

# Towards a syntactic analysis of Basque imperative phrases

*Key words: imperatives; hortatives; syntax; Basque*

The study of imperative phrases shows some syntactic and semantic phenomena of great interest for the syntactic theory. First of all, imperative phrases usually imply the elision of the subject, not only in pro-drop languages such as Basque, but also in non-pro-drop ones as English. Besides, even when the subject is overtly realized, it shows some restrictions: for instance, in Basque, the subject of canonical imperatives can only be a second person pronoun or a quantifier (1). Secondly, the subject is always interpreted as the addressee (2), and thirdly, the temporal interpretation is always future oriented, even if the verb is uninflected (3).

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|-----|---|----------|
| (1) | *Jan        Jonek!<br>eat.PTCP   John.ERG<br>'John eat!'      | (Basque) |
| (2) | Jan!<br>eat.PTCP<br>'(You) eat!'                              | (Basque) |
| (3) | *Jan        atzo!<br>eat.PTCP yesterday<br>'*¡Eat yesterday!' | (Basque) |

The goal of this proposal is to provide a syntactic analysis of Basque imperative phrases and to answer some questions that emerge from Basque data that other proposals such as Zanuttini et alia's (2012) or Alcázar and Saltarelli's (2014) do not answer.

The syntactic analysis I am proposing here aims at explaining the subject restriction as well as the temporal restriction of Basque imperative phrases. Besides, I am extending this proposal to non-canonical imperatives, i.e. *hortative phrases*. In Basque, these can have either first person subjects (*goazen* 'let's go', *noan* [go.1SG.HOR]) or third person subjects (*bihoa*, *doala* [go.3SG.HOR]), and unlike in canonical imperatives, the verb must be necessarily inflected. All these phrases share some relevant properties: first, they result in the updating of the *to do-list* (Portner 2005) of one or more participants of the speech act; second, they have the same temporal restriction, that is, they both have a future oriented interpretation, and third, they show a special word order (the verb appears at the beginning of the sentence).

Therefore, following Ritter and Wiltschko (2014), I assume that the *directive* content in imperative and hortative CP layer values the unvalued temporal feature of the inflexion, causing the temporal restriction. In addition, I propose that this same layer is the responsible of the special word order of these phrases. On the other hand, based on the fact that imperative and hortative phrases result in the updating of the *to do-list* of the speech act participants, I assume the existence of the *Speech Act Layer* (Haegeman and Hill 2013; among others). Moreover, I propose that the agreement between the verb and the head of this projection can explain the subject restriction of imperative phrases.

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