

BASQUE VERBAL MORPHOLOGY

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1. Introduction.

No aspect of Basque linguistics has received more attention over the years than the morphology of the verb. In comparison with most other European languages, Basque exhibits a verbal morphology which is remarkably rich and which has often seemed rather exotic. As a consequence, innumerable books have been devoted and continue to be devoted entirely to the Basque verb.

Although a number of earlier scholars had published studies of the Basque verb (e.g., Zavala 1848 and Inchauspé 1858), in many respects the serious study of Basque verbal morphology begins with the work of Bonaparte (Bonaparte 1869), whose collection of verb forms from nearly all Basque dialects provided the data base for decades of study, although few of Bonaparte's own interpretations are generally accepted today.

Almost every scholar who has worked on Basque has contributed something to the study of verbal morphology, yet it is not unjust to say that by far the greatest contribution to our understanding of the verb has come from the work of just two men. The first, of course, was the great German linguist Hugo Schuchardt, whose extraordinarily disorganized writings conceal a variety of profound insights into the structure of the Basque verbal system; many, perhaps most, of his analyses are still accepted today. The second in time, though surely the first in importance for the study of the verb, was the distinguished French linguist René Lafon. It is very sad that Professor Lafon did not live long enough to attend this conference. Much of what I shall have to say in this paper is directly based on his work, originally presented in his book of 1943 and later developed in a long series of papers in the *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris*.

Since my time is limited, I will not attempt to summarize everything we know about the Basque verb; the main features have already been well described many times. Instead, I shall concentrate on areas which present

particularly interesting problems, especially problems which, in my opinion, have received too little attention, and, where possible, I shall suggest what I hope are plausible approaches to these problems.

2. Non-Finite Verb Forms.

Every Basque verb possesses a set of non-finite forms—infinite, participles, verbal noun, and related forms; indeed, most verbs possess *only* such forms, being conjugated entirely periphrastically. Let us briefly review these, taking *ikusi* «to see» as an example.

The simplest form is the so-called infinitive, here *ikus*. The infinitive is in most, though not all, cases identical with the verb stem. The citation form, variously called the «past participle» or the «perfective participle», is usually derived from the stem by adding one of several suffixes: *ikusi*. The «verbal noun» is derived from the stem by adding a different suffix: *ikuste(a)*; this is possibly the same nominalizing suffix seen in such derivatives as *eurite* «period of rain», from *euiri* «rain». The «present participle» or «imperfective participle» is etymologically just an old locative of the verbal noun: *ikusten*. And the «future participle» is formed by adding one of the genitive suffixes to the past participle: *ikusiko* or *ikusiren*. Other non-finite forms can be regarded as straightforward nominal inflections of the past participle or verbal noun; e.g., *ikusia* «seen», *ikusita*, *ikusirik* «having (been) seen», *ikusteko*, *ikustera* «in order to see», *ikustean* «on seeing», etc. All of these forms appear to be fundamentally nominal in nature: every one either has or can take typical nominal affixes or can appear with a postposition, as in northern *ikus arte*, southern *ikusi arte* «au revoir».

Nearly all the oldest verbs in Basque exhibit what appears to be a prefix in their non-finite forms; this prefix appears variously (and partly predictably) as *e-*, *i-*, *j-*, or \emptyset -; e.g., *etorri* «to come», *ebaki* «to cut», *ikusi* «to see», *ibili* «to walk», *joan* «to go», *jan* «to eat», *ukan* «to have», *utzi* «to leave». Professor Michelena has shown that all of these are derived from original **e-* (Michelena 1961, pp. 64-65). This prefix does not generally appear in the directly conjugated forms of these verbs, where they exist: *dator* «he is coming», *dakusat* «I see it», *nabil* «I am walking», *zoaz* «you are going». The original force of this prefix is not known, but given that it appears in the (nominal) non-finite forms, but generally not in the (verbal) finite forms, a reasonable guess might be that it was originally a nominalizing affix of some sort, one which had the effect of converting a verbal root into a nominal stem which could then take various nominal affixes.

Several workers (Schuchardt 1923, p. 5; Wilbur 1976, p. 540; Wilbur 1979, p. 134) have identified this **e-* with the initial *e-* or *i-* found in a number of nouns; e.g., *igel* «frog», *izar* «star», *ikatz* «charcoal», *euiri* «rain». This identification is not impossible, but there does not seem to be a great deal of

Now consider the form *deutsat*. It can be analyzed in two different ways: either as a simple conjugated form of a verb *eutsi*, or as a form of **edun* containing an additional morpheme *-ts-*. This *-ts-*, of course, is just the element which has traditionally been regarded as an indirect object marker in such forms as *diotsa* «he says it to him, he tells him» (compare *dio* «he says it»), and of course in the Bizkaian auxiliary forms like *deutsat*. The validity of this dual analysis is shown by the fact that the verb *eutsi* always takes an indirect object (e.g., *Eutsi diot* «I've grabbed it, I've got it»).

Moreover, there are other verbs which show the same sort of structure: verbal root + *-ts-* or *-k-* (or occasionally *-ka-*). In some cases the variation between shorter and longer forms is facultative: *jarrai* or *jarraiki* «to follow»; *ibardun* or *ibarduiki* «to be busy (with)». In other cases there is a clear semantic distinction: *egon* «to be (in a state)», *egoki* «to correspond to, to suit». In still other cases only the longer form is attested: *atxeiki* «to retain»; *iguriki* «to wait for»; *erauntsi* «to hit». What is significant is that in many, perhaps most, of these cases the form with *-ts-* or *-k-* takes an indirect object, while the shorter form, if it exists, most often does not—thus *egoki*, but not *egon*, takes an indirect object; *eutsi*, but not **edun*; *sorotsi* «to look at, look after», *atxeiki* «to retain», and the surviving forms of *eduki* all do.

All this supports the following conclusions:

- (1) A number of Basque verbs contain an element *-ts-* or *-k-* which was originally a separate morpheme following the verbal root¹.
- (2) The function of these morphemes was to mark a following indirect object.
- (3) These morphemes are identical with the morphemes *-ts-* and *-k-* which are found in the inflected forms of various verbs to mark the inclusion of an indirect object agreement marker.

It appears that *-ts-* and *-k-* were originally indirect object markers having some degree of independent existence, and that they came to be incorporated morphologically into preceding verbs. In some cases they have been reinterpreted as part of the verb stem, while in others they have retained an identity distinct from the verb stem. In the former case, the resulting compound verb has sometimes continued taking an indirect object down to the present day (e.g., *eutsi*, *egoki*), while in others it has been reconstrued as a simple transitive verb (e.g., *aurdiki* «to throw», *ebatsi* «to steal», and the non-finite forms of *eduki*).

1. Professor Michelena has pointed out to me that verbs ending in *-tsi* and those ending in *-ki* do not behave in the same way, since those in *-tsi* regularly lose their *-i* when forming the infinitive, while those in *-ki* often retain the *-i*; thus, *jauntsi* «to go down», infinitive *jaunts*, but *ebaki* «to cut», infinitive usually *ebaki* (though *ebak* and similar forms are attested; see Lafitte (1944), p. 203). This suggests that the original forms of the suffixes may have been *-ts* and *-ki*; on the other hand, it may simply be that infinitives ending in *-k* tend to be avoided for phonotactic reasons.

Essentially this analysis has been accepted, in its main lines at least, by Schuchardt (1893, p. 46), by Lafon (1943, p. 427), and apparently by Michelena (1977, p. 269). As Schuchardt (1893, p. 46) pointed out, it explains the *ts* in the verbs *erakutsi* «to show» and *erakatsi* «to teach», causatives of *ikusi* «to see» and *ikasi* «to learn»; they are derived from **e-ra-kus-ts-i* and **e-ra-kas-ts-i*, respectively; the presence of *-ts-* is semantically justified (see Section 4), it explains the phonological forms perfectly, and it is consistent with the fact that these verbs take indirect objects, although the simple verbs *ikusi* and *ikasi* do not.

What was the original source of *-ts-* and *-k-*? We cannot be sure, but I would like to suggest that they were *prepositions*—after all, they always precede pronominal elements, and they govern a particular case, the dative. The incorporation of prepositions into verb forms is well attested in other languages, including Amharic and the Munda languages of north India (all of these languages, incidentally, are exclusively postpositional today, like Basque). Prepositions are not directly attested at any period in Basque, but perhaps here we have a tantalizing residue of a time when the structure of Basque sentences was very different.

A last comment on these indirect object markers: Lafon (1943, p. 394) maintains that *-ts-* is derived historically from *-k-* + *-i-* by palatalization (**ki* > **ky* > *ts*). However, there appears to be no parallel in Basque for such a phonological development, and it seems best to regard *-ts-* and *-k-* as two unrelated elements performing similar functions.

There are other problems with the non-finite forms, but I shall mention just one more. As has long been known, certain verbs with stems in *-a* and *-o* acquire an extra *i* in derived forms; e.g., *erran* «to say», verbal noun *erraita*, agent noun *erraitaile*; similarly, *egon* «to be», *egoitea*; *izan* «to be», *izaitea*; *erbo* «to kill», *erbaitea*, *erbaile*, and others. So far as I am aware, no plausible explanation of this *i* has appeared in the literature.

3. Finite Forms.

I turn now to the finite forms of the verb. For lack of time I shall say little about the periphrastic forms which dominate the Basque conjugation, except to remark that it would be helpful to have an agreed standard set of names for the various periphrastic and simple forms, now that the forms themselves have been established for Euskara Batua by Euskaltzaindia.

Let us begin by looking at person agreement. The feature that has long fascinated linguists and dismayed foreign learners of the language is that the verb, in general, agrees in person and in number not only with its subject, but also with its direct object (if any) and its indirect object (if any).

Intransitive verbs adhere to the following pattern:

Pattern A: Subject-Root-(Indirect Object)

e.g., *nago*, *natorkizu*

while most transitive verb forms show a different pattern:

Pattern B: Direct Object-Root-(Indirect Object)-Subject

e.g., *nauzu*, *dizkizugu*

Past-tense and contingent² forms with third-person direct objects show Pattern A, with the direct object not being overtly marked; e.g., *nuen*, *nion*. These forms aside, since approximately the same prefixes are used to indicate intransitive subjects as direct objects, it is clear that Basque verbal morphology, just like the nominal morphology, is *ergative* in form (that is, intransitive subjects and direct objects are treated identically, while transitive subjects are treated differently). The historical origin of this ergative verbal morphology is unknown, though presumably it is related to the ergativity of the nominal morphology; see Trask (1979) for some discussion of this topic in general terms. Nor is it known why certain transitive forms show the first pattern rather than the second; see Trask (1977) and Heath (1977) for two opposing views on this. What is clear is that this ergative morphology can no longer be taken as evidence for the old «passive theory» of the Basque transitive verb; see Section 4 for discussion of this.

A striking feature of Basque verbal agreement is what might be called its «penetration». By this term I refer to the ability of the finite auxiliary to agree with the object, direct or indirect, of a verb which is separated from it by a string of participles, modals, and particles; e.g.,

- (1) *Biak eman behar izan al dizkizu?*
«Has he had to give you both of them?»

Here *dizkizu* agrees with *biak* «both» and the unrealized *zuri* «to you», direct and indirect objects of *eman*, in spite of the intervening material. This suggests that phrases like *eman behar izan al dizkizu* must be taken as single verbs, though this analysis is not without its problems; see Section 4 for an example.

The presence of a verbal noun usually serves to block penetration:

- (2) *Zuri eman nahi dizut.*
«I want to give it to you.»
- (3) *Zuri ematea nahi dut.*
«I want somebody to give it to you.»
(in some dialects, also «I want to give it to you»).

2. I use the term «contingent» for the set of forms called *eventual* by Lafitte (1944) and other writers.

The following sentences look at first like counterexamples to this claim:

- (4) *Irakurtzerat omen doatza.*
 «He is apparently going to read them.»
 (Heath 1974, p. 253)
- (5) *Kantatzera noazu bertso bat edo bi.*
 «I'm going to sing you a verse or two.»
 (from a song by Xabier Lete)

In each case the finite verb appears to be agreeing with an object of the verbal noun, and Heath (1974) analyzes (4) in just this way. But if it is possible to gloss these as «He is apparently going to them for reading» and «I'm going to you for singing a verse or two», then there is no penetration. I am not confident about the validity of such an analysis, but I would point out that in (5) there is apparently no agreement with the direct object of the verbal noun, a point which possibly supports the no-penetration analysis.

A topic which has been receiving a good deal of discussion recently is verbal agreement (or lack of it) with indefinite NPs. The general rule in virtually all dialects of Basque is that the verb *must* agree with a subject or object if it is a *definite* NP, though it appears that agreement with a definite indirect object can optionally be omitted in certain varieties of Low Navarrese if the indirect object is a noun (Irigoyen 1971, p. 468; Lafon 1961, p. 141); these dialects allow both (6) and (7):

- (6) *Eman dio haurrari.*
 «He has given it to the child.»
- (7) *Eman du haurrari.*
 ditto

In most dialects (7) is ungrammatical³. From the examples given in Corum (1975), it appears that indirect object agreement has been completely lost in some varieties of American Basque, and of course, as is well known, the speech of Elorrio, Arrasate, Oinati, and the Valley of Lenitz has lost the contrast between third singular and third plural direct object marking (Villasante 1978, pp. 12-13; Irigoyen 1971, p. 468). Otherwise, agreement with definite subjects and objects is universal.

Variation is the rule, however, in the type of agreement found with indefinite NPs. Some speakers do not allow a verb to agree with an indefinite subject or object at all, others require such agreement, while still others show complex variations. Compare, for example, the speech of Milafranga (French: Villafrance) in Lapurdi with that of Elorrio in Bizkaia:

3. José Borja has suggested to me that the variation between (6) and (7) is governed by thematic structure, with the verb agreeing with a definite NP when that NP is in focus, but usually not when the NP is out of focus. This may well be the case, but I have had no opportunity to investigate the Low Navarrese dialects exhibiting this variation.

In Milafranga, one *must* say

(8) *Hanitz gizon jin da.*

(NOT: **dira*) «A lot of men came:» while in Elorrio the normal form is

(9) *Gizon asko etorri dira.* (NOT: **da*)

ditto

Again, in Milafranga, one *must* say

(10) *Mutiko bati eman dut.* (NOT: (?)*diot*)

«I've given it to a boy.»

while in Elorrio the only possibility is

(11) *Mutil bati emon dotsat (=diot).* (NOT: **dot*)

ditto

Similarly, Milafranga has

(12) *Mutiko bati hamar sagar eman dut.* (NOT: **dizkiot*)

«I've given ten apples to a boy.»

And Elorrio

(13) *Mutil bati amar sagar emon dotsat (= dizkiot)* (NOT: **dot*)

ditto

In each case Milafranga forbids agreement with an indefinite NP, while Elorrio requires it.

In most Bizkaian and Guipuzkoan dialects today, agreement with indefinite NPs seems to be more usual than lack of agreement, but such agreement is certainly far from universal, even in these dialects. This topic clearly needs a good deal of careful research based on the analysis of continuous oral discourse and written texts, since discourse factors may well be involved, as Wald (1979) has demonstrated to be the case with a comparable variation in Swahili. Txillardegui (1977, section 2.2; 1978, ch. 4) has collected extensive data showing that lack of agreement with indefinite NPs was widespread in nearly all dialects in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; for example, Pello Errota's *Bost ikusi bear du* (1977, p. 65). Much more remarkably, however, he has collected a number of examples from the nineteenth century and earlier showing a type of agreement which I have never heard from any of my informants: the use of a *singular* agreement marker in the verb to agree with an indefinite indirect object which is semantically *plural*; e.g.,

(14) *Zenbati egin dio sabeleko miña?* (Udarregi)

«To how many did he give a stomach-ache?» (1978, p. 36)

(15) *Anbitzi gerhatzen zaika (=zai).* (Axular)

«It happens to many people.» (1978, p. 36)

With these sentences, all my informants would use either *plural* agreement (Elorrio) or *no* agreement (Milafranga). I would be interested to hear of any present-day speakers who exhibit this third pattern.

In any case, it is clear that agreement with indefinite NPs is much more widespread today than lack of agreement, and Txillardegí's data suggest that such agreement has been gaining ground. This is not surprising, because general linguistic investigations show that agreement with definite NPs usually enters a language earlier, but that agreement then often spreads to indefinite NPs [see, for example, Givón (1976) and Wald (1979)]. This is surely what has happened in Basque, with dialects like that of Milafranga remaining more conservative than most others. This is what I believe, though I hasten to add that I do not wish to take a position in the controversy over which pattern should be adopted in Euskara Batua (see Txillardegí 1977, 1978 for one point of view and Rotaetxe 1979 for the other.)

A particularly interesting type of agreement is shown by Basque in connection with the syntactic process called Gapping. Given a sentence like.

(16) *Aitak ardoa edan du, eta nik sa₁ rdoea edan dut.*

«Father drank wine, and I drank cider.»

we can gap to the right, producing the unremarkable.

(17) *Aitak ardoa edan du, eta nik sagardoa.*

or we can gap to the left, in which case the verbal agreement is different:

(18) *Aitak ardoa, eta nik sagardoa edan dituguldugu.*

In this case, the remaining verb must agree with all the subjects in the sentence taken together, and for some (though not all) speakers with all the objects as well. This is remarkable, not only because I know of no other language which behaves in this way, but because we seem to have the verb agreeing with NPs which do not actually exist – there are no plural NPs in sentence (18) at all, yet the verb shows plural agreement.

Still another remarkable type of agreement is that associated with causative verbs; this has received almost no attention in the literature apart from Bouda's brief note (Bouda 1969). Generally in Basque, when a causative is formed, an intransitive subject is demoted to direct object, while a transitive subject is demoted to indirect object; e.g.,

(19) *Joan da.*

«He has gone.»

(20) *Joan-erazi dut.*

«I have made him go.»

(21) *Egin du.*

«He has done it.»

(22) *Egin-erazi diot.*

«I have made him do it.»

(The same occurs with causatives made with *-ra-* and *eragin*.) In general, if a simple transitive verb already has an indirect object, no causative can be formed. Thus, from.

(23) *Eman dizu.*

«He has given it to you.»

there is no causative meaning specifically «I have made him give it to you», but only

(24) *Eman-erazi diot.*

«I have made him give it away.»

However, in the dialect of Milafranga, I have found the following remarkable set of forms:

(25) *Eman diot.*

«I've given it to him.»

(26) *Eman-a(r)azi dautak.*

«You've made me give it away.»

(27) *Eman daut.*

«He's given it to me.»

(28) *Eman-a(r)azi nautak.*

(!!) «You've made him give it to me.»

The last form is extraordinary in that it actually includes *TWO* markers of first person singular, one in direct object position, and one in indirect object position. So far as I am aware, such a form is absolutely without precedent in Basque⁴. In the same dialect there exists also the following contrast:

(29) *Jan-a(r)azi dautak.*

«You've made me eat.»

(30) *Jan-a(r)azi nautak.*

«You've made him feed me.»

These forms deserve further investigation.

Finally, there is one other type of *agrèement* which seems to me to call for discussion, or rather two types which are often found together. A number of Basque verbs exhibit one or both of the following properties:

Property 1: The verb takes an indirect object, but no direct object.

Property 2: The verb takes transitive morphology, and requires an ergative subject, but it does not take a direct object; all finite

4. Georges Rébuschi has informed me that speakers from Oñate and Vidania (near Tolosa) do indeed use causatives derived from verbs which already have both direct and indirect objects; an example is *Nik aitari eman arazi diot dirua anaiari*, which is ambiguous between «I've made my father give the money to my brother» and «I've made my brother give the money to my father», the word order reflecting only the focus. Such extraordinary dative doubling is not used or accepted by my informants.

forms of the verb appear to show agreement with a «dummy» third person singular direct object.

Some verbs have only the first property; e.g., *jarraiki* «to follow», *atxekei* «to adhere (to)», *ekin* «to be busy (with)», *jario* «to flow (from)», all of which are intransitive verbs taking indirect objects. Others exhibit only the second property; e.g., *afaldu* «to eat dinner», *zaunkatu* «to bark», *iharduki* «to resist, dispute», *iraun* «to last», *kurritu* «to run», *iraki* «to boil (intr.)», all of which take transitive morphology but no object of any kind. Still others show both properties; e.g., *eutsi* «to grasp», *erauntsi* «to hit», *urgatzi* «to help», *eritzi* «to have an opinion of», and its compounds *oneritzi* «to love» and *gaitzeritzi* «to hate»; these have transitive morphology with indirect objects only. (These last two groups, with Property 2, are the «deponents» of Lafitte (1944), pp. 189-190.) A few verbs show variable behavior; e.g., *deitu* «to call», *begiratu* «to look at», *lagundu* «to help», *eman* «to put», which sometimes take direct objects and sometimes indirect, though always with transitive morphology; this variation is partly dialectal, but not entirely; see Rebuschi (1978), p. 89, for some discussion. There are also a few verbs which show different behavior correlated with a difference in meaning; e.g., *argitu* «to shine» with transitive morphology and «to brighten, clear up» with intransitive morphology (Lafitte 1944, p. 190).

I have nothing new to say about the first property, taking dative objects, but I would like to consider the second property, that of taking transitive morphology with no direct object. Verbs with this property were discussed by Lafon (1975), in his last paper on the Basque verb. Lafon points out that some of these verbs have undoubtedly undergone a change of meaning, retaining their earlier morphology in the process; likely cases are *iraun* «to last» and *iraki* «to boil», both of which look like old *-ra-* causatives, possibly from *egon* «to remain» and *jaiki* «to get up», respectively (a suggestion originally made by Schuchardt). Otherwise, Lafon suggests, the presence of an apparent third singular direct object agreement marker in the forms of these verbs can only be accounted for by assuming either that a reflexive direct object *bere burua* has been deleted, or that an «indefinite» direct object is understood — for example, that *urak diraki* «the water is boiling» is to be understood as «the water is raising (something unspecified)» (pp. 335-336).

This does not seem appealing, and in fact I would like to suggest that the apparent presence of a «dummy» direct object marker in these verbs can be partly explained by a theory which also helps to explain several other problems involving the verbal morphology.

Recall that the first and second person singular and plural are marked in Basque verbs by a set of affixes which, for the most part, are clearly related to the corresponding personal pronouns:

	Prefix	Suffix	Pronoun
1 sg	<i>n-</i>	<i>-da > -t</i>	<i>ni</i>
2 sg M	} <i>b-, φ-, y-</i>	} <i>*-ga > -a-, -k</i> <i>*-naga > -na-, -n</i>	} <i>bi, i, yi</i>
2 sg F			
1 pl	<i>g-</i>	<i>-gu</i>	<i>gu</i>
2 pl > 2 sg	<i>z-</i>	<i>-zu</i>	<i>zu</i>

Fig. 2

(I ignore here the «new» second person plural, as well as the additional morphs *-in-*, *-en-*, *-it-* which sometimes follow the prefixes, and I accept Professor Jacobsen's reconstruction of the second singular feminine suffix as **-naga* [Jacobsen 1975, p. 23]). It can hardly be doubted that most, perhaps all, of these forms are derived from the pronominal stems, the singular affixes possibly reflecting an ancient stem variation.

In contrast, the third person affixes show complex variation of form:

Prefix	Suffix (Ind. Obj.)	Suffix (Tr. Subj.)
<i>d-, z-</i> (Bizk. <i>φ-</i> , <i>l-, b-</i>	<i>-o, -a</i>	<i>φ</i>

Fig. 3

(Third plural forms are indicated by the addition of various pluralizing affixes to the singular forms.) A number of proposals have been made as to the origin of these morphs. Schuchardt derived *d-* from a lost demonstrative element, *z-* from *zen/zan* «he was» by analogy, replacing earlier **φ-*, *l-* from *abal* «to be able», and *b-* from *ber-* «same» (1893, p. 5, p. 76; 1919, pp. 161-162; 1923, pp. 3-7). Lafon (1972, p. 1767) endorses these interpretations. Others have derived *b-* from *behar* «necessity», from affirmative *ba, bai* or from a lost pronoun. Professor Jacobsen has recently proposed that both *d-* and *-o* derive from an element **-do-* similar in nature to the first and second person markers (Jacobsen 1975, p. 21), though most workers have followed Schuchardt (1893, p. 34) in deriving the dative markers *-o, -a* from the familiar demonstrative stems (*(h)au*, (*(h)ori*, (*(h)a(r)*-).

All of these suggestions seem to me to rather miss the point, which is that the distribution of the various prefixes correlates very well with verbal categories — tense, aspect, mood — of the forms in which they appear, a fact discussed at some length by Lafon (1943), though he draws no conclusions from it. The correlation is roughly as follows:

<i>d-</i>	present tense
<i>z-</i> , \emptyset -	past tense
<i>l-</i>	contingent forms
<i>b-</i>	«third-person imperative»; old subjunctive?

Fig. 4

Synchronically, therefore, we should say that *d-*, for example *simultaneously* marks third person and present tense; *z-* or \emptyset -, third person and past tense, and so on.

The tendency throughout the literature has been to regard these prefixes as third-person markers which happen to coincide with verbal categories. But we can turn this description around: we can say that they are markers of verbal categories which happen to occur only in the third person. I want to claim that the historical position is essentially this: the prefixes were originally markers of the verbal categories with which they are still correlated, and their apparent role as third person markers has come about entirely by accident, probably as a result of combinative phonological changes induced by the addition of first and second person prefixes, as explained in Trask (1977); the changes eliminated these markers from first and second person forms, but the markers remained in the third person forms, because there were no third person prefixes to disturb them phonologically.

In other words, I claim that these prefixes are not so much markers of the *presence* of a third person, but rather of the *absence* of a first or second person which would be marked in initial position. This interpretation has a number of advantages:

- (1) It accounts for the variation in form of the third person prefixes, in contrast with the first and second person prefixes, and in contrast with the third person suffixes.
- (2) It accounts for the correlation of the third person prefixes with verbal categories.
- (3) It accounts for the presence of apparent third person prefixes in forms with no appropriate third person NP to agree with — such verb forms as *diraki* «it boils» and *deutsat* «I grasp it» have initial «third person» prefixes, not because there is an «indefinite» third person NP buried somewhere in the sentence, but merely because there happens to be no first or second person marker in initial position.
- (4) Similarly, it accounts for the apparent absence of third person direct object markers in forms like *nuen* «I had it». Such forms as *dut* «I have it» and *nuen* «I had it» differ in the way the first person subject is marked (suffix vs. prefix), but, in my interpretation, they do *not*

differ in the way the third person direct object is marked — in *neither* case is there a direct object marker.

- (5) It confirms the complete pointlessness of the old argument as to whether the prefix in forms like *zuen* «he had it» agrees with the subject or the object — in my interpretation, it agrees with neither.
- (6) Finally, it allows us to reconstruct a system for Basque in which *both* third person subjects and third person direct objects are marked in the verb by \emptyset - an extremely common situation in the world's languages.

There are many other fascinating problems concerning the finite verb forms which I lack the time to consider here - the origin of the plurality markers and their spread through the paradigm (Milafranga even has forms in which plural *-z* has spread to first and second *singular* forms: *noaz* «I go», *hoaz* «you (sg.) go»), the mysterious *i* which follows the initial prefix in dative and allocutive forms like *diezaioke* «he can have it to him», the aspectual distinction between two classes of verbs claimed by Lafon (1943) to have existed in sixteenth-century Basque (the theory is described and endorsed in Txillardegi 1978, ch. 23), and many others. If there are any sociolinguists present, I would like to suggest that a sociolinguistic investigation of the use of the *hiketa* would be revealing and valuable - for example, it is now common in parts of Gipuzkoa for young men and women to address one another *bika*, and in spite of what is said in several textbooks, I have often heard speakers in Milafranga and Elorrio addressing animals with *zu*.

4. Verbal Morphology and Syntax.

The final section of this paper is devoted to certain aspects of the interaction between verbal morphology and syntax, an area which presents a number of interesting phenomena, some of which have received little or no attention in the literature.

The first point to be made here is that the old passive theory of the Basque verb is now dead. Apparently first proposed by Stempf (1890), the theory that Basque transitive verbs (or rather, transitive sentences) were passive in nature was accepted in various works by Schuchardt, Uhlenbeck, Gavel, Lafon, Tovar, and many others; in 1943 Professor Lafon could write that the theory «is recognized today by all competent bascologists» (p. 15). But today our greater understanding of syntax allows us to reject the old theory, because we can now demonstrate that Basque sentences are based on the same subject-object syntagm as other European languages (for this demonstration see Rotaetxe (1978a, 1978b) and Trask (in preparation a), but see also Rebuschi (1978) for some criticism).

One aspect of the interaction between verbal morphology and syntax which has received too little attention is the behavior of the modal particles

like *obi, al, omen, ei, bide, ari, ote* and the modal and catenative items like *behar, ahal, ezin, nabi, gura, and egin*. All of these items show a complex mixture of the properties of nouns, verbs, and particles – for example, the well-known variation between *joan nabi dut* and *joan nabi naiz* «I want to go», showing two different ways of construing the sentence. Attempts to clarify their behavior are found in Trask (in preparation b, in preparation c). Here I can only briefly note one or two points.

Consider such sentences as the following:

- (31) *Ezkondu berriak dira.*
«They are newlyweds.»
- (32) *Umea jaio berria da.*
«The child is newly born.»

Here the phrases *ezkondu berriak* and *jaio berria* are best regarded as constituents. The same sort of structure is found in

- (33) *Aurkitu berria daukat/dut.*
«I've just found it.»

But I have also encountered examples like

- (34) *Aurkitu berri dut.*
idem

It seems to me that (34) is best regarded as being quite different in structure, with *aurkitu berri dut* a single verb form comparable to *aurkitu omen du* «they say he's found it» or *aurkitu ote du?* «could he have found it?» We may be witnessing the birth of a new modal particle in Basque, and this process may shed some light on the origins of the older ones.

A further indication of the difficulty of classifying these items is provided by the nice contrast found in at least some Bizkaian dialects between such pairs as

- (35) *Ez dot joan bear.*
«I mustn't go.»
- (36) *Ez dot/daukat joan bearrik.*
«I don't have to go.»

This contrast seems hardly to have been noticed in the literature. Both are related to affirmative *Joan bear dot* «I have to go», but (36) appears to have a rather different structure from the other two; in particular, it is not clear that it can be analyzed as containing a single verb. See Trask (in preparation b) for discussion.

Another phenomenon which has received too little attention is the manner in which Basque promotes genitive NPs to direct or indirect objects for purposes of verbal agreement. Thus, instead of saying,

- (37) *Nere ama hil da.*
 «My mother has died.»
 (38) *Nere gurasoak Ameriketan daude.*
 «My parents are in America.»

most Basques prefer

- (39) *Ama hil zait.*
 «My mother has died.»
 (40) *Gurasoak Ameriketan ditut/dauzkat.*
 «My parents are in America.»

and indeed, at least some speakers appear to have a clear contrast between

- (41) *Ama hor zen.*
 «Somebody's mother was there.»
 (42) *Ama hor nuen.*
 «My mother was there.»

The conditions under which this promotion takes place are far from clear; it cannot always be done. Thus, corresponding to

- (43) *Nere ama ikusiko duzu.*
 «You'll see my mother.»

there is no

- (44) **Ama ikusiko didazu.*

The chief importance of this promotion is that it enables certain relative clauses to be constructed which would otherwise not be possible. Thus, to render the English sentence «The man whose mother has died is coming», we cannot say.

- (45) **Bere ama hil den gizona dator.*
 which is quite incomprehensible, but instead
 (46) *Ama hil zaion gizona dator.*

in which the genitive has been promoted to a dative and included in the verb. See Rebuschi (1978, pp. 84-86) for a very interesting discussion of one of the conditions on this promotion.

A further point is the so-called «passive» construction of Basque. There is no doubt that Basque contains sentences like the following:

- (47a) *Etxe hori aitak egina da.*
 «That house was built by my father.»
 (47b) *Etxe hori aitak egindakoa da.*
 idem

Such sentences have been widely regarded as the equivalent of the passive sentences of other European languages, especially those like (47a), with sequences like *egina da* being regarded as verb forms [see, for example,

Bollenbacher (1977)]. But such sentences are not common; they cannot be used with anything like the same freedom as their apparent English counterparts. Recently a new interpretation of these sentences has emerged, for example, in Brettschneider (1979, pp. 379-382) and Wilbur (1979, p. 162). In this new view, a sentence like (47a) or (47b) is a stative predication; the verb is *da* alone, and *aitak egina* or *aitak egindakoa* is a constituent. Thus the structure of (47) might be shown by such a gloss as «That house is father-built». This interpretation has much to commend it; for example, it automatically accounts for the presence of the otherwise puzzling ergative suffix *-k*, and it also seems to accord better with the intuitions of native speakers. See Rebuschi (1979a, 1979b) for an illuminating discussion of this and certain related constructions, all of which are called the «antipassive» by Rebuschi.

A final point concerns reflexives and reciprocals. All Basque dialects use phrases like *bere burua*, lit. «one's own head», as reflexive pronouns. But they differ in their manner of constructing reciprocals. Many dialects still use the NP *elkar* «each other» as a reciprocal pronoun, as in

- (48) *Elkar ikusiko dugu.*
«We'll see each other.»

But many southern dialects use sentences like (49) instead:

- (49) *Ikusiko gara.*
idem

This construction, termed the *mediopassive* by Bollenbacher (1977), is widely used in Basque in the meaning «We shall be seen», though speakers who use (49) as a reciprocal often prefer.

- (50) *Norbaitek ikusiko gaitu.*
«Someone will see us.»

in place of the mediopassive meaning of (49). This innovating reciprocal has sometimes been condemned by prescriptivists, but it is well established. My point here is that the new construction appears to be expanding its semantic range; I have heard, for example,

- (51) *Konponduko gara.*

meaning, not «We'll fix each other», or even «We'll be fixed», but «We'll fix it between us».

And here I must abruptly bring this rambling survey to an end. It should be clear that, in spite of more than a century of first-class work, there still remain today a host of fascinating problems related to the morphology of the Basque verb.

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LABURPENA

Bai deskribapenaren aldetik, bai diakroniaren aldetik, problema interesgarri andana bat eskaintzen digu oraino euskal aditzaren morfologiak eta argitaratze egokirik gabe hor daude beti problema horiek. Adibidez badauzkagu:

1) -k(i) eta ts(i) morfemak, aurkitzen ditugunak bai aditz batzuen erromuinetan, bai zehar-osagarriekilako komunztadura markatzen duten forma jakinetan.

2) Noiz eta nola aditz forma mugatuak komunztatzen diren edozein elementu pertsonabekorekin.

3) «Hirugarren pertsonako» komunztadura marken aldaketa korapilotsuak aditz forma mugatuetan.

4) «Deponente» deitu aditzen eta zehar osagailurik baizik ez duten iragangaitzen morfologia.

5) Sintasi prozesu zenbaiten eragina aditz komunztaduretan eta bereziki Gapping eragina eta antolaketa kausatiboa.

6) Noiz eta nola genitiboak datibo edo absolutibo gisa jokatzeko diren aditz komunztaduraren bitartez.

Morfologia problema hutsak iduri duten problema ainitzek badute hemen argibidea: onar dezagun bakarrik hirugarren pertsonako aurrizkiak, aspektuen, moduen edo aldien markak baizik ez zirela hastapenean eta marka horiek fonologiazko aldaketa zenbaiten jokoaren gatik galdu izan direla lehen eta bigarren pertsona formetan.

RESUMEN

La morfología del verbo vasco continúa presentando un número de problemas interesantes tanto descriptivos como diacrónicos, los cuales no han recibido todavía adecuadas explicaciones.

Entre éstos están:

1) La presencia de morfemas -k(i) y ts(i) en ciertos núcleos de verbos así como en formas definidas en concordancia con objetos indirectos.

2) Las condiciones bajo las cuales un verbo definido muestra concordancia con un argumento NP indefinido.

3) La compleja variación en la forma de las marcas de la concordancia de la «tercera persona» en formas definidas.

4) La morfología de los verbos «deponentes» y de los verbos que rigen sólo objetos indirectos.

5) El efecto de ciertos procesos sintácticos en la concordancia verbal particularmente Gapping y la formación causativa.

6) Las condiciones bajo las cuales los genitivos pueden ser promovidos a absolutivos o dativos para los propósitos de la concordancia verbal.

Varios de los problemas puramente morfológicos pueden ser solucionados por la suposición de que los prefijos de la tercera persona eran originariamente marcas de tiempo, aspecto o modo y que estas marcas han sido eliminadas de las formas de la primera y segunda persona por cambios fonológicos combinatorios.

RÉSUMÉ

La morphologie du verbe basque continue de présenter nombre de problèmes intéressants, de caractère descriptif, aussi bien que diachronique, qui n'ont pas reçu une solution satisfaisante. Par exemple:

1) La présence des morphèmes -k(i) et -ts(i) au sein de certains radicaux verbaux ainsi que parmi les éléments symbolisant la concordance avec les objets indirects.

2) Les conditions auxquelles un verbe défini établit sa concordance avec un élément NP indéfini.

3) Les variations complexes des marques de concordance de la troisième personne dans les formes verbales définies.

4) La morphologie des verbes «déponents» et des verbes qui gouvernent seulement des objets indirects.

5) L'effet de certains procès syntaxiques sur la concordance verbale l'effet Gapping et la formation causative en particulier.

6) Les conditions auxquelles les génitifs font fonction de datifs, ou d'absolutifs, pour la concordance verbale.

Plusieurs de ces problèmes, purement morphologiques, peuvent être résolus par l'hypothèse que les préfixes de la troisième personne étaient originellement des marques de temps, d'aspect ou de mode et que ces marques ont été éliminées des formes de la première et de la seconde personne par des transformations combinatoires d'ordre phonologique.

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