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Zara'nā Law Ṭala'et Yā Rēt! On Wish, Hope, and other Bouletic Modalities in Spoken Arabic from Syria

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Introduction

- 1 With this paper, we pursue our journey with modalities in spoken Arabic from Syria, illustrated through articles presented, for their great majority, in AIDA conferences¹. It focuses on the bouletic (also 'boulomaic') category, intimately related to the area of *irrealia*, *possibilia* or 'possible worlds'. While the alethic and deontic modalities (that we have examined elsewhere²) are rather the domain of truth and reality (although the literature on modalities acknowledges that certain varieties of deontic are necessarily imbued with a volitive, speaker-oriented illocutionary force), bouletic modalities are, *par excellence*, the realm of subjectivity that pertains to volition and possible worlds.
- 2 We analyze conventionalized expressions used in spoken Arabic from Syria to convey the meanings of wish and hope that form the core of the bouletic modality: mainly desiderative operators (*law*, 'izā, 'alaww, wēn, barki), the semantically complex expression *yā rēt* (would God...!; if only...!), as marker of 'desirable' and some specific combined expressions. Other various bouletic expressions, situated at the negative pole - unsuitable (*makrūh/bakarrih*), frightening (*muḥīf/baḥawwaf*), rejectable, repulsive (*marfūḍ/karīh, baṣṣa'*) will, hopefully, be the object of further observation.
- 3 The interpretative approach highlights the hybrid character of the illocutionary acts performed through the use of bouletic operators, proving that in Syrian - as, in general, in natural languages - the bouletic modality is deeply connected with (and, sometimes, dependant on) other modalities, especially evaluative and *deontic*. Ultimately, our approach sheds light on the linguistic creativity manifested by Syrian Arabic speakers when modalizing their discourse, an aspect that emphasizes the virtues of the colloquial mode that sets no limits to expressivity.

- 4 Abbreviations: we use 'n.d.' for non-dated references (mainly electronic); 'el.' for electronic resources.

1. Definition of terms and theoretical approach

1.1. Bouletic: definition

- 5 A simple definition of bouletic modality is: “A type of modality that expresses what is possible or necessary given someone's desires” (ODLT, el.). In general linguistics, bouletic is most of the times considered a root modality (perhaps since Hoffman's - 1966 - classification), “root” modalities being all modalities other than epistemic: deontic, circumstantial, dynamic (ability and disposition generally included), bouletic, teleological, etc. (the number and categories of modalities depending on the various existent typologies at various authors). For Kilpatrick & Barker (n.d., 3, el.), “bouletic modality is a type of non-root modality, somewhat similar to deontic modality, but specifically concerning the desires and wishes of some relevant agent”; it is, for these authors, a 'volitional modality' - i.e., supposing a volitional agent - “that is not reliant on the lexical features of a verb”.
- 6 According to Hacquard's (2011: 3, el.) definition (based on Kratzer's - 1981, 1991, etc, seminal work on modalities), who takes into account deontic and alethic aspects, but still emphasizes the desiderative as a core of bouletic, the “bouletic modality expresses possibilities and necessities given particular desires (from Greek *boule* ‘wish’)”.
- 7 Other definitions of bouletic are schematic, non-detailed. The bouletic modality may be completely omitted as a modal category, “core” bouletic expressions being treated as “optative examples of contra-factivity” (Mitchell & Hassan (1994:12) - referring to *ya retni ruḥt* I wish I had gone). Bouletic seems to be a sort of “waste-basket of modalities” (paraphrasing Bar-Hillel's 1971 metaphorical expression “waste-basket of linguistics” that depicts pragmatics as being considered, sometimes, the waste-basket of linguistics, especially of syntax and semantics).

1.2. Bouletic among other modalities; symbouletic modality

- 8 Portner (2009: 36) notes: “Not all modality in natural language can be classified as epistemic or deontic. We need other categories. Some of the other general varieties of modality include, besides epistemic and deontic, the modalities of ability, desire (called 'bouletic modality'), goals (also called teleological modality) and perhaps history”. 'Symbouletic', a term proposed by Igor Yanovich (2013, 2014), defines the modality of suggestion and advice, that we will take into account herein, as it is very close to the core (hope and wish) of bouletic.

1.3. Bouletic accessibility relation

- 9 Portner's (2009: 36-37) vision of bouletic highlights the role of the “accessibility relation”:

R is a bouletic accessibility relation iff for some individual *i*, *R* = the relation which holds between two worlds *w* and *w'* iff all of *i*'s desires in *w* are satisfied in *w'*. (...) A

bouletic frame is one which has the set of possible worlds conceivable by humans as *W* and a bouletic accessibility relation as *R*.

1.4. Modal flavor and bouletic ordering source

- 10 Notions such as modal flavor, modal interpretations, and bouletic ordering source are related to the interpretation of a sentence as conveying a bouletic modal meaning. It has been noted that “natural language modals seem to vary along (at least) two dimensions: ‘force’ (whether they express possibility or necessity), and type of interpretation, or modal ‘flavor’” (Hacquard 2011: 3, el.) that needs to be detected then interpreted. As a generally applicable view, “modal interpretations differ in their selection of a modal base, of an ordering source, and in the requirements they place on the optimal worlds picked out by the ordering source” (Kilpatrick & Barker, n.d., 11, el.). The bouletic ordering source “reflects the desires and intentions of some agent involved in the described event”.

1.5. The role of the context in interpreting the modal flavor

- 11 Discussing the example below, Portner (2009: 49) insists on the role of the context in the determination of sentence meaning:

For example, if we are talking about the fact that Mary loves broccoli, (70) naturally receives a bouletic interpretation, while if we are trying to enforce the idea that children should eat everything on their plates, it naturally receives a deontic interpretation:

(70) Mary should eat her broccoli.

- 12 For our further interpretation, we retain the implied idea that bouletic and deontic values may be very closely related, the final interpretation we give to a sentence depending - to a great extent - on detecting the speaker's intended meaning and volition. Indexical information may play a vital role in assigning a final meaning to a modal.

2. Corpus

- 13 The corpus is almost entirely formed from samples of expressions used in spoken Arabic of Damascus and Aleppo (the provenience of the examples is indicated by the abbreviations *D* and *A*) that we collected (sometimes tape-recorded, some other times conserved as written notes) during our stays in Syria, on several occasions, and during conversations with Syrian informants, in latest years. For space reasons, the examples included here are limited to the strictly necessary; they are selected from a much larger corpus on which we base some considerations regarding the core expressions that convey the modal meanings examined.

3. The core of bouletic in spoken Arabic from Syria (according to criteria of meaning, conventionalization, and frequency)

- 14 Positive pole - Wish, Hope:

- 15 A. Constructions with desiderative *law* (sometimes 'izā);
- 16 B. Conventionalized expressions: *yā rēt, rēt, rēt* + suffix pronouns
- 17 1. *yā rēt bə'der 'aḥkī ma'a ḥad! D* (If I only could / I wish I could speak with somebody!)
- 18 Note: A and B categories form, in our view, the “hard core” of the bouletic modality in spoken Arabic from Syria.
- 19 C. Expressions of wish used in their lexical sense: positive: *b-atmannā (l-ak)* I wish (you...); *'ad'il-ak* I pray for you; *'amalī 'ənnu.../ 'aržū 'ənnu* My hope is that.../ I hope that; constructions including *bədd* (+suffix pronouns) with the primary modal value of wish (for other various modal values of *bədd*, see Firanescu 2000), etc. These expressions are not analyzed herein.
- 20 Negative pole - Rejection, Wish to Prevent, Failed Hope/Despair
- 21 Some expressions – that we would include in the core of bouletic, at the negative pole – are: *lā sāmaha 'Allāh / 'a'ūzu bi-llāh / ma'āza llāh* May God forbid / save (the speaker or someone else) from this to happen; *'Allāh yəstur, yā Rabb yā sattār / yā sāter!* God protect (from/against); *lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwa 'illā bi-llāh!* (Literally: “There is no might nor power except in Allah”) or the “*ḥawqala*” formula, in specific contexts, where it expresses failed hope or despair; etc. Expressions pertaining to the negative pole are not analyzed herein.

4. Some other expressions of wish and hope at various distances from the core

- 22 Between the two poles, there is a large series of expressions conveying the sense of desirable, recommendable, worth to be suggested or pointed out to or the opposite of all these (non-recommendable, undesirable, unwanted, negative wish, etc.), from the speaker's subjective perspective:
- *'aḥsanla(i)k* – you'd better, you should [rather /better] do... (symbouletic)
 - Constructions containing the word *'Allāh*: *'Allāh yəḥfaz-ak* May God preserve you/keep you, *'Allāh yeblik* May God afflict you, *in šā'a 'Allāh* God willing, I hope that...; also: I believe/trust that. Variant: *nšalla* (at the end of the statement, possibly grammaticalized for expressing vindictive or resentful reproach); *'iza 'Allah rād, 'in rād 'Allah, 'in 'Allah saḥhal*, etc. (with short vowel *a* in the word *Allah*).
 - *la 'alla wa-'asā*+Subjunctive: hopefully - intense hope/aspiration, mixed with uncertainty, but may express, as well, a certain degree of conviction/trust that the desired event will happen; implies that there is little hope for the desired thing to happen, but the agent keeps hoping that it will occur, eventually.
2. *la'alla w-'asā nšūf-ik šī masa* (maybe/hopefully I'll see you one evening! = I so much wish I can see you; lyrics of the song *La'alla w-'asā* performed by Syrian singer Noor Mhanna).
- *barki/balki* (that we have approached elsewhere; also, thoroughly analyzed by Salamé & Lentin (2010:107), as always including, to various extents “une implication du locuteur sur la conjecture qu'il introduit (...), et souvent (...) ses craintes ou ses espoirs à l'égard de cette conjecture”) – perhaps, maybe, possibly, could/may/might be that, it may/might happen that, hopefully (will/will not) occur/happen with complex modal flavor, predominant deontic-bouletic (would include symbouletic)

- *wa-law!* – so, what?! I wish/hope you do (implied: no worries, I won't be upset if you do, on the contrary!)
 - various imperative formulas (also with *kirmāl* for someone's sake, as a bouletic marker)
 - 'alaww ('alawwāh), wēn (in rhetoric interrogation) - It would be so nice/great! - both conveying the sense of longing for something, wishing it to happen, etc.
 - evaluative expressions: *niyālak!* Lucky you! (admiration, positive evaluation; or ironic, faked admiration); *yā weyli!* Woe unto me / Oh, woe is me! (sorrow, heartbreak); *yā weylak* Woe unto you!
 - some constructions with *lā*+Subjunctive (in interrogation)
- 23 3. *kēf/ šū baddi sāvī la-tsāmiḥīnī?! D* (How / what should I do so that you forgive me?!)
 - various expressions of unsuitable - (*makrūh/bakarrih*), 'frightening' (*muḥīf/bəḥawwaf*), rejectable, repulsive (*marfūḍ/karīh, bəšə'*) - which define a specific type of subjectively defined necessity that expresses in fact the speaker's perception and/or emotional attitude towards what is or is not suitable/desirable
 - cursing and swearing
 - using allusive talk and proverbs, with evaluative purpose
 - etc.

5. Illustrations of the “hard core” of bouletic

- 24 We can only deal here with expressions that mainly convey (directly or in mitigated ways) wish and hope, focusing on the “hard core”, namely the categories A and B (see above, 3.). The following are illustrations of such conventionalized expressions with high frequency in the corpus:
- 25 *Law and 'izā: conditional versus desiderative*
- 26 Both particles are part of conditional constructions (not approached here), but both are used as well in desiderative expressions (sometimes not easy to be delimited from the “purely” conditional ones), desiderative *law* being much more frequent than desiderative *'izā*.
- 27 A construction that seems to stand for a hypothesis or expectation that has a chance to be achieved in the future, often carrying a bouletic modal flavor, when it refers to a positive possible development, interpretable as such depending on context (otherwise, it remains a marker of supposition – 'in the case that...') is *'izā kān* (Past, uninflected) +verb at Past (although the expectancy is directed towards the future):
- 28 4. *'iza kān ṭla'nā mən ha-n-nār, baddi rabbī wlādī wēnma kān! D* (If we get out of this hell, I will raise my kids anywhere!)
- 29 *Desiderative law*
- 30 Does *law* always refer to a failed hope in the past? Does it refer to an unrealized / unrealizable hypothesis or unachieved /unachievable hope?
- 31 Cowell (1964: 335) states that “most conditions expressed with *law* are hypothetical and most, therefore, are contrary to the fact or expectation. The verb of a *law*-clause is generally in the perfect tense”, but adds that “in desiderative (if only, would that) conditions, however, *law* is commonly followed by verbs in the imperfect (indicative or

subjunctive) or by non-verbal clauses. The apodosis is often suppressed". The following example from Cowell illustrates the desiderative value of *law* followed by imperfect:

32 5. *law yəḥki kəlme waḥde btənhall ʔl-məškle D* (If he would just speak up once, the problem would be solved!)

33 Intonation and contextual factors may make conditional statements with *law* interpretable as carrying a desiderative complex meaning (bouletic modality). The use of *law* implies the regret that the desired event has not happened so far, but it does not necessarily indicate that it cannot occur in the future. The nuance of regret/disappointment is almost always present, but possibly mixed with the flavor of resilient hope.

34 Structures containing *law*

35 - Followed by Past; *kān* at past tense + verb at past tense, in the main clause:

36 6. *kənt rəḥət ma'kon əmbərḥa law žitu la-anna bakkīr! D* (I would have gone with you yesterday if you had come to us/our place early/earlier!)

37 - Present in the conditional clause - Present tense of *kān* (uninflected) followed by the present, in the main clause because the condition/situation affects the current decision making:

38 7. *law bābā məš məšgūl, kān nəṭla' 'a bēt nēnt-ak ya ḥabībī, yā karbūḡ! A* (Should Daddy not be busy, we would go to your Grandma's, my sweetie, my pumpkin!).

39 However, usually, *kān* is followed by the past tense:

40 8. *law rəḥti la-ando bə-l-'eiyyāde! kənti ta'arrafti 'a-d-daktōr yalli mart-o rōmāniyye. Bas yallah, l-marra ž-žāye. Mḥammad birūḥ l-o kəll žəm'a. A* If you had gone to him to the clinic! (=You should have gone to him to the clinic!) You would have made the acquaintance of the doctor whose wife is Romanian. But no problem, next time. Muhammad goes to him every week.

41 - In the context, and with the main clause omitted, the bouletic value is prominent: hope is open for the future; *kān* is absent from both clauses:

42 9. *āḥ, law šəft-o tənīl! D, A* Oh, if I'd see him again! (Intonation conveying the meaning of regret, longing, and hope)

43 10. *law rakab əṭ-ṭeyyāra 'ab ʔl ma yisakkarū l-maṭār! Bas ma mna'ref! Yā rēt-o laḥa'! D* If he only could get on the plane before they closed the airport! But we don't know! I wish he made it! (Intonation of fear+hope).

44 11. *law 'and-o nədfet ḥazz bas! nattūse! D* If he only had a bit of luck! Just a bit of it!

45 - Followed by *kān* (perfect) with apodosis suppressed; the hope seems to be directed mostly towards the future, but the context may clarify if it is just a failed hope in the past:

46 12. *law kənt ʔbmaḥall-ak bas! D* If I only were in your position/shoes [in the past, now, or in the future]! *Bas* reinforces the sense of regret, but also of hope (like 'only' in English).

47 13. *law kān əl-żaw 'arḥam b-šuwayy! D* If only the weather were/was/will be a bit milder! (Out of the larger context, it is not possible to determine the temporal orientation).

48 - Followed by the indicative present:

49 14. *law bətsūfi š'ad kānet zariḥe w-ḥabbābe ma'nā! A* I wish you had seen / You should have seen how kind and affectionate she was with us! The *law* clause expresses the regret for

the past (that the interlocutor has not seen or witnessed the signs of kindness, but the Indicative Present induces the hope that the desired thing may happen in the future.

50 - Present conditional: *lawlā mā*

51 15. *kənnā bənrūḥ ma'kon lawlā mā kān 'annā maw'ed ed-daktōr el-lēle. Yā Ḥsāra! D* We would go with you if we hadn't the doctor's appointment today. What a pity!

52 *Polysemantic yā rēt*

53 Meanings: would that it were...; I wish / If only it were that...; I wish you (or other person) [could] do, etc. It is a conventionalized expression of failed hope, as illustrated by the saying:

54 16. *Kalimat yā rēt 'umr-a ma bi-t'ammer bēt. D and A* Literally: The expression “if only” never builds a house, i.e. With “if only” / “I wish it were” [with a defeatist attitude], one can never build a house.

55 Structures containing *yā rēt*

56 - Followed by verb at:

57 Past: expresses failed hope; if the verb is *kān*, it may be elided (18)

58 17. *yā rēt səmə' kalām w-mā səfer! A* I wish he listened to what he had been told and didn't travel/leave!

59 18. *yā rēt [əš-šaḡle] basīṭa la-ha-daraže! D* Would that it were so simple! / If only it were so simple! / I wish the situation were/was so simple!

60 Subjunctive: has the bouletic flavor of regenerated hope oriented towards future or a 'possible world':

61 19. *yā rēt težma'nā munāsabāt ḥəlwe mətl hāy dayman! A* I wish there will always be nice occasions like this to bring us together!

62 20. *yā rēt 'a'der 'ə'ra ha-r-rmūz əš-šīniyye! (Cowell, 1964: 350)* I wish I could read those Chinese characters! (Cowell's translation)

63 Indicative present: conveys hope+doubt, uncertainty

64 21. *yā rēt b-yisma' kalām! A* I wish/hope he listens to what he is being told!

65 - Followed by suffix pronoun (more frequently 2nd person)+verb at the indicative present or subjunctive: expresses failed hope in the past, blended with possibly open hope for the future; it has a predominant deontic flavor, based on a deontic accessibility relation. In a specific context, it overtly expresses the speaker's desire and suggestion/advice (symbolletic modality) for the interlocutor:

66 22. *yā rēt-ak 'tsāfer w-tlā'ī šī šəḡəl b(i) Tərkiyā! A* I wish you [could] travel = you should travel and find some job in Turkey!

67 23. *yā rēt-o b-yisma' kalām! Bas wēn?! A*

68 I wish he were / he will be receptive to what he's being told! But where is a chance for this to happen?! (No way, there is too little hope!)

69 The time projection may be ambiguous; the indicative present projects in the future a hope on which doubt and uncertainty are cast.

70 - Versions with *kān* (discussed with informants):

71 24. *yā rēt-o kān b-yisma' kalām! -* I wish he were [a man who / of the kind who is] receptive to what he is being told! Analyzed in context (omitted here), it expresses

failed hope (based on past experience of failure) with the indicative present after *kān* indicating that the illocutionary force is oriented towards the present.

- 72 25. *yā rēt-o kān səme' kalām!* - I wish he had listened to what he was told! Past after *kān* indicates failed hope in the past.
- 73 - Construction with *yā* elided: *rēt* +pronoun suffix: would sooner/rather do... than...; the desiderative flavor persists:
- 74 26. *Ḥalto, rēt-nī šaṭṭaf kəll əl-bēt mən taḥət la-sūḥ badal ma 'aṭboḥ!...Bas 'əmmī 'a'de t'li šlōn (bə)dd-ik tetḡawwazī?! A Aunty, I would sooner/rather (= I would be happier to) clean the floors in the whole house, from the ground to the roof terrace, than cook!... But my mom keeps telling me "how will you get married" [if you don't know how to cook]?!]*
- 75 *Local/regional expression 'alaww ('alawwāh) from Damascus outskirts (rif əš-šām), but also Aleppo*
- 76 Abderraḥīm (2003) considers it of Syriac origin, meaning *layta / yā ḥabbadā / yā rēt*; we tend to believe that it is related either to the Classical Arabic particle *'alla* or to the root *'l-w* (cf. the colloquial exclamation *'āl* in the sense of *'azīm* great!). It seems to us that the value conveyed is complex: that of intense desire shadowed by little hope (as if the sense of the - frequently associated - particle *'asā*, was embedded).
- 77 27. *'alaww / 'alawwāh tiḡi la-'anna šī yōm!* I so much wish you could come to us one day! (Implied meaning: but there is so little hope for this to happen).
- 78 28. *bədd-o yiḡir doktōr?! 'alaww!* He wants to become a doctor?! Great then! (Implies it would be great, wonderful, but there is too little hope / I doubt we'll see this happen!).
- 79 *Combined expression law+yā rēt*
- 80 29. *Zara'nā law ṭala'(et) yā rēt.* Possible translations: we planted "if", it came up "if only" / "would that"; we threw the seeds of "if", they germinated "if only"; we have sown "if", it came up "it would have been so nice!", etc. Sometimes considered a saying (*maqūla*), some other times a proverb (*matal*), this expression figures on many lists of Syrian proverbs, but it is also on Palestinian Arabic lists and seems to be spread over the whole Levantine area (possibly a pan-Arabic proverb?). It expresses affliction caused by an unfulfilled wish, the deep regret caused by a failed (or failing) hope to see a good outcome of some action or development.
- 81 A cultural aspect, perhaps relevant, is that in the Islamic tradition, *law* marks a statement negatively, if used to express the regret related to one's deeds in the past or past events. A prophetic tradition recounted by Muslim (cf. Al-Nawawī, el., *Šarḥ...: Kitāb al-qadar, Bāb al-'amr bi-l-quwwa...*) warns about the fact that "*law* opens the [way to the] work of the devil" (*law taftaḡu 'amal aš-šayṭān*); al-Nawawī's explanation is that *law* "sows in the heart the opposition to the divine decree and [through this] Satan awakes in the heart his temptation/doubts" (*yulqī fī-l-qalb mu'araḡat al-qadar wa-yuwaswisu bi-hi š-šayṭān*).
- 82 Versions of the same expression (29) are wordplay, pun-like expressions, not as widely spread sayings or frequent formulas; sometimes, they seem to be individual creations; checked with Syrian informants, they proved to be functional and meaningful:
- 83 30. *law zara'nā law kān ṭala'et yā rēt!* If we had sown/planted "if", it would have come up "if only" / "would that it were..."
- 84 31. *zara'nā əl-law ṭala'et / tala' bi-l-'āḡer yā rēt* We sowed the seeds of "the if", at the end it came up "if only" / "would that it were...". Note that *law* is articulated or

substantivized, meaning “the” if, a specific type of if, well defined, interpretable as the one carrying by excellence the meaning of doubt (defeatist, pessimistic view).

- 85 32. *fā-law zara'nā law tala' yā rēt w-yā rēt yiṭalla' rēt. Kān mā 'alnā law!* And, if/since we sowed “if”, it came up “if only”; and “if only” sprouts/germinates “would that it were”. Were it not that we said “if”!
- 86 33. *zara'nā yā rēt 'ām tala' law!* We planted “I wish it were” / “if only”, and – [surprise!] – came up “if”!
- 87 34. *hād bizakkirni b(i)-matal kānet settī bət'ūl-u: zara'nā law tala' yā rēt!* *D* This reminds me of a saying/proverb that my grandma used to say: “We planted 'if', it came up 'I wish it were'/'if only’”.
- 88 35. *zara'nā law fi 'arḍ kāna ṭala'et yā rēt* We planted/sowed the seeds of “if” in the soil of “to be” (“it would have been”) and it came up “if only”. This very interesting version that introduces *kāna* in the combination is more elaborated.
- 89 On the above-mentioned versions an informant commented:
- 90 36. *law zara't yā rēt w-law, raḥ yinabbī l-ak lā šī.* If you sow “I wish it were” and “if”, they will germinate /bring about nothing for you (the outcome will be nothing).
- 91 *A word on double modals with bouletic component*
- 92 Many examples of bouletic modality in English contain “should”, considered as the most versatile modal, but whose main flavors are deontic-bouletic. “Should” is often a part of a double modal construction. It has been noted that (Kilpatrick & Barker, el.: 4):
- (...) the meaning of a double-modal construction cannot be equated with any interpretation of the lower modal alone, nor can it be paraphrased by the meaning of any single modal. Rather, each modal makes its own characteristic and irreducible contribution to the meaning of the construction as a whole.
- 93 The same authors emphasize (p.13) that “there are two crucial restrictions evident: the lower modal [the first] always has a circumstantial base, and the upper modal [the second] always has a bouletic ordering source”. The following example would reveal the virtues of the construction *'aḥsan l(a)+pronoun suffix* (all words pronounced together, in one sequence) that seems to play in Syrian the role of deontic-bouletic “should”. In both 37 and 38, this construction represents the upper modal; in 38, both modals carry a bouletic modal meaning, together conveying a symbouletic modal flavor (strong recommendation).
- 94 37. *biṣūz / ṣāyez 'aḥsan-l-ak ma trūḥ. D* Maybe you should not go / Maybe it would be better [for you] that you don't go.
- 95 38. *'ēš d-a'all-ak, 'aḥsanl-ak tkūn bi-l-bēt 'ab' ma yerṣa' 'abūk. A* I want to tell you something: you should better be home before your father returns.

Final remark

- 96 This paper has highlighted a series of conventionalized expressions that form the hard core of the positive pole of the bouletic modality in spoken Arabic from Syria. Beyond conventionalization (or, sometimes, right because of it), there is wide room for the speaker's creativity, as far as the main syntactic constructions and key-words are preserved. Further investigation should probably focus on the core of the negative pole, followed by the expressions situated at variable distances from the two poles, but

liable to convey bouletic meaning. The material available for analysis suggests that the less conventionalized are some expressions, the more we need to incorporate pragmatic analysis tools (indirect speech acts, conversational implicatures, pragmatic politeness theories, mitigation, etc.), as the bouletic flavor may be evasive or blended with other modal flavors, depending on the complex pragmatic context.

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NOTES

1. Published articles cover the period 2002-2017.
2. Firanescu 2016 and 2017.

ABSTRACTS

In this paper we deal with bouletic (or boulomaic) modalities in spoken Arabic from Syria, a modal variety intimately related to the area of *irrealia*, *possibilia* or possible worlds. While the categories of alethic and deontic are rather the domain of truth and reality, bouletic modalities are, par excellence, the realm of interlocutors' subjectivity. Our paper analyzes conventionalized expressions used in spoken Arabic from Syria to convey the meanings of wish and hope (that form the hard core of the larger bouletic modality); we focus on the 'hard core' of bouletic: the semantically complex expression *yā rēt* (would God...!; if only...!), with its possible combinations, as marker of desirable, and on desiderative operators *law*, *'izā*, *'alaww*, *wēn*, *barki*, etc.

The interpretative approach highlights the hybrid character of the illocutionary acts performed through the use of bouletic operators, proving that in Syrian - as in natural languages, in general - the bouletic modality is deeply connected with (and even dependant on) other modalities, especially evaluative and deontic. Ultimately, our approach sheds light on the linguistic creativity manifested by Syrian Arabic speakers when modalizing their discourse: an aspect that emphasizes the virtues of the colloquial mode that sets no limits to expressivity.

INDEX

Keywords: modalities, bouletic flavor, volitive, desiderative, speakers' creativity

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