

LABILE VERBS IN MODERN ALBANIAN: A PRELIMINARY CORPUS-BASED STUDY

Maria Morozova

Institute for Linguistic Studies
Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg
morozovamaria86@gmail.com

Alexander Rusakov

Institute of Language and Literature
Academy of Sciences of Albania, Tirana
ayurusakov@gmail.com

The goal of the study is to analyze the use of labile verbs in the modern written Albanian language based on the Albanian National Corpus, which contains over 31 million words. In this paper, we present our findings from a pilot study of eight Albanian P-labile verbs belonging to different semantic groups that are typologically prone to lability. The study has shown that the selected verbs behave differently. Only phasal verbs *filloj* ‘begin’ and *mbaroj* ‘finish’ demonstrate consistent lability. The motion verb *lëviz* ‘move’ is used as a labile verb, with a predominance of active intransitive usages, while the verb *ziej* ‘boil; seethe; ferment’ shows variation between non-active and active intransitive usages. Deadjectival color verbs *zbardh* ‘whiten; brighten’ and *skuq* ‘make/color red; fry’ appear both transitively and intransitively, but only in their basic color-related meanings. The verb of distinction and change *dalloj* ‘distinguish; differentiate’ primarily employs active intransitive forms in reciprocal meanings and morphologically non-active forms in other meanings, while the related verb *ndryshoj* ‘change; vary, distinguish’ behaves as a typical labile verb, with a secondary development of non-active usages.

Keywords: P-lability, non-active voice, lexical semantics, Albanian National Corpus.

ЛАБИЛНИТЕ ГЛАГОЛИ ВО СОВРЕМЕНИОТ АЛБАНСКИ ЈАЗИК: КОРПУСНО ИСТРАЖУВАЊЕ

Марија Морозова

Институт за лингвистички истражувања
Руска Академија на науките, Санкт Петербург
morozovamaria86@gmail.com

Александер Русаков

Институт за јазик и литература
Академија на науките на Албанија, Тирана
ayurusakov@gmail.com

Целта на оваа статија е анализа на употребата на лабилните глаголи во современиот пишан албански јазик, врз основа на Албанскиот национален корпус. Во трудот ги претставуваме нашите согледувања од прелиминарното истражување на осум албански пациентивни лабилни глаголи, коишто припаѓаат на различни семантички групи. Резултатите покажуваат дека овие глаголи се однесуваат различно. Само фазните глаголи *filloj* ‘почне’ и *mbaroj* ‘заврши’ доследно покажуваат лабилност. Глаголот за движење *lëviz* ‘се движи’ се користи како лабилен глагол, но преовладуваат активните непреодни употреби, додека глаголот *ziej* ‘врие; зоврива; ферментира’ покажува варијација помеѓу неактивните и активните непреодни употреби. Деадјективните глаголи *zbardh* ‘обели; разјаснува’ и *skuq* ‘поцрвенува; пржи’ се јавуваат како преодни и како непреодни, но само во нивните основни значења, поврзани со значењето на боја. Глаголот *dalloj* ‘разликува, истакнува’ првенствено се јавува во активни непреодни форми со реципрочно значење и во морфолошки неактивни форми, во други значења, додека сличниот глагол *ndryshoj* ‘менува; варира, разликува, истакнува’ се однесува како типичен лабилен глагол со секундарни неактивни употреби.

Клучни зборови: пациентивна лабилност, неактивен залог, лексичка семантика, Албански национален корпус.

1 Introduction

In Albanian, as in most of the Balkan languages, with the exception of Romani, anticausative derivation predominates over causative (Nichols 2020). This aligns Albanian with other SAE languages (Haspelmath 2001). It has also been noted that some verbs in Balkan languages are characterized by the phenomenon of lability (ambitransitivity), i.e., the same verb can be used transitively and intransitively without changing its form (Friedman and Joseph 2025). Friedman (2010) suggests that lability represents a Balkanism of scalar type, manifested to varying degrees in different Balkan languages. Recent studies have found more labile verbs in Macedonian (especially in Western and some Southeastern dialects) and Modern Greek, and fewer in Aromanian, Bulgarian, and Albanian (Bužarovska and Mitkovska 2022; Makartsev et al. 2024).

Though Albanian has been mentioned among the Balkan languages with the least representation of lability, the number of labile verbs in this language is quite substantial. It is worth noting that Albanian can use ambitransitives for four out of the 18 pairs of contrasting transitive-intransitive verbs in the diagnostic list by Nichols et al. (2004): *die* — *kill* (1), *learn* — *teach*, *boil* — *boil*, *sleep* — *be asleep*. Dhrimo (1965) mentions around 30 Albanian verbs that can be employed both transitively and intransitively. The only existing study of lability in modern Albanian provides a list of about 50 verbs showing lability (Diveeva 2013).

- (1) a. *ata* *vdis-nin*
 they.M.NOM die-IPF.3PL
 ‘they were dying’
- b. *e=rrah-u* *sa* *e=vdiq*
 3SG.ACC=beat-AOR.3SG as.much 3SG.ACC=kill.AOR.3SG
 ‘he beat him so that he killed him’ (examples constructed by authors)

There are no corpus-based studies examining Albanian lability, and our research aims to fill this gap. The data come from the Albanian National Corpus (ANC), which comprises over 31 million words. The goal of the study is to analyze the use of different forms of labile verbs in the modern written Albanian employing both quantitative and qualitative methods.

In the present article, we share observations from a pilot study of eight Albanian labile verbs belonging to different semantic groups that are typologically prone to lability. Section 2 presents an overview of the data extracted from ANC and describes the methodology of data collection and analysis. In the subsections of Section 3, we focus on the particular verbs and analyze ratios of the active transitive, active intransitive, and non-active intransitive usages of each verb, their lexical meanings and argument structures, and the distribution of various TAM forms across the three usages (if significant differences are observed). When relevant, attention is given to the characteristics of texts (e.g., text type and period of creation) in which a certain type of usage appears. In Conclusion, we summarize the preliminary results and outline the perspectives of the study.

2 Methodology and overview of the data

In our study, we primarily address P-lability, as exemplified in (1). The most significant groups demonstrating lability of this type in Albanian, as in many other languages, are phasal verbs and motion verbs. A notable group of verbs exhibiting conversive lability (not considered in this article), such as *pëlqej* ‘like’, is also present in Albanian.

For our pilot study, we selected eight Albanian verbs that represent the main semantic groups that tend to demonstrate lability, based on the typological criteria proposed by Letuchiy (2013), which have previously been applied for Albanian in Diveeva (2013). These are: phasal verbs *filloj* ‘begin’ and *mbaroj* ‘finish’, the motion verb *lëviz* ‘move’, deadjectival color verbs *zbardh* ‘whiten; brighten’ and *skuq* ‘make/color red; fry’, verbs of distinction and change *dalloj* ‘distinguish; differentiate’ and *ndryshoj* ‘change; vary; distinguish’, and the verb *ziej* ‘boil; seethe; ferment’ denoting (in its intransitive use) a “spontaneously arising situation” (Letuchiy 2013: 111). These verbs can be classified as demonstrating the anticausative type of lability, with some also showing a degree of reciprocal lability.

In our analysis, we examined both active intransitive and active transitive usages of the selected verbs, as well as the presence of parallel morphologically non-active forms. The examples were searched in ANC by lemma. In the further analysis of the extracted samples, both the primary and secondary (metaphorical) usages were taken into account. We counted the number and share of active intransitive, active transitive, and non-active usages in the first 300 randomly ordered examples, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Number and share of active intransitive, active transitive, and non-active usages of labile verbs (first 300 examples, numbers rounded to two decimal places)

	number of examples	intransitive		transitive		non-active	
		number	share	number	share	number	share
<i>dalloj</i>	300	48	0.16	124	0.41	128	0.43
<i>filloj</i>	300	178	0.59	118	0.39	4	0.01
<i>lëviz</i>	300	241	0.80	53	0.18	6	0.02
<i>mbaroj</i>	300	160	0.53	134	0.45	6	0.02
<i>ndryshoj</i>	300	138	0.46	137	0.46	25	0.08
<i>skuq</i>	300	10	0.03	52	0.17	238	0.79
<i>zbardh</i>	300	24	0.08	136	0.45	140	0.47
<i>ziej</i>	300	191	0.64	86	0.29	23	0.08
Total	2400	989	0.41	840	0.35	571	0.24

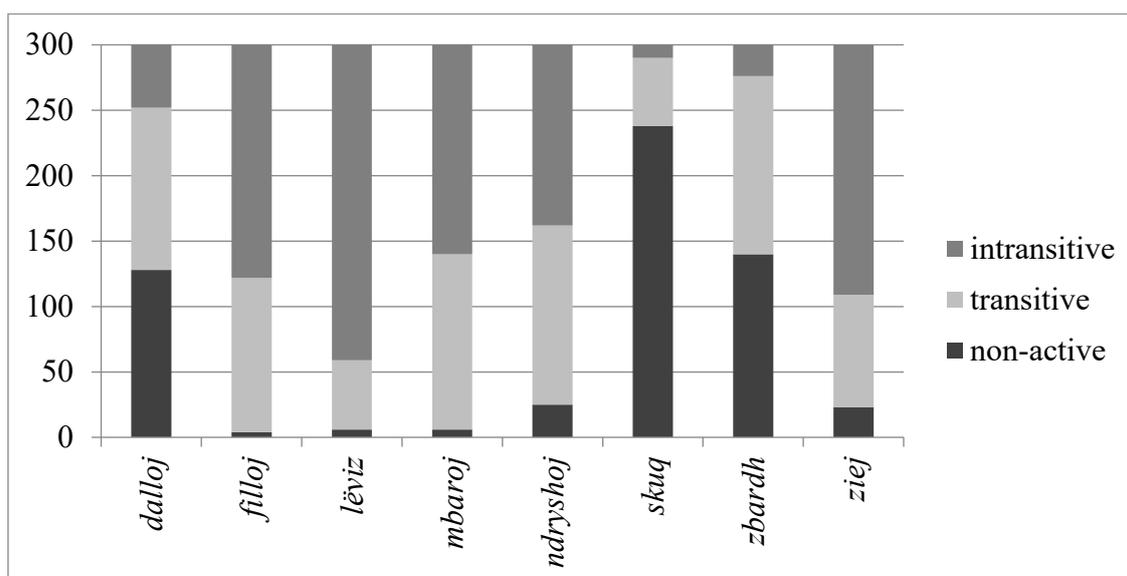


Figure 1. Number of active intransitive, active transitive, and non-active usages of labile verbs (first 300 examples)

Non-active usages are most typical for the verbs *skuq*, *dalloj*, and *zbardh*. For the verb *skuq*, they significantly outnumber active intransitive and transitive usages, accounting for 79% of all analyzed examples with this verb. As for *dalloj* and *zbardh*, active transitive usages are almost as frequent as their non-active counterparts, while active intransitive usages are significantly less frequent. The verb *lëviz* occurs mostly intransitively (80% of the sample). Phasal verbs *filloj* and *mbaroj*, as well as the verbs *ndryshoj* and *ziej*, are used mostly transitively and intransitively, with a more (*filloj*, *ziej*) or less (*mbaroj*, *ndryshoj*) pronounced prevalence of intransitive usages. Non-active forms are extremely rare for these verbs.

The distribution of active intransitive, active transitive, and non-active usages is defined by two fundamentally different factors: (a) the ratio of intransitive and transitive usages, which is determined almost exclusively by the semantics of the verb, and (b) the ratio of active and non-active intransitive usages, which can vary depending on the specific verb, its different meanings, or its semantic verb group. Below, we'll focus on the behavior of the eight selected verbs in relation to these factors. Verbs belonging to one semantic group will be also compared to each other, such as *filloj* 'begin' and *mbaroj* 'finish' in 3.1.

3 Labile verbs in the modern Albanian: Some observations on the usage and meaning

3.1 Phasal verbs *filloj* 'begin' and *mbaroj* 'finish'

It has been noted that phasal verbs "are labile even in some languages for which lability is generally uncharacteristic" (Letuchiy 2013: 171). In this article, we examine the two most common and productive phasal verbs in contemporary Albanian: *filloj* 'begin' and *mbaroj* 'finish'. Etymologically, they are derived from a noun (*fill* 'thread; source' > *filloj*, cf. *zë fill* 'begin (lit. 'get a source')') and an adjective (*i mbarë* 'proper, going well' > *mbaroj*). The two verbs notably differ in frequency: *filloj* appears 20,289 times in the ANC, while *mbaroj* appears 3,825 times (these figures include deverbal adjectives *i filluar* 'initiated' and *i mbaruar* 'finished' due to technical reasons). This aligns with the general typological tendency towards a higher frequency of inchoative verbs among phasal verbs (Letuchiy 2013: 174).

In our sample (see Table 1), active forms of both verbs are overwhelmingly dominant. For *filloj*, we observed 178 instances of active intransitive usage (2), 118 of transitive usage, and four of non-active usage (4). For *mbaroj*, the corresponding numbers are 160, 134 (3), and six. Neither verb shows a statistically significant difference in the distribution of active intransitive, active transitive, and non-active forms ($p < .05$).

- (2) *Filluan protestat nga populli dhe nga ne, nxënësit, por askush nuk na e vuri veshin.*
 'Protests began from the people and from us, the students, but no one listened to us.'
 (*Vite të vegjëlisë*, Enver Hoxha, 1976[1962])

<i>fillua-n</i>	<i>protesta-t</i>	<i>nga popull-i</i>
begin-AOR.3SG	protest(M).PL-DIR.PL.DEF	from people(M)-NOM.SG.DEF
'protests began from the people' ¹		

- (3) *Tani, tani mezi pris-te të mbaro-nte punë-n.*
 now now hardly wait-IPF.3SG SBJV finish-IPF.3SG work(F)-ACC.SG.DEF
 'Now, now he couldn't wait to finish the job.'
 (*Unaza prej floriri*, Kostaq Duka, 2009)

¹ The glossing of a long example is restricted to the verb and its immediate syntactic environment.

- (4) *Pra, të menduarit Shekspirian është një çështje që duhet të studiohet dhe të sprovohet mirë para se të fillohet performimi eventual i ndonjë vepre të këtij autorit.*
 ‘So, Shakespearean thinking is an issue that must be studied and thoroughly tested before the beginning of the eventual performance of any work by this author.’
 (Zëri, 16.03.2013)

para se të fillo-het performim-i
 before COMP SBJV begin-NACT.PRS.3SG performance(M)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘before the performance begins’

Some interest for us lies in the peripheral non-active forms of phasal verbs, although it is rather difficult to draw definite conclusions about them based on our dataset. It can be noted that all four instances of the non-active usage of *filloj* appear in newspapers (three of which are from Kosovo), while the six non-active examples with *mbaroj* are found both in newspapers and in fiction and religious texts. Examples with passive semantic interpretation, which are possible according to Diveeva (2013), did not occur in our sample.

There are some formally intransitive, but semantically transitive usages of the verb *filloj*, demonstrating different argument structures: with the combination of third person singular dative and accusative pronominal clitics *ia* (5) and with the preposition *me* ‘with’. Such instances seem to be extremely rare: only three cases are found in the sample of 300 examples.

- (5) *Pra, nëse ditët janë të ftohta, milingonat flenë, e kur është nxehtë, ia fillojnë punës.*
 ‘So, if the days are cold, the ants sleep, and when it’s hot, they get to work.’
 (Zëri, 01.07.2013)

ia=fillo-jnë punë-s
 DAT.3SG:ACC.3SG=begin-PRS.3PL work(F)-OBL.SG.DEF
 ‘they get to work’

An additional count was conducted for the third-person singular aorist forms of both verbs (*u fillua*, *u mbarua*) occurring in all texts of the ANC. Their distribution in the different text types mirrors the one observed in our 300 examples sample. The 17 instances of *mbaroj* (out of 3,825 usages of this verb) are found both in fiction (13, including literature from the early 20th-century) and in newspapers, while the 25 instances of *filloj* (out of 20,289) mainly come from newspapers. There are three examples in which *filloj* has a clearly passive interpretation, as in (6).

- (6) *Luft-a civil-e nuk u fillua*
 war(F)-NOM.SG.DEF civil-F NEG NACT begin.NACT.AOR.3SG
nga ballistë-t, por nga komunistë-t.
 from Ballist(M)-DIR.PL.DEF but from communist(M)-DIR.PL.DEF
 ‘The civil war was not started by the Ballists, but by the communists.’
 (Panorama, 29.07.2016)

It can be stated that *filloj* ‘begin’ and *mbaroj* ‘finish’ are typical labile verbs. Their non-active intransitive usages are negligible in number. For the verb *filloj*, such usages appear to be a recent innovation, possibly emerging in official bureaucratic registers of Albanian over the past few decades. In contrast, non-active examples of *mbaroj* seem to be more deeply rooted in the Albanian language and require a dedicated diachronically oriented study.

3.2 The verb of motion *lëviz* ‘move’

In typological terms, motion verbs are highly prone to lability, as are phasal ones (Letuchiy 2013: 183–197). The verb *lëviz* is used mainly intransitively in our sample (241 of 300 examples) and its usages are mostly interpreted as anticausative (7). The general meaning of this verb is a change of position which may entail either changing location or moving into a new place of residence, employment, etc. (conceptualized metaphorically as a movement, see [8]). Non-active forms are represented in six of 300 examples, one of which has a passive interpretation (9).

- (7) *Gjymtyrë-t* *lëviz-in* *pa* *kontroll* <...>.
 limb(F).PL-DIR.PL.DEF move-PRS.3PL without control(M).DIR.SG
 ‘Limbs move uncontrollably.’
 (Panorama, 17.11.2016)
- (8) *Garanci* *për* *persona-t* *që* *ka-në* *lëvizur*.
 guarantee(F).DIR.SG for person(M)-DIR.PL.DEF COMP have-PRS.3PL move.PTCP
 ‘Guarantee for people who have moved.’ [about immigration]
 (Agjencia Telegrafike Shqiptare, 17.01.2017)
- (9) *Shumë* *prej tyre* *ja-në* *lëvizur* *dhe* *i=ka-në*
 many from they.ABL be-PRS.3PL move.PTCP and 3PL.ACC=have-PRS.3PL
çuar *më në veri,* *madje* *edhe më larg*
 carry.PTCP CMPR in north(M).DIR.SG even and CMPR far
Tiranë-s.
 Tirana(F)-OBL.SG.DEF
 ‘Many of them were moved and they have taken them further north, even further away from Tirana.’
 (Panorama, 13.04.2015)

No significant difference was found in the distribution of active intransitive and transitive usages across the different TAM forms of this verb. The distribution of a few non-active examples across the different text types (four are found in the press and two in fiction and religious texts) does not allow for any definite conclusions. Overall, *lëviz* represents a typical labile motion verb, with a predominance of intransitive usages (presumably original) due to its semantics and the relatively low agentivity of the subject in these usages.

3.3 The verb *ziej* ‘boil; seethe; ferment’

As mentioned in Section 2, the verb *ziej* ‘boil; seethe; ferment’ is used mostly intransitively. Transitive usages are less frequent than intransitive ones, while non-active forms are rare. The distribution of the three usages in different tense forms found in our 300 examples sample is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2. Active intransitive, active transitive and non-active usages of *ziej* (first 300 examples, numbers rounded to two decimal places)

		all	active intransitive	active transitive	non-active
Present	number	83	54	20	9
	share	0.28	0.28	0.23	0.39
Imperfect	number	114	93	17	4
	share	0.38	0.49	0.20	0.17
Aorist	number	12	5	7	0
	share	0.04	0.03	0.08	0
Perfect	number	9	4	2	3
	share	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.13
Plusquamperfect	number	5	0	4	1
	share	0.02	0	0.05	0.04
Future	number	2	1	1	0
	share	0.01	0.01	0.01	0
Present Subjunctive	number	35	26	5	4
	share	0.12	0.14	0.06	0.17
Imperfect Subjunctive	number	8	4	4	0
	share	0.03	0.02	0.05	0
Perfect Subjunctive	number	2	1	0	1
	share	0.01	0.01	0	0.04
Nonfinite forms	number	11	3	7	1
	share	0.04	0.02	0.08	0.04
Imperative	number	19	0	19	0
	share	0.06	0	0.22	0
All forms		300	191	86	23

A substantial number of examples with transitive imperatives is found in recipes published in newspapers, illustrated in (10). The prevalence of active imperfective forms (present and imperfect tense) over perfective ones (aorist and perfect) can be explained by the fact that *ziej* usually describes atelic processes of boiling (11), fermenting, and distilling. From the perspective of actional meaning,² the less frequent active aorist and perfect forms can be interpreted as entry into the process (11) or state (12), while transitive usages describe a completed action directed to an object (13).

- (10) *Pris-ni panxhar-in në kubikë dhe*
 cut-IMP.2PL beetroot(M)-ACC.SG.DEF in cube(M).DIR.PL and
zie-je-ni pak minuta.
 boil-3SG.ACC-IMP.2PL few minute(F).DIR.PL
 ‘Dice the beetroot and boil it for a few minutes.’
 (Panorama, 05.12.2015)

² According to the inventory of actional meanings as shown in Tatevosov (2002).

- (11) *Pasi uj-i ka zier, hidh-ni*
 after water(M)-NOM.SG.DEF have-PRS.3PL boil.PTCP throw-IMP.2PL
hithra-t dhe lër-i-ni të zie-jnë
 nettle(F)-ACC.SG.DEF and leave-3PL.ACC-IMP.2PL SBJV boil-PRS.3PL
për një minutë.
 for one minute(F).DIR.SG
 ‘Once the water has boiled, add the nettles and let them boil for a minute.’
 (*Agjencia Telegrafike Shqiptare*, 25.02.2017)
- (12) *Pasi të ke-në zier, hap-i-ni dhe*
 after SBJV have.SBJV-PRS.3PL boil.PTCP open-3PL.ACC-IMP.2PL and
pastro-ji-ni nga lëkur-a.
 clean-3PL.ACC-IMP.2PL from husk(F)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘Once they are boiled, open them and peel them.’
 (*Panorama*, 29.10.2016)
- (13) *Plak-a i=dha Pandë-s*
 old.woman(F)-NOM.SG.DEF 3SG.DAT=give.AOR.3SG Panda(M)-OBL.SG.DEF
një dash, të cil-in e=pre-u
 one ram(M).DIR.SG L which-M.ACC.SG 3SG.ACC=cut-AOR.3SG
dhe e=zje-u.
 and 3SG.ACC=boil-AOR.3SG
 ‘The old woman gave Panda a ram, which he slaughtered and cooked.’
 (*Shkëlqimi dhe rënia e shokut Zylo*, Dritëro Agolli, 1972)
- In 135 of 300 examples, the verb *ziej* is used figuratively to refer to agitated emotional states. Almost all of these examples contain intransitive usages (14), while non-actives (15) and active transitive forms (16) are rare (six and three examples, respectively).
- (14) *Sekretar-i i parti-së zie-nte*
 secretary(M)-NOM.SG.DEF L.M.NOM.SG party(F)-OBL.SG.DEF boil-IPF.3SG
nga zemërim-i.
 from anger(M)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘The party secretary was seething with anger.’
 (*Koha e dhive*, Luan Starova, 1993)
- (15) *E=di-ja mirë se çfarë zi-hej në*
 3SG.ACC=know-IPF.1SG well comp what boil-NACT.IPF.3SG in
kokë-n e tij.
 head(F)-ACC.SG.DEF L.ACC.SG his
 ‘I knew very well what was going on in his head.’
 (*Shkëlqimi i huaj*, Beqë Cufaj, 2003)
- (16) *Vetë ia=zie-nte gjak-un*
 self 3SG.DAT:3SG.ACC=boil-IPF.3SG blood(M)-ACC.SG.DEF
Kadri-ut të varfër...
 Kadri(M)-OBL.SG.DEF L.M.OBL.SG poor.M.SG
 ‘She herself made poor Kadri’s blood boil.’
 (*Panorama*, 03.11.2015)

No significant semantic differences between the more frequent active intransitive and the less frequent non-active forms can be observed at this stage; both have an anticausative interpretation. The non-active forms occur in both newspaper texts and literature. Overall, it seems that, for *ziej*, we can speak of genuine variation between non-active and active intransitive forms.

3.4 Deadjectival color verbs *zbardh* ‘whiten; brighten’ and *skuq* ‘make/color red; fry’

It has been noted that deadjectival verbs are quite often labile (Letuchiy 2013: 200–203), and this is partially confirmed by our data on the verbs *zbardh* ‘whiten; brighten’ and *skuq* ‘make/color red; fry’.

The main feature of the verbs *zbardh* and *skuq* is that, in modern Albanian, their direct color meaning appears in only a minority of their usages. For the verb *skuq*, the most frequent meaning (more than two-thirds of the examples) is that of a psychological reaction (‘to blush from shame, excitement, etc.’), covering a spectrum of meanings from describing purely physical manifestations of such a reaction (17) to indicating a psychological state (18). These meanings are mostly expressed by non-active forms, which are predominant for this verb (238 of 300 occurrences), with only 6 transitive usages and no attested active intransitive usages. A notable feature is the large number of aorist forms, reflecting the actional meaning of ‘entering a state’.

- (17) *Faqe-t* *e* *kuq-e iu=skuq-ën*
 cheek(F)-DIR.PL.DEF L.DIR.PL red-F 3SG.DAT:3SG.ACC=reddden-AOR.3PL
edhe më fort.
 yet CMPR strongly
 ‘His red cheeks became even redder.’
 (*Vjeshta e Xheladin Beut*, Mitrush Kuteli, 1943)

- (18) *Atëherë do t’ju vijë turp për lisat që keni dashur dhe do të skuqeni për kopshtet që keni zgjedhur.*
 ‘Then you will be ashamed of the oaks you loved and blush for the gardens you chose.’
 (*Isaia, Dhjata e vjetër*, 1994)

do të skuq-eni për kopshte-t
 FUT SBJV reddden-NACT.PRS.3SG for garden(MF).PL-DIR.PL.DEF
 ‘you will blush for the gardens’

For the verb *zbardh*, the numerically dominant usage (255 occurrences) conveys the meaning ‘to bring to light, clarify, reveal’ (19). Only non-active (intransitive) and active transitive usages are attested. The grammatical forms are diverse, including many non-active present forms found in newspaper headlines.

- (19) *Zbardh-et* *skem-a* *e* *re,*
 whiten-NACT.PRS.3SG sheme(F)-NOM.SG.DEF L.F.SG.NOM new.F.SG
si do llogarit-en pensione-t.
 how FUT calculate-NACT.PRS.3SG pension(MF).PL-DIR.PL.DEF
 ‘New scheme is revealed, how pensions will be calculated.’
 (*Panorama*, 14.04.2017)

Among the non-figurative meanings of *skuq* (if the psychological reaction meaning is considered figurative), a significant number of examples pertain to the meaning ‘to fry’, etc. (referring to food), frequently occurring in the imperative form in recipes. In the case of intransitive usages of *skuq* in its literal color meaning, non-active forms (20) predominate over active ones (21) with 41 to 10 instances. Interestingly, all 10 examples of active intransitive usage belong to literary works written no later than 1985, suggesting a somewhat literary (and perhaps slightly archaic) nature of this usage.

- (20) *Piq-et* *dardh-a,* *skuq-et*
 bake-NACT.PRS.3SG pear(F)-NOM.SG.DEF redder-NACT.PRS.3SG
moll-a...
 apple(F)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘Pears ripen, apples redder...’
 (Pamje katundare, Asdreni, 1938)

- (21) *Mbi mjekra-t* *e* *tyre të shkurtr-a*
 on beard(F).PL-DIR.PL.DEF L.DIR.PL their L short-F.PL
këna-ja *skuq-te* *kërcënueshëm.*
 henna(F)-NOM.SG.DEF redder-IPF.3SG menacingly
 ‘On their short beards, henna was dyed menacingly red.’
 (Ura me tri harqe, Ismail Kadare, 1978)

For the verb *zbardh*, in its non-figurative meaning, only non-active and active intransitive forms are attested. Of the 25 intransitive usages, 16 describe sunrise and are semi-idiomatic expressions (22). There is also one semantically similar non-active usage. The remaining nine intransitive direct usages (23), found both in literary works and newspapers, actionally denote state and entering a state and compete with more frequent non-active forms (24), which total 19 occurrences.

- (22) *Kish-te* *një orë* *e ca*
 have-IPF-IPF.3SG one hour(F).DIR.SG and some
që kish-te *zbardhur* *dit-a.*
 COMP have-IPF-IPF.3SG whiten.PTCP day(F)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘It had been an hour or so since daylight.’
 (Lëkura e daullës, Ismail Kadare, 1967)

- (23) *Njëqind* *e ca* *petë-t* *e* *mbaruar-a*
 one.hundred and some noodle(F)-DIR.PL.DEF L.DIR.PL finished-F.PL
zbardh-nin *të vën-a* *një mbi një mbi*
 whiten-IPF.3SG L stacked-F.PL one on one on
ca sofrë *drur-i.*
 some table(F).DIR.PL wood(M)-OBL.SG
 ‘A hundred or so finished noodles were whitening, stacked one on top of the other on some wooden tables.’
 (Komisioni i festës, Ismail Kadare, 1978)

- (24) *Natë-n e krishtlindje-ve Lesbos-i*
 night(F)-ACC.SG.DEF L.ACC.SG Christmas(F)-OBL.PL Lesbos(M)-NOM.SG.DEF
u zbardh nga dëbor-a.
 NACT whiten.NACT.AOR.3SG from snow(F)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘On Christmas Eve, Lesbos was whitened with snow.’
 (Të jetosh në ishull, Ben Blushi, 2008)

Overall, it can be cautiously suggested, that in modern Albanian, deadjectival color verbs are losing their labile character. This is likely related to the tendency of these verbs to be used more frequently not in their direct color-related meaning, favoring intransitive usage, but in their other meanings, e.g., ‘fry’ for *skuq* and ‘bring to light’ for *zbardh*, for which active transitive uses and their non-active counterparts are more natural.

3.5 The verbs *dalloj* ‘distinguish; differentiate; differ’ and *ndryshoj* ‘change; vary’

The verb *dalloj* ‘distinguish; differentiate; differ’ is basically a transitive verb, as seen from the proportion of active intransitive, active transitive, and non-active forms in Table 1. Transitive forms and their non-active counterparts prevail in the sample, along with a moderate percentage of examples in which *dalloj* is used intransitively. In contrast, *ndryshoj* ‘change; vary’ functions as a verb with almost equal numbers of active transitive and intransitive usages and a low number of non-active forms.

Usages of the verb *dalloj* are of two main types. In the first type the verb means ‘distinguish, manage to discern, be distinguished’ with the direct meaning typically referring to visual perception (25–26). When used metaphorically (27–28), *dalloj* is often accompanied by an argument introduced by the preposition *për* ‘for’. Non-active forms and a few active intransitive forms with this meaning have an anticausative interpretation (26, 28).

- (25) *Tani e=dallo-va një-rë-n nga dy*
 now 3SG.ACC=discern-AOR.1SG one.of.two-F.ACC.SG from two
silueta-t te dritar-ja.
 silhouette(F)-DIR.PL.DEF at window(F)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘Now I recognized one of the two silhouettes at the window.’
 (Muzgu i perëndive të stepës, Ismail Kadare, 1978)

- (26) *Përmatanë përro-it tani dallo-heshin qartë*
 across stream(M)-OBL.SG.DEF now discern-NACT.IPF.3PL clearly
tre silueta.
 three silhouette(F).DIR.PL
 ‘Across the stream, three silhouettes were now clearly visible.’
 (Yjet ndritin lart, Naum Prifti, 2002)

- (27) *Ju jeni një kritik i ashpër i Kadaresë, a dalloni ju vlera të rëndësishme në veprën e tij?*
 ‘You are a harsh critic of Kadare, do you recognize important values in his work?’
 (Panorama, 22.09.2017)

a dallo-ni ju vlera të rëndësishm-e
 Q discern-PRS.2PL you value(F).DIR.PL L important-F
 ‘do you recognize important values?’

- (28) *Gjatë viteve 1970, Sali Berisha u dallua për punën kërkimore në fushën e kardiologjisë në Shqipëri dhe u emërua profesor kardiologjie në Universitetin e Tiranës.*
 ‘During the 1970s, Sali Berisha distinguished himself for his research work in the field of cardiology in Albania and was appointed professor of cardiology at the University of Tirana.’

(*Panorama*, 15.10.2017)

Sali Berisha u dallua për punë-n kërkimor-e
 Sali Berisha NACT discern.NACT. AOR.3SG for work(F)-ACC.SG.DEF research-F
 ‘Sali Berisha distinguished himself for his research work’

In the second type of usage, *dalloj* functions as a lexical reciprocal with the meaning ‘to distinguish, to differentiate’ (on lexical reciprocals, see Knjazev 2007). In its transitive usage, this reciprocal has an object-oriented character (29), whereas in its intransitive usage, it is subject-oriented (30–31). As a rule, both transitive and intransitive uses of this verb appear in the so-called discontinuous construction, with the syntactic dominance of one of the participants. The subdominant participant is introduced by the prepositions *nga* (31), *prej* ‘from’ (30) and *me* ‘with’ (29). However, there are also two examples of the so-called simple reciprocal construction, where both participants are joined by a coordinating conjunction or expressed by a noun phrase in the plural (32). The intransitive examples of reciprocal use of the verb *dalloj* have an anticausative interpretation.

- (29) *Në Shqipëri s’e=dallo-jnë flamur-in*
 in Albania(F).DIR.SG NEG:3SG.ACC=discern-PRS.3PL flag(M)-ACC.SG.DEF
e Kosovë-s me të Bosnjë-s.
 L.ACC.SG Kosovo(F)-OBL.SG.DEF with L Bosnia(F)-OBL.SG.DEF
 ‘In Albania, they don’t distinguish between the Kosovo flag and the Bosnian flag.’
 (*Koha.mk*, 21.07.2012)

- (30) *Këtu parimisht dallo-jmë ne prej jush <...>.*
 here fundamentally discern-PRS.1PL we.NOM from you.ABL
 ‘This is where we fundamentally differ from you <...>.’
 (*A.z via Koha.mk*, 06.03.2012)

- (31) *Ilirët flisnin një gjuhë që dallohej nga gjuhët e popujve të tjerë të kohës së lashtë të Ballkanit.*
 ‘The Illyrians spoke a language that was distinct from the languages of other ancient Balkan peoples.’
 (*Historia e popullit shqiptar. Ilirët*, Muzafer Korkuti et al., 2002)

një gjuhë që dallo-hej nga
 INDF language(F).DIR.SG REL discern-NA.IPF.3SG from
gjuhë-t e popuj-ve të tjerë
 language(F)-DIR.PL.DEF L.DIR.PL people(M)-OBL.PL L other.M.DIR.PL
 ‘a language that was distinct from the languages of other peoples’

- (32) *Këto pjesë të qytet-it dallojnë edhe nga infrastruktur-a.*
 this.F.DIR.PL part(F).DIR.PL L city(M)-OBL.SG.DEF discern-PRS.3PL
 also from infrastructure(F)-NOM.SG.DEF
 ‘These parts of the city also distinguish in infrastructure.’
 (*Koha.mk*, 21.03.2012)

Table 3 and Figure 2 draw attention to the different distribution of the reciprocal meaning in terms of the opposition between active intransitive and non-active forms. Among the 128 passive forms, we observe 20 reciprocals, while among the 48 active intransitive forms, there are 37 reciprocals. From this distribution, at the very least, we can conclude that the active intransitive usages of the verb *dalloj* rarely express the more common non-reciprocal meaning of this verb. However, this issue requires further investigation.

Table 3. Reciprocal and non-reciprocal usages of the verb *dalloj* (first 300 examples, numbers rounded to two decimal places)

	number of examples	intransitive		transitive		non-active	
		number	share	number	share	number	share
reciprocal	81	37	0.46	24	0.30	20	0.25
non-reciprocal	219	11	0.05	100	0.46	108	0.49
Total	300	48	0.16	124	0.41	128	0.43

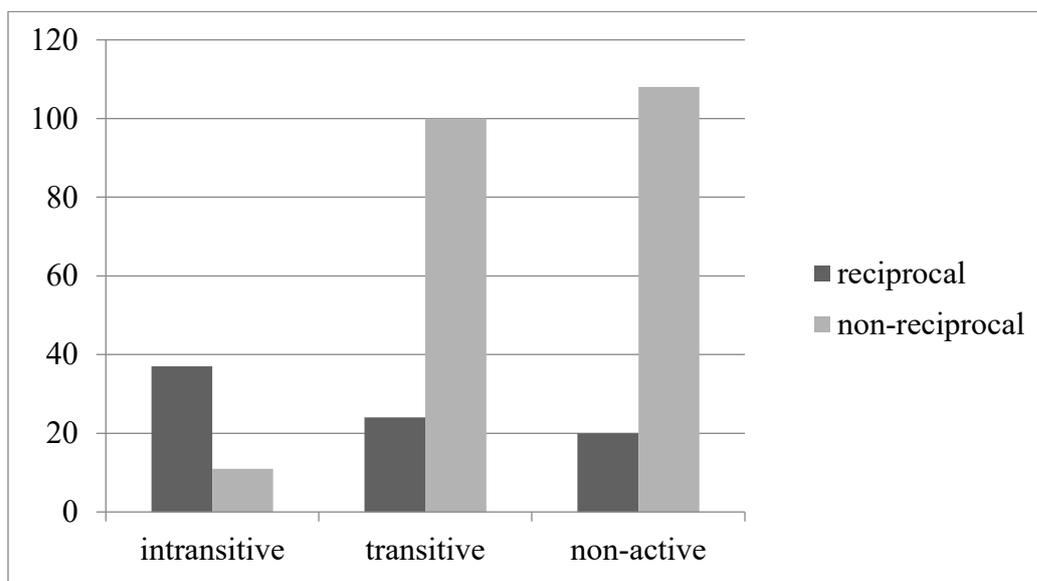


Figure 2. Reciprocal and non-reciprocal usages of the verb *dalloj* (first 300 examples)

For the verb *ndryshoj*, as mentioned above, active intransitive usages significantly outnumber the non-active ones (138 to 25; see Table 1). Almost all active intransitive usages of *ndryshoj* have an anticausative interpretation (33–34), while the majority of non-active usages have a passive interpretation (35). Nearly all non-active examples originate from newspapers and official documents. Imperfective and present tense forms of *ndryshoj* unambiguously refer to a process (33) or state (36), while perfective forms (aorist and perfect) refer to a change of state, which results in a new state (34). In our sample of 300 examples, the perfect dominated over the aorist (57 and 23 examples, respectively) and the present tense, often accompanied by the continuative particle *po*, dominated over the imperfect (77 and 8

examples), due to the high representation of newspapers in the ANC, in which “hot news perfect” is widespread (see Rusakov and Morozova 2014), and present rather than past states of affairs are usually described.

- (33) *Koncepti i sovranitetit kombëtar në kuadrin e globalizimit të botës dhe të integritimit Evropian po ndryshon.*

‘The concept of national sovereignty in the context of world globalization and European integration is changing.’

(*Gazeta Shqiptare*, 17.11.2006)

<i>koncept-i</i>	<...>	<i>po</i>	<i>ndrysho-n</i>
concept(M)-NOM.SG.DEF		PROG	change-PRS.3SG
‘the concept <...> is changing’			

- (34) *Koh-a ka ndryshuar.*
time(F)-NOM.SG.DEF have.PRS.3SG change.PTCP
‘The time has changed.’

(*Koha.mk*, 18.04.2011)

- (35) *Ndërkaq nga radhë-t e socialistë-ve do të ndrysho-het ministr-i i transport-it.*
meanwhile from row(F)-DIR.PL.DEF L.DIR.PL Socialist(M)-OBL.PL FUT
SBJV change-NACT.PRS.3SG minister(M)-NOM.SG.DEF L.M.NOM.SG
transport(M)-OBL.SG.DEF

‘Meanwhile, from among the Socialists the Minister of Transport will be changed.’

(*Rel via Zëri*, 30.07.2013)

One of the possible meanings of the verb *ndryshoj* is ‘distinguish, differ’, which is synonymous with *dalloj*. However, usages like (36) turned out to be infrequent in our sample (23 of 300 examples). All of them are active intransitive, as opposed to *dalloj*, which is used both transitively and intransitively in the same meaning. Almost half of these usages (11 of 23 examples) demonstrate lability of the reciprocal type (37), probably modeled on *dalloj*, which is described above.

- (36) *Dhe këto doreza ndrysho-jnë në gjatësi, materiale, ngjyra dhe dizajn.*
and this.F.DIR.PL glove(F).DIR.PL change-PRS.3PL in length(F).DIR.SG
material(M).DIR.PL color(F).DIR.PL and design(M).DIR.SG
‘And these gloves vary in length, material, color and design.’

(*Koha.mk*, 28.09.2012)

- (37) *Këto ëndrra ndryshonin nga njëra-tjetra, por, te secila prej tyre, heroi kryesorë ishin dhitë tona.*

‘These dreams differed from each other, but in each of them, the main heroes were our goats.’

(*Koha e dhive*, Luan Starova, 1993)

këto *ëndrra* *ndrysho-nin* *nga një-r-a*
 this.F.DIR.PL dream(F).DIR.PL change-IPF.3PL from one.of.two-F.NOM.SG
tjetr-a
 other-F.NOM.SG
 ‘these dreams differed from each other’

It can be stated that *ndryshoj* is a labile verb with a secondary development of non-active usages in bureaucratic speech style.

4 Conclusion

A pilot corpus-based study of eight verbs demonstrating P-lability has shown that Albanian verbs behave differently in this respect. Phasal verbs *filloj* ‘begin’ and *mbaroj* ‘finish’ exhibit lability quite consistently. The motion verb *lëviz* ‘move’ is also a labile verb, with a predominance of active intransitive usages (presumably original) over active transitive and non-active ones. The verb *ziej* ‘boil; seethe; ferment’ displays variation between non-active and active intransitive usages (so far, no significant semantic differences between these usages have been established).

Deadjectival color verbs *zbardh* ‘whiten; brighten’ and *skuq* ‘make/color red; fry’ demonstrate lability only in their basic color-related meanings (which are relatively infrequent), while in their figurative uses, they employ morphologically non-active forms in intransitive contexts. The verbs of distinction and change *dalloj* ‘distinguish; differentiate’ and *ndryshoj* ‘change; vary, distinguish’ behave differently. *Dalloj* primarily employs active intransitive forms in reciprocal meanings and morphologically non-active forms in other meanings. In contrast, *ndryshoj* is a labile verb with a secondary development of non-active usages.

From a semantic perspective, most of our verbs exhibit an anticausative type of lability, as well as the rarer reciprocal mobility (*dalloj* and, to some extent, *ndryshoj*).

For the next stages of the research, the following objectives are set:

- expanding the range of verbs to cover all verbs demonstrating lability in Albanian, including those with other types of lability, primarily conversive lability;
- incorporating a diachronic aspect (tracing the development of lability from the earliest Albanian written records) and a diatopic aspect (comparing regional and dialectal varieties of Albanian in terms of lability expression);
- placing Albanian lability in the broader context of how lability is realized in Balkan languages.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 — person; ABL — ablative; ACC — accusative; AOR — aorist; COMP — complementizer; CMPR — comparative; DAT — dative; DEF — definite; DIR — direct case; F — feminine; FUT — future; IMP — imperative; INDF — indefinite; IPF — imperfect; M — masculine; MF — ambiguous noun; NACT — non-active; NEG — negation; NOM — nominative; OBL — oblique case; PL — plural; PROG — progressive; PRS — present; PTCP — participle; REL — relativizer; SBJV — subjunctive; SG — singular.

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