

## Predicted Conversational Speech: Accuracy and Epistemic Markers

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### Abstract

*This paper analyzes prediction of speech in conversational interaction realized by informants aged 21-27, which in our context expresses possible future utterances of subjects acquainted with each other. The data is compiled by recorded spoken interaction and interview, where 37 respondents projected utterances that would be said in a certain topic or context by their bestfriend, colleague, crush or a person of certain profession. In total, 1102 options were articulated. When they resulted in coherence with their friend's, sister's or colleague's response (after confirmation through telephone), they stressed the high level of mutual recognition and possibility of psycho-social perception of a person to serve as source for predicting future utterances. Therefore, it is concluded that accurate prediction is highly based on the density of pre-communication, episodic memory of conversations with that person in certain topics, epistemic stance/authority, habitual linguistic behaviors etc. There are found variety of pragma-linguistic manners in which the speaker shows her/his version of what someone else would say. Higher scale of accuracy has been noticed at family members and close friends.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The possibility to pattern linguistic habits and similar reactions of certain persons implicates that many conversational turns are repeatable and can become routinized and calculated in the hearer's mind. We often use constructions such as: *now he will say..., surely, she/he will react like this..., no, because perhaps she will get mad and say...etc.* Such statements aren't motivated intuitively. They incorporate various psychological reasons related to the subject's personality, emotional state, psycho-social conditions, or may be based on experience, when the speaker has received similar responses about that kind of topic or context. Thus, personally experienced events lead to hypothetical suggestions about future utterances (Ferreira 2021, Park 2018, Koester & Hanford 2018) or culturally-based future behaviours (Slors 2021). They also emphasize and carry the indication of greater evidence and the possibility that occurrences are factual (Speas 2018, Mulder 2017), as they are easier to be anticipated (Pfander & Couper-Kuhlen 2019).

Predicted speech isn't related to *already told* messages as it usually is dealt with in reported speech in many studies of storytelling or other spoken/written interactions (Berger & Doehler 2015, Holt 2017, Clift 2007, Tannen 2007) - rather, it considers a central concern *expected utterances* or *verbal/emotional reactions* of others. Studies on the realization of reported thoughts (Park 2018, Haakana 2007, Couper-Kuhlen 2007) are also discussions about what *has not been said*. But differently from *predicted speech*, they are based on real contexts and are shaped and assessed in line with utterances already produced in the past.

The present study treats the predictability of speech turns, which are explored constructally and pragma-linguistically by identifying grammatical parts, their context-basis and linguistic markers that portray the epistemic/evidential stance of the speaker while conveying socially situated predictions. The investigation of this phenomenon constitutes an innovative approach towards the source of a reported speech, which here isn't a 'revoiced' sequence or associated with reported thoughts (Park 2018), but a future-oriented "active voice" (Simmons & LeCouteur 2011).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Hypothetical Speech (Previous Studies)

Koester and Hanford (2018) and Koester (2014) have examined hypothetical reported speech deployed strategically in business interactions and identified its most frequent functional patterns: problem–solution-evaluation, claim–evidence, evaluative summary etc. According to these studies, HRS seeks to influence future actions, acknowledge the other party's position by voicing imaginary words or thoughts, show competence through imagined dialogue etc. The hypothetical discourse was also examined by Simmons & LeCouteur (2011) in therapy sessions while proposing behaviour changes and by Golata (2012), who noticed some of its interactional functions such as illustrating assessment, taking a position in arguments etc.

Sams (2010) has made a study about the quotations that portray events of the past, which according to her (p.3152-3159), "act as demonstrations of mental states, rather than demonstrations of a particular situation" because they are not about any previously uttered speech. She also mentions future dialogues that participants deploy in their turns. In her examples (p.3152-3154), actors create 'future quotes' or emotional states for themselves and the interlocutor present: *you'll be like..., I'll be like...* as forms with widespread use (see Romaine & Lange 1991, Lampert 2013; ). Thus, speakers create frame structures of each other's utterances and prosodic cues while interacting (as proved by research above) and before even seeing each other directly. That's the case when we share our versions of potential responses we will supposedly receive, telling ourselves or others: *if I say this, he/she will say that..., or if I do this, he/she will react like that*. This isn't only valid at *preferred constructions*, depending on the influence of social norms and cultural conventions (Slors 2021), e.g. the "appropriateness" of a linguistic behaviour where women are expected to be more sensitive and use more modal words (Jahiu 2020a, 2020b), or when polite principles require/also predict a similar cue. Our case has to do with more complex and subjective assessments (though based on previous experience/knowledge) of future constructions: with emotive involvement, episodic memory of the speaker, etc.

The linguistic structure of predicted reports in our corpus basically coincides with *direct reported speech*: communicative/reporting verb + another person's (presumed) voice. As we said, this phenomenon is not connected with real occurrences but potential ones with different

levels of certainty and accuracy. Thus, the “quote” in our case doesn’t provide “real evidence” (Holt 1996, 2017, Galatolo 2007, Clift 2006, Rae & Kerby 2007) or demonstration (Clark & Gerrig 1990), rather it is a particular *irrealis*, but possible format which serves as “an opportunity to provide an upshot of the hypothetical scenario through an evaluative summary” (Koester & Handford 2018, p.8).

The reported speech also constitutes a “compelling claim to epistemic authority that it can deter co-participants from continuing with their assessments” (Clift 2006, p.585), thus functioning as evidence for rhetorical purposes. However, in our case, it indicates the degree of mutual recognition. We chose acquainted/familiar subjects to be *the presupposed authors* of predicted speeches delivered by our informants, as “persons are generally treated as knowing more about their relatives, friends, pets, jobs, and hobbies than others” (Heritage 2012:6). Otherwise, the predictions would be framed on restricted, general, conversational and cultural rules.

We must outline the fact that no matter how sophisticated methods are applied, there isn’t a guarantee for 100% accuracy in predicting future reactions in hypothetical situations because, evidentially, they have never happened. Consequently, their authenticity/validity cannot be objectively measured, as they comprise “fictitious discourse” (Golata 2012:6). However, the possibility to predict speech turns exists (what validates our endeavour to explain it. Wee considers that asking the original presupposed author about the assumed reaction directly provides useful insights into showing an approximate accuracy of predicted utterances.

## **2.2.Projectability of upcoming speech**

In the Conversational Analysis approach, predictability, as a notion, coincides with the projectability of turn constructional unit (TCU), as the smallest complete unit, coined as a term by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). According to them, “unit types so usable allow a projection of the unit-type underway, and what, roughly, it will take for an instance of that unit-type to be completed. Unit-types lacking the feature of projectability may not be usable in the same way” (p.702). A segment of conversation comprises a TCU when listeners are able “to predict both the type of action underway and the possible completion of that action” (Liddicoat 2004), to give an “orientation to a precise placement of talk....” (Jefferson 1973:48).

Hayashi (2004:1338) sees projection as a “property of human action by which an individual action (or a part of it) foreshadows what comes next in the temporal unfolding of interaction”. In this line, Pfander & Couper-Kuhlen (2019) stress that simultaneous speech is bilateral: “what the current speaker is in the process of saying allows the second speaker to anticipate what will come next” (p.38). They argue that projection is rhythmic: “...the current speaker can be seen to set up a rhythmic frame, ... second speakers use this frame to coordinate their incoming with the ongoing talk” (p.41). Lerner (1991, 1996) mentions instances where a turn is completed together by two speakers (joint production) who can finish one of other’s utterances, called *collaboratively constructed sentences* (1991, p.444). Thus, “...the hearer continues the projected compound TCU to a next possible completion place for the unit as a whole (1996:241). Chevalier & Clift (2008) describe cases when participants can ‘predict’ where a turn of speech is headed, despite the syntactic incompleteness – as a highly coordinated activity. They attribute a significant role to French’s syntax as SVO language in projecting the next type of items and “sound stretches and other speech perturbations that are mobilized for

interactional purposes” (p.1746). Therefore, in every turn, the speaker calculates an approximate response or a potential trajectory of the conversation. The ability to predict utterances by social/cultural practices determines how conversations are initiated, regulated, closed and maintained.

Acuña Ferreira (2021) has examined hypothetical constructed dialogues in third-party complaint interactions, which are explicitly framed by verbal constructions with verbs of sayings “I'm gonna say to him..”, conditional structure: and “if some day...”, where dialogues are focused on defending the complainer's remedial action in the unfair situation on future or possible subsequent confrontation. Also, they implicate emotional closeness: intimate or distant ones.

### 3. DATA AND METHODS

To analyze the predicted speech (PS henceforth), conversations of 37 women with a friend<sup>1</sup> were recorded (not directly with the author because we wanted the participants to feel free and spontaneous) in an isolated environment, telling her scenarios which contain predicted speeches. They were enabled by utilizing psycho-social information. Interactions were unfolded and recorded in a public gymnasium. Participants were asked to predict their best friend's, sister's, brother's, crush's reaction in three contexts/topics: *love, family, work/studies* - based on real-life occurrences while interacting with (mostly) a close friend. We didn't restrict them on specific themes to provide them with enough space and a wider perspective to select the proper occurrences that allow them to express higher probability PSs. However, pre-determined topics imposed certain events more than potential occurrences they would have chosen spontaneously.

Nevertheless, they had the chance to make up situations. However, many parts were filled with repeated patterns of the presupposed author's reaction, as otherwise. It wouldn't be possible to elicit typical reactions. They also were told not to share an identical story that has already occurred in the past but rather a modified or totally imagined one.

After that, they had an interview with the author to deliver other potential responses they'd receive and shortly to give the reasons that urged them to provide the PSs. They had the chance to make more than one prediction in conversation and then give all the options in the interview. Also, they had to give concrete conversational turns, not just to specify the expected speech act with lack of verbal precision, e.g. declaring: *when X, then she'd shout\** - but they were instructed to give lexical pieces they'd hear in that situation. These verbal reactions of their sister/brother/colleague that were given as options by a speaker were confirmed by them as (in)accurate through telephone by the author (with the permission of respondents) immediately after the options produced in conversation & interview were written. First of all, our respondents contacted presupposed authors. Then the researcher briefly explained to them the study and the reason for questioning the matter. Then, to create an environment to answer more naturally, respondents described scenarios to them and asked explicitly if they would respond/react with exact constructions which informants proposed. E.g. *Drena, if I'd tell you*

<sup>1</sup> A friend was selected by participants themselves after author's pre-requirement (before direct realization of the study) to interact with a well-known person. Their role was procedural, but important on eliciting more qualitative outcome, as they helped on reminding respondents about more recent and typical stories and provided more commodity on interaction.

*that I've bought a new car, would you laugh and say: yeah in a parallel universe or...(other options)?*<sup>2</sup>

Their crush and “the fictional waiter” were not able to be contacted, so we used the material to describe the generality of creative linguistic productions (crush) and “propositions which are to be taken for granted, via the force of diverse conventions, as unchallengeable by the hearer and thus requiring no evidentiary justifications by the speaker” (Givon 1982:24), as is the case with a fictional waiter. The study took place in Prishtina (Kosovo), and the overall procedure took more than four hours.

#### **4. PREDICTED REPORTS IN OUR CORPUS**

Before entering the statistics part, to offer an overview of how predicted speeches were manifested concretely, in this section, we'll analyze some conversations of our respondents (relevant parts of the study), which contain PSs, in the length of one conversational turn, accompanied with friend's reaction of such prediction.

We need to clarify that the predicted responses in this study are not deeply guided and facilitated by narrow local conventions. However, they are not completely disengaged, e.g. when bad news is shared, console words are expected, congrats and so on follow good news. But, in our case, they typically are based on the speaker's competence/entitlement (related to direct experience) to make assessments (Heritage & Raymond 2005, Pomerantz 1984) of someone he/she knows, and thus creates phrases or clauses they'd use in a particular situation.

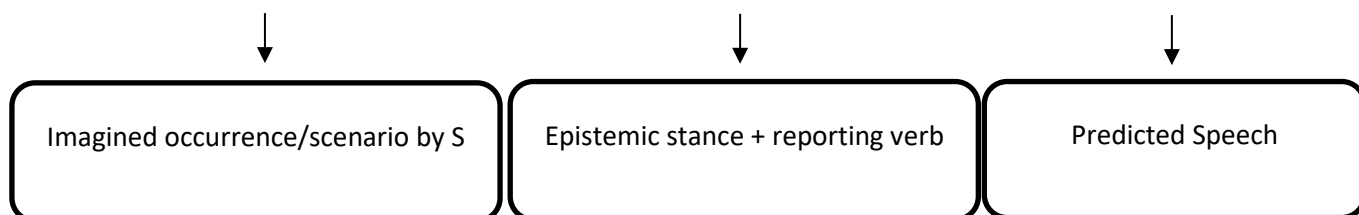
The turn which carries the predicted report was expressed in most cases of our corpus with conditional clauses, where the *if clause* is the part that draws a picture of a supposed scenario that waits for his/her reaction. The second (main clause) contains the *predicted report*. Its structure consists of three main parts: *a. imagined or a modified (similar to “real-life”) scenario, b. the modal word (adverb, auxiliary modal) that evaluates the likelihood + communicative verb, c. the PS - subject's expected utterance*. So, PS also involves the presupposed author and his linguistic habits – it is a kind of complex combination of two contexts. E.g. if Linda predicts a speech, her mom's reaction, and predicted format is correlated with mom's social habits, which are also part of the utterance, because PS doesn't express a volitive modality (in our case, and when it's not a joke), but has many multimodal resources.

a.Nëse i tregoj nënës që kam ajo me gjasë do të thoshte: s'ke mësuar mjaftueshëm e dashur dështuar në test

*If I tell my mom that I've failed the  
test*

*she probably would say*

*you didn't learn enough darling*



<sup>2</sup> The manner of formulating questions and the fact they were conscious that their feedbacks are used for public study of an unknown person (social desirability) may also have exerted control on the (non)confirmation of PSs.



The predicted speech is a sophisticated construction - a product of the speaker's creativity but is not based on the speaker's intuition or desire. Rather, it is strongly justified by Linda's relevant beliefs about her mom. How she perceives and memorizes her socio-psychological characteristics etc., and also how she thinks her mom would react in a certain context. PS is preceded by a conditional clause in the example above. The "if" is "a turn-initial token that projects an expanded turn shape, and delays by at least one turn-constructive component the occurrence of the next possible turn-transition place" (Lerner 1991:443). In our case, both, the *if clause* and PS are projected by one speaker, since there is not a logical/conventional implication (by persons that don't know (well) the presupposed author) of what speaker's friend will say<sup>3</sup>. Reporting verb also may be: *tell (she'd tell me you didn't learn...)*, *make (in Albanian language: ma boni: shko (she said go))* or *performative: shout, accuse (she'd accuse me...)*, which also serve to attribute the communicative act to presupposed author. According to Ivanova (2013:91), "without a reporting verb, reported speech is unattributed to any author other than the current speaker, so, ...that verb attributes the quotation to a specific author and detaches the time within the reported situation from the moment of current interaction" (p.89), "...indicating that it stands with or 'associates' dialogically with that proposition (White 2012:63).

As we will see, the more insecure the speaker is, the more imaginative/creative character is attributed to the predicted report.

Except for the formula *if X, than Y*, which is the most frequent, in 117 cases construction, the format is *when X, than Y, so Z* e.g.

b. Kur e pyes për dashuri, ajo refuzon të flasë, kështu që ajo do të thoshte: ta ndërrojmë temën.

*When I asked her about her love life, she refused to talk, so she'd say: let's change the topic.*

X

Y

Z

In Y, the speaker foresees the "negative face" she'd cause by doing X. Z includes the communicative (reporting) verb and PS because they function complementally with each other. This construct is used whenever a similar experience is mentally accessible as a concrete and visual mental model (how something was represented in the real world), so the predicted utterance (Z) is interrelated and shaped with previous similar social interaction, while an *if...* formula has more imaginative components.

These syntactic regularities in the Albanian Language are used broadly when someone delivers this kind of assumptions. Speakers may keep these assumptions about potential reactions to themselves or share with others to show "how smart we are" on pre-portraying

<sup>3</sup> In other contexts, it is possible that the PS part to be complemented by interlocutor if the *author* (in Goffman's footing terms (1981)) is well-recognized by both interactants.

future occurrences or to serve other communicative functions: to be funny, bet with others etc. Below, we'll see some concrete realizations<sup>4</sup>.

#### **4.1. Best friend**

In the utterance below, the reporter predicts the reaction after telling her best friend that she found the love of her life:

(1) Topic: Love

A: ermmm... Nëse i tregoj asaj që prej tash jom në ↑lindhje, ka me thon: ↑oooh ma nfund t'mori dikush, po gzohna ↑shum për ↑ty ose s'muj me besu pa e pa<sup>5</sup>.

*erm...If I tell her from now I'm in ↑relationship, she will say: ↑oooh you finally got ↓someone, I'm ↑so happy for ↑you or<sup>6</sup> I will not believe if I don't see him.*

B: [hh: je shumë naïve edhe budallic, ajo tkish xhelozu

[hh:: You are naïve and foolish, she will be jealous of ↑you

***Declared probability: 100%      Confirmed by best friend: Correct***

A gives two options of PSs and uses the auxiliary verb *will* before them, which expresses the strong possibility of an action that is expected in the future. She may not have proved exactly this response in real occasions of the past. However, potential previous complaints of A, e.g. *I will never find anyone...*, may have urged A to predict her best friend's surprise for such information and cause impressions for these possible feedbacks: *you finally got someone; I will not believe if I don't see him*. If she were optimistic during previous talks about that topic, the PS wouldn't have too much surprise/joke nuances.

As we see, B considers as *naïve* these options of implicating the excitement of her best friend. "By saying something, the speaker opens himself to the possibility that recipients will affront him by not listening or will think him forward, foolish or offensive Goffman" (1967:37). Thus, while sharing the PS, speaker A doesn't just share a referential code, but speaks about her way of perceiving characters to whom she refers as *innocent* in this case, by indicating that her best friend will be happy for her.

(2) Topic: Family

C: Nëse i thom që ko me i ↓ndihmu vllait tem që osht 7-vjeç n'↑matematik, ↑sigurt ka me thon: ↑ooh veç po don me ↑gjetë ↓arsye, ↑kështu që s'muj me përdorë ket ↓arsyetim

*If I tell her that I have to ↓help my 7-year old brother in ↑maths she'll ↑surely say: ↑ooh you only want to ↑find a ↓reason, ↑that's why I can't use this ↓explanation.*

<sup>4</sup> As the term which is the center of the study, "predicted conversational speeches" indicates that the main, we will briefly analyze them within conversation, and show implications given by their construct.

<sup>5</sup> Turns are not written in standard variety of Albanian, but are transcribed as they were recorded (in Gheg dialect, which differs significantly from the basis dialect of standard: Tosk Albanian).

<sup>6</sup> The *or* connector is bolded to signal that there are given more than one option.

D: Po de po:

*Yeah right*

**Declared probability: 90%,      Confirmed by best friend: Incorrect<sup>7</sup>**

The sentence's structure is *If x, (than) y*, where PS also includes imitation of the prosodic prominences, implicating irony that she expects to hear: *ooh you only want to find a reason!*. "Oh" as a second assessment is also used to index epistemic independence and priority (Heritage & Raymond 2005:26, Heritage 2002) or inappositeness and reluctance (Heritage 1998). Within the utterance of B, the *ooh part* is a presupposed second position, which in this case entails rebuttal or inappositeness of the first position's claim, considering previous similar situations. As we see, after PS, C offers an additional comment: *that's why I can't use this explanation.*, by which also indirectly approves that her best friend is right, and the assumption: "it is only explanation" is suggested to be "real", because she generalizes it as an "*explanation in use*", not as a fact.

#### 4.2.Sister

From PSs with a sibling, we chose two cases: one related to future plans of a job which E claims to have (work), and the second with "dating a guy" (love).

##### (3) Topic: Work

E: Kur i thom ↑asaj po du me u bo:: ↑shkencta:re, ke:sh me ↓mu si ashtu "ti s'mun bon kurgjo" kshtu që me gjas mkish kesh ↑pak edhe kish thon: ↑shko moj ↓relaksohu qyre dillin ose bir ↓flej

*When I say to ↑her I want to be: a ↑scienti:st, she always lau:ghs and shouts to ↓me "↑you cannot do anything", so probably she'd smile and say: go↑ and ↓relax the sun is shining↑, or take a ↓nap*

F: ↑oohh: s'koka motër e ↓mi:r

*Ohhh:: she's not a ↓goo:d sister*

E: I kom dhon she::ja me menu qashtu hahaha

*I gave her the clu::es to think so hahaha*

**Declared probability: 100%,      Confirmed by sister: Correct**

That's another example when speaker E seeks to demonstrate her sister's common reaction when she talks about her future plans. E's second reaction *I gave her the clues to think...* shows that this PS is built by giving credit to the assumed prediction of the "presupposed author" about the speaker E as she says, she gave clues not to take seriously her carrier goals, so the PS

<sup>7</sup> Although as e report was confirmed as "untrue" by her bestfriend, C said "she's just shy and doesn't want to look with lack of empathy publicly, but factually she never believes me". Despite this unilateral comment, we considered the confirmation of her bestfriend's as a valid assessment of truthfulness.



fully reflects the way E thinks that her sister perceives her, when she sets/expresses goals on the future. Thus, she elicits this prediction (and defines the future speech act: *shouts*) from generalized assessment/utterance that her sister claims to her “*you cannot do anything*” and evokes this linguistic outcome (PS). Even though this usual assessment isn’t directly related with her goal to become a scientist, “a decontextualized quotation may be used to demonstrate something of the quoted speaker’s character, presenting a report of the action to which that speaker is responding has deeper implications about that speaker (Rae & Kerby 2007:184-185).

**(4) Topic: Love**

G: Nëse i tre:goj që po dal me një ↑dja:l, po ↓menoj që ka me ↓kcy:: pej ve:ni tu ↓thon: kush dreqi ka me pa:së fatin me dal me ket krije::së? ose kush osht ↑ai? Tregoma ni ↓fo:to meniher

*If I te:ll her I’m going out with a ↑guy I ↓think she’ll ↓ju:mp and ↓say: who the hell has the luck to meet this strange creature? or who is ↑that dude? Tell me a ↓picture immediately*

***Declared probability: 80%      Confirmed by sister: Incorrect***

The first prediction (*who the hell...*) is related to G’s awareness that her sister defines her as a " strange person "; thus, it creates evidence to define a reaction that includes this epithet. The second PS *who is that dude? Tell me a picture immediately* inherently suggests the close relationship between two sisters and the “obligation” G has to tell her everything, as she predicts the imperative mood in the request she’d receive if she’d tell her about the new love.

**4.3.Colleague**

In this subpart, we took two PSs of the same respondent, who related her “coming late habit” to both contexts.

**(5) Topic: Work**

H: Nëse i ↓thom po vi:j për pe:s ↑minuta:, ka mem thon s’muj me prit edhe ni ↑or

if I ↓say to her for I’m coming for five ↑minutes, she’d say I cannot wait another ↑hour

***Declared probability: 100% Confirmed by colleague: Correct***

The PS “*I cannot wait another hour*” implicates H’s habit of coming late to work and also her awareness that her colleague doesn’t believe her when she makes this consistent comment. So this PS provides implications of this, even though it is not said explicitly.

As it goes beyond what one says, and the inference is not achieved by purely linguistic features, it is a *conversational implicature* (Grice 1975), with a degree of conventionality, as it is logically implicated, not just in this conversation or between certain speakers.

**(6) Topic: Love**

G: Kur ja përmeni martesën e ↑o::ndrrave, ajo ↓ke:sh, kshtu që kish thon kush osht viktimja për me pri:t tri or kur thuhët “për pes ↑minuta”

Whenever I mention my wedding ↑dream, she ↓laughs, so she'd say who's the victim to wait three hours when it is said "for five ↑minutes"?

H: Po mir e ka:

Yeahh she's right

**Declared probability: 100%      Confirmed by colleague: Incorrect**

G relates the "being late problem" with a possible sequence she'd receive if she'd tell her colleague she's marrying someone. It reflects the prominent characteristic of her communication with her colleague and the facts that she would view it as funny fact (when she says *she'd laugh*) and that she humorously considers him "a victim",

These and other PSs wouldn't be possible without fully integrating relevant mental constructs: their conceptualization, memory based generalizations, categorization of relations between what the speaker shows about presupposed author's personality or usual reactions on one side, and how he/she formulates her perceiving through an utterance on the other side, which has vital importance on summarizing one construction and attributing it to another author than themselves. Thereof, there are portions of discourses, general, conceptual and communicative dimensions containing cue phrases that suggest some indirect instructions to the speaker on how to produce, and express the scale of certainty through modal words and the complex relationship between the semiotic resources and psycho-social characteristics. These predictions also enable the speakers to recognize the appropriate way to perform certain topics, and thus, orient them to soften abruptness of selected themes.

## 5. STATISTICS ABOUT PREDICTIONS: (IN)CORRECT OPTIONS

Now we'll focus on some relevant statistics to measure the number of options given within conversation and interview after profiling an event and the accuracy<sup>8</sup>.

Topic	Bestfriend	Accurate pred.	Sister/brother	Accurate pred.	Colleague	Accurate pred.	Crush
Love	224	212	114	81	39	22	112
Family	77	70	141	129	61	45	68
Work/studies	56	55	81	79	71	55	58
Total	357	337	336	289	171	122	238

<sup>8</sup> The term *accurate prediction* is used conditionally. It doesn't assume that enactments produced would be exactly the same in real life, because the prediction "is clearly not real" (Koester 2018:2). Thus the evidence for such characterization was conditioned by the response of original presupposed author – as the most relevant actor to judge it.

Mean	119	↔	112.3	112	↔	96.3	57	↔	40.6	79.3
p-value	*0.1		*0.1	0.02		0.02	0.02		0.05	0.04

**Table 1. Number of options of PSs in each topic and of those confirmed as *true* through telephone by the presupposed author**

There is quite a difference in the number of options proposed in the ‘love topic’ and others in the *bestfriend* columns, so there is not a significant correlation between a number of options given in each topic, neither of those that were confirmed as correct on one-sample T-test. Each of 37 respondents gave approximately 6 options of responses they’d receive from their best friend in *love* topic (total 224) in several contexts, by which 212 (94.64%) are confirmed as possible reactions by them. This high number signals the frequency of time they discuss love (crush: relationships, and other stories/problems they face/share that are related to love) so that they’re able to correctly foresee the content of best friend’s turn and even whole potential conversation when the topic is love-related. On the other side, in the sister’s and colleague’s columns, there is a significant association between options in three topics and the number of accurate answers confirmed. Surprisingly, in the “work/studies topic”, they gave accurate options in 77.4% of cases at PSs with their colleague. At the same time, with sister & best friend they demonstrate being better predictors whenever they start talking about their job (even better then with the coworker or faculty colleague).

So, predictability in conversation is not only restricted to words or adjacency pairs (Sacks et al. 1974) - where after a question, the speaker expects an answer, greeting after greeting, and so on, but goes beyond these generally defined kinds of turns. A person, as we see can predict the content of the whole upcoming turn. The emotional state that will be triggered after something will be said is, even the epilogue of a whole conversation, before encountering their co-interlocutor, as we will demonstrate below.

High number of PSs in the *crush’s* column are mainly based on their “creativity” than on previous mutual interaction, because 32 (86.4%) of respondents declared they only have a brief greeting with him, while others a surface small talk. This non-supporting by real-life input didn’t suppress or inhibit candidate PSs on their mind. Their “shared future utterances” in this case are more reflection of their volitive attitude than epistemic stance, but as we see, the brain doesn’t necessarily need experience with that individual to produce stories. So, “speakers can also create fictive worlds of dialogue for future situations; because this is dialogue based on speech that has not or probably will not occur, it seems to be a type of “fake” quotation in that the quotations only exist in the world created by the current speakers” (Sams 2010:3152). Even though there is high number that took place at crush’s PRs, they remain speaker’s wishes and it wasn’t a difficult task to knit them, knowing their truth-value won’t be tested.

The high rate of confirmed *accurate predictions*, especially at *bestfriend’s* column shows that the future conversations with specific persons are not totally unknown or invisible. Of course, they probably won’t make exact copies of pre-drawn mental picture - they can exceed or disappoint the expectations - but assumptions before taking action or talking to somebody are reliable criterion to rely on. The scale of assurance, differs saliently depending on richness episodic memory of somebody or something, which facilitates or entangles accurate PSs. Also

many “rejected PSs” (confirmed as incorrect) were those which *denied the care about their friend* or included threats e.g. when the respondent said: *she’d threat me saying: if you bother me, say goodbye to this world.* – so presupposed authors may have decided to call them “incorrect” in order to not be viewed publicly as “immoral”, insensitive and so on (but this is just our logical assumption).

### 5.1. Pragmatic/modal markers surrounding predicted reports

One of the key aspects of PSs is that projections come with an estimate (big or small) of (un)certainty. All modal expressions induce a certain attitude, force and subjectivity of the speaker’s epistemic stance. Force of these markers is “merely predictive with respect to the profiled process” (Langacker 2007:14). Thus, informants’ presupposed PSs aren’t substantially factual claims, so they remain *irrealis* or subjective assessments, as they refer to an event that hasn’t occurred (yet). “Subjectification is the expression of the semantic-pragmatic tendency of meanings to become increasingly situated in the speaker’s subjective belief/attitude toward the situation” (Traugott 1989:35, cited by Sanders 1999:484) or with other words, “linguistic subjectivity is the interpretation of linguistic expressions in terms of some cognisant observer, thinker, emoter, and, of course, speaker” (Mushin 2001:1). Thereof, responses weren’t plausible in the same scale on each topic or part of the study. They saliently expressed this through lexical pieces of different categories: predicates, adverbs, particles etc. The distribution in conversations and interviews was relatively similar, but the variability of some markers

Type	Epistemic modals	N conversations	in	N interviews	in	Total	Mean
High certainty markers (HCM)	<i>garant, sigurisht, duhet</i> ( <i>certainly, surely,</i> <i>must</i> )	195		105		300	150
Cognitive verbs (CV)	<i>Po meno, sa pom</i> <i>kujtohet, sa pe maj</i> <i>n’men</i>  ( <i>I think<sup>9</sup>, as I</i> <i>remember</i> )	172		189		361	180.5
Low certainty markers	<i>ka mundësi, me gjasë,</i> <i>nashta, doket</i> (possibly,	177		222		399	199.5

<sup>9</sup> There is a wide debate about the cognitive verbs’ epistemic class. Wierzbicka (2006:208) calls them “the most important epistemic phrase” also Cappelli (2007) states that *think* alludes “computational process over available evidence” (p.185), In the other side, Almeida et al. (2012), Arrese (2011) Cornillie (2009, 2010), Söderqvist (2020:14) stress their evidential nature. In our view, specifically in Albanian language and in study’s corpus, it expresses assertion or opinion about a statement based in knowledge, and is merely equivalent with *probably*.

(LCM)      *probably,      perhaps,*  
*seems)*

**Table 2. Types of epistemic markers and their number in conversation and interview part**

This tells that respondents used quite frequently such epistemic modals before or after sharing their version of PS. *Must* indicates that the speaker has evidence for the claim, which in itself possibly would not convince others than himself (Sanders 1999:478), while *surely* is a device to express the speaker's high conviction for his/her statement. So, "if one has authority to claim something, then perhaps that claim is less open to challenge or to be "defeated" by challenge" (Fox 2001:173).

Higher number of HCM in purely conversational corpora than in the interview shows that the speakers from the beginning (conv. part) present their strength of certainty towards what is to be reported and then continue with lower possibility options. The opposite is at CV and LCM, which tend to be more active in the interview part (especially LCM), most likely because they were asked to describe sources of evidence and the reasons which prompted construction of the PSs in concrete linguistic constructions – which in fact is very complex issue and difficult to explain, due to wide and complicated nature of factors that help to shape PSs. On the other side, there are lesser LCM at conversations<sup>10</sup>, what shows that they started operating with what they knew for certain. From these options, in the corpus: "*doket*" (*seems*) is used 39 times at imaginative scenarios constructions, especially on sister's and colleague's PSs during interview: *when I say that, she seems warm, whenever I claim that, it seems boring so, she...*, which marks mediated access to a referent and downgrades the claim (Heritage & Raymond 2005:19).

CVs, which pertain to the mental world of the speaker (Arrese 2011) and take into account the possible existence of alternative viewpoints which may potentially be true in addition to the ones they themselves are advancing (White 2003, 2012) also take place more on interview and usually express the speech act performed: *I think she'd threat me saying, I think she'd accuse me, as I remember, she shouted when I mentioned her ex* etc. They are followed by constructions: *kjo nënkupton...kjo domethon(that means that)*<sup>11</sup>.

The distribution in the terms of the subject informants attributed the PR are described below:

	LCM
Bestfriend	41 (10.2%)
Sister	59 (14.7%)
Colleague	102 (25.5%)

<sup>10</sup> The low certainty markers were very frequent while giving more than two options e.g. at first it is declared: *surely she will say X*, than...*or perhaps Y*. Simultaneously, LCM lower the authority and entitlement of the speaker to take responsibility about the option given.

<sup>11</sup> According to Marin-Arrese (2011), communicative evidential expressions (that means..., that suggests, ...), are similarly opaque in that they also leave open the possibility of potentially sharing the evaluation with other participants.



**HCM**

Bestfriend	174 (57.9%)
Sister	59 (19.6)
Colleague	41 (13.6%)
Crush	26 (8.6%)

**Table 3. Number of High and Low Certainty Markers at presupposed authors of PSs**

As we see, predicting their best friends' utterances, produced the highest number of HCM (especially on the love topic:), while low certainty markers were manifested overtly at crush's PSs. So, the modals help them to feel free to express their version of PSs, because they have the opportunity to implicate different degrees of reliability and to make it clear that are (not)totally sure about their statement<sup>12</sup>.

**6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The first aim of this study was to provide an overview of the possibility of predicting and construct unsaid utterances and to confirm the scale of the accuracy of such PSs by presupposed authors. The term *predicted speech* considers the fact that the hypothetical turns weren't factually said but are *partly imagined* and *creatively constructed*. However, their form wasn't arbitrarily uttered but based on previous experience, professional roles, personality traits of the reported speaker etc. We need to stress that the speaker could not have come to a unified prediction for the same subject in different contexts, as they assessed different reactions on varying circumstances.

All the predictions in this study came without instruction from the "presupposed author" like *I am this type of person...* etc. or great deal of reading psychology, but the speaker collected the relevant mental resources in episodic memory and formed the PS accordingly. However, as the interaction is social enterprise, though also depended on many cognitive and perceptive processes, it is not fabricated by the speaker alone without the influence of stimulus on the outside world. Also, as S unfolds the PS, she takes into consideration (in)direct evidence which "provides for a scene, an event, an artefact, etc. that *qua evidence* is thought of as relevant in determining the nature of some other scene, event, artifact, etc" (Pomerantz 1984b:608), which also paints the possible future utterance.

748 of 864 (86.57%) checked predictions were confirmed as accurate, without counting 238 crush's fictive PSs, which were unconfirmable, but served to prove the possibility to creatively produce several utterances based more on volition, desire than epistemic authority. Even though PSs were confirmed as quite accurate, predicted speeches in our case are characterized by high degree of subjectivity, bearing in mind that they were produced completely based on

<sup>12</sup> That's the case when persons are proved wrong about a statement. They can explain themselves saying: *I didn't say surely, I warned you that it is possible or probable locution*. That's why their additional function is to create space for "not necessarily being right".

individual impressions, experience, semantic and episodic memory - foregrounding speaker's evaluation of such sources.

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