattributed examples are from my own data sources.

In (1b), the unmarked verb performs as an optative, giving God the option of bringing the house to ruin. A similar construction involving an unmarked verb and comprising statements that urge or encourage is the hortative. A few researchers into Arabic have mentioned a hortative mood (Mitchell & El-Hassan 1994: 12, 30–33, 67; Brustad 2000: 233, 236, 254; Woidich 2006a: 275, 326; and for Maltese, a peripheral dialect of Arabic Borg & Azzopardi-Alexander 1997: 242). For Brustad (2000: 233), “the morphologically unmarked form of the imperfective serves as a subjunctive mood, with non-indicative, potential, hortative, or optative meaning,” some such constructions conveying “exhortatory meaning” (2000: 236). El-Hassan, too, views this as the role of the unmarked subjunctive, which “is appropriate for several semantico-pragmatic functions, including the speech acts of suggesting, exhorting, praying (or invoking the aid of God), and similar performative illocutions” (2008: 264). Clearly, here and when writing with Mitchell, El-Hassan views the hortative as a semantic or pragmatic function and not as constituting a mood in itself: “Jussive, which includes both ‘imperative’ and ‘subjunctive’, refers, like ‘indicative’, to the *mood* of a verb, that is, in principle to its linguistic form and not strictly to kinds of sentences” (Mitchell & El-Hassan 1994: 12, their emphasis).

Hortatives may be expressed in several manners in spoken Arabic, usually, but not necessarily, involving a pre-verbal element, with the main verb itself in the unmarked subjunctive. For the Egyptian Arabic of Cairo, Woidich (2006a: 326) illustrates the construction with a preverbal element in the form of the auxiliary verb *xalla/yixalli*, there taking the shape of an imperative (2a), in the sense of the exhortation ‘let’. Cowell (2005: 345) describes exhortation in Syrian Arabic (2b.) with a nonverbal element: “the particle *la-* is sometimes used before a main verb in the subjunctive to express an exhortation (‘let ...’)”:

- |     |    |   |                      |                   |
|-----|----|---|----------------------|-------------------|
| (2) | a. | xallī-na                                    | ni-twadda            |                   |
|     |    | let-us                                      | we-perform.ablutions |                   |
|     |    | ‘Let us perform the ablutions [for prayer]’ |                      | (Egyptian Arabic) |
|     | b. | la-ne-ržaʿ                                  | la-masʿalat          | əl-bēt            |
|     |    | HORT-we-return                              | to-matter            | the house         |
|     |    | ‘Let’s return to the matter of the house’   |                      | (Syrian Arabic)   |

Here a terminological matter intrudes: researchers use “hortative” and “exhortative” in slightly differing manners. Woidich reserves the term “hortative” for the 1st person singular, when “the speaker issues instructions and makes suggestions and recommendations to...himself” (2006a: 275),<sup>2</sup> applying “exhortative” to constructions involving the 1st person plural (2a). For Maltese, Borg & Azzopardi-Alexander (1997: 242) apply the term “hortatory” to all three persons. Meanwhile, Mitchell & El-Hassan use “hortative ... in order to free for subsequent use elsewhere the term ‘jussive’” (1994:12). In their conception, “jussive for its part corresponds to two sets of Arabic forms, the imperative and the subjunctive” (ibid). Illustrating the hortative, Mitchell & El-Hassan (1994: 29–30) provide a perfectly matched pair, one with a preverbal element that

<sup>2</sup> *Der Sprecher erteilt Anweisungen und macht Vorschläge und Empfehlungen an ... sich selbst (hortativ).*

Badawi & Hinds label, “a particle lending emphasis to a suggestion or invitation” (1986: 809)<sup>3</sup> (cf. example [9]) and the other, with a bare unmarked imperfective verb:<sup>4</sup>

- (3) a. ma ni-rga<sup>ʕ</sup> li-l-mawḏū<sup>ʕ</sup> da  
 HORT we-return to-the-subject that  
 ‘Let’s return to that topic’  
 c. ni-rga<sup>ʕ</sup> li-l-mawḏū<sup>ʕ</sup> da  
 we-return to-the-topic that  
 ‘[Let] us return to that topic’ (Egyptian Arabic)

More of a prompt than a command, the hortative is, in fact, structurally and functionally distinct from the imperative. In differentiating them, while noting that the imperative is actually more a performative than a modal, de Haan (2006) writes:

With the modal verb, the command can come from other sources beside the speaker ... and be used on non-second persons ... Related to imperatives are jussives and hortatives. When the subject of a command is not the addressee, but someone not participating the speech situation (i.e., the 3rd person) or a group to which the speaker belongs (1st person), then we are dealing with jussives and hortatives (2006: 35–36).

Here, another terminological matter intrudes: the term “jussive” is particularly unfortunate in discussions of spoken Arabic for its close association with the Arabic of writing. Indeed, the term is somewhat misapplied to written Arabic grammar, too, where the apocopate form of the verb, which comprises the so-called “jussive”, also negates past time (the verb withal remaining in the imperfective), which has nothing to do with the usual understanding of its working in other languages.<sup>5</sup> In Latin, from which the term derives, the jussive or “jussive subjunctive” denotes an exhortation or a command in the 2nd and 3rd persons. The same applying to the 1st person plural is called a “hortatory subjunctive” (Allen & Greenough 1903: 278).

Its conceptualization in Latin notwithstanding, in spoken Arabic, the hortative, usually expressing an exhortation analogous to the English ‘let me, us, him/her, them,’ may address all three persons, just as it may when negated as a dehortative, there in expressions analogous to the English ‘let me, us, him/her, them not’. What is more, in spoken Arabic, the hortative and dehortative express other degrees of urging, encouraging, discouraging, and dissuasion. Although both can also apply to the 2nd person, they remain distinct from the imperative and its negation, the prohibitive. It is these negations especially that shall interest us here.

<sup>3</sup> This is to be distinguished from the negator *mā*. Mitchell & Hassan (1994: 33) contrast the hortative *mā* with that of the negator, saying that the negator *mā* is given greater stress, or as they say, “pronounced longer than the ‘hortative’ *mā*.”

<sup>4</sup> They label this as either “hortative” or “desiderative” (1994: 12, 29). Yet, what is called the desiderative usually denotes an unrealizable wish: e.g., *yārēl-ni mā ruḥt* ‘would that I had not gone’ (cf. Brustad 2000: 236).

<sup>5</sup> Cowell (2005: 343, fn) maintains that the jussive and subjunctive in written Arabic are, “not full-fledged grammatical categories at all, but only automatic syntactic alternants.”



## 2. The prohibitive

In the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (WALS), van der Auwera & Lejeune (2013) present a map of prohibitive strategies in 495 languages, delineating four manners of forming the prohibitive, applying three of them to Mediterranean Arabics: a prohibitive formed of the 2nd person imperative negated with the same negator as that which negates the declarative sentence, which they call “normal imperative + normal negative” and we shall call Type I; a prohibitive formed of a verbal construction other than the second singular imperative, negated with the same strategy as that with which the indicative is negated (special imperative + normal negative – our Type II); and a Type III a prohibitive formed of a verbal construction other than the second singular imperative, employing a negation strategy not used with the indicative (special imperative + special negative), the final type represented by one Arabic variety on the map: Maltese. They apparently base their assignment on the presence of, “an archaic negative imperative form *la* instead of *ma* ... for example *la tistrax* ‘Thou shalt not steal’” (Borg & Azzopardi-Alexander 1997: 27).<sup>6</sup> Otherwise the Maltese prohibitive is formed with a post-positive *-š* alone (ibid), with no preverbal negator *mā*, or, for that matter, *lā* (6b).

They chart Palestinian Arabic as falling within Type I, that is, of the normal imperative + normal negative type, classifying another three spoken varieties of Arabic as Type II, the special imperative + normal negative type, those being the Moroccan, Egyptian, and northern Levantine dialects. Their source for their northern Levantine data is Mitchell & El-Hassan (1994), who, for their part, specify their Levantine citations as coming from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, in other words, all Levantine dialects of Arabic.

These classifications conceal a wide variability in negation techniques, such that most Arabic dialects of the Mediterranean could be subsumed under several types. For example, their sources for Moroccan Arabic, Caubet (1993: 162) and Marçais (1977: 275), both attest a prohibitive form with *lā-* with an optional enclitic *-š*, rather than the usual indicative negator, the circumfix *mā ... š*. That is, in its optionally forming the prohibitive with *lā-*, Moroccan is, like Maltese, at least partially a Type III:

- |     |    |            |            |                                      |
|-----|----|------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| (4) | a. | ma         | ti-mši-š   |                                      |
|     |    | not        | you-go-NEG |                                      |
|     | b. | la         | ti-mši-š   |                                      |
|     |    | not        | you-go-NEG | (Moroccan Arabic: Caubet 1993: 162)  |
|     | c. | lā         | t-rōḥ      |                                      |
|     |    | not        | you-go     |                                      |
|     |    | ‘Don’t go’ |            | (Moroccan Arabic: Marçais 1977: 275) |

For their part, Palestinian dialects form the imperative in exactly the same manner as any other Arabic variety, by removing the 2nd person marker /t-/ from the imperfective verb:

<sup>6</sup> The {x} in Maltese orthography represents the sound [š].

- (5) a.      šū      b-ti-nsā                              yā      zalame  
           how    HAB-you-forget                    O      man  
           ‘How you forget, Man!’
- b.      insā    yā      zalame  
           forget.m                                O      man  
           ‘Forget [it], Man!’
- (Palestinian Arabic)

What is more, they and other closely related dialects of the Levant may form their prohibitives with a post-positive *-š* alone, without either of the preposed negators *mā-* or *lā-*. They share this quality with Maltese, which as a matter of course forms its prohibitives with post-positive *-š* alone:<sup>7</sup>

- (6) a.      Biex                    ma      ti-nsie-x                              min    hu  
           so.that               not      you-forget-NEG                    who    he  
           ‘That you not forget who he is’
- b.      Ti-nsie-x                                      li      Ġesù   wkoll                              i-bati  
           you-forget-NEG                            that   Jesus   also                              he-suffers  
           mi-l-loneliness                            b-ħal-ek                              u      b-ħal-i  
           from-the-loneliness                        PREP-self-your and      PREP-self-my  
           ‘Do not forget that Jesus also suffers from loneliness, as you and I do’
- c.      ħāwil   inn-ak                    mā      ti-nsā-š  
           try    that-you                   not      you-forget-NEG  
           ‘Try that you not forget’
- d.      ti-nsā-š                                      iš-šanġa  
           forget-NEG    the-bag  
           ‘Don’t forget the [your] bag’
- (Maltese)
- (Jordanian Arabic)
- (Jordanian Arabic)

Clearly, Palestinian dialects, which form their imperatives as all other Arabic varieties do, cannot be Type I prohibitive languages, those forming their prohibitives with the verbal construction of the second singular imperative negated in the same manner as the indicative. Instead, like the Moroccan, Egyptian, and Levantine dialects, they form their prohibitives with a verbal construction other than the second singular imperative, negated in the same manner as the indicative, making them, at least in part, Type II.

Beyond that, however, negation in Levantine dialects is extraordinarily variable. The northern dialects, that is, those from around Beirut and Damascus northwards, tend not to mark verbal negations with a post-positive *-š*. The dialects of the southern and highland Levant, however, usually do, either with a post-positive *-š* alone or pairing it with a preposed *mā* or *ʾa* (for discussion and other examples, see Khairallah 2014: 46 and references):

<sup>7</sup> Borg & Azzopardi-Alexander (1997: 237) state that Maltese has only two morphologically marked moods, the indicative and the imperative. Yet, because the Maltese prohibitive is distinct, it, too, may be considered a mood.

- (7) a. mā ti-ns-ī-š 'amīšt-ik  
 not you-forget-f-NEG shirt-your.f  
 b. 'a ti-ns-ī-š 'amīšt-ik  
 not you-forget-f-NEG shirt-your.f  
 c. ti-ns-ī-š 'amīšt-ik  
 you-forget-f-NEG shirt-your.f  
 'Don't forget your shirt' (Levantine Arabic)

Some Levantine varieties, notably those of the Syrian and Jordanian Ḥawrān, can form their prohibitive with the post-positive –š without a 2nd person prefix (Wilmsen 2014: 107–108):

- (8) a. kabbir-hā-š iktīr iš-šaġle miš mistāhle  
 enlarge-her-NEG much the-thing not deserving  
 'Don't blow the thing out of proportion; it's not worth it'  
 c. šabbih-ī-š il-qiyāde bi-l-makdūs  
 liken-f-NEG the-leadership PREP-the-pickled.eggplant  
 'Don't compare the [party] leadership with pickles' (Ḥawrāni Arabic)

That is, some northern and southern Levantine dialects may also form the prohibitive with a verbal construction other than the second singular imperative and a sentential negative strategy not found in the indicative, making them, in part at least, of a Type III.

### 3. The dehortative

In view of the variability in negation strategies as a whole in Arabic dialects, the WALs is understandably somewhat inexact in its classifications of strategies for forming the prohibitive in the Mediterranean varieties of Arabic. It is more helpful in determining the differences between imperatives, hortatives, and optatives:

Imperatives and hortatives both have to do with the expression of a wish of the speaker about a future state of affairs. In this respect they are like optatives, but in contrast to optatives, they convey an appeal to the addressee(s) to help make the future state of affairs true. In case the person in control of the desired state of affairs is the addressee or addressees, then we speak of an *imperative*. In any other case, we speak of a *hortative* (van der Auwera, Dobrushina, & Goussev 2013).

For its part, the optative, “expresses a wish of the speaker, but there is no appeal to the addressee to make it true” (ibid). Ammann & van der Auwera (2004: 296) make clear that they see the term “imperative” applying to the 2nd person and “hortative” to the 1st and 3rd, remarking upon the confusion of terminology in the literature:

The imperative is typically conceived of as being reserved for the second person(s) ... There are, however, categories which differ in meaning only with respect to the person(s) targeted by the appeal. These are referred to with many different labels in the literature, depending on the person(s) associated with them and the author's preference: “imperative”, “hortative”, “jussive”, “adhortative”, to name just the most important ones.



which also derives from an imperative of the verb ‘to awaken’ (Cowell 2005: 351). Each expresses a stern warning:

- (10) a.    iyyā-k            ti-nsā            il-yōm            da  
           beware-2        you-forget        the-day            DEM  
           ‘Beware [= Don’t] you forget this day’            (Egyptian Arabic)
- b.    iw’ā/ū’ā(-k)        ti-nsā-ni  
           take heed(-2)    you-forget-me  
           ‘Take heed [= Don’t] you forget me’            (Egyptian/Syro-Lebanese Arabic)
- c.    iṣḥa(-k)            ti-ğlaṭ            ġaltit-i  
           wake(-2)        you-err            error-my  
           ‘Wake(you) [=Don’t] you make the mistake I made’            (Syrian Arabic)

Mitchell & El-Hassan point out that these elements are inherently negative, “to the exclusion of overtly negative elements” (1994: 33). Yet, another construction, functioning in an identical manner, utilizes the overtly negative element *miš/muš* in what Alqassas (2012: 22, 121, 127–134), writing about the phenomenon in the Irbid dialect of the Jordanian Ḥawrān, calls “cautioning”. The following comes from further south: a dialect of Amman, Jordan:

- (11)    zakkir-ni            ’abil    ma        t-rūḥ            miš        ti-nsā  
           remind-me        before that    you-go        not        you-forget  
           ‘Remind me before you go; [Mind] you not forget!’            (Jordanian Arabic)

As the example shows, a verb in the subjunctive usually follows, but a negated verb may also, as in the following from the Syrian Ḥawrān:<sup>8</sup>

- (12)    bi-t-rūḥ-u        wi        bi-t-’amil-u            ḥāl-kum        mabsūt-īn  
           HAB-you-go-pl and    HAB-you-make-pl        selves-your        content-pl  
           miš        t-rūḥ-ū-š  
           not        you-go-pl-NEG  
           ‘You’ll go, and you’ll act happy; [Mind] you not not go’ (Syrian Ḥawrāni Arabic)

The negation of verbs with *miš/muš* has largely attracted the attention of researchers writing about Egyptian Arabic (Brustad 2000: 302–306; Doss 2008), under the assumption that such negation, generally considered ungrammatical, is a recent innovation amongst younger speakers of Egyptian Arabic, with young women engaging in such negation more often than young men, the young men using it being of the upper classes, therefore of dubious authenticity and masculinity. Yet, recent work has shown that the phenomenon when taken in context, is grammatical when serving specific

<sup>8</sup> Notice that here the verbal negation is with post-positive *-š* alone. Alqassas (2012: 128 & 131) adduces almost the same construction with both the preposed negator *mā* and the post-positive *-š*: *miš mā-t-rūḥ-iš*, NEG-2-go-NEG, which he renders as ‘you shouldn’t not go’ and ‘it is not for you not to go’ (= you should go).

functions (Håland 2011), is at least as old as the fifteenth century AD and probably as early as the 9th (Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen forthcoming; Wilmsen forthcoming), and that men and women appear to negate in this manner in about equal proportions (Håland 2011; Wilmsen forthcoming). What is more, far from being a phenomenon unique to Egyptian Arabic, negation of verbs with reflexes of *miš/muš* occurs in Arabic varieties of the eastern Mediterranean from Tunis (Hafedh 1992: 45; Belazi 1993: 61; McNeil 2012: 34–35, Wilmsen forthcoming) and Malta (Borg & Alexander-Azzopardi 1997: 92; Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen forthcoming; Wilmsen forthcoming) to the Levant. The uses of verbal negations with *miš/muš* are listed here briefly with examples. Håland (2011: 28–33) provides three:

I. Contrastive negation, in which “one negated and one positive fact stand in contrast to each other” (ibid p. 30):

- (13) miš b-a-kallim ‘alā l-fulūs b-a-kallim ‘ann-ik inti  
not HAB-I-speak PREP the-money HAB-I-speak PREP-you you  
‘I’m not talking about money; I’m talking about you’ (Egyptian Arabic)

It is worthwhile noting that this is a line from a television serial (*‘alāqāt xāšša* ‘special relations’) scripted for and delivered by Egyptian actor Maged El Masri, who always plays the role of an Egyptian man’s man. There is nothing ungrammatical, foreign, or effeminate about the character or the line.

II. Metalinguistic negation, in which anything but the truth-value of an utterance is denied (for much more on this, see Mughazy 2003).

- (14) anā mūš n-šaḥḥaḥ nu-bšum bi-l-‘ašara  
I not I-sign I-put.a.thumbprint with-the-ten  
‘I’m not signing; I’m giving my full endorsement’ (Tunisian Arabic)<sup>9</sup>

This, too, is a line from a television serial (*šayd ir-rīm* ‘gazelle hunting’), in which the speaker delivers the line while actually signing for receipt of goods. She is not denying that she is signing; to the contrary, she is signing whole-heartedly.

III. Rhetorical negation, posing a question, in which an entire sentence is negated in expectation of an affirmative reply:

- (15) miš bi-y-qūl-u alla yi-žīr-na min il-īda’āt issa až-at  
not HAB-3-say-pl god he-protect-us from the-harm now came-it  
‘Don’t they say, “God protect us from harm?” Now it’s come!’ (Hawrāni Arabic)

To Håland’s three, we may add two more:

<sup>9</sup> Except where otherwise credited, Tunisian data are drawn from the Tunisian Arabic Corpus (<http://tunisiya.org>).

IV. Progressive negation, by which a distinction is made between the progressive and the habitual or ongoing aspect of an imperfective verb.

The distinction is manifest in Tunisian Arabic, which specifically negates an imperfective verb with *muš* when it expresses progressive aspect (Belazi 1993: 61):

- (16) a.      ma      yi-‘āwin-š      ḥatta    tarf  
           not     he-helps-NEG even    bit  
           ‘He doesn’t help a bit’  
       b.      muš     yi-‘āwin         ḥatta    tarf  
           not     he-helps         even    bit  
           ‘He’s not helping at all’
- (Tunisian Arabic)

So, too, is the preposition *fī*, when used as an object marker in Tunisian Arabic, itself an indication of progressivity, with which negation with a reflex of *muš* is obligatory (McNeil 2012: 34–35).

This also appears to apply when the active participle, which usually indicates the progressive, carries a meaning other than the root meaning of the verb (Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen forthcoming; Wilmsen forthcoming; Wilmsen 2014: 175). Even in the presence of the Tunisian Arabic object marker *fī* indicating progressivity, the participial effect comes into play, as in the following (Hafedh 1992: 45), in which the participle of the verb in question *qarā* ‘to read’ (*qāriya*) would mean ‘a reader’ or ‘has read’ not ‘reading’:

- (17)   nawāl   miš     ta-qra           fī     ktāb  
        name   NEG   she-reads       ACC   book  
        ‘Nawal is not reading a book’
- (Tunisian Arabic)

The same thing appears in the Tunisian Arabic Corpus ([tunisiya.org](http://tunisiya.org)):

- (18)   mhūš   yu-qšud       fī-k           aw     fī     ayy     ‘iḍw  
        not   he-drives.at   ACC-you       or     ACC   any     member  
        ‘He’s not hinting at you or at any [forum] member’
- (Tunisian Arabic)

Here, the participle *qāšid* would mean ‘intending/heading towards’ in its translocative sense.

Although obligatory negating with *muš* of the progressive marked with *fī* may be peculiar to Tunisian Arabic, the marking of objects with *fī* is not. Addressing the phenomenon in Egyptian Arabic, Woidich (2006b) defines object marking with *fī* as expressing a combination of telicity, durativity, progressivity, and personal engagement of the agent. Regardless, in Egyptian Arabic, the participial effect in negating imperfective verbs with *miš/muš* operates without the necessary intercession of an object marker *fī*. There, it appears that certain verbs attract such negation, for example, the verb *radd* ‘to answer’. Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen (forthcoming) propose that in examples (19) and (20) its imperfective form is negated with *miš* precisely because negating the participle *rādid*, which carries the meaning ‘growing in health’, risks listener

misconstrual – if only momentarily. Negated, *miš radda* may at first be understood to mean ‘one’s health is not improving.’ Hence negation of the imperfective with *miš*:

- (19) bi-y-kallim-ni            ktīr    miš    b-a-rudd            ‘alē-h  
 HAB-he-talks-me            much    not    HAB-I-answer            PREP-him  
 ‘He calls me a lot; I’m not answering him’            (Egyptian Arabic)

It is again worth mentioning that (19) is a scripted line from a television serial (*furṣa t̄āniya* ‘another chance’), this time delivered by actress Heidi Karam. Evidently, scriptwriters have no compunctions about placing such constructions in the mouths of their actors or actresses. Lest it be objected that the line in (19) is of a different sort than that in (13), perhaps penned as appropriate for women’s speech, consider the same construction “uttered” by a male in an Egyptian chatroom (from the small Egyptian Arabic subcorpus at <http://arabicorpus.byu.edu>):

- (20) ‘afal-it    il-māsinjir    wa miš bi-t-rudd            ‘alā    l-īmēlāt  
 closed-she    the-messenger    and not    HAB-she-answers    PREP    the-emails  
 ‘She shut off Messenger, and she’s not answering emails’            (Egyptian Arabic)

Arguing against a gender bias, Håland (2011:50) finds in her data a ratio of female usage to male at about 1.3/1. Wilmsen, (forthcoming, fn. 19), with a smaller sample, finds a ratio of exactly 1/1.

V. The dehortative: negation of an imperfective verb with a reflex of *miš/muš/mhuš* intending to caution, dissuade, or discourage.

#### 4. Discussion

We have seen examples of the dehortative in (11) and (12), both from Levantine dialects. These are distinguished by the absence of the indicative mood marker /bi-/ in the imperfective verb, with the verb being negated with *miš*. The same thing can appear in Egyptian Arabic. Doss (2008: 88) adduces several examples of unmarked imperfective verbs negated with *miš*. Unfortunately, with most of these she does not provide context, thereby rendering the interpretation of the utterances that she adduces difficult (Håland 2011: 80–81 makes the same observation). Doss interprets five of the seven imperfective verbs that she adduces as being imperatives (they would more properly be prohibitives). An earlier example (2008: 87) that Doss adduces as a clausal negation is a dehortative:

- (21) miš    t-akl-i    n-nahar-da    wa    a-gi    bukra    a-lā’i    l-’akl  
 not    2-eat-f    the-day-DEM    and    I-come    tomorrow    I-find    the-food  
 zayy    ma    huwwa  
 like    which    it            (Egyptian Arabic)  
 ‘[Mind] you not eat today and then I come tomorrow to find the food as is [uneaten]’

Doss glosses this as a prohibitive: ‘Don’t eat.’ But in the context in which her study was conducted, a hospital in Cairo, where she was, as she says, “attending the illness of a



family member” and where she “first observed the feature” (2008: 87), it seems that the utterance is an exhortation to the patient to eat well while recovering. Mughazy (2003: 1148 & 1156–1157) had already observed that such expressions must be accompanied by what he calls “contrastive intonation”. Håland reiterates this in discussing Doss’s work, remarking specifically, “we have no information about intonation used when the sentences were uttered” (2011: 80), and that if we had, we may have been able to interpret the utterances as comprising contrastive or metalinguistic negation. Yet, inasmuch as Doss interprets most of her examples as commands, we can suppose that they may, indeed, be dehortatives. This is exactly the manner in which such utterances are delivered in Levantine Arabic:

- (22) a. imm-ā            ḥa-t-waṣṣl-ik?            miš    ti-mši!  
 mother-her      FUT-she-brings-you    not    you-walk  
 ‘Her mother will bring you [home]? [Mind] you not walk!’
- b. ti-nsā-š            iš-šanṭa! miš    ti-trik-hā            fi-s-siyyāra!  
 you-forget-NEG the-bag not you-leave-it    in-the-automobile  
 ‘Don’t forget your bag! [Mind] you not leave it in the car! (Jordanian Arabic)
- c. wayn-ak!        šū    bi-y-žāwb-ak            tu-ḡrub-ni    hā!  
 where-you    how    HAB-he-answers-you    you-ring-me    (exclamation)  
 miš    ti-stannā            la-ti-rža’!  
 not    you-wait            that-you-return  
 ‘Wait! However he answers you, call me! [Mind] you not wait until you return!’
- d. naqqi            d-duyūk!            miš    ti-dbaḥ            il-quruqtēn!  
 choose        the-roosters    not    you-slaughter    the-hens  
 ‘Choose the roosters! [Mind] you not slaughter the hens!’ (Ḥawrāni Arabic)

In these, a contrast is being made; nevertheless, the uttering of a dehortative does not depend upon a juxtaposed clause, but may be made in isolation of any surrounding conversation:

- (23) a. miš    ti-‘abbī-l-i            d-dinya            binn  
 not    you-fill-for-me            the-world            coffee.grounds  
 ‘[Mind] you not get coffee grounds everywhere’
- b. miš    ti-xalliṣ-ī-l-i            yyā-h  
 not    you-finish-f-for-me            ACC-it  
 ‘[Mind] you not use it up’ (Jordanian Arabic)

These cannot be placed into a discursive context because there was no discourse accompanying them. Nevertheless, their motivations are easily envisioned: in (23a), it is, ‘[I see that you are making coffee; mind] you not get coffee grounds everywhere’; in (23b), it is, ‘[Here is the tube of white paint that you wanted to borrow; mind] you not use it up.’ In this light, and in Doss’s (2008: 87–88) context of hospital goings on, the motivations for at least some of her attestations can be guessed at:

- (24) a. miš    ti-rmī-hom  
 not    you-throw-them  
 ‘[Take two of these every day; mind] you not throw them out’

- b. miš ti-nzil-i š-šugl 'alā tūl  
 not you-go-f the-work PREP length  
 '[Rest at home for a few days; mind] you not go to work right away.'
- c. miš ti-xāf-i  
 not you-fear-f  
 '[Do some light exercise daily; mind] you not be afraid' (Egyptian Arabic)

These, however, must remain guesses. Håland tries her hand at a few others, notably supposing that the single negation of an imperfective verb with *miš* that Doss does not subsume under her imperative rubric could easily be an instance of metalinguistic negation: "If, for instance, the sentence *miš bi-y-xallī-ha ti-štaḡl* 'he doesn't let her work' were followed by the rectification clause *da yi-šagga 'ha* 'he encourages her,' this would be a case of metalinguistic negation" (2011: 80–81). As for Doss's attestations of the negation of verbs in the past tense with *miš*, Håland opines that these could be instances of rhetorical negation, concluding, however, that we simply cannot know:

The sentence *miš istawa* "it didn't cook" could have been the rhetorical question "didn't it cook?" ... As the sentences are not given in their context, we cannot know whether they are followed by rectification clauses or whether they are preceded by an utterance which carries an implicata. Thus, it may be a possibility that some of these examples could have been cases of metalinguistic negation, in which the truth-functional material is not what is negated. They could also be cases of contrastive negation, in which the negated material stands in contrast to a positive fact (2011: 80).

Or, as we have seen, it is entirely plausible that some of them may have been dehortatives. The others, Doss's perfective verbs negated with *miš* (2008: 88), could have been, as Håland surmises, either instances of contrastive, metalinguistic, or rhetorical negation. Yet, true to form, in none of Doss's examples is the imperfective verb negated with *miš* accompanied by the /bi-/ prefix marker of the indicative. This is precisely what distinguishes the dehortative from other meanings when negating the imperfective verb with *miš*, such as those illustrated in the examples from Egyptian and Levantine Arabics in (13), (15), (19), and (20).

For their parts, neither Tunisian Arabic nor Maltese employ an overt marker of the indicative mood. But they do engage in all manners of verbal negation with reflexes of *miš* (in their cases, *mūš*) that we have seen here (Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen forthcoming). Borg & Azzopardi-Alexander (1997: 92) provide two Maltese examples, as it happens, both in the perfective, without, however, identifying them as instances of contrastive negation:

- (25) a. mhux m-ghed-ti-le-k-x ti-ḡi imma xtaq-t  
 not not-told-I-to-you-NEG you-come but wished-I  
 ma ḡej-t-x  
 not came-you-NEG  
 'I didn't tell you not to come, but I wish you hadn't come'

- b. mhux ra-h imma semgħ-u  
 not saw-him but heard-him  
 'It was not the case that he saw him; but he heard him' (Maltese)

Searching for the negation of imperfective verbs with *mhux* in the Korpus Malti (mlrs.research.um.edu), Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen (forthcoming) find that contrastive negation is common in the roughly 8,000 instances of such negations in a corpus of 124,727,981 words, and it is the most common of such negations in the much smaller (818,310 words) Tunisian Arabic Corpus (tunisya.org). Nevertheless, dehortatives do occur in both:

- (26) a. Jekk issa l-Ministru din irtira-ha j-għid li rtira-ha  
 If now the-minister that withdrew-it he-say that withdrew-it  
 imma mhux j-għid li jiena ivvint-ajt xi haga  
 but not he-say that I invented-I some thing  
 'If the Minister now withdrew it, let him say that he withdrew it; but [let] him not say that I invented something' (Maltese)
- b. mūš yi-qūl-ū illi θamma hāža ism-hā istimrāriyya  
 not 3-say-pl that there.is thing name-its continuation  
 '[Let] them not say that there is something called continuity' (Tunisian Arabic)

These examples and many instances of dehortative usage in the Korpus Malti are in the 3rd person, as such, fitting nicely into definitions of the hortative that other researchers have proposed. Yet Borg & Azzopardi-Alexander (1997: 242) apply the term 'hortatory' to all three persons of the verb, and instances of the dehortative in the 2nd person do appear in the Korpus:

- (27) mhux ta-qta' t-rid t-rid t-kun iżjed effiċjenti  
 not you-cut you-wish you-want you-be more efficient  
 t-rid ta-qta' l-hala  
 you-want you-cut the-waste (Maltese)  
 'You [must] not cut as you wish; you need to be more efficient; you need to cut waste'

In most of these examples of dehortative usage, we have, after Mitchell & El-Hassan (1994: 33), been glossing the understood word of caution as the British 'mind', as in the famous expression written on the floors of the London Metro 'Mind the gap.' Yet a range of implied meanings can be envisioned, approximating the English 'you/he/they should not,' 'let him/them not', or 'you/he/they must not', the context (and intonation) indicating the severity of the exhortation.

## 5. Conclusion

The Tunisian Arabic corpus is small, such that it returned only one instance of the dehortative (26b) in the 3rd person. The much smaller Egyptian chatroom corpus (140,234 words) returned none. So, too, in about twenty-five hours of recordings of Syrian Ḥawrāni Arabic (Wilmsen 2014: 103), negation of imperfective verbs occurs only five times, four of them dehortatives in the 2nd person, of which three are adduced here: (12), (22c), and (22d), the fifth (15) being a rhetorical negation.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, all of the dehortatives from Jordanian Arabics that we have seen have also been of the 2nd person. This does not mean that 2nd person dehortatives do not occur in Tunisian Arabic, that 3rd person dehortatives do not in Levantine Arabics, and that no dehortatives occur at all in Egyptian Arabic; it simply means that they have not appeared in the corpora. At least one of Doss's attestations from Egyptian Arabic is surely a dehortative of the 2nd person (21), with perhaps several others being the same. It seems plausible that if such dehortatives occur in the 2nd person, they would likely occur with the 3rd and, under the right circumstances, also the 1st.

Far from being ungrammatical or peculiar to a particular gender or subsection of society, verbal negations with reflexes of *mhūš/mūš/muš/miš* are instead meaningful productive strategies. That such negations do occur in a wide range of eastern Mediterranean varieties of Arabic indicates that verbal negation with *miš* is not a recent change in Egyptian Arabic, as Doss (2008: 89–91) specifically assumes. That it is a change from a more standard form of verbal negation cannot be in doubt, but that change must have occurred well before the 20th or 21st centuries. Such negation in Egyptian Arabic is attested almost as soon as grammars of the Egyptian dialects began to be written in the late 19th century (Vollers 1890: 34):

- (28) muš    yi-‘raf  
       not    he-knows  
       ‘He doesn’t know’ (Egyptian Arabic)

The earliest attestation of *miš* negating an imperfective verb also comes from Egyptian Arabic, in a 15th-century letter composed in vernacular Arabic from the Cairo Genizah (Wagner 2010: 158):

- (29) mš      a-ršd    ayš      b-y-‘ml  
       not    I-see    what    HAB-he-does  
       ‘I do not see what he is doing’ (Egyptian Arabic)

An even earlier attestation of what may be *mhuš* negating an imperfective verb comes in an Egyptian Arabic text dating to the mid 11th century (Diem 2014: 32):

<sup>10</sup> The fourth dehortative negation in the Ḥawrāni data may be seen in example (20a) of Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen (forthcoming).

- (30) mā-hū-šī      y-šf  
 not-it-NEG      it-describe[d]  
 ‘It is not describable’ (Egyptian Arabic)

This could be interpreted as *māhū šī y-šf* ‘it is not a thing to be described.’ Regardless, whether or not (30) is an instance of verbal negation with *miš*, the early age of the phenomenon can be deduced from its presence in Maltese. Speakers of Arabic first arrived on Malta in the late 9th or mid 11th century (Brincat 1995; 2008), becoming isolated from the mainland Arabophone world some two to four hundred years later. The Maltese language has consequently preserved features of the Arabic of the day. It is generally supposed that Arabic speakers came to Malta by way of what is now Tunisia, and the affinities between Maltese and Tunisian Arabic are obvious (Hammet 2012; Čeplö et al 2016). That the same manners of negation with reflexes of *mhūs/mūs/muš/miš* operate in varieties of the eastern Mediterranean, including Maltese, gives cause to suppose that they represent features present in the dialects of Arabic of the eastern Mediterranean at the time of or earlier than the entrance of Arabic speakers into Malta.

Missing amongst the Mediterranean Arabic varieties that we have examined here are those of Libya. At present, there is little that can be said about the possibility of verbal negation with reflexes of *mhūs/mūs/muš/miš* in them, field research in Libya, for now at least, likely being a risky undertaking after the 2011 collapse of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Considering that very few grammars of Libyan Arabic are available, and those that are do not treat this type of negation in detail, if they do at all, no conclusions can be reached about their falling within the isogloss, amounting to the demarcation of an eastern Mediterranean variety of Arabic. Nonetheless, Libyan Arabic does possess reflexes of *mhūs/mūs/muš/miš* in the form of *mawš*, *mōš*, *miš*, and *məš*, and Pereira (2008: 467), in his grammar of the dialect of Tripoli, does document an instance of contrastive negation with *məš*:

- (31) məš      mā-yə-fhəm-š      ḥne      nə-tkəllmu      b-sur‘a      bəss  
 not      not-he-understands-NEG      we      we-speak      PREP-speed      just  
 ‘It’s not that he doesn’t understand, we just speak quickly’

It is, therefore, tempting to suppose that other such negations with *miš* and its reflexes may occur in the Arabic dialects of Libya, as they do in the varieties of Arabic on either side of them.

With that, it remains to decide whether the prohibitive, hortative, and dehortative constitute moods of their own. It is worthwhile noting that any of the dehortative statements under scrutiny here may have been effected with a prohibitive. That they were not signals a difference in meaning. That a negator not usually involved in verbal negation marks that difference itself amounts to a morphological marking of the dehortative mood. Regardless, in the spoken Arabics of the eastern Mediterranean, and others besides, it is the subjunctive, sometimes appearing as an unmarked imperfective verb and sometimes accompanied by preverbal elements, that forms the basis of the other moods, including the dehortative. On the other hand, the characteristic prohibitive of Maltese (6b) and the optional forms of some Levantine Arabic dialects ([6d], [7b & c],

and [8]) must be reckoned as distinctive moods, unless, that is, prohibitives and, for that matter, imperatives, as performatives, should be treated “as distinct from modality proper” (de Haan 2006: 36).

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## Corpora and electronic resources

- arabiCorpus (<http://arabicorpus.byu.edu>)  
 Korpus Malti (<http://mlrs.research.um.edu.mt/index.php?page=1>)  
 Tunisian Arabic Corpus (<http://tunisiya.org>)  
 WALS ([wals.info](http://wals.info))

## Abbreviations

HAB	a marker of habitual aspect, sometimes imparting imminent future aspect
HORT	the hortative mood
NEG	a marker of negation
PREP	a preposition
WALS	<i>World Atlas of Language Structures</i>
f	feminine
pl	plural
2	2nd person
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> person