



The discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian. It provides the first in-depth description of the distribution and functional meaning of *vallë*. I argue that *vallë* is restricted to speech acts containing questions as opposed to assertions. The meaning of *vallë* is expressive in nature since it contributes to the non-at-issue content of the utterance and expresses speaker's attitude of wondering towards the truth of the proposition. I provide an analysis in terms of Traugott's subjectification approach, according to which *vallë* expresses the speaker's epistemic stance.

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1. Introduction

This paper concerns the Albanian discourse particle *vallë*, which is used (nearly exclusively) in interrogative sentences where it gives rise to an attitude of wondering on the side of the utterer. Consider the examples in (1).

- (1) Ku shkoi Ana?
where went.3sg Ana
“Where did Ana go?”
- (2) Vallë, ku shkoi Ana?
vallë, where went.3sg Ana
“Where did Ana go, I wonder?”¹

The (simple) interrogative clause in (1) is used as a (regular) question. The speaker is seeking information about the place where Ana went to. Therefore, (1) is most felicitously uttered in a context involving a speaker and an addressee. The speaker utters the question in (1) to the addressee to seek information about Ana. While (2) could be uttered in the same context as (1), it does not need to involve an addressee. Nor, does it require an immediate response. (2) is most felicitously uttered in a discourse context where the speaker finds to their surprise that Ana is missing (after interacting with her) and begins to wonder where she could have gone. Thus, *vallë* establishes a relation between the current question and the discourse situation and can be used if (and only if) the speaker has had a previous interaction with Ana. The use of *vallë* as in (2) expresses an attitude of wondering on the side of the speaker.

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¹ The meaning of *vallë* loosely parallels that of ‘I wonder Q’ in English. However, it should be regarded as merely a loose approximation since it is impossible to translate the meaning of *vallë*!

Similar particles, in other languages, constitute Romanian *oare* in (3) [Giurgea, 2018](#), [Farkas, 2022](#); German *denn* in (4) [Zimmermann, 2011](#), [Bayer, 2012](#), [Theiler, 2021](#); or the Japanese particle *kana* in (5) [Miyagawa, 2022](#).

- (3) a. (Oare) ce a spus Amalia?
oare what has said Amalia
'What did Amalia say, (I wonder)?'
- b. (Oare) e acasă Amalia?
(oare) is home Amalia
'Is Amalia home, (I wonder)?'
- (4) a. Hat dich denn Dr. Schreck angerufen?
has you PRT Dr. Schreck called
'Did Dr. Schreck call you? (I am wondering)'
- b. Wer hat dich denn angerufen?
who has you PRT telephoned
'Who called you? (I am wondering)'
- (5) Dare-ga kur-u kan-a?
who-nom come-pres Q-na
'I wonder who will come.'

Some of these authors have focused on the formal semantic properties of these particles. For instance, (cf. [Farkas, 2022](#)) argues that the Romanian *oare* introduces a new type of non-canonical questions which she dubs *non-intrusive*. Intuitively speaking, when the speaker marks a question with *oare* as in (3-a) or (3-b), she does not assume that the issue she raises (what Amalia said/is Amalia home) will be resolved in a future state of conversation. Other researchers have focused on the syntactization of the discourse. For instance, [Miyagawa, 2022](#) has argued that particles such as *kana* in (5) constitute some linguistic evidence for the syntactic representation of speaker and addressee.

Our aim, in this article, is two-fold: (a) empirically, I provide the first in-depth description of the distribution and function of the discourse particle *vallë*; (b) theoretically, I argue that the functional properties of discourse particle *vallë* can be accounted for in terms of Traugott's subjectification approach. According to [Traugott \(1982, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2022](#) and many others), discourse particles become increasingly associated with speaker's attitude towards (the truth of) the proposition. Thus, the meaning of discourse particles is to express the speaker's subjective belief, state or attitude towards what is being said (cf. speaker's perspective point; [Talmy, 2000](#), and speaker's subjective view; [Espinal et al., 2022](#)). This process of semanticization, which consists of the speaker's point of view, is known as subjectification and it corresponds exactly to the meaning of the discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian. Our theoretical approach, then, differs from the afore-mentioned approaches such as [Farkas, 2022](#) in the sense that I focus on the functional properties of the discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian.

With this goal in mind, the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides the theoretical background against which I analyze the discourse particle *vallë*. This section discusses the subjectification approach and illustrates it with examples discussed in Traugott's work. Section 3 discusses in a nutshell the methodology employed to conduct this research. I provide the first corpus study of *vallë*, with data drawn from the Albanian National Corpus as discussed in detail in Section 3. Section 4 is devoted to the distribution of *vallë*. In 4.1, I show that *vallë* is restricted to speech-acts containing questions. In 4.1.3, I show that *vallë* can appear with expletive negation in embedded questions. This section discusses the semantic constraints of *vallë* in embedded subordinated clauses. In 4.3, I illustrate a further constraint of *vallë*: discourse anaphoricity. *Vallë* can be used felicitously in an utterance only if it is anaphorically linked to some prior discourse which leads to the question containing *vallë*. Section 5 discusses the clausal position of *vallë*: it can appear in clause-initial position; pre-verbal; post-verbal and clause-final position with no difference in meaning. Section 6 shows that *vallë* does not contribute to the at-issue content of the utterance but only to the non-at-issue content. Therefore, the meaning contribution of *vallë* is not evaluated at the propositional level but must be considered expressive in the sense of [Potts, 2005, 2007](#). This, in turn, is taken as evidence for the subjectification approach to discourse particles. Section 7 addresses some open questions for future research. Section 8 concludes the paper.

2. Theoretical background

This section outlines the theoretical background and framework used in the paper to provide an analysis of the discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian. I maintain that the properties of *vallë* can be accounted for in terms of subjectification in the sense of E. C. [Traugott, 2022](#). According to her work, subjectification (as well as intersubjectification) are "processes that lead to orientation of meanings toward grounding in the Speaker-Addressee dyad" ([Traugott, 2022:191](#)). Traugott considers (inter) subjectification as a historical concept. Her initial observation is that there exists a unidirectional path (cf. (6)) that enables the development of conventionalized expressions of subjectivity.

- (6) propositional > textual > expressive

According to Traugott, (6) shows the three functional-semantic components of language at the synchronic level. The propositional component of language comprises the resources used to describe a speech event; the textual component contains all the language tools or devices that convey cohesion-making meanings such as connectives, topicalisers, complementizers, relativizers, discourse markers, etc. The final component has to do with various phenomena (for instance,

modal elements) that convey speaker's attitude towards the proposition (cf. López-Couso (2010:129). Traugott (2022:197) defines the three components as in (2):

- (7) a. **Subjectification** is increase in the degree to which SP/Ws overtly base meanings in and orient them toward their own perspective.
 b. **Intersubjectification** is increase in the degree to which SP/Ws overtly pay attention to AD/Rs and orient meanings toward AD/Rs' cognitive stances and social identities.
 c. **Textualization** is increase in the degree to which SP/Ws pay overt attention to text-creation and invite AD/R to interpret textual relationships.

As Traugott argues, subjectification and intersubjectification should be viewed as processes by which meanings are used and reinterpreted over time. In what follows, I will illustrate only the process of subjectification since it is directly relevant to our analysis of the discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian. E. Traugott and Dasher, 2002, 2002:166–168 provide the following examples, also discussed in López-Couso, 2010, to show how the original meaning of the expression in fact has evolved into an expressive meaning, which shows why *in fact* has become a discourse marker.

- (8) a. But it is evident in fact and experience that there is no such universal Judge, appointed by God over the whole World, to decide all cases of temporal Right (1671 Tillotson, p. 445).
 b. That the Turkey Merchants do Ship out much Cloth, I deny not; but as true it is, that they have Shipt out more Yearly since the great encrease of the East-India Trade, and since themselves have made this Complaint, than they did in former Years. So that in Fact it doth not follow that the encrease of the East-India Trade, and particularly of their Importation of Silk, doth hinder or diminish the Exportation of Cloth to Turkey, but rather the contrary. (1681 ecb 1. 33 [Lampeter Corpus])
 c. I should not have used the expression. In fact, it does not concern you—it concerns only myself (1816 Austen, Emma, vol. III, chapter 10, p. 393).

Example (8-a) shows that the original meaning of *in fact* could be paraphrased as “in practice, in reality”, which evolved into an adverbial adversative as in (8-b) conveying the idea of a contrast to a prior preposition. Finally, (8-c) shows that *in fact* has evolved into a discourse marker since it is used to express the speaker's attitude at the discourse level, signaling that what follows is a stronger assertion than what it precedes (cf. López-Couso, 2010, p. 134. I aim to analyze the discourse particle *vallë* from a synchronic perspective, based on a large sample of corpus examples drawn from the Albanian National Corpus. As demonstrated below, almost all of the properties of *vallë* can be accounted for in terms of subjectification. There are two reasons for this: (a) *vallë* is used to indicate the speaker's attitude of wonder towards the truth of the proposition and (b) *vallë* does not contribute to the truth-conditions of the utterance. Several tests based on Potts (2005, 2007) show that the meaning of *vallë* is expressive in nature.

3. Methodology

Most data used in the present article have been tested against the Albanian National Corpus (AlbNC) available online: <http://albanian.web-corpora.net/>. The Main corpus contains 31.12 million words and consists of the following subcorpora: (1) Press which contains 23.4 million words (75.2% of the Main Corpus); (2) Fiction with 3.2 million words (10.3% of the Main Corpus); (3) Non-fiction with 4.3 million words (13.8% of the Main Corpus) and (4) Poetry with 0.2 million words (0.7% of the Main Corpus). Besides the corpus, I have consulted various native speakers of Albanian in order to find out the extent to which my examples are acceptable. In the present paper, those examples which are judged as unacceptable are marked with an asterisk (*).

For our corpus pragmatic approach, the starting point is the raw frequency. There are 1891 occurrences of *vallë*, found in approximately 618 documents, in the corpus. In order to investigate the distribution and functional meaning of *vallë*, 500 randomised occurrences of *vallë* from AlbNC were analyzed in detail. Randomisation is an effective method in corpus research since the frequency of occurrence is combined with a qualitative analysis that allows us to diagnose specific functions (cf. Clancy et al., 2023). As for *vallë*, things are a bit simpler since it always functions as a discourse particle. For the purposes of this paper, I looked into the distribution, syntactic position, and meaning of *vallë*.

The next step in the analytic process is based on the syntactic distribution of *vallë*. Some of the following context can be extrapolated from Agalliu, 2002; Çeliku, 2002, Kondi, 2013, Telhaj, 2013, but I illustrate those contexts with examples extracted from the AlbNC:

- (9) Kush vallë trashëgoi restaurantin e tij të famshëm?
 who vallë inherited restaurant agr. his agr. famous
 ‘Who inherited his famous restaurant, I wonder?’

In (9) the discourse particle *vallë* appears in wh-questions. Here, the speaker wonders about the person (if any) who could have inherited the famous restaurant in the discourse context. Examples under (10) are very interesting. As I discuss such examples in Section 4.1.3, *vallë* co-occurs with *mos*. In Albanian, *mos* can either function as a prohibitive marker or as expletive negation marker. In each of the sentences in (10), it functions as expletive negation marker, as it fails to negate the sentence. The discourse particle *vallë* seems to obtain a different interpretation in such as cases, that of an epistemic modal element.

- (10) a. Mos vallë edhe koncepti për dashurinë dhe moralin ka
 mos vallë also conception for love and morality has
 ndryshuar?
 changed?
 ‘Has our conception for love and morality maybe changed?’
 b. A mos vallë nuk vlejnë rregullat për policë?
 Q mos vallë neg apply rules for policemen
 ‘Do rules not apply to the policy, I wonder?’

- c. Pastaj më kapi një frikë se mos vallë doja që ajo të
 then cl.1sg caught a fear that mos vallë wanted that she subj
 më takonte mua.
 cl.1sg met me
 'Then, I feared that maybe I wanted her to meet me.'

Another context where *vallë* appears in the corpus comprises polar questions of the type presented in (11). Polar questions require a yes/no answer but a polar question containing *vallë* does not have the same intended effect. I discuss polar questions in the next section.

- (11) A u vinte vallë turp kur kryenin veprime të
 Q cl.them came vallë shame when committed acts agr.
 neveritshme?
 heinous
 'Were they ashamed when they committed heinous acts, I wonder.'

Examples (12) and (13) are interesting cases, though very marginalized in the corpus. (12) shows that *vallë* appears in the initial position of the subordinate clause. On the other hand, (13) shows that *vallë* appears in the initial position of an indirect question.

- (12) Siç do mbetet edhe pyetja se vallë çka e pengonte PPD
 as will remain also question that vallë what cl.acc prevented PPD
 që t'i artikulonte drejtë kërkesat e shqiptarëve.
 that subj.cl articulate rightly demands of albanians
 'The question that remains is what prevented PPD to articulate rightly the demands of Albanians.'
- (13) Ai e kishte pyetur kryeministrin nëse vallë e dinte kur
 he cl.acc had asked prime minister if vallë cl.acc knew when
 do të përfundojë lufta në Ukrainë.
 will subj end war in Ukraine
 'He asked the prime minister if he perhaps knew when the war in Ukraine will end.'

Finally, I find in the corpus instances of *vallë* co-occurring with a similar discourse particle *a thua*. The literal meaning of *a thua* is 'do you say', but it is used just like *vallë* to express speaker's attitude of wondering or doubt.

- (14) A thua (vallë) kush është fajtori?
 Q say vallë who is guilty
 'Who is guilty, I wonder?'

Thus, (14) has the same interpretation with or without *vallë*: the speaker wonders who the guilty person is.

4. The distribution of *vallë*

As mentioned in the previous section, I extracted 500 randomised examples from the AlbNC. The contextual frequency distribution of *vallë* is presented in Table 1:

Table 1
 The frequency distribution of *vallë* in AlbNC.

Context of <i>vallë</i>	Frequency in AlbNC
WH+QUESTIONS	240
EXPLETIVE NEGATION:	136
(a) <i>mos vallë</i> IN ROOT Q	101
(b) <i>mos vallë</i> IN POLAR Q	26
(c) <i>mos vallë</i> IN EMBEDDED Q	9
OTHER POLAR Q	82
<i>vallë</i> IN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES	31
<i>vallë</i> IN <i>A thua vallë</i>	8
<i>vallë</i> IN IF-CLAUSES	3

Unsurprisingly, *vallë* occurs with Wh-questions. It also co-occurs very often with the marker *mos*, as outlined above. Interestingly, it can also occur in interrogative subordinate clauses. In three cases, it appears in indirect subordinate clauses. Below, I will discuss some of the constraints of *vallë* within interrogative sentences.

4.1. Clause-type restrictions

4.1.1. Interrogatives

Rhetorical questions and tag questions cannot host *vallë*. (15) is a rhetorical question which asserts the negative bias of the speaker toward the proposition *p*. Thus, the reading of (15-a) is that the speaker thinks nobody would care if something

happens to him. Inserting *vallë* as in (15-b) changes the meaning completely. (15-b) is a self-addressed question whereby the speaker wonders if anyone would care in case something happens to him.

- (15) a. Kujt i plas nëse më ndodh diçka?
 who.DAT cl.DAT cares if cl.1SG.ME happens something
 ‘Who cares if something happens to me?’ (= Nobody cares if some-thing happens to me)
- b. Vallë, kujt i plas nëse më ndodh diçka?
 vallë who.DAT cl.DAT cares if cl.1SG.ME happens something
 ‘I wonder if anyone cares if something happens to me.’

Since the meaning of (15-b) is very different from that of (15-a), I maintain that rhetorical questions cannot host *vallë*. This also holds for tag questions.

- (16) a. Dera është e hapur, apo jo, (*vallë) ↗?
 door.the is agr. opened, or no, vallë
- b. Dera është e hapur, apo jo, (*vallë) ↘?
 door.the is agr. opened, or no, vallë

The examples in (16) show tag questions in Albanian. They are formed by adding the interrogative *apo jo* as a supplement to another clause, changing the illocutionary force of the utterance. The clause they are attached to is sometimes referred to as the **anchor** (cf. Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). In the two sentences in (16), the anchor is the declarative sentence *dera është e hapur* ‘the door is open’. (16-a) and (16-b) have falling tone on their anchors; the tag itself is either rising or falling. With rising tag, the question is biased towards an answer that confirms the anchor. With falling tag, the question merely seeks acknowledgement that the anchor is true. Neither (16-a) nor (16-b) can host *vallë* since the latter is incompatible when the speaker confirms the truth of the proposition or seeks acknowledgement that the proposition is true.

In light of this, it is not surprising that confirmationals cannot host *vallë* either.

- (17) a. Do të kthehesh në shtëpi, ë?
 FUT subj return.2sg in house, eh
 You will return home, eh?
- b. (*Vallë), do të kthehesh në shtëpi, ë?
 vallë, FUT subj return.2sg in house, eh

Using *ë*, as in (17-a), the speaker seeks confirmation from the addressee that the she will return home. (17-b) shows that *vallë* is in complementary distribution with such confirmation markers, since *vallë* encodes a sense of wondering on the side of the speaker, while *ë* seeks for confirmation from the addressee and using the two of them results in a contradictory state of affairs: one where the speaker wonders whether the addressee will return home or not and the other where the speaker believes the addressee will return home but simply asks for confirmation.

In contrast, wh-questions, polar and alternative questions can host *vallë*. For instance, wh-questions have a propositional content consisting of an open proposition. Example (2) repeated below as (18), can receive different answers such as Ana went to the store; Ana went to visit her parents; Ana went on a trip to Paris. Therefore, using *vallë* is perfectly felicitous in (18) in situations when the speaker wonders about which state of affairs hold true for Ana.

- (18) Vallë, ku shkoi Ana?
 vallë, where went.3sg Ana
 ‘Where did Ana go, I wonder?’
- (19) a. A është e hapur dera, vallë?
 Q is agr. opened door.the vallë
 ‘Is the door open?’
- b. A është e hapur apo e mbyllur dera, vallë?
 Q is agr. opened or agr. closed door.the vallë
 ‘Is the door opened or closed?’

Polar questions in Albanian are formed by means of the Q-particle *A* as shown in (19-a). The polar question in (19-a) has as answers a pair of polar opposites, positive and negative. Using *vallë* in polar questions is possible since the speaker may wonder which of the two possible answers is true. Same holds true for the alternative question in (19-b).

4.1.2. Declaratives and imperatives

The contrast between wh-questions, polar and alternative questions on the one hand and rhetorical and tag questions on the other hand shows that *vallë* is blocked with speech acts containing assertions. This explains why rhetorical and tag questions cannot host *vallë*. Also it predicts that declaratives cannot host *vallë* either since they also contain assertions. This prediction is borne out.

- (20) a. Dikush m'i vodhi paratë.
 someone cl.me.1sg+cl.acc.pl steal.3sg.aor money.the.pl
 ‘Someone stole my money.’
- b. *Vallë, dikush m'i vodhi paratë.
 vallë, someone cl.me.1sg+cl.acc.pl steal.3sg.aor money.the.pl

(20-a) is a declarative sentence. By uttering this sentence, the speaker states that someone stole her money. *Vallë* is ungrammatical in (20-b).

Let us now discuss imperatives in Albanian. They are used to express commands or directives and include a wide range of specific speech acts such as orders, requests, instructions etc. Example (21-a) expresses an order of the speaker to the addressee to open the window.

- (21) a. Hape dritaren!
open.2sg window
'Open the window!
- b. *Vallë, hape dritaren!
vallë, open.2sg window

As (21-b) shows, *vallë* is also ungrammatical with imperatives.

4.1.3. Co-occurrence with expletive negation

Another interesting context regarding the distribution of the discourse particle *vallë* concerns sentences where it co-occurs with the (expletive) negation marker *mos* as shown below.

- (22) a. Mos vallë nuk më duan?
mos vallë neg cl.1sg love.3pl
'Could it be the case that they don't love me, I wonder?'
- b. Profesori i Zagrebit më pyeti se mos vallë kujtoj
professor.the of Zagreb cl.1sg asked.3sg that mos vallë pretend
se profesorët e Kosovës janë më të mençurit në botë.
that professors.the of Kosovo are cmp ag.pl smart.pl in world
'The professor from Zagreb asked me if I perhaps thought that the professors from Kosovo are the cleverest in the world.'

The particle *mos* in (22-a) and (22-b) is used as a marker of expletive negation. By *expletive negation*, I mean a negative item, which lexically contributes to negation, does not modify the truth value of the proposition in which it occurs (Espinal, 2000). This is the case of *mos* in Albanian since it can either function as a non-negative element (or, expletive) as in (22) or as a prohibitive marker as in (23), from Turano, 2000, p.85-ex.15(a-e).

- (23) a. Merr çadrën që të mos lagesh!
take umbrella.the that subj neg wet
'Take the umbrella so that you do not get wet!'
- b. Mos lexo këtë libër!
neg read this book
'Do not read this book'
- c. Mos vdeksh kurrë!
neg die.opt never!
'May you never die!'
- d. Duke mos ditur ç'të bënte, doli në oborr.
prog neg knowing what+subj do.impf.3sg, came.3sg in yard
'Not knowing what to do, she went out in the yard.'
- e. Për të mos u vonuar, mori një taksì.
for subj neg nact late, took.3sg a taxi
'For not to get late, (s)he took a taxi.'

The examples in (23) show that *mos* combines with the subjunctive (23-a), the imperative (23-b), the optative (23-c), the gerund (23-d), and the infinitive (23-e).

When *mos* is used with fear-denoting predicates as in (24-a), question-embedding predicates (24-b), or in the initial position of a root (24-c) or embedded (24-d) polar question, it is not interpreted as a negative marker.

- (24) a. Kisha frikë se mos vallë më pa i ati i saj.
had fear that mos vallë cl.1sg saw agr. father agr her
- b. Profesori i Zagrebit më pyeti se mos vallë kujtoj
professor.the of Zagreb cl.1sg asked.3sg that mos vallë pretend
se profesorët e Kosovës janë më të mençurit në botë.
that professors.the of Kosovo are cmp ag.pl smart.pl in world
- c. Mos vallë nuk më duan?
mos vallë neg cl.1sg love.3pl
- d. A mos vallë mendon kush për ta?
Q mos vallë think anybody for them
'Does anybody care about them, I wonder?'

Further arguments that *mos* is non-negative are provided by the data in (25) and (26).²

- (25) a. Mos hëngre kërpudha?
mos ate.2sg mushrooms
b. *Mos hëngre asgjë?
mos ate.2sg nothing
c. Mos nuk hëngre kërpudha/asgjë?
mos neg ate.2sg mushrooms/nothing
- (26) a. Kam frikë se mos hëngri kërpudha.
have fear that mos ate.3sg mushrooms
b. *Kam frikë se mos hëngri asgjë.
have fear that mos ate nothing
c. I thashë të mos hante kërpudha/asgjë.
cl.dat said subj neg eat.impf.3sg mushrooms/nothing

The difference between (25-a) and (25-b) shows that *mos* is non-negative. In (25-a), *mos* is interpreted as an epistemic modal element paraphrased as “could it be the case that you ate mushrooms?”. (25-b) is ungrammatical because non-negative *mos* cannot license the negative concord item (NCI) *asgjë* ‘nothing’. (25-c) also illustrates the fact that *mos* is non-negative since it can co-occur with sentential negation *nuk* without giving rise to a double negation reading. (25-b) is best paraphrased as “could it be the case that you did not eat mushrooms/anything?”. A similar explanation applies to sentences under (26) with embedded *mos*. (26-a) is interpreted as “the speaker is afraid that the addressee could have eaten mushrooms”. In (26-b), *mos* is non-negative; hence, it cannot license the NCI *asgjë* ‘nothing’. In (26-c), *mos* appears with embedded subjunctive clauses. In such environments, *mos* is a negative marker and therefore, it can license NCIs such as *asgjë* ‘nothing’. When *vallë* co-occurs with expletive *mos* as shown above, it also is interpreted as an epistemic modal element.

- (27) a. Kam frikë se mos më pa i ati i saj.
have.1sg fear that mos cl.1sg saw agr. father agr. her
‘I fear that maybe her father has spotted me.’
b. Kam frikë se mos vallë më pa i ati i saj.
have.1sg fear that mos vallë cl.1sg saw agr. father agr. her
‘I fear that maybe her father has spotted me.’

One argument that *vallë* is also an epistemic modal element is the fact that both (27-a) and (27-b) are paraphrased as “the speaker is afraid that it is possible that her father has spotted the speaker”. Thus, *mos* and *vallë* have a comparable meaning in (27-b). They occur in a harmonic combination, simply reinforcing each other.

Another argument is that the presence of *vallë* in (27-b) seems to be dependent on the presence of *mos*, as shown in (28).

- (28) *Kam frikë se vallë më pa i ati i saj.
have.1sg fear that vallë cl.1sg saw agr. father agr. her

The reason why this is so is that the subordinate clause of (28) is a declarative subordinate clause and *vallë* does not occur in declarative clauses. Therefore, the distribution and interpretation of *vallë* in (27-b) depends on *mos*. The interesting observation here is that the embedded clause of (27-b) is interrogative and not declarative. *Fear*-type predicates can take interrogative and declarative clauses as complements.

- (29) a. Kam frikë se ç'mund t'i ketë thënë i ati.
have.1sg fear that what+could subj+cl have.3sg said agr father
‘I fear what her father could have said to her.’
b. Kam frikë se ai erdhi pa paralajmrim.
have.1sg fear that he came without warning
‘I fear he came without warning us.’

On the other hand, *believe*-type predicates can only take declarative clauses as complements, as shown in (30-a). In this example, the speaker believes that her father has spotted him (the speaker). Hence, the embedded clause is declarative.

- (30) a. *Besoj se ç'mund t'i ketë thënë ai.
believe.1sg that what+could subj+cl have.3sg said he
b. Besoj se ai erdhi pa paralajmërim.
believe.1sg that he came without warning
‘I believe he came without warning us.’

The contrast between (31-a) and (31-b) shows that the embedded clause is interrogative and not declarative:

- (31) a. *Besoj se mos më pa i ati i saj.
believe.1sg that mos cl.1sg saw agr. father agr. her

² These data are modelled after Tsiakmakis et al., 2023 examples on the Greek expletive negation marker *min*.

- b. Kam frikë se mos më pa i ati i saj.
 have.1sg fear that mos cl.1sg saw agr. father agr. her
 'I fear that maybe her father has spotted me.'

In light of these observations, I conclude that *vallë* can be licensed in embedded clause if the embedded clause is either selected by a question-embedding predicate such as *pyes* “ask” or *pyes veten* “wonder” or if the embedded clause is interrogative.

4.2. *Vallë* in subordinate clauses

As noted earlier in the paper, *vallë* can appear in subordinate clauses, besides cases discussed in the previous subsection where *vallë* can appear with the non-negative marker *mos* in embedded clauses.

- (32) Siç do mbetet edhe pyetja se vallë çka e pengonte PPD
 as will remain also question that vallë what cl.acc prevented PPD
 që t'i artikulonte drejtë kërkesat e shqiptarëve.
 that subj.cl articulate rightly demands of albanians
 'The question that remains is what prevented PPD to articulate rightly the demands of Albanians.'

The use of *vallë* in (32) is possible due to the fact that the subordinate clause is an interrogative. It contains the wh-element *çka* ‘what’ and *vallë* could also appear below the wh-element.

- (33) Ai e kishte pyetur kryeministrin nëse vallë e dinte kur
 he cl.acc had asked prime minister if vallë cl.acc knew when
 do të përfundojë lufta në Ukrainë.
 will subj end war in Ukraine
 'He asked the prime minister if he perhaps knew when the war in Ukraine will end.'

Examples such as (33) are rare in the corpus. I maintain that the subordinate clause functions as an interrogative clause. It is selected by a question-embedding predicate and it is interpreted as “is it the case or not the prime minister knew when the war in Ukraine will end.”

4.3. Discourse anaphoricity

Discourse particles can be used felicitously if they are anaphorically linked to a previous discourse. A particle such as *denn*, for instance, cannot occur in out-of-the-blue contexts but needs to be triggered by a previous discourse, leading to the question where *denn* occurs. Köning (1977) shows that *denn* is infelicitous in (34) but perfectly felicitous with some additional discourse leading to the question. Suppose (34) is uttered in the following context: A wakes B in the middle of the night. A cannot utter the question in (34):

- (34) *Wie spät ist es denn?
 *how late is it denn?
 'What time is it?'

Now let us suppose a context for (34) where there is a second early waking where B wakes A in the middle of the night. A's question in would be licit since A may wonder why B is waking her so early.

Theiler 2021 also confirms that *denn* cannot occur in out-of-the-blue contexts. Suppose A approaches a stranger on the street. Using *denn* is infelicitous in such a context, as shown in (35):

- (35) Entschuldigen Sie, ist heute (*denn) Montag?
 Excuse me, is today (*denn) Monday?
 'Excuse me, is it Monday today?'

Now let us consider a different context discussed by Theiler: garbage gets collected on Mondays. A and B, two housemates, are talking over breakfast. A asks B to put out the garbage later. B finds to their surprise that today is Monday. Therefore A's request towards B is what triggers the use of *denn*:

- (36) Kannst du nachher die Mülltonne rausstellen?
 Can you later the dustbin put out?
 'Can you put out the garbage later today?'
 Ist heute(denn) Montag?
 is today(denn) Monday?
 'Is it (really) Monday?'

Albanian *vallë* cannot be licensed in out-of-the-blue contexts, either. Suppose that (37) is uttered in a context where an administrator has to simply write down the addressee's address.³

- (37) Ku jetoni (*vallë)?
 where live.2pl (*vallë)

³ This example is modelled after Bayer, 2012's discussion of discourse anaphoricity of *denn*.

Let us suppose now that A and B have a meeting. B is late for the meeting and A is somehow surprised that B is late. The question in (37) would not require the addressee to respond to it. And it would be uttered (with high intonation) to convey to the addressee that she is late for the meeting. The data discussed in the present section show that *vallë*, similar to *denn* and other discourse particles, must be triggered by a previous discourse context which causes the speaker to wonder about something.

4.4. Summary

I have shown that *vallë* can occur with wh-questions, polar and alternative questions as well as embedded questions but not with rhetorical and tag questions. Nor does it occur with declarative, imperatives. Table 2 summarizes the distributional restrictions of the discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian.

Table 2
Sensitivity to sentence types.

Sentence types	Illocutionary force	<i>vallë</i>
Wh-questions	question	✓
Embedded questions	question	✓
Declaratives	assertion	*
Rhetorical questions	assertion	*
Imperatives	command	*
Polar questions	question	✓
Alternative questions	question	✓
Tag questions	assertion	*

Given this behaviour, I conclude that *vallë* is sensitive to the illocutionary act of an utterance. Specifically, it is restricted to questions. The basic function of *vallë* can then be described as modifying the illocutionary force: it turns a question into an act of wondering for what the response of that question could be.

5. The clausal position of *vallë*

Another question I raise in this section concerns the position of the discourse particle *vallë* with respect to the host clause. Corpus data show that *vallë* can have several positions: initial position (38-a), preverbal position (38-b), postverbal position (38-c), and final position (38-d). These are all illustrated under 5.

- (38) a. *Vallë, ç'do të bëja ato tre ditë në atë vend?*
vallë, what+would subj do.1sg Those three days in that place
 'What would I do there during those three days, I wonder.'
- b. *Pse vallë u zhveshën para kamere?*
why vallë cl.nact undressed.3pl before camera
 'Why did they get undressed in front of the camera, I wonder'
- c. *Më kishte ngatërruar vallë me ndonjë tjetër?*
cl.1sg had mixed vallë With any other
 'Had he may be mixed me with a different person, I wonder'
- d. *Pse e kemi frikë dashurinë, vallë?*
why cl.acc have fear love, vallë
 'Why do we fear love, I wonder.'

The frequency distribution of *vallë* in each of these positions is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3
The syntactic position of *vallë* in AlbNC.

Syntactic position of <i>vallë</i>	Frequency in AlbNC
INITIAL POSITION:	129
(a) ROOT CLAUSES:	98
(b) SUBORDINATE CLAUSES	31
PRE-VERBAL POSITION:	169
POST-VERBAL POSITION	164
FINAL POSITION	38

Irrespective of the position, *vallë* expresses speaker's attitude of wondering towards the truth of the proposition. On the other hand, *vallë* has a fixed position when it co-occurs with the non-negative *mos*:

- (39) a. Mos vallë nuk më duan?
 mos vallë neg cl.1sg love.3pl
 'Maybe they do not love me?'
 b. A mos vallë nuk më duan?
 Q mos vallë neg cl.1sg love.3pl
 'Maybe they do not love me?'

It is interesting to observe that the position of *vallë* relative to *mos* is identical to the position of the epistemic adverb *ndoshta* 'perhaps', 'maybe' with respect to *mos*:

- (40) a. Mos ndoshta nuk më duan?
 mos maybe neg cl.1sg love.3pl
 'Maybe they do not love me?'
 b. A mos ndoshta nuk më duan?
 Q mos maybe neg cl.1sg love.3pl
 'Maybe they do not love me?'

(39-a) and (39-b) have very similar, if not identical meanings. The same holds true for the polar questions in (39-b) and (40-b). Furthermore, note that *vallë* is ungrammatical in (41-a) in absence of expletive *mos*. It has to move to either initial position (41-b) or final position, (41-c).

- (41) a. *A vallë nuk më duan?
 Q vallë neg cl.1sg love.3pl
 b. Vallë, a nuk më duan?
 vallë Q neg cl.1sg love.3pl
 c. A nuk më duan, vallë?
 Q neg cl.1sg love.3pl, Vallë

Another question I raised is whether the position of *vallë* with respect to the host clause, plays any role in getting/claiming the attention of the addressee. Specifically, when *vallë* occurs in final position, does it claim the attention of the addressee? There are no data that suggest this. In 500 examples, I found an instance where the addressee provides an answer to a *vallë*-marked question.

- (42) Vallë, ti je vërtet Jusufi?
 vallë, you are really Jusuf
 'Are you indeed Jusuf, I wonder?'
 Po, unë jam Jusufi dhe ky është vëllau im.
 Yes, I am Jusuf and this is brother mine
 'Yes, I am Jusuf and this is my brother.'

As we have seen so far, questions containing *vallë* are self-addressed since the speaker wonders about the truth of the proposition. Example (42) suggests that answering a *vallë*-marked question is, nevertheless, licit.⁴

6. The expressive content of *vallë*

This section will show that *vallë* does not contribute to the core propositional content but only to the expressive content of the utterance. This means that *vallë* does not contribute to the truth-conditions of an utterance but simply indicates the speaker's attitude towards a proposition. According to Potts, 2005, 2007, there are six defining characteristics of expressives (i) **independence or non-at-issueness**: the content contributed by an expressive cannot be negated or questioned; (ii) **non-displacability**: expressives predicate something about the utterance situation; (iii) **perspective dependence**: the content contributed by an expressive is generally speaker-oriented although a shift in perspective is possible under the right (pragmatic) conditions; (iv) **ineffability**: it is hard to paraphrase exactly the meaning of an expressive; (v) **immediacy**: expressives "achieve their act by simply being uttered; (vi) **strengthening**: repeating an expressive results in a strengthened content rather than redundancy.

Apart from the final characteristic of expressives, Albanian *vallë* displays the rest of the characteristics outlined above.

i. Independence or non-at-issueness

Various authors, besides Potts, (cf. Faller, 2002; Davis et al., 2007; Eckardt, 2020) have used independence or non-at-issueness as a test to show whether an expression contributes to the at-issue or non-at-issue content of an utterance. Expressions which contribute to the non-at-issue content can neither be negated nor questioned. Therefore, the content contributed by *vallë* can neither be negated nor questioned. Consider (43) where the speaker utters the interrogative in (43-a). The addressee can respond as in (43-b) but not as in (43-c):

⁴ A similar observation has been made by Eckardt, 2020 for verb final *wohl*-questions. These questions are usually self-addressed but if the addressee happens to know the answer, then, answering a *wohl*-marked question is perfectly felicitous.

- (43) a. Vallë, kush m'i vodhi paratë?
 vallë, who cl+cl stole money.the
 Who stole my money, I wonder?
- b. Jo, nuk është e vërtetë! Askush nuk t'i vodhi paratë.
 no, neg is agr.true! nobody neg cl+cl stole money.the
 No, this is not true! Nobody stole your money!
- c. *Jo, nuk je në mëdyshje / ti e dije që askush nuk t'i
 *no, neg are in doubt / you cl.knew that nobody neg cl+cl
 vodhi paratë.
 stole money.the
 No, you are not in doubt of that!/You knew that nobody stole your money!

The data in (43) show that the content of *vallë* 'the speaker wonders about *p*' cannot be targeted by assent/dissent. (43-b) targets the propositional content of the utterance in (43-a). (43-c) shows that the addressee's response cannot target the speaker's level of uncertainty or her attitude of wondering.⁵

Similarly, *vallë* scopes over question formations:

- (44) Vallë, pse dukem kaq i zbehtë?
 vallë, why look.1sg so agr. pale
 Why do I look so pale, I wonder?

(44) can only be paraphrased as "I am wondering why I look so pale?!". It cannot be paraphrased as "Why I am wondering why I look so pale?!". Thus, *vallë* scopes over question formations. Next, consider the scopal interaction with modals:

- (45) Vallë, a mund të vijë Ana në festë?
 vallë, Q can subj come.3sg Ana in party
 Can Ana come to the party, I wonder?

(45) can be paraphrased as "the speaker is wondering whether the addressee could come to the party?" and not "could the speaker wonder whether the addressee is coming to the party?".

In summary, *vallë* scopes over negation, modals and question formations.

ii. Non-displaceability

The term *non-displaceability* is due to Cruse, 1986. The following is Cruse's initial formulation of the term:

"Another characteristic distinguishing expressive meaning from propositional meaning is that it is valid only for the utterer, at the time and place of utterance." Cruse, 1986, p. 272.

Thus, expressives always tell us something about the utterance situation and cannot be used to report on past events, attitudes or emotions, as Potts argued. One test of non-displaceability proposed by Potts involves adverbial quantification over events, as shown in the following example⁶:

- (46) Whenever I pour wine, the damn bottle drips.

In (46), the bottles may vary with wine-pouring events. But, the meaning of the expressive *damn* does not vary. If it did, we would assert that the speaker is in a heightened emotional state only in wine-pouring events and not right at this moment of the utterance. As Potts argues, (46) cannot be paraphrased as "in all situations *s* such that the speaker pours wine in *s*, the bottle in *s* drip in *s* and the speaker is in a heightened emotional state in *s*." Thus, the content contributed by *damn* is non-displaceable in the sense of Cruse, 1986. A similar observation holds for *vallë* in Albanian.

- (47) Vallë, a do të më Fyesh saherë që më
 vallë Q FUT subj cl.me.1sg insult.2sg whenever that cl.me.1sg.
 sheh?
 see.2g
 "Will you insult me anytime you see me?"

(47) cannot be paraphrased as "in all situations *s* such that the speaker and the addressee interact in *s*, the speaker wonders whether the addressee will insult the speaker in *s*". Rather, the speaker expresses her attitude of wondering at this particular moment of the utterance. Therefore, (47) can be paraphrased as: "the speaker wonders whether the addressee will insults her (the speaker) in all situations *s* in which the speaker and the addressee interact". Thus, the content contributed by *vallë* is also non-displaceable.

⁵ The reason why this is so is that *vallë* has no lexical meaning; it is impossible to paraphrase its meaning precisely and to target it by assent/dissent.

⁶ Potts attributes the example in (46) to Florian Schwarz (p.c.).

iii. Perspective dependence

The notion *perspective dependence* is related to the question: where does the attitude of wondering come from? For Miyagawa 2022, p.107, this perspective “clearly comes from the speaker, since it is the speaker who uniquely brings this perspective of uncertainty.” So far, I have also assumed, in line with Miyagawa, that the speaker wonders about the truth of some proposition (p) whenever the speaker utters a question containing the particle *vallë*. However, Zimmermann, 2011 has argued that German *wohl* sometimes allows a shift in perspective from the actual speaker to the addressee or hearer. The term employed to refer to this shift in perspective is *interrogative flip* (or, *evidential flip*). When *wohl* occurs in assertions, it signals that the speaker is uncertain about the asserted content. In questions however, *wohl* asserts that the addressee or hearer is uncertain about the answer or may not know the answer. To show this, Zimmermann, 2011 discusses the so-called *expert contexts* which imply that the addressee is an expert concerning the question under discussion. One such context is illustrated in (48) where the speaker addresses the question to an airline official:

- (48) Geht der Flug (*wohl) um 7.00h?
 leaves the flight (wohl) at 7 am
 “Does the plane leave at 7 am?”

Wohl is unacceptable in (48) since the context shows that the addressee (the airline official) knows for sure the answer. Zimmerman contrasts (48) with (49) to show that *wohl* is compatible only if the addressee may not know the answer. (49) is uttered in a context where the teacher utters the question to a student:

- (49) Was ist wohl die Wurzel aus 9?
 what is wohl the square root 9
 “What is the square root of 9?”

The particle *wohl* is perfectly acceptable in (49) since the teacher (the speaker) asks the student (the addressee) for what she assumes to be the correct answer. This implies that the student may not know the correct answer. Albanian *vallë* does not generally allow such a shift in perspective.

- (50) A niset aeroplani në orën 7, vallë?
 Q leave plane in hour 7, vallë
 “Does the plane leave at 7 am, I wonder?”

As indicated earlier, *vallë* signals that the utterer is uncertain about the answer to the question. Therefore, *vallë* is perfectly licit in (50), which could be uttered in a context where the traveller (the speaker) is uncertain whether the plane leaves at 7 am or not.

Suppose (51) is uttered in the same context as (49): the teacher asks the student about the square root of 9. In (49), *wohl* indicates the addressee may not know the answer but in (51), *vallë* indicates that it is the speaker who may not know the answer. Therefore, *vallë* may be odd in scenarios such as (51) since it implies that the teacher is uncertain of the answer and asks the student to provide the answer.

- (51) Cila është rrënja katrore e numrit 9, vallë?
 which is root square of number 9, vallë
 “What is the square root of number 9, I wonder?”

The contrast between *wohl* and *vallë* shows that *vallë* is anchored to the utterer of the question. However, the utterer need not always be the speaker. Consider the following example:

- (52) Në oborr paska ushtarë!
 in yard have.adm.3sg soldiers
 “There are soldiers in the yard, I witness!”
 Pse, vallë?
 why vallë?
 “Why, I wonder?”

As (52) shows, it is the addressee, as opposed to the speaker, who conveys her attitude of wondering by employing the particle *vallë*.

The discussion of the data in the present section show the utterer of the question containing *vallë* can be either the speaker.

iv. Descriptive ineffability

The term *descriptive ineffability* conveys the idea that expressives are difficult to paraphrase (cf. Potts, 2007; Blakemore, 2002, 2011). For instance, Potts reports how native speakers of English cannot generally paraphrase the meaning of the expressive *bastard*. For such expressions, native speakers tend to provide the right conditions under which they can be used. However, Potts shows one case where native speakers of English provided the definition ‘a vile contemptible person’ for the expression *bastard*. As Potts shows, such a definition cannot extend to all uses of *bastard*, as, for instance, of those in (53):

- (53) a. “Here’s To You, Ya Bastard!”
 b. “So my story begins with my X-Box [...] Unfortunately, the bastard won’t open. This is a problem.”

In (53-a), *bastard* does not convey the speaker's negative feelings towards the addressee but rather positive feelings since (53-a) can be continued by "You've been such a good friend to me over the years. I'm so grateful" (cf. Potts, 2007; footnote 5). (53-b) shows that *bastard* is not restricted to human beings. None of these two uses of *bastard* can be derived from the definition 'a vile contemptible person'.

As for *vallë*, it also seems difficult to paraphrase its meaning. Native speakers of Albanian report using *vallë* to express "doubt" or "uncertainty". This idea of "uncertainty" can be correct only when assigned to the utterer of the question containing *vallë*. What I have shown so far is that *vallë* contributes to non-at-issue meaning by expressing a presupposition that the utterer (speaker or hearer) wonders about the truth of some proposition (p). Moreover, I have also used, throughout the paper, the expression "I wonder?" to translate the meaning of *vallë* in English but have also indicated that this is just a loose approximation. There is simply no way to translate the meaning of *vallë*.⁷

Nevertheless, *descriptive ineffability* has been criticized in the literature (cf. Geurts, 2007; Drożdżowicz, 2016) for not being a stable criterion to distinguish descriptive and expressive meanings. For instance, Bart Geurts argues that *descriptive ineffability* is not the prerogative of expressives:

"As a matter of fact, it is all over the lexicon, as witness such disparate items as *the, at, because, languid, green, pretty*, and so forth. Descriptive ineffability doesn't draw the line between descriptive and expressive language." Geurts, 2007, p.210.

The bottom line of Bart Geurts' quote is that descriptive ineffability is not one of the criteria to distinguish between descriptive and expressive language.

v. Immediacy

Potts argues that expressives share a property with performatives: "the act of uttering an expressive is sufficient for conveying its content" Potts, 2007, p.13. Therefore, expressives, just like performatives, manifest this property of *immediacy*. Potts discusses the following examples to show the comparability between performatives and expressives:

- (54) a. I promise that I will wash the dishes.
b. That bastard Kresge was late for work yesterday. (*But he's no bastard today, because today he was on time.)

By uttering (54-a), the speaker puts herself under the obligation to wash the dishes. Similarly, the expressive content is performative in the sense that by simply uttering the expressive *bastard* in (54-b), the speaker has already indicated that she regards Kresge negatively. Therefore, a continuation such as **but he's no bastard today, because today he was on time* is illicit since it is impossible to deny the fact that the speaker regards Kresge negatively. I have already shown in (43) above that negation cannot target the expressive content of *vallë*. Here is a similar example:

- (55) Vallë, pse t'i laj enët unë?
vallë, pse subj+cl wash dishes I
"Why should I wash the dishes, I wonder?"
(56) a. No, you're not going to wash the dishes later!
b. *No, you didn't assert that.

(56-b) - as opposed to (56-a) - is an illicit continuation of (55), since it is impossible to deny the expressive content of *vallë*.

vi. Repeatability

Potts observed that expressives can be used repeatedly. He discusses the following examples:

- (57) a. Damn, I left my keys in the car.
b. Damn, I left my damn keys in the car.
c. Damn, I left my damn keys in the damn car.

As Potts argues, repeating the expressive *damn* in the three examples under (57), leads to a heightening of the speaker's emotional state. As for *vallë*, corpus research shows that repeating *vallë* is possible only if we repeat the interrogative or coordinate two interrogatives.

- (58) Kush vallë ka dëgjuar një gjë të tillë, kush vallë ka parë gjëra
who vallë has heard a thing agr such, who vallë has seen things
si këto?
as These
'Who has heard such a thing and who has seen such things?'

However, repeating *vallë* within a single clause leads to redundancy but not to ungrammaticality.

- (59) ??Vallë, kush vallë ka dëgjuar një gjë të tillë?
vallë, who vallë has heard a thing agr. such

⁷ Farkas, 2022 also showed that "I wonder?" in English is just a loose approximation of the Romanian discourse particle *oare*, which is the counterpart of *vallë*.

One possible explanation for the difference between *vallë* and expressives such as *damn* could be due to their syntactic distribution. *Damn* but not *vallë* can modify a noun phrase (NP) as shown in (57-b) *my damn keys* or in *in the damn car* as in (57-c). *Vallë* can only modify the entire clause. Therefore, repeating it to modify the same clause leads to redundancy.

6.1. Summary

I have discussed six properties of expressives. These are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

The expressive properties of *vallë*.

Properties of expressives	<i>vallë</i>
Independence	✓
Nondisplaceability	✓
Perspective dependence	✓
Descriptive ineffability	✓
Immediacy	✓
Repeatability	*

Given that *vallë* displays most of the properties of expressives, I conclude that *vallë* is expressive in nature and it contributes to the non-at-issue content of the utterance.

7. Discussion

As we have seen so far, a *vallë*-marked question is used to express the speaker's (or writer's) attitude of wondering towards the truth of the proposition. These data can be accounted for in terms of Traugott's subjectification approach. The previous section demonstrated that the meaning of *vallë* is expressive in nature. Subjectification can capture this property of *vallë* very elegantly since it suggests that the expressive meaning of discourse markers arises as a result of an evolutionary process their original meaning undergo. Unfortunately, for Albanian *vallë* it seems impossible to provide a clear picture of the diachronic development of *vallë*. The reason for this is that old Albanian texts contain only two instances of *vallë*, which appear in the early part of the 17th century. Consider the two examples under (60)⁸:

- (60) a. *Vollë a e kaa mbaruom e baam, si desh ligja*
vollë, Q cl has finished and made, as wanted, testament
, e sikundrëse I qe urdhënuom?
cl.dat just as cl.dat was ordered
'I wonder if he has finished it, just as described in the testament, and as ordered.'
- b. *Si të ndjetë vollë, a munë të kienë ndimuom gjaakafshë*
how cl.2sg feel vollë, Q Can subj have helped anything
këto uratë e lëmoshëna?
these benedictions and Charities
'How do you feel, I wonder. Have these benedictions and charities been of any help for you?'

As we can see, *vallë* was spelled as *vollë*. In both cases, it appears in polar questions and expresses the speaker's attitude of wondering towards the truth of what is said. So whatever the diachronic evolution of *vallë* is, it must have taken place before the 17th century.

Another important issue to discuss regarding subjectification is related to examples where the attitude of wonder is not expressed by the speaker/writer but by the subject of the matrix clause:

- (61) *Ana kishte frikë se mos vallë e kishte tradhëtuar i dashuri.*
Ana had fear that mos vallë cl had betrayed agr. boyfriend
'Ana fear that maybe her boyfriend had betrayed her.'

In (61), the attitude of wondering is expressed by Ana and not the speaker/writer. How can we handle such data? According to Traugott's theory, examples such as (61) illustrate intersubjectification, which encodes the speaker's/writer's attention to the addressee's cognitive stances and social identities. Even though the vast majority of corpus examples typically illustrate subjectification, it is important to try to find out the extent to which *vallë* is used in examples similar to (61). I leave this for future research.

In Section 4.1.3, I discussed data where the discourse marker *vallë* is exclusively dependent on the marker of expletive negation, *mos*. To the best of our knowledge, this relation between *vallë* and expletive negation has not been documented elsewhere in the literature for similar discourse particles in other languages. When *vallë* co-occurs with *mos*, it is interpreted as an epistemic modal element. The issue here is whether we should consider two different lexical items of *vallë*: one where it

⁸ The examples in (60) are taken from Budi, 1985

is loosely paraphrased by English ‘I wonder’ and one where it is paraphrased by ‘maybe’. This remains an open question for future research.

Another venue for future research concerns the force of a question. Theories of force argue that the force of a question has the canonical intended effect that the addressee is obligated to answer the question (cf. Fintel and Iatridou, 2019). As I have seen throughout the paper, *vallë*-marked questions are questions in which the speaker/writer expresses their attitude of wondering. Thus, *vallë*-marked questions do not have the canonical intended effect to oblige the addressee to provide an answer. These types of questions pose challenges for theories of force of questions. I consider this challenge important for syntactic/semantic theories of questions.

8. Conclusion

This paper has documented the distribution and functional meaning of the discourse particle *vallë* in Albanian. I have shown, based on corpus data, that *vallë* expresses the speaker's/writer's attitude of wondering towards the truth of the proposition. I have also documented a use of *vallë* as an epistemic modal element in examples where it co-occurs with expletive negation. I have shown that *vallë* can appear in subordinate clauses only if the subordinate clause contains itself an interrogative marker.

Our theoretical approach in this paper is different from formal semantic/pragmatic approaches to similar discourse particles in the literature: a corpus pragmatic approach. I have argued that *vallë*-marked questions can be accounted for in terms of Traugott's subjectification approach. The expressive meaning of *vallë*, analyzed in detail in this paper, provides further evidence for the subjectification approach.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Bujar Rushiti: Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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