UPV/EHU

Unergative predicates in Basque varieties: consequences for the ergative case assignment

Ane Berro Urrizelki
07/11/2010

INDEX

0. Introduction

Ergative / absolutive case variation on subjects has been attested in Basque varieties[1]. In this work, we analyse the alternation found in unergative verbs and we propose a theoretical analysis which aims to explain the nature of this phenomenon. In the following examples, we show the two variants that can be found:

(1)   Ni-ø   dantzatu n-aiz
        I-ABS   dance   1sgABS-be
        'I have danced'

(2)   Ni-k   dantzatu d-u-t
        I-ERG   dance   x-have-1sgERG
        'I have danced'

In (1) the subject has been assigned ergative case, while in (2), an absolutive subject has been preferred. Broadly speaking, the former is generally found in south-western varieties of the language, whereas the latter is mostly attested in north-eastern varieties. Despite the different subject cases, these sentences have apparently the same meaning in those varieties. Both are agentive predicates which describe the motion initiated by the subject. However, this variation does not seem to be general to all unergative verbs, such as in *distiratu* 'shine'. The variant in (3) can be found in all Basque varieties, in which the verb always selects an ergative subject.

(3)   Eguzkia-k distiratu d-u-ø
        sun-ERG   shine   x-have-3sgERG
        'The sun has shined'

Throughout this work, we explore the distribution of this variation and we try to identify the syntactic factors that are involved. This way, we discuss several issues which seem to be relevant and, sometimes problematic, in previous theoretical proposals dealing with case theory, argument structure and, specially, ergative case assignment of Basque. We eventually suggest an analysis that can account for the variation attested among unergative verbs, and also for the alternation found in different geographical varieties.

---

[1] Abbreviations: ERG: ergative, ABS: absolutive, DAT: dative, INE: inesive, ADL: adlative, SOC: sociative, INS: instrumental, ABL: ablative, GEN: genitive, MOT: motivative, PART: partitive, DES: destinative, N: nominalized, P: postposition, loc: locative, prog: progressive, Comp: complementizer, fut: future, tns: past tense, rec: reciprocal.

Firstly, we propose that a telicity feature, related to the ability of the verbs to introduce an internal object, is at play in those Basque varieties which show selective behaviour in the subject case assignment of unergative verbs. The capacity to introduce an event-measuring internal object seems to mark the cut-up point between verbs which can take absolutive subjects and those which obligatorily take ergative subjects. Secondly, we suggest that the dialectal variation –shown in examples (1) and (2)– is due to the fact that syntax in south-western varieties is losing the sensitivity towards this lexical telicity feature, and consequently unergative verbs always select ergative subjects in those dialects.

Our analysis supports the claim that ergative case is structurally assigned by T in Basque, a theory that has been defended by many scholars (Ortiz de Urbina 1987, Laka 1993a, Fernandez 1997, Rezac 2008). Absolutive case, on the other hand, is licensed by another functional head whose activity is related to the verb's lexical telicity.

Basque is a highly inflected ergative language, in which a marked, ergative case is assigned to the subject of transitive predicates –*Pello-k*– (4) and absolutive case, a zero case, is assigned to the object of a transitive predicate –*ni-ø*– (5) and to the subject of an intransitive predicate –*ni-ø*–(4). On the other hand, dative case is assigned to the indirect object –*ama-ri*– (6).

(4)   Pello-k   ni-ø   jo n-au-ø
        Pello-ERG   I-ABS   hit 1sgABS-have-3sgERG
        'Pello has hit me'

(5)   Ni-ø   erori   n-aiz
        I-ABS   fall   1sgABS-be
        'I have fallen'

(6)   Liburu-ø bat erosi d-i-o-t   ama-ri
        book-ABS a   buy   x-have-3sgDAT-1sgERG   mum-DAT
        'I have bought a book to mum'

The verb auxiliary in Basque agrees with ergative, absolutive and dative arguments of the predicate in person and number and it also contains tense and mood. This way, arguments bearing ergative, absolutive and dative case are reflected in different fashions: the absolutive argument controls prefixes and the plural field. Third person absolutive does not control person morphology, and in this case the prefix is

filled with a tense/mood-conditioned default (Laka 1993b) –glossed *x* following Rezac (2008)– (6). Ergative and dative arguments control the suffix field. Like the absolutive, third person ergative lacks person morphology.

Basque is a subject and object *pro-drop* language, and therefore, the phonetic realization of the subject or objects is not obligatory, as we can see in (6) where the subject is missing –*pro*_{1sgERG}–. However, since Basque has a rich inflectional morphology, case and phi-features of the arguments are reflected in the auxiliary.

The case of the arguments is also partially indicated in the choice of the auxiliary root. In intransitive predicates with no ergative argument involved, Basque makes use of *izan* or **edin* auxiliary. The *izan* auxiliary is used in the indicative and **edin* in the subjunctive, imperative and potential. Whenever an ergative argument is involved, **edun* or **ezan* auxiliary is used. The auxiliary **edun* is selected in the indicative and **ezan* in the subjunctive, imperative and potential. When *izan* and **edun* are used like main verbs, the former means 'to be' and the latter 'to have'.

Izan auxiliary has also be termed the intransitive auxiliary, and **edun* the transitive auxiliary. Nonetheless, we will show that they are not appropriate terms, since intransitive predicates involving just a single argument bearing ergative case also selects **edun* auxiliary. Therefore, a given auxiliary –like *dugu* in (7) and (8)– cannot be called transitive, because it can be selected in a transitive bivalent construction –with an ergative subject and a singular absolutive object (7)– or in a monovalent intransitive construction with an ergative subject (8).

(7)   Gutuna-ø   idatzi   d-u-gu
        letter-ABS   write   x-have-1plERG
        'We have written the letter'

(8)   Kart-etan   jokatu   d-u-gu
        cards-INE   play   x-have-1plERG
        'We have played cards'

Focusing on intransitive predicates, Basque differentiates two alignment patterns. The single argument can be marked with absolutive case, and consequently, *izan* auxiliary is selected (9). On the other hand, if the argument is assigned ergative case, **edun* auxiliary is used (10).

(9)   Amaia-ø   etorri d-a
              Amaia-ABS come x-be
              'Amaia has come'

(10)   Amaia-k   hitz egin d-u-ø
             Amaia-ERG speak   x-have-3sgERG
             'Amaia has spoken'

This discrimination of case and auxiliary selection in intransitive predicates has been considered a surface realization of two different argument structures (Levin, 1983, Salaburu, 1992 among others). They have suggested that verbs which select an absolutive subject are unaccusative, whereas verbs selecting an ergative subject are unergative. In this work, I partially contradict this hypothesis, since, as it can be seen, not all unergative predicates select ergative subjects, like in some agentive unergative verbs of north-eastern varieties.

There are two types of unergative verbs in Basque: (i) verbs formed by a bare noun and the light verb *egin* 'do' –like in example (9)–; and (ii) verbs consisting of just a single word –like in example (7)–. I will call unergative verbs in (i) *complex* unergatives (Etxepare 2003), and verbs in (ii) *simplex* unergatives (Preminger, 2009b). It is worthy to note that complex unergatives are much more common in southern varieties, whereas simplex are preferred in northern ones. Ergative/absolutive case alternation is found among the latter type (Oyharçabal 1990, Fernández 1997, Aldai 2006, 2009, Albizu 2009).

It seems that when simplex verbs are used in south-western varieties, an ergative subject is preferred and therefore variation emerges.

These are the verbs that we have analysed for this work. The list has been almost entirely taken from Albizu (2009), following Etxepare (2003), Alberdi (2003) and Aldai (2006).

1. Speech verbs
01. Mintzatu
02. Solastatu
03. Elekatu/elestatu
04. Hizkatu/hizketatu
05. Iharduki

2. Verbs related to meal-times
01. Bazkaldu
02. Afaldu
03. Askaldu
04. Gosaldu

3. Verbs of manner of motion
01. Dantzatu
02. Saltatu
03. Paseatu
04. Biratu
05. Errodatu

06. Nabigatu
07. Eskiatu
08. Korritu/kurritu
09. Hegatu
10. Airatu
11. Igerikatu

4. Human or animate activities
01. Jostatu/jolastu
02. Jokatu
03. Barautu
04. Borrokatu
05. Gudukatu
06. Trufatu
07. Trabailatu
08. Zintzatu
09. Oldartu
10. Entrenatu
11. Bidaiatu/biajatu
12. Deskantsatu
13. Jardun

14. Sufritu
15. Erreinatu

5. Non-animate activities
01. Funtzionatu
02. Kotizatu
03. Zirkulatu

6. Non-volitional emission verbs
01. Dirdiratu
02. Distiratu
03. Izarniatu
04. Erauntsi
05. Usaindu

7. A stative verb
01. Iraun

8. A verb describing internal motion
01. Irakin

The outline of the work is the following:

In **chapter 1**, dialectal data concerning simplex unergative verbs is presented (**§1.1**), showing that variable verbs can take event measuring objects (**§1.2**). We propose an analysis to explain the variation of subject case marking (**§1.3**); in which absolutive case is assigned by an aspectual head and ergative case by the head T (**§1.3.1**). We suggest that the dialectal alternation takes place because a verbs' telicity feature is transferred to the syntax in some varieties, whereas it is not in others (**§1.3.2** and **§ 1.3.3**). Finally, we analyse the alignment of two specific verbs in old texts, showing that marking with the ergative the subjects of simplex unergative verbs is quite a late tendency of south-western varieties of the language (**§1.4**).

In **chapter 2**, we deal with the consequences that this data can have in several theoretical approaches of ergative case. Firstly, we start looking at the structural approach of ergative case assignment (**§2.1**). We show the problems that approaches of object incorporation and transitivity of unergative verbs have on the light of this data

(**§2.2**). We discuss the dissociation found between ergative arguments and agent theta role, pointing that an inherent approach of ergative case assignment cannot be extended to all varieties (**§2.3**). In (**§2.4**), the proposal which views ergative case as a lexically conditioned case (Preminger 2009) is considered, identifying some problematic issues.

In **chapter 3**, we explore the matter of unergativity in Basque, focusing on non-agentive unergatively aligned verbs (**§2.1**) and apparently unaccusatively aligned agentive verbs (**§2.2**), extracting relevant aspects and conclusions for our proposal (**§ 2.3**).

In **section 4**, we consider how our analysis works in different predicate formations, showing that it perfectly applies for the data that we have.

Finally, in **section 5**, I sum up the main conclusions and point to relevant further aspects that our analysis must consider.

1. <u>Subject case variation in simplex unergative verbs</u>

We find alternation with respect to subject case marking in some simplex predicates across Basque varieties. Several scholars (Oyarçabal 1990, Fernandez 1997, Aldai 2006 2009, Albizu 2009) have reported examples of this dialectal variation. Predicates of the *bazkaldu* 'have lunch', *dantzatu* 'dance' or *borrokatu* 'fight' kind are used in the unergative construction in south-western varieties (13), whereas in north-eastern varieties, they are used unaccusatively (14).

(11)   Ni-k   dantzatu   d-u-t
        I-ERG   dance   x-have-1sgERG
        'I have danced'

(12)   Ni-ø   dantzatu   n-aiz
        I-ABS   dance   1sgABS-be
        'I have danced'

As we can see in the examples, the verb *dantzatu* 'dance' can take an ergative subject and *edun 'have' auxiliary (11), or, on the other hand, it can select an absolutive subject and *izan* auxiliary (12). In the latter variant, the predicate takes the same superficial form as unaccusative verbs.

1.1.   Variable behaviour verbs

As a starting point to analyse the dialectal distribution of this syntactic variable, we have made use of historical dictionaries and written corpuses. These are the sources we have consulted:

- OEH: *Orotariko Euskal Hiztegia* (*General Basque Dictionary*) (Mitxelena & Sarasola 1989-2005)
- EAEL: *Euskalerriko Atlas Etnolinguistikoa* (*Ethnolinguistic Atlas of the Basque Country*) (Egaña, Artola et al. 1983)
- EPG: *Ereduzko Prosa Gaur* (*Contemporary Reference Prose*) (Basque Insitute, 2007) with the *Corsintax* browser (Landa, 2008)
- EH: *Euskal Hiztegia* (*Basque Dictionary*) (Sarasola, 1996)

- EEH: *Egungo Euskararen Hiztegia* (*The Dictionary of Contemporary Basque*) (Sarasola, 2010).

The historical dictionary OEH has made us possible to explore the traditional usage of the verbs in different authors, and this way, it gives us evidence about the dialectal variation. On the other hand, the EPG and EAEL offer us modern data.

Although they are written texts, we believe they are useful to obtain a general picture of the variation and to identify relevant aspects involved in the phenomenon. Nonetheless, fieldwork is necessary to get detailed information about the distribution of the variable and we are actually working on such a project.

Looking at this dialectal data, we have found absolutive subjects in simplex unergative agentive predicates, mainly in north-eastern varieties of the language. The classes of verbs that usually show this pattern are speech verbs, meal time related verbs, verbs of manner of motion and animate activity verbs.

Some of these predicates are used across Basque varieties, and in those cases unaccusative-unergative alignment alternation has been attested. These verbs generally select *izan* auxiliary in northern texts. In southern texts, on the other hand, **edun* is also accepted and commonly used. This kind of configuration alternation can be found specially in meal related verbs, verbs of manner of motion and animate activities verbs, and we also have found a few examples of speech verbs.

We show some of the examples below:

- **Speech verbs** (*mintzatu* 'talk'*, elekatu* 'talk' and *solastatu* 'chat, talk'):

According to the OEH, the speech verbs we have analysed are traditionally found in northern texts, although *mintzatu* has also been used by southern authors since the end of the 19th century. These verbs take absolutive subjects when they are monovalent and no alternation in subject case marking has been reported (13)-(14), except for few examples of *mintzatu*.

Two cases of *mintzatu* in the unergative alignment have been reported; one in a text of a Navarrese author of the beginning of the 19th century –Lizarraga–(15) and other in a text of a Gipuzkoan author of the 20th century –Irazusta–(16).

(13)　Jesus-ø　　berrogoi　egun-ez　　solista-tze-n　　d-a　　bere
　　　　Jesus-ABS fourty　　days-for　　converse-N-loc x-be　his
dizipulu-ekin. (Dv *LEd* 18)
disciples-with
　　　　　'Jesus conversed with his disciples for fourty days'

(14)　Artzai-ekin　　　izkatu　z-i-ra-n. (Ol Gen 26, 20)
　　　　shepard-with　　talk　　x-be-pl-tns
　　　　'They talked to the shepherds'

(15)　Zer　　　billa-tze-n　　d-ú-ø　　　　edo zergátik　　　mintza-tze-n
　　　　what　　look for-N-loc x-have-3sgERG or　　why　　　　　talk-N-loc
d-ú-ø　　　　oné-ki? (LE Io 4, 27)
x-have-3sgERG　　this-with
　　　　　'What is she/he looking for or why is she/he talking to this guy?'

(16)　Bakoitza-ren　　ibillera-k　　eta　　izaera-k　　　　itzak　bañan
　　　　each-GEN　　　walking-ERG and　　personality-ERG　　words　than

garbi-go mintza-tze-n d-u-te.　　　　　　(JAIraz *Bizia* 97)
clear-er talk-N-loc　　x-have-3plERG
　　　　　'Each one's trajectory and personality talk clearer than words'

We also find little case alternation in EAEL. North-eastern varieties use simplex predicates for speech verbs, unlike south-western varieties, where complex predicates of the *berba egin* 'talk' kind (literary 'do word') are preferred.

Absolutive subjects are selected in Zuberoan varieties (in Altzai, Domintxine and Santa Grazi), Low-Navarrese varieties (in Amenduze, Bidarrai, Irisarri, Uharte garazi and Urepele), Lapurdian varieties (in Hazparne, Itsasu, Sara, Urketa and Ziburu) and High-Navarrese varieties (in Auritz, Eugi, Lekarotz, Lesaka, Merkiritz, Luzaide and Xuarbe) (17). In addition, two examples of simplex communication verbs with ergative *pro* subjects have been attested in the Navarrese towns of Abaurregaina, Esparza and Usi (18).

(17)　yolastatu d-a
　　　　converse　x-be
　　　　'She/he has chatted'

(18)　elekatu d-u-ø
　　　　talk　　x-have
　　　　'She/he has talked'

It seems that among simplex speech unergative verbs, if we are going to find ergative subject marking, this is going to occur in the southern part of the Basque Country.

- **Meal related verbs** (*afaldu* 'have supper', *bazkaldu* 'have luch' and *askaldu* have an afternoon meal'):

According to the EH, configuration alternation in *afaldu* and *bazkaldu* is dialectally divided –they take absolutive subjects in northern varieties, whereas the ergative subject is selected in southern varieties–.

Askaldu, on the other hand, shows dialectal and semantic alternation: in northern varieties, it takes an absolutive subject and is used with the sense 'have breakfast'. In southern varieties, it takes an ergative subject and it means 'have an afternoon meal'. Semantic alternation is not relevant in this case, since it does not imply a configurational change in the verbs' argument structure.

We can also find this dialectal alternation in the examples of the OEH:

(19) Z-atoz-te, barazkal z-aitez-te (Lç Io 21, 12)
2-come-pl have luch 2ABS-*edin-pl
'Como on, have lunch'

(20) Oparo barazkaldu d-e-zu (Lar *Cor* 216)
plenty have lunch x-have-2sgERG
'You have had lunch plentiful'

(21) O Jesus maitatzekoa, / ortzegun arrats-ean / afaldu z-in-en
Oh Jesus dear thursday evening-INE have dinner x-be-tns
hamabi / Apostoluen arte-an (EZ *Noel* 120)
twelve apostle-GEN among-INE
'Oh dear Jesus, you had dinner among twelve apostles on Thursday evening'

(22) Apaldu d-ai-gun orain (Mg *PAb* 108)
have dinner x-do-2plERG now
'Let' have dinner now'

Browsing modern data in the EPG corpus, we see that the division between the ergative and the absolutive subject selection is not as clear. In this case, meal related verbs are used exclusively with *edun* auxiliary in southern varieties, and both *edun*

and *izan* are used in northern varieties. Although *izan* auxiliary is more commonly selected in latter varieties, the use of **edun* also takes an important part.

- **Verbs of manner of motion** (*dantzatu* 'dance', *korritu/kurritu* 'run', *nabigatu* 'sail', *saltatu* 'jump', *paseatu* 'stroll', *hegatu* 'fly', *igerikatu* 'swim', *lasterkatu* 'run', *airatu* 'fly', and *biratu* 'round'):

All these verbs can appear in constructions in which an absolutive subject is selected. Dialectal tendencies can be stated.

In the examples provided by the OEH, we find little alternation with *dantzatu, nabigatu, saltatu, paseatu, hegatu* and *korritu*. The selection of absolutive subjects is general both among north-eastern and south-western authors, but we do find some evidence of ergative subjects in south-western texts. These are some examples of the verbs *saltatu* and *hegatu*:

(23)   Zu-ø   ama-ren   sabele-an / bozkario-z saltatu   (EZ *Noel* 162)
         you-ABS mother-GEN belly-INE   joy-INS   jump
         'You jump(ed) with joy in your mother's belly'

(24)   Jainkoaren Semea bazera, salta z-aite   or   bee-ra   (AA III 566)
         god-GEN   son   ba-2-be jump 2-*edin there down-ADL
         'If you are god's son, jump down there'

(25)   Salta-tze-n   d-i-yo   bizkarr-era   (Bil 164)
         jump-N-loc   x-have-3sgDAT back-ADL
         'She/he jumps to the shoulders'

(26)   Eta airea-n   ez-t-ire hegatu-ren xoriak-ø   (EZ *Man* I 88)
         and wind-INE no-x-be   fly-fut   birds-ABS
         'And the birds won't fly in the wind'

(27)   Zelako toki zoragarri-ra   egatu eb-an!   (AB *AmaE* 111)
         how   place wonderful-ADL fly   have-tns
         'How wonderful place did it flied to!'

(28)   Sapelaitza-ø ega-tze-n d-e-n   toki-an   (Or *Mi* 70)
         buzzard-ABS   fly-N-loc x-be-Comp place-INE
         'The place where the buzzard flies'

Results provided by the *Corsintax* browser in EPG show that the surface unaccusative alignment can also be selected in south-western varieties in certain verbs,

such as *hegatu, airatu* and *lasterkatu*. On the other hand, some others like *dantzatu* and *korritu/kurritu* can also occur in the unergative construction in north-eastern varieties[2].

Some manner of motion simplex verbs across varieties, meaning 'run', 'jump', 'fly' and 'swim', have been reported in EAEL. As for verbs meaning 'run', *korritu* is used in southern varieties (Biscayan, Gipuzcoan and Navarrese) with **edun* auxiliary, while *lasterkatu* is used northern varieties (Zuberoan and Lapurdian) with *izan* auxiliary. The same situation is attested with *saltatu* –or *brinkatu*– for verbs meaning 'jump'.

'Fly' and 'swim' simplex verbs have only been attested in north-eastern varieties, since south-western varieties prefer complex unergatives. In these cases, they generally select *izan* auxiliary but some examples with **edun* have also been reported in towns located in Nafarroa (again, in the southern Basque Country).

- ▪ **Animate activity verbs** (*jolastu* 'play, have fun', *jostatu* 'have fun', *jokatu* 'act, play', *borrokatu* 'fight', *gudukatu* 'fight', etc.)

All these verbs have traditionally selected *izan* auxiliary in their intransitive use.

In the OEH, dialectal alternation has been reported in *jolastu* and *jokatu.* Specially, for *jokatu,* the dictionary says that, from 1950 on, southern authors generally use it with **edun* auxiliary, while northern authors keep selecting *izan.*

These are some examples of the alternation found in *jolastu/jostatu* and *jokatu.*

(29)   Surtzapi   txuri on-ekin / jolas-te-n g-era   (NEtx *LBB* 297)
          handkerchief white this-SOC   play-N-loc 1pgABS-be
          'We play with this white handkerchief'

---

[2] *Dantzatu*, and *korritu/kurritu* are mainly used with **edun* 'have' auxiliary both in south-western and north-eastern texts but *izan*'s frequency is also important (20-35 %). In this respect, we need to say that the use of **edun* is not restricted to the unergative construction since these verbs also can appear in certain transitive constructions.

   Paseatu and *saltatu* are mainly used in southern texts; *paseatu* generally with *izan* (56,52 %), but the use of **edun* is also relevant (41,78 %); and *saltatu* mainly with **edun* (75 %), but *izan* is also important (25 %).

   As we can see with *paseatu* and *saltatu* –and in some activity verbs like *borrokatu*, too– the intransitive use of these verbs with *izan* 'be' auxiliary is not restricted to north-eastern varieties of the language. Its use is also very common in south-western varieties, at least in written formal texts.

(30) Nik   zu-gaz   jolastu d-ai-tta-n   (Echta *Jos* 67)
       I-ERG you-SOZ play   x-do-1sgERG
       'Let me play with you'

(31) Segurki-ago ioka z-indez-ke   (Ax 236)
       sure-more   act 2-*edin*-mood
       'You can act more sensitively'

(32) Era lotsagarri-an jokatu d-u-gu-la   (MIH 280)
       way shameful-INE act   x-have-1plERG-Comp
       'That we have acted in a shameful way'

The EPG shows that the use of *jostatu, jolastu, jokatu* and *borrokatu* with *izan* auxiliary is general in northern texts. In southern texts, the frequency of *izan* auxiliary is similar to the frequency of **edun*. As we can observe, while the use of **edun* is accepted and common in southern texts, in northern texts *izan* is almost exclusively used.

In the historical dictionary, *trufatu, zintzatu* and *trabailatu* are traditional verbs of north-eastern varieties and their use with *izan* is general.

In the EPG, on the other hand, there are few examples of *trabailatu* and *zintzatu*. As for *trufatu*, it is mainly used with *izan* auxiliary in both northern and southern texts.

1.2. Variable behaviour verbs can occur in transitive constructions

Simplex unergative verbs that allow an absolutive subject can generally appear in certain transitive constructions[3] (Etxepare, 2003).

We have seen that simplex unergatives taking absolutive subjects are: speech verbs, meal related verbs, manner of motion verbs and animate activity verbs. Now, we are going to show that these verbs generally admit a transitive variant, in which the subject bears ergative case and the object bears absolutive case.

---

[3] Exceptions for this behaviour would be the activity verbs *jokatu*. These verbs do not accept a transitive variant in the same sense expressed in the unergative construction.

(33) Solastatu d-it-u-gu-n   enpresa buru batzu-k   d-io-te
      chat   x-pl-have-Comp enterprise head some-ERG x-say-3plERG
biziki zaila   d-e-la   (*Herria*, 2005-08-11)
very difficult x-be-Comp
      'Some directors of enterprises that we have talked to say that it is very
difficult'

(34) Maitia nahi z-ütü-t   segreki mintzatü   (Etch 72)
      darling want 2ABS-have-1sgERG secretly talk
      'Darling, I want to talk to you secretly'

(35) Bide-an zer   izka-tz-en z-enu-te-n?   (Ol Mc 9, 33)
      way-INE what talk-N-loc x-have-3plERG-tns
      'What did you speak about in the way?'

(36) Aldi hun-tan, Jakes Pitaud-ø   mintzatu d-u-gu   (*Herria*, 2005-07-14)
      time this-INE J akes Pitaud-ABS talk   x-have-1plERG
      'This time, we have talked to Jakes Pitaud'

(37) Txibia bat-egaitik gaba galdu, / ta poz-en   zoro-z   zer   ez
      squid a-MOT   night lose   and happy-GEN crazy-INS anything no
afaldu?   (Zav *Fab* RIEV 1909, 34)
have dinner
      'Losing the night because of a squid, and then having lunch nothing because
      of crazy happiness?

(38) Israeltarra-k, afaldu   z-u-en   bildotsa-ø   (Ub 24)
      israeli-ERG   have dinner x-have-tns lamb-ABS
      'The Israeli took lamb for dinner'

(39) Bai al dakik   fandangua-ø dantzatzen?   (Iraola 62)
      yes   x-know-ALL fandango-ABS dance-N-loc
      'Do you know how to dance the fandango?'

(40) Aurreskua-ø dantza-tze-n ari   da-la esan l-ite-ke (Urruz *Zer* 138)
      aurresku-ABS dance-N-loc prog x-be-Comp say mood-*edin*-mood
      'It can be said that she/he is dancing the aurresku'

(41) Jauzilari kubatarra-k bi   metro   saltatu d-it-u-ø
      jumper Cuban-ERG two   kilometers-ABS jump   x-pl-have-3sgERG
                                                      (Etxepare, 2003: 395)
      'The Cuban athlete has jumped two metres'

(42) Bi   kilometro korritu d-it-u-t   oinutsik   (Etxepare, 2003:395)
      two kilometres run   x-pl-have-1plERG barefoot
      'I run barefoot two kilometres'

(43) Etsai-en   borroka-tze-ko / lagüngua eta kharra (Casve *SGrazi* 142)
      Enemies-GEN fight-N-for   help   and flame
      'Help and strength to fight the enemies'

(44)   Urtain-ø   borrokatu d-u-ø   Jon-ek   (Etxepare, 2003:397)
         Urtain-ABS fight   x-have-3sgERG Jon-ERG
         'Jon has fought Urtain'

(45)   Zerren beti   ta leku guzi-an   d-arrai-z-ku-n   gure
         because always and place every-INE x-follow-pl-1plDAT-Comp our
etsaiak-ø   eta guduka-tze-n g-aitu-z-te-n   (CatBurg 12)
enemies-ABS and fight-N-loc   1plABS-have-pl-3plERG-Comp
         'Because our enemies follow us and they fight with us always and
         everywhere'

(46)   Jolas polit bat-ø   jolastu z-u-te-n
         game nice a-ABS play   x-have-3plERG-tns
         'They played a nice game'

The set of things that can occupy the complement position of these verbs are restricted: they can be cognate objects, things belonging to a very limited subclass of things or complements indicating spatial length (Etxepare 2003).

These complements incorporate relevant semantic properties to the verbs. In the case of *solastatu* and *mintzatu* of examples (33), (34) and (36) the objects seem to delimit the target of the event. The same situation is attested in examples (43), (44) and (45) with the verbs *borrokatu* and *gudukatu*.

On the other hand, the internal complements of *mintzatu* in (35), *jolastu* in (46), *afaldu* (37) (38), *dantzatu* (39) (40), *saltatu* (41) and *korritu* (42) delimit the length of the event. In meal related verbs and manner of motion verbs, the internal complement delimits the length of the event.

In all the cases, the incorporation of the internal object imposes a boundary to their aspectual meaning. When they are intransitive, these predicates are atelic but when used with such complements, the event denoted in the predicate becomes telic.

The activity *dance*, because of its meaning, does not denote an end point. The predicate *dance a dance*, however, expresses an end. The activity finishes when the dance is finished.

This ability of the verbs to telicize their meaning in such a way might be related to the absolutive subject choice when they are monovalent.

1.3. Lexical telicity sensitive syntax

We can imagine that the fact that verbs can introduce event-measuring objects is a relevant aspect for the functional skeleton. I suggest that the ability of a verb to telicize its meaning taking an internal object activates an aspectual head, which we will call Asp. This aspectual head is responsible for assigning absolutive case to the objects of transitive verbs and to the subjects of some monovalent verbs.

1.3.1. Ergative and absolutive cases are structurally assigned

I propose that the head which licenses ergative case is higher is the functional tree, and that its assignment can occur in two situations: (i) when Asp has already checked its case features or, (ii) when Asp is not active.

I assume that T assigns ergative case in a structural agree relation, in accordance with Laka 1993, Fernandez 1997, Albizu 2007, Rezac 2008 among others.

Within this approach, the fact that agentive simplex unergatives take absolutive subjects in some Basque varieties is due to the presence of a lower active [+case] functional head in the functional skeleton. This way, in transitive bivalent predicates, once the object is assigned absolutive case, the argument in [spec, vP] looks for another probe to license its case. It finds T and it checks ergative case with it.

In monovalent unergative predicates, case assignment depends on the presence of an active Asp head. If Asp is active, the DP in [spec, vP] will check absolutive case with Asp. If it is not active, then, the sole argument of a verb licenses ergative case with the following nearest [+case] head, T.

1.3.2. Telicity: part of the lexical entry but incorporated to a post-lexical, checking mechanism

This approach is related to the *Aspectual Interface Hypothesis* postulated by Tenny (1992), in the sense that it highlights the aspectual properties –related to the measuring-out– of verbs and their implications for verbs' syntactic behaviour.

However, it also proposes that this feature is syntactically encoded, following the idea of Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995).

The lexical telicity of the verb in relation to their internal complement activates the Asp head. But, then, it is the post-lexical syntactic derivation the one responsible for the case assignment and auxiliary selection in Basque.

This proposal also adopts the idea of the Aspectual head that we find in Borer (1994), as a functional head with a [+case] feature, whose syntactic activity is related to the presence of an event-measuring element. The major difference between Borer's theory and this one is the following: I assume that each verb projects an *argument structure*, where arguments are hierarchically organized (a lexical-syntactic representation). The syntactic positions of the arguments are relevant for the syntax, since the ability of a verb to have an *internal* argument has a direct influence in the functional skeleton: it activates Asp. This way, the syntax discriminates internal from external arguments, when determining the formation of the functional tree.

1.3.3. Basque varieties: telicity sensitive or non sensitive syntax

For this approach, it is important to differentiate verbs which can telicize taking an internal object and verbs which cannot ([+telicize] vs. [-telicize]). Most agentive unergative verbs are [+telicize], in the sense that they can become telic taking an internal object.

This feature is transferred from the lexicon to the syntax in north-eastern varieties. Therefore, I suggest that these varieties are sensitive to whether a given V can license an internal object or not. If V *can* take an object, then Asp head activates.

In south-western varieties, on the other hand, there exists a growing tendency to lose the sensitivity towards this [telicize] feature. In these latter varieties, the syntax only reacts with the actual presence of an internal object, instead of with the verb's lexical ability to introduce it. In other words, the syntax is becoming blind to the [+telicize] feature of the verb: the Asp head will remain non-active, unless an overt NP occupies the complement position of the verb. Therefore, Asp only activates if, and only if, V takes an internal object.

1.4. A recent change

The tendency to select ergative subjects in some of the agentive simplex unergative verbs seems to be quite recent and related to the varieties spoken in the south-western part the Basque Country. In this section, we are going argue in favour of this notion, reviewing the use of two prototypical verbs –*borrokatu* 'fight' and *dantzatu* 'dance'– both in old and modern texts, and commenting on some interesting aspects of the alignment patterns selected for recent intransitive loan verbs (Sarasola 1977 and Alberdi 2003).

As a matter of fact, in the OEH only the use of the *izan* auxiliary is reported for the verb *borrokatu*. In texts dating from the 19th and 20th centuries, authors from both north-eastern and south-western Basque Country select *izan* auxiliary when verbs are intransitive.

Examples in (47)-(49) are taken from Biscayan and Gipuzcoan texts (written by Juan Mateo de Zavala and Crispín Beovide); (50) is a sentence attested in Navarre − *Bortziriak*–, collected by Gotzon Garate; (51) is an example of a Navarrese author (Enrique Zubiri); and (52) belongs to the Souletin modern author Casenave-Harigile.

(47) Martizdi azkarra-kaz / burrukatu ba-az / ator   bildur baga-rik /
  army   fast-SOC   fight   ba-be come fear   without-PART
  gudatu-te-n   geu-gaz   (Zav *Fab* RIEV 1907, 92)
  wagewar-N-loc   us-SOC
  'If you have fight with fast armies, come without fear to fight with us'

(48) Borrokatu n-aiz,   preso   ere bai (Noe 32)
  fight   1sgABS-be prisoner also yes
  'I have fought, and I am prisoner'

(49) aiek baño obeto borrukatu z-ir-a-la   etsaia-rekin   (Bv *AsL* 214)
  them than better fight   x-pl-be-Comp ememy-SOZ
  'That they fought with the enemies better than them'

(50) Elkarr-eri lotuta borrokatu z-ir-en   (Gte *Erd* 123)
  rec-DAT   united fight   x-pl-be-tns
  'They fought together'

(51) Batzu-ø   borrokatu z-ir-e-n   Auritz-eko ordoki-an   (Zub 30)
  some-ABS fight   x-pl-be-tns Auritz-P   plain-INE
  'Some fought in the plain of Auritz'

(52) D-ir-ade borrokatü-ko / heben-ko güdükariak-ø   (Casve *SGrazi* 134)
      x-pl-be fight-fut   here-P   soldiers-ABS
      'The soldiers from here will fight'

As we can see in the examples, all of them select an absolutive subject and *izan* auxiliary. There is also a case, attested in the Gipuzkoan author Etxaniz, where the verb has also taken a dative object:

(53) lentxe-ago tiro-ka   burrukatu z-itzai-o-n   bat-ek   (NEtx *Antz* 147)
      before-than shoot-ADV fight   x-be-3sgDAT-tns one-ERG
      'One that had fought with him before'

Similarly, the verb *dantzatu* has been generally used with an absolutive subject and *izan* auxiliary in texts from the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th century.

Some absolutive/ergative case alternation can be found, though: according to the OEH, Pouvreau and Voltoire, from the 17th century, already used *dantzatu* with an ergative subject, as it can be seen in the example (55) from Pouvreau, where *ezan* auxiliary has been selected in the imperative.

However, the rest of the authors from the 17th and 18th century always use absolutive subject, even the Gipuzkoan Mendiburu (57).

(54) E-tz-are-te   danzatu   (Lç Mt 11, 17)
      no-2ABS-be-pl dance
      'You have not danced'

(55) Danza zazu   (SP *Phil* 375)
      dance ezan-2ERG
      'Dance'

(56) Herodias-en alaba-ø   dantzatu z-e-n   (He Mc 6, 22)
      Herodias-GEN daughter-ABS dance   x-be-tns
      'Herodias' daughter danced'

(57) Ezurr-ik e-tzuten-ak   bezala danza-tze-n z-ir-a-n
      bone-PART no-x-have-3plERG-tns-N like   dance-N-loc x-pl-be-tns
      guziak-ø   (Mb *IArg* I 376)
      all- ABS
      'They all danced like if they would not have bones'

In the 19th century, some alternation starts to emerge. Most of the authors keep choosing an absolutive subject and *izan* auxiliary (58), but we already have some cases

of ergative marking among south-western authors, such as Astarloa, Lardizabal and "Xenpelar" (59)-(61).

(58)   Eskarnioz   d-ir-e-la   dantza-tze-n buruak-ø   (Hb *Esk* 229)
       misfortune-INS x-pl-be-Comp dance-N-loc heads-ABS
       'Heads dance with misfortunes'

(59)   Ara-ko mutil eta neskatillak-ø euren soñu-ban danz-etan
       Ara-P   boys and girls-ABS   their sound-INE dance-N-loc
d-abe-nian
x-have-3plERG- INE   (Astar II 144)
       'When the boys and girls from Ara dance with their music'

(60)   Jauna-ren aurre-an dantzatu-ko d-e-t   (Lard 189)
       lord-P   front-INE dance-fut   x-have-1sgERG
       'I will dance in front of the lord'

(61)   Eztuela   dantzatu-tze-n / zortzikuan   gaizki (Xe 183)
       no-x-have-Comp dance-N-loc   zortziko-INE badly
       'That she/he does not dance badly the zortziko'

In the examples attested in the 20th century, there is no such marking. Interestingly, in all the examples belonging to south-western authors an absolutive subject and *izan* auxiliary is used (62)-(64).

(62)   Santa Kurtzetan Legazpi-n / dantzatu n-intza-n   bera-kin
       Santa Kurtze-INE Legazpi-INE dance   1sgABS-be-tns him/her-SOC
                                                              (JanEd II 52)
       'I danced with him/her in the festivale of Santa Kurtze in Legazpi'

(63)   Emakume andaluzitar bat-ø, jazband jotzen   z-u-en   beltza-rekin
       woman   Andalucian   a-ABS jazband play-N-loc x-have-tns black-N-SOC
       dantza-tze-n   e-tz-a-n   ba!   (ABar *Goi* 15)
       dance-N- loc   no-x-be-tns ba
       'An Andalucian woman danced with the black guy who played in the jazzband!'

(64)   Hauk-ø   xingili-ka ari   bai-t-ir-a, dantza-tze-n ez d-ir-e-nean (Lf ib. 13)
       these-ABS hop-ADV   prog ba-x-pl-be dance-N-loc no x-pl-be-INE
       'These guys are hopping, when they are not dancing'

As we have shown, little alternation has been found historically with both *borrokatu* and *dantzatu*.

Nonetheless, the EPG shows that, at the beginning of the 21st century, the use of an ergative subject with these verbs is very common. Examples of the kind in (66)-(68) for *borrokatu* and in (68)-(70) for *dantzatu* can easily be found in the press.

(65)   diktadura   guzti-en aurka borrokatu dugu   (*Berria*, 2004-06-23)
               dictatorship all-P   against fight   x-have-1plERG
               'We have fought against all dictatorships'

(66)   Errusia-ko armada-rekin gerra-n borrokatu z-u-en   (*Berria*, 2004-09-30)
               Russia-P   army-SOZ   war-INE fight   x-have-tns
               'She/he fought in the war with the Russian army'

(67)   eta Deba-n,   euskara-ren eta ikastola-ren alde borrokatu z-u-en
               and Deba-INE Basque-P   and ikastola-P side   fight   x-have-tns
               (*Berria*, 2004-06-18)
               'And in Deba, she/he fought in favour of the Basque language and the ikastola'

(68)   Tonathiu-ren ordez beste neska bat-ek dantzatu z-u-en   Cecilia-rekin
               Tonathiu-P   instead other girl   a-ERG dance   x-have-tns Cecilia-SOC
               (*Berria*, 2006-05-03)
               'Instead of Tonathiu, another girl danced with Cecilia'

(69)   Arriaga antzoki-an bihar   eta etzi   dantzatu-ko
               Arriaga theatre-INE   tomorrow and the day after tomorrow dance-fut
               d-u-te   Gulbenkian balet-eko dantzariek   (*Berria*, 05-13)
               x-have-3plERG Gulbenkian ballet-GEN dancers-ERG
               'The dancers of the Gulbenkian ballet will dance tomorrow and the day after tomorrow in the Arriaga Theatre'

(70)   Gaiarre antzoki-an maiz   dantzatu z-u-en   (*Berria*, 2006-02-03)
               Gaiarre theatre-INE usually dance   x-have-tns
                'She/he danced in the Gaiarre Theatre many times'

Leaving aside the unergatives that traditionally have selected an absolutive subject, we are now going to focus on the alignment that Basque speakers do with Spanish or French newer loan verbs. Some scholars have pointed to this issue, such as Sarasola (1977) and Alberdi (2003).

Sarasola (1977) states that the number of unergatively aligned verbs is increasing in Basque and he argues that it happens because speakers are adopting the tendency to perceive all verbs like transitive. This behaviour would be stronger in loan verbs, due to the lack of linguistic tradition which enables the speaker to make his/her choice freely.

He even suggests that Basque could end up aligning all intransitive verbs like unergatives, becoming an accusative language, and ceasing to be an ergative language.

However, we do not believe that this speakers' new behaviour will reach all intransitive verbs. As Alberdi (2003) showed, there are some strategies involved leading to different configuration patterns of intransitive loan verbs. He argued that Basque speakers make the alignment choice depending on both (i) semantic and (ii) syntactic aspects of the verb. In order to be aligned unergatively, a verb must be either agentive or otherwise internally caused[4]. As for the syntactic restriction, it cannot have a *se* clitic in the original language –Spanish or French–, at least in the sense that it is being loaned. If it does bear a *se* clitic, then, the verb will select an absolutive subject and *izan* auxiliary in Basque.

Alberdi also points that the tendency to select an ergative subject in unergative loan predicates is even stronger in spoken language, giving rise to such uses with non-standard loan verbs:

(71) Autoa-k ez d-u-ø   arranka-tze-n
       car-ERG no x-have-3sgERG start-N-loc
       'The car does not start'

(72) Pilota-k txarto botatu d-u-ø
       ball-ERG badly bounce x-have-3sgERG
       'The ball has bounced badly'

(Alberdi 2003: 47)

Some verbs that we have analysed belong to this group (*deskantsatu, entrenatu, erreinatu, sufritu, bidaiatu, funtzionatu, kotizatu* and *zirkulatu*). They are recent loan verbs, generally restricted to southern varieties, whose subject is generally marked ergative.

Looking in the EPG, it is interesting to note that *entrenatu* is the only verb which is commonly used with *izan* auxiliary (57 % of frequency)[5]. For the rest of them, they generally select an ergative subject and **edun* auxiliary. Little alternation (in *deskantsatu, bidaiatu* and *jardun*) or none (*sufritu* and *erreinatu*) is attested.

---

[4] For a better understanding of internally caused verbs, see the chapter number 3.
[5] Following Alberdi, it might be because in Spanish we find both *'He entrenado'* and *'Me he entrenado'*, the latter having a *se* clitic.

The special case of *funtzionatu, kotizatu* and *zirkulatu* is explored in Chapter 3, since their subject is not a protipypical agent, and therefore, an unergative alignment can be confusing.

It seems that the strategy to mark unergative subjects with ergative case is very productive nowadays, at least in some Basque speakers. What it seems clear is that it was not at play when *dantzatu* or other intransitive verbs were introduced in the language.

Going back to the hypothesis presented in this paper, we suggested that in north-eastern varieties and that in old southern varieties, the syntax perceived the telicizing capacity of verbs introducing internal objects. It seems that in present southern varieties, the syntax can just perceive whether the intransitive verb has an argument in the complement position of V or not, that is to say, whether it is really an unaccusative or not. If it is not, the Asp head will not activate and the subject will receive ergative case.

This change in the syntax of southern varieties seems to have taken place in the last century.

2. **Simplex unergative verbs and theoretical approaches to ergative case**
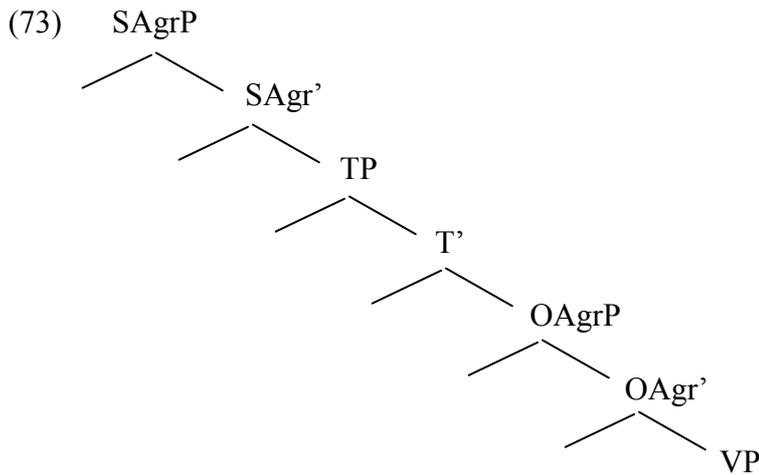
2.1. **The structural approach**

Many scholars (Ortiz de Urbina 1987, Laka 1993, Fernandez 1997, Rezac 2008) have proposed that ergative case assignment is structural in Basque. Structural case is considered to be assigned by functional heads to the elements sitting in their specifier position (Laka 2006) or in a structural agree relation (Rezac 2008). The pronominal head does not select the element; the assignment takes place blindly and is not related to theta role (Chomsky 1992, Laka 2006, Rezac 2008).

Some of these works (Laka 1993, Fernández 1997) considered Basque unergative predicates –both complex and simplex– pure transitive, and this way, they accounted for the ergative case of their subjects. As we will see in §2.2, proposals made within this approach could serve to explain part of the dialectal data regarding simplex unergatives, but cannot be extended to the whole picture of the variation.

Let us see step by step how these hypotheses accounted for Basque complex and simplex unergatives. Under this approach, it is assumed that ergative case corresponds to nominative case, and that absolutive corresponds to accusative. Both case systems, ergative-absolutive and nominative-accusative, are considered to be the result of a single parameter: the *Obligatory Case Parameter* (Chomsky 1992, Bobaljik 1992).

Inflection is subdivided into different functional heads; Subject Agreement Phrase (SagrP or Agr1), Time Phrase (TP) and Object Agreement Phrase (OAgrP or Agr2) (73) (Pollock 1989, Chomsky 1989). Agreement heads are responsible for structural case assignment. According to Chomsky (1992), the only difference between nominative/ergative and accusative/absolutive case, is that case features involved in nominative or ergative case assignment belong to T, whereas, case features involved in accusative or absolutive case assignment belong to V.

(73)   SAgrP
```
(73)    SAgrP
       /    \
            SAgr'
           /    \
               TP
              /   \
                  T'
                 /  \
                    OAgrP
                   /    \
                        OAgr'
                       /    \
                           VP
```

The *Obligatory Case Parameter* states that both case systems –ergative-absolutive and nominative-accusatives– behave in the same way in transitive predicates. Both agreement heads are activated and verbal arguments move to their respective specifier position, to check ergative or nominative case –in the case of external arguments– and absolutive or accusative case –in the case of internal arguments.

The crucial difference lies in the choice made in monovalent predicates. The *Obligatory Case Parameter* says that when the predicate has only one argument, languages differ in the agreement head they activate. If SAgr activates, the case system we get would be nominative-accusative. On the contrary, if OAgr is activated, then, we will have an ergative-absolutive case system (74).

(74)   Obligatory Case Parameter
Monovalent predicates: a) SAgr activated → nominative case system
                         b) OAgr activated → ergative case system

In the parametric way indicated in (74a), the only argument of the clause will move to the specifier position of SAgrP, and there, it will check case features belonging to T. This is actually, what we find in nominative languages, where intransitive subjects bear the same case as transitive subjects; nominative.

In the second parametric path, indicated in (74b), the only argument of the verb moves to the specifier position of the active agreement head, which in this case is OAgr. In this position, it will check case features belonging to V with the Agr functional head. This is the choice we find in ergative languages, such as Inuit, where the case system equals intransitive subjects with transitive objects.

Latest works dealing with this parametric variation (Rezac 2008), suggest that case assignment occurs in a structural agree relation. In the same way as previous proposals, the *Obligatory Case Parameter* states that in ergative languages the head *v* serves as a probe in intransitive clauses, whereas in nominative languages, T does. Arguments check their case features with the appropriate probes in a given structural distance. In ergative languages, the DP in intransitive predicates checks absolute case with *v* and in nominative ones, it checks nominative case with T.

One strong piece of evidence in favour of the structural view and against the inherent approach of ergative case assignment in Basque consists on raising-to-ergative configurations. Artiagoitia (2001) shows that *seem* verbs in Basque –*irudi* 'seem' and *eman* 'give'– have true null expletive elements bearing ergative case in subject position (75). The ergative case of the expletive is reflected in the choice of the auxiliary **edun*.

(75)   Jon-ø   nekatuta dago-ela   ema-te-n   d-u-ø
         e Jon-ABS tired   x-be-Comp give-N-loc   x-have-3sgERG
         'It seems Jon is tired'

The absolute subject of the embedded predicate – *Jon* – can rise to the subject position of the main clause, taking the place previously occupied by the expletive. There it is assigned ergative case by T (76).

(76)   Jon-ek   t nekatuta dago-ela   ema-te-n   d-u-ø
         Jon-ERG   t tired   x-be-Comp seem-N-loc x-have-3sgERG
         'Jon seems tired'

Oyharçabal (1990), arguing that ergative is inherent, suggested that the ergative expletive in (75) is a non referential but quasi-argument subject, similar to subjects in weather verbs. However, Artiagoitia showed that subjects in *seem* verbs and weather verbs behave differently in control structures, pointing that subjects in weather verbs are quasi-arguments (77), but not in *seem* verbs (78).

(77)   ezin   d-u-ø   elurra egin   hotz-ik   egin gabe
         e_i cannot x-have-3sgERG snow do e_i cold-PART do   without
         'It cannot snow without cold' or *'It cannot snow it it is not cold'*

(78)   ?? Jon-ø   nekatuta d-ago-ela   ema-te-n   d-u-ø   lan
        e_i Jon-ABS tired   x-be-Comp give-N-loc x-have-3sgERG e_i pro work
handi-rik   egin ez d-u-ø-ela   eman   arren
big-PART   do   no x-have-3sgERG-Comp give   although
        'It seems that Jon is tired although it doesn't seem he has done a lot of
        work'

An interesting observation of Artiagoitia's proposal is the necessity to turn to lexical features on verbs like *irudi* and *eman* in order to account for the ergative case on their subjects. In raising structures, the embedded subject raises to the main clause, looking for an appropriate probe that would check its case features. Artiagoitia considers *irudi* verbs to be monovalent predicates, so that *v* would be the only active functional head capable of assigning case, according to the *OCP*. Nevertheless, according to this scholar *irudi* and *eman* are lexically specified to be [-absolutive] and therefore, *v* is not active on them. T is active, and subjects necessarily have to check ergative case with it.

This way, we can explain the ergative case on raised subjects and the selection of *edun* auxiliary even when we have a null expletive in subject position. T has a strong EPP feature and needs a subject in its specifier position. The expletive or the embedded subject will satisfy T's [EPP] feature and this way, they will check phi-features and ergative case with T.

Lexical specification of verbs, like the [-absolutive] feature proposed by Artiagoitia, is going to be a recurrent fashion explaining monovalent predicates taking ergative subjects in Basque. The fact that some monovalent verbs cannot have an absolutive argument is an interesting notion, which is also closely related to our proposal.

The point that head responsible for assigning absolutive case to the argument is not active in some verbs is very close to what we are proposing in our theory for monovalent verbs, with the difference that we suggest that this scenario occurs due to the inability of a verb to introduce an internal object in the argument structure, or, in the case of south-western varieties, due to loss of syntactic sensitivity towards this feature.

Rezac (2008) also suggests, as other evidence in favour of the structural approach, that ergative 1st and 2nd person arguments control absolutive agreement in past tenses. This phenomenon is known as *Ergative Displacement* and it serves to argue in favour of grouping ergative and absolutive case as structural, separated from dative case which he considers theta related. In ditransitive configurations where ergative displacement takes

place, phi-probing between the ergative DP and absolutive agreement morphology occurs even if a dative argument is between them (79). It shows that dative DPs do not act as interveners for this operation. Rezac considers this a proof for the distinct nature of ergative/absolutive DPs, and dative DPs.

(79)   Gu-k   zu-ri   sagarrak-ø erosi g-en-iz-ki-zu-n   (Rezac, 2008: 12)
         we-ERG you-DAT apples-ABS buy 1plABS-have-pl-DF-2sgDAT-tns
         'We bought you apples'

E   lements bearing ergative case are able to phi-probe because they are transparent domains, whereas dative elements are opaque PPs, unable to phi-probe. Consequently, the presence of a dative element between the ergative DP and agreement morphology is not relevant for the operation.

1.2.1. The case of unergative verbs in Basque

Looking at Basque intransitives, we can see that they do correspond to neither of the parametric ways of the *Obligatory Case Parameter*. We have mentioned previously that Basque has some monovalent predicates –complex (80) and simplex unergatives (81)– which take ergative subjects. The *Obligatory Case Parameter* states that in ergative case systems, monovalent predicates activate *v* and therefore, the only argument will be assigned absolutive case. Basque unergatives, unlike unaccusatives, do not follow this pattern.

(80)   Aitona-k   egunero   negar egi-te-n   d-u-ø
         grandfather-ERG every-day cry   do-N-loc x-have-3sgERG
         'Grandfather cries every day'

(81)   Elkarr-ekin jolastu-ko d-u-gu
         rec-SOZ   play-fut   x-have-1plERG
         'We will play together'

The alignment distinction, like this one between unergative and unaccusative verbs, is known as *Split Ergativity* (Dixon 1979, 1994) and languages showing it have been

described as *extended ergative systems* (Ortiz de Urbina 1986) or *active* (Levin 1983, Rebuschi 1986).

Laka (1993a) and Fernandez (1997) argue this deviation of the ergative parametric way is due to the transitive nature of Basque unergatives. Hale and Keyser (1993) proposed that unergative predicates are universally transitive in their *Lexical Relational Structure* –a lexical level, prior to D-structure, governed by syntax– and that they undergo object incorporation in the mapping to D-structure. Laka showed that Basque *complex* unergatives are examples of these transitive predicates, but unlike English unergative verbs like 'dance' or 'laugh', they have not incorporated their object in the way to D-structure. Uribe-Etxebarria (1989) showed some configurations in which the N and the light verbs *egin* occur separated: interrogative sentences (82), focalized structures (83) and taking the partitive (84).

(82)   a. Nor-k   egin behar d-u-ø   lan?
        who-ERG do   need x-have-3sgERG work
        'Who has to work?'

        b. Nor-k   egin d-u-ø   lan?
        who-ERG do   x-have-3sgERG work
        'Who has worked?

(83)   Oso ondo egin d-u-zu   lan
        very well do x-have-2sgERG work
        'Very well you have worked'

(84)   Ez d-u-t   lan-ik   egin
        no x-have-1sgERG work-PART do
        'I haven't worked'

Complex unergative verbs in Basque consist of a bare NP describing the event, and a light verb *egin* 'do', carrying the eventive meaning. This predicates construction is very productive –specially in south-western varieties– and can be classified according to their semantic content (Etxepare 2003): sound emission (*deiadar egin* 'scream (do scream)', *hasperen egin* 'sigh (do sigh)', *oihu egin* 'yell (do yell)' etc.); light emission, (*dir-dir egin* 'shine', *diz-diz egin* 'glow, sparkle', *nir-nir egin* 'twinkle, flicker'; verbal emission (*burla egin* 'make fun', *errieta egin* 'reprehend, scold', etc.); internal body motion (*dar-dar egin* 'tremble', *bor-bor egin* 'boil noisily'); physical acitvities, such as actions against an object or an individual (*tiro egin* 'shoot', *bultza egin* 'push', *saka egin* 'press', etc), motion verbs (*korri egin* 'run', *ihes egin* 'flee', *salto egin* 'jump',

etc.), bodily functions (*aharrausi egin* 'yawn', *kaka egin* 'shit', *txiza egin* 'urinate', etc.); mental activities (*duda egin* 'doubt', *kasu egin* 'pay attention', *amets egin* 'dream', etc.); and behavioural verbs (*mehatxu egin* 'threaten', *muzin egin* 'be unfriendly, disdainful', etc.).

Fernández claimed that the object is lately incorporated to the verb in the computational system. She argued that this incorporation takes place after spell out, so that both the NP and the light verb remain independent in the overt syntax.

Both Laka and Fernández suggested that the internal object of the verb is assigned absolutive case inherently from the verb. Since this object is a bare NP, and consequently, non specific, it remains within VP. This NP needs to check its case features. Absolutive case is assigned inherently –through incorporation in Fernández (1997)– by V.

Case features on OAgr are no longer available, and therefore, the subject of the predicate needs to find another head that will serve as a probe for case checking. SAgr is active and has case features. The subject moves to [spec, SAgrP] and checks with SAgr case features belonging to T, in this case, ergative case.

Like these scholars, I also think that complex unergative verbs in Basque are transitive in nature. In chapter §4, I show how the derivation takes place (scenario#1). The object sits in the complement position of V, both in the argument structure and in the computational system. Consequently, Asp head activates and the argument checks case features in an agree relation with it.

The case of simplex unergative predicates has been more controversial among scholars and different hypothesis have emerged to explain this special subject case selection. Unlike complex unergatives, simplex unergatives consist of just one lexical item, (they do not involve a bare NP and a light verb construction), and therefore, they have not apparently an internal object that would derive the ergative marking of the subject. In the next sections (§2.2, §2.3, §2,4), we discuss different hypothesis in the light of the dialectal data.

2.2. The problem of the transitive nature

The dialectal variation that we have presented in the first section has not been theoretically attended within the structural approach. Scholars have usually focused on the western form of these predicates, that is to say, in the unergative alignment of the verbs. Accounting for the western variant of these simplex predicates, both Laka and Fernandez proposed that these predicates, like complex unergatives, are transitive in nature and this way, they explained the ergative marking of the subject. In this section, I show that this theory cannot be extended to the whole variation typology found in simplex unergative verbs, since even if we would propose that the object incorporation takes place in different levels of the derivation, we would not be able to explain why some verbs keep stable and do not show subject case alternation across varieties.

Laka suggested that simplex predicates have a *pro* in their object position. This way, she accounted for the fact that simplex predicates can also occur in transitive constructions, bearing an overt object.

(85) Emakumea-k   dantza hau-ø   dantzatu   d-u-ø
      woman-ERG   dance this-ABS   dance   x-have-3sgERG
      'The woman has danced this dance'

(86) Urtain-ø   borrokatu d-u-ø   Jon-ek
      Urtain-ABS   fight   x-have-3sgERG Jon-ERG
      'Jon has fight Urtain'

Laka's proposal explains why we can find an overt object in simplex unergatives, and not in complex predicates (87). Complex predicates already have an internal object case licensed with V.

(87) *Amama-k   dantza hau-ø   dantza egin d-u-ø
      grandmother-ERG dance   this-ABS   dance do   x-have-3sgERG
      'Grandmother has danced this dance'

However, as Fernández points out, not all simplex predicates can take overt objects. There are a number of simplex predicates which do not permit an internal argument: *argitu* 'lighten', *beilatu* 'to watch over', *dirdiratu* 'sparkle', *distiratu* 'shine', *dudatu* 'hesitate', *erauntsi* 'rumble', *iharduki* 'to challenge, to be engaged, to deal',

irakin 'boil', *iraun* 'remain', *laboratu* 'to cultivate' and *kurritu* 'to flow'. Although these verbs do not accept an internal object, they select an ergative subject. As Fernández claims, a *pro* position that can be occupied by overt DP seems not to be an adequate explanation for all simplex unergative predicates.

Fernández argued that *simplex* unergative verbs are other example of transitive predicates whose internal object had been incorporated to the verb. This incorporation has taken place before spell out, and for that reason, a single element is visible in the overt syntax. In any case, the internal object has received inherent absolutive case from the verb and, consequently, the subject needs to look for another probe to check its case features. SAgr serves as a probe and the subjects checks its case with it. This way, the external argument is assigned ergative case.

2.2.1. Object incorporated verbs

In north-eastern varieties, most agentive simplex unergative verbs do not seem to be of a transitive nature, since their subject is assigned absolutive case and *izan* 'be' auxiliary is selected, as in the verb *afaldu* 'have dinner' (89).

(88)   Afaldu   zenean   etzan zen
        have-dinner x-be-tns-loc   lie   x-be-tns
        'He lied after having dinner'

In all these cases in which absolutive case is assigned to the subject, a hypothetical internal object that would check inherent absolutive case would not be possible, since *v* case features are available just once. Once *v* would have assigned inherent case to the internal object, it would be impossible for OAgr, or Asp in our proposal, to assign absolutive case to the subject.

Therefore, it seems that an internal object cannot be present in these predicates, at least in north-eastern varieties. These verbs are apparently intransitive for the syntax.

Simplex predicates of this kind appearing in the unaccusative alignment pattern had previously been reported in Levin (1983), Oyharçabal (1990) and Fernández (1997). Levin suggested that *mintzatu* 'talk' was the only agentive verb with absolutive subject she had found. Lately, Oyharçabal pointed out there are actually more agentive

verbs with absolute subjects in Basque, specially, in north-eastern varieties. In the first chapter we have actually mentioned some of them, such as *elekatu, elestatu, solastatu, hizkatu, hizketatu, hegatu, igerikatu, zintzatu, trabailatu,* etc.

Fernández (1997) approached the unergatives which take *izan* auxiliary as another type of unergative predicates in Basque, together with simplex verb taking **edun* and complex unergatives. She proposed that they also undergo object incorporation but, unlike in simplex and complex predicates, this incorporation takes place in the *Lexical Relational Structure*, a lexical level prior to the computational system. As a consequence, these verbs are intransitive for the computational system, and the only argument is assigned absolute case.

This approach can give us a partial explanation for our dialectal variation. If simplex predicates take, on the one hand, ergative subjects and **edun* auxiliary in south-western varieties, and take, on the other hand, absolute subjects and *izan* auxiliary in north-eastern dialects, then, we could propose the following: in north eastern varieties, the internal object incorporates onto the verb in the *Lexical Relational Structure*, and the predicate is intransitive for the syntax. In south-western varieties, the object incorporation takes place in the computational system, before spell out, and therefore, the predicate is transitive for the syntax. The object is assigned inherent absolute case from V, and the subject is assigned ergative case from T. Our first hypothesis is formulated in (89).

---

(89)   <u>Incorporation Time Hypothesis</u>
North-eastern varieties:
-    incorporation at LRS → absolute subject in simplex predicates

South-western varieties:
-    incorporation in syntax, before spell out → ergative subjects in simplex predicates

---

Interestingly, works dealing with object case variation –absolutive/dative– (Fernández 2008, Fernández and Landa 2009, Fernández and Ortiz de Urbina 2009 2010, Mounole 2009) have found that some verbs in north-eastern varieties tend to mark the object with absolutive case, whereas the same verbs in south-western varieties mark it with dative. This object case variation gives rise to two configurations:

(i) Bivalent transitive: the subject is assigned ergative and the object is assigned absolutive (90).

(ii) Bivalent unergative: although there is no absolutive argument, the subject is assigned ergative and the object is assigned dative (91).

(90) Entzun   n-au-zu
      listen   1sgABS-have-2sgERG
      'You have listened to me'

(91) Entzun   d-i-da-zu
      listen   x-have-1sgDAT-2sgERG
      'You have listened to me'

This phenomenon would be easily explained with the *Incorporation Time Hypothesis*. North-eastern varieties incorporate the object in the lexical system and these verbs enter the derivation with a single argument –the subject. If an overt object is taken by these predicates, it will be assigned absolutive case by *v*. The subject will look for another probe which can provide it with case. Since T has case features to value, the subject is assigned ergative case.

In south-western varieties, on the other hand, the internal object is incorporated in the syntax, so that the verb enters the derivation as a transitive predicate. This object is assigned absolutive case from *v*. The second internal object taken by the verb would need to check case with another functional case that would provide it with case. Since absolutive case is no longer available on *v*, it follows that the second object checks dative case with a suitable probe higher in the syntactic tree. In the same way, the subject looks for an appropriate head to check its case and does it with T. The subject receives ergative case from it.

Fernandez and Ortiz de Urbina (2010) also address this question. As they point out, many of these verbs seem to have a direct object implied in their meaning. For example, in the verbs *abisatu* 'notify', *barkatu* 'forgive', *bultzatu* 'push', *entzun* 'hear', *erregutu* 'pray', *eskertu* 'thank', *kontseilatu* 'give advice', *manatu* 'order' and *obeditu* 'obey'. This implicit direct object meaning could derived due the incorporated object.

However, these scholars remind that there are still many other verbs which do not bear the sense of having an implicit object: *begiratu* 'look at', *erreparatu* 'be aware of', *esetsi* 'attack', *jazarri* 'persecutte', *iguriki* 'wait', *itxaron* 'wait', *jarraiki* 'follow', *segitu* 'follow', *oratu* 'hold'. For these verbs, the hypothesis of object incorporation

does not seem to be an adequate explanation. Dative marking of the objects in these verbs would be, then, unexplained.

Actually, Incorporation Time Hypothesis becomes problematic even when looking at monovalent unergatives. Not all simplex predicates show dialectal subject alternation. Some verbs always select an ergative subject in all varieties. Althought they are few in number, we belief that their distribution must be taken into account to make a proper analysis of the variation.

2.2.1.1. Unergative verbs of non variable behaviour

- **Verbs of non-volitional emission** (*dirdiratu* 'to sparkle', *distiratu* 'to shine' and *erauntsi* 'to rumble').

Looking at the OEH, *edun use is general with *dirdiratu* and *distiratu*. There are a few examples with *izan* auxiliaries but we believe they are not significant for the present study, since there is not alternation that can be dialectally stated and, furthermore, they are all modern examples, dating of the 20th century. So, it is far from being equalled to the variation found in activity verbs or manner of motion verbs, in which the absolutive subject choice was general in old examples.

(92) Parabisua-k   distia-tze-n d-u-ø   nola milla   iguzki-k
      paradise-ERG shine-N-loc x-have-3sgERG how a-thousand suns-ERG
                                                      (EZ *Man* I 133)
      'The paradise shines like a thousand suns'

(93) Ekus-te-n d-e-zu,   nola distia-tze-n d-u-en   izarra-k (AA II 12)
      see-N-loc x-have-2sgERG how shine-N-loc x-have-tns star-ERG
      'Can you see, how the star shines'

Ergative subjects are general in all times and varieties. In example (92), from Joannes Etcheberri, a northern author of the 17th century, an ergative subject is selected. This is an example which illustrates the point that even historically and in northern varieties, the verb 'shine' always has selected an ergative subject. Example in (93) was written by Aguirre, a Guipuzcoan writer, at the beginning if the 19th century.

The EPG also shows that the ergative subject choice is general: the use of *izan* is less than the 15 %. Dialectal tendencies cannot be established.

- ***Iraun*** 'persist'

In the OEH the use of this verb with *edun auxiliary is general, but some few examples of *izan* use are also reported. Again, we claim that this alternation is not significant, due to the reasons we stated before. In the EPG, the frequency of this verb with *edun is absolute (more than 95 %, both in southern and northern texts).

(94)   Oraindik ere bizirik dirau-ø   (Ub 47)
         still   also alive   x-persist-3sgERG
         'She/he/it is still alive'

(95)   Bost urte iraun eba-n   (Astar VIII)
         five year persist have-tns
         'She/he/it lasted five years'

- ***Irakin*** 'boil'

No variation is attested in *irakin* in OEH. The use of the ergative subject and *edun auxiliary has been general in all times and dialects. In the EPG, the frequency of occurrence of *irakin* with *edun auxiliary is almost 90 %, although it appears much less in northern texts.

(96)   Odola-k   su baga   diraki-ø   (RS 146)
         blood-ERG fire without x-boil-3sgERG
         'The blood boils without fire'

(97)   Zahartasuna-ø hotz d-a, gazte-ek   d-iraki-te   (H)
         old-age-ABS   cold x-be young-ERG x-boil-3plERG
         'Old age is cold, young people boil'

All these predicates keep selecting an ergative subject and *edun auxiliary across varieties. Therefore, the hypothesis presented in (89) is insufficient, unavailable to account for all simplex predicates in north-eastern varieties. We could say that in some

cases the incorporation of the object takes place in the lexical system, whereas in some others it occurs in the syntax, depending on the verb. But then, we would need to explain which syntactic, semantic or lexical aspect makes the verb to incorporate the object sooner or later. In any case, the locus of variation seems to reside in another aspect that is not accounted within this view.

2.2.2. *Have* auxiliary, a sign of transitivity?

Even if we do not focus on dialectal variation, the transitive view of unergative simplex verbs is *per se* problematic. According to Laka (2006) and Preminger (2009), there is no sign of transitivity in simplex unergative predicates. The fact that **edun* 'have' auxiliary is selected does not obligatorily mean that an absolutive argument is present in the predicate.

Actually, as many scholars have suggested (Albizu 2001, Arregi 2004, Fernandez and Ortiz de Urbina 2010), **edun* 'have' auxiliary selection does not necessarily reflect transitivity. An inflected **edun* auxiliary form, such as *dut,* can be used in two distinct syntactic contexts: in a transitive predicate, where two arguments –an ergative and an absolutive DP– are involved (98), or in an intransitive predicate, with just an ergative argument (99).

(98)   Ni-k   baloia-ø   hartu   d-u-t.
        I-ERG   ball-ABS   take   x-have-1sgERG
        'I have taken the ball'

(99)   Ni-k   saltatu d-u-t.
        I-ERG   jump   x-have-1sgERG
        'I have jumped'.

Absolutive arguments control prefixes and the plural field in the auxiliary (Laka 1993b, Rezac 2008). When the absolutive argument is 3rd person (98), the agreement marker is zero mark. The prefix is filled by a default tense/mood marker (Laka 1993b). Similarly, when the absolutive argument is singular, no agreement marker reflects its number. Consequently, in the form *dut*, only ergative marking is overtly reflected.

Similarly, Arregi (2004) claims that *edun auxiliary selection is morphologically motivated by the presence of ergative agreement morphology, and not by syntactic transitivity as it is often thought.

Preminger (2009ab) argues that the parallelism made between the use of *edun* in transitive and intransitive predicates is due to the fact that 3rd person absolute agreement morpheme of transitive contexts –namely, zero mark–, is also used as a *default* mark when *agree* operation fails.

This scholar claims that unlike ergative or dative, absolutive agreement morphemes are the result of *agree* operation. When this operation fails, due to defective intervention, locality conditions or just absolutive argument absence, 3rd person singular morpheme emerges, reflecting default phi-features.

Following this idea, desirable results obtain in Long Distance Agreement configurations attested in some varieties of the language (Etxepare 2006). Some Basque varieties accept LDA where the main predicate agrees with the plural complement belonging to the embedded clause.

(100)   Jon-i   kopla hori-ek-ø kantatzen entzun d-i-zki-o-t (Etxepare, 2006:88a)
        Jon-DAT song those-ABS sing-N-loc heard   x-have-pl-3sgDAT-1sgERG
        'I have heard/listened to John singing those songs'

The auxiliary in the main clause agrees with the embedded plural object –*kopla horiek*– and this agreement is reflected in the plural absolutive morpheme *zki*. According to Preminger, *agree* operation is subject to intervention effects (Chomsky 2000, 2001) and so is attested in similar contexts when a dative argument is involved in the embedded clause. In (101), the dative DP –*lankideei*– acts as an intervener and blocks the *agree* relation between the auxiliary in the higher clause and the embedded absolutive DP. For this reason, the auxiliary cannot bear a plural absolutive mark and the derivation crashes.

(101)   * Lankide-ei   liburu horiek-ø   irakurtzen probatu d-it-u-(z)-te
          colleagues-DAT book those-ABS read-N-loc attempt x-pl-have-3plERG
                                                        (Preminger 2009:24)
          'They have attempted to read those books to the collegues'.

Nevertheless, if the dative DP is substituted by an adjunct –*Mirenentzat*– the sentence is grammatical in this variety (102). The adjunct does not act as an intervener and the *agree* relation between *harri horiek* and the auxiliary is obtained.

(102)   Miren-entzat harri horiek-ø   altxatzen probatu d-it-u-(z)-te
          Miren-DES   stone those-ABS lift-N-loc attempt x-pl-have-3plERG
                                                     (Preminger, 2009:25)
          'They have attempted to lift those stones for Miren'

When Agree operation fails, as in (101), Preminger suggests that a default agreement marker is selected –in this case 3rd person singular marker–, and this way, the derivation converges (103).

(103)   Lankide-ei   liburu horiek-ø   irakurtzen probatu d-u-te
          colleagues-DAT book   those-ABS read-N-loc attempt x-have-3plERG
          'They have attempted to read those books to the collegues'

According to him, this very same result applies for unergative simplex predicates in Basque. The verb *probatu* 'attempt' behaves like an unergative verb: it is monovalent and takes an ergative subject. Besides, it also takes an adpositional clause as we have seen in the examples (101), (102) and (103).

If *probatu* and unergative predicates would have an internal incorporated object, then, we would have to say that the absolutive marker in (102) is co-indexed with two absolutive arguments, –the internal incorporated object and the embedded object *harri horiek*. This would not be a desirable result.

On the other hand, if *probatu* and unergative verbs are taken as truly intransitive verbs, then, we would be able to explain the absolutive plural marker in (102) and the default marker –absolutive 3rd person singular– in (103). The auxiliary looks for an appropriate absolutive target and, in the case of (101), finds it in the adpositional clause. The *agree* operation successes and the phi-features of the embedded object are reflected in the auxiliary. In the case of (104), on the contrary, there is not such an argument and consequently, the *agree* operation fails. A default absolutive marker is then selected.

(104)   Ni-k   dantzatu d-u-t.
          I-ERG   dance   x-have-1sgERG
          'I have danced'

This proposal favours an intransitive view of Basque simplex unergatives and goes against the *Obligatory Case Parameter* since it assumes that ergative case assignment can occur without the presence of an absolutive argument.

I agree with Laka (2006) and Preminger (2009ab) in considering simplex unergative predicates truly intransitive. In many simplex predicates, a lexical N can be discerned within the verb (for example *dantza* in *dantza-tu* 'dance', *salto* in *salta-tu* 'jump', *borroka* in *borroka-tu* 'fight', *distira* in *distira-tu* 'shine', etc.), but this is not the case for some others like *korritu* 'run', *iraun* 'remain', *irakin* 'boil', *funtzionatu* 'work' and *kotizatu* 'to quote'. Besides, **edun* auxiliary selection cannot be seen as an indicator of the transitivity of the predicate, as we have just explained.

2.3. Ergative case and agent theta role

Given the problems discussed in §2.2, many scholars have proposed that ergative case is a theta related case in Basque (Oyharçabal 1990, Holmer 1999 and Laka 2006). According to these approaches, ergative case is assigned in the very same position as it is agent theta role –within vP–, and therefore, the assignment is not subject to structural aspects. In this section, I show that in Basque varieties there are several instances of agentive subjects not bearing ergative case, so that an inherent view of the ergative case cannot be taken in all dialects.

We have already presented some dialectal data regarding Basque simplex unergative verbs. This data can be divided into three classes for a better understanding of the whole variation picture. For each class of data, an example is given in (105). (105a) reflects the use of most simplex unergatives in south-western varieties. The subject bears ergative case and the **edun* auxiliary is selected. (105b) represents the configuration of some simplex predicates in north-eastern varieties. The agentive subject bears absolutive case and the *izan* 'be' auxiliary is selected. Finally, (105c) corresponds to the use of some simplex predicates in all varieties of Basque. The subject, which is not prototypically an agent, is assigned ergative case and **edun* auxiliary is selected.

(105)   a. Umea-k   bazkaldu   d-u-ø
           child-ERG   have-lunch x-have-3sgERG
           'The child has had lunch'

        b. Umea-ø   bazkaldu   d-a
           child-ABS   have-lunch x-be
           'The child has had lunch'

        c. Izarra-k   distiratu   du.
           star-ERG   shine   x-have-3sgERG
           'The star has shined'

In the previous section, we have seen that the three classes of data are problematic for the object incorporation account (Laka 1993, Fernández 1997).

- Since the transitive nature of simplex unergatives is rather untenable, ergative assignment remains unexplained in (105a) and (105c) within OCP.

- Even assuming a transitive configuration for simplex unergatives, and adopting the *Incorporation Time Hypothesis* (89) dependent on varieties, intra-variety alternation –that of (105b) and (105c)– cannot be accounted, since the unergative use in (105c) is also followed in north-eastern varieties.

The division of the three classes of data is going to be useful for the discussion throughout this paper. For convenience, I am going to name data represented in (105a) **Type A**, (105b) **Tybe B** and (105c) **Type C**.

(106)

	Type A	Type B	Type C
Subject case	Ergative	Absolutive	Ergative
Classes of verbs	• meal related verbs • verbs of manner of motion • animate activity verbs	• communication verbs • meal related verbs • verbs of manner of motion • animate activity verbs	• non-volitional emission verbs • *iraun* • *irakin*
Example	Umea-**k** bazkaldu **du**	Umea-**ø** bazkaldu **da**	Izarra-**k** distiratu **du**
Variety	South-western	North-eastern	All

Inherent case is assumed to be a theta related, because it is assigned in the same position as theta role, which is the argument merge position (Legate 2008). Consequently, inherent case is regular and predictable (Wolford 2006).

Woldford (2006) proposed that ergative case is assigned to the external argument in its theta position. According to Chomsky (1995), external arguments are specifiers of a head higher than V –*v*– , and this very same head assigns agent theta role to it.

If the inherent hypothesis is right, then, we would expect that all arguments merged in [spec, vP] are agent subjects and that they all are assigned ergative case.

(107)
```
            vP
           /  \
  AGENT  /     \  v
 Ergative       / \
              v    VP
```
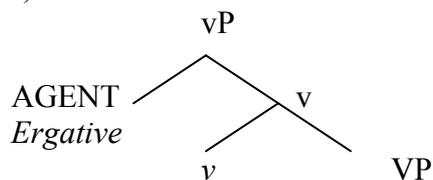
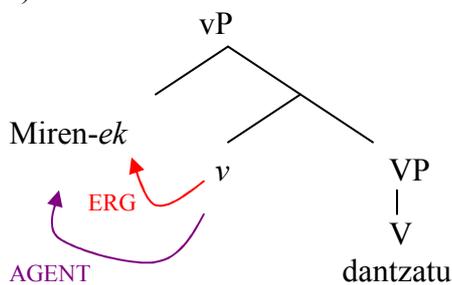The ergative assignment in complex unergative predicates of the *lan egin* 'work' kind (108) can be easily explained within this approach. These configurations have been generally considered bivalent transitive, since the verb *egin* takes two arguments: an internal object –*lan*– and an external argument –*Peiok*. The light verb *egin* assigns agent theta role and ergative case to the subject (Laka 2006).

(108) Peio-k   asko   lan   egin   d-u-ø
       Peio-ERG a-lot   work   do   x-have-3sgERG
       'Peio has worked a lot'

The inherent hypothesis also accounts easily for agentive unergative predicates that we have classified in Type A. This class of data shows the south-western use of agentive unergative predicates, as in (110).

(109) Miren-ek   oso   ondo   dantza-tze-n   d-u-ø
       Miren-ERG very   well   dance-N-loc   x-have-3sgERG
       'Miren dances very well'

(110)

If we consider this kind of unergatives as truly intransitive, as we have done, the inherent approach explains straightaway the ergative assignment of the subject. The agentive subject –*Miren-ek*– is merged in the specifier position of vP and there, it receives agent theta role and ergative case from v.

2.3.1. Theta role and case dissociations

However, once we start looking at the rest of simplex predicates data, we find some problematic cases for this hypothesis. As Laka (2006) points out, in *Principles and Parameters* model (Chomsky 1981, 1986), there have been two dissociation types favouring the idea that theta role and case assignment are two independent operations. These dissociations can be formulated this way for the topic we are discussing:

(i)   an argument bearing agent theta role can surface as an ergative or as an absolutive DP.

(ii)   an ergative DP can be an agent or a patient/theme.

If we would find instances of these dissociations in Basque dialects, they would show that ergative case does not always come along with agent theta assignment, and as a consequence, ergative case would not be inherent in all varieties.

Simplex predicates found in Type B data reflect the dissociation in (i).

2.3.1.1. Type B data: agentive absolutive DPs

Especially in north-eastern varieties, we find predicates whose agent argument surfaces with absolutive case, like in (111). In this example, the verb *dantzatu* takes an agent argument bearing absolutive case –*Miren*–.

(111)   Miren-ø   dantzatu   da
         Miren-ABS dance   x-be
         'Miren has danced'

As we have mentioned in §1.1, absolutive agent arguments like *Miren* in (111) can be found in speech verbs, meal related verbs, verbs of manner of motion and animate activity verbs of north-eastern varieties.

According to the *Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis* (Baker 1988), identical theta relationships between items are represented by identical structural relationships between these items. Therefore, assuming that *Miren* in (111) is an agent, we would expect that it would merge in [spec, vP] and in that position it would receive agent theta role from *v*. However, theta role assignment has not come along with ergative case assignment (112). The subject surfaces with absolutive case, that is, zero case. This fact corresponds to the dissociation formulated previously in (i).

(112)
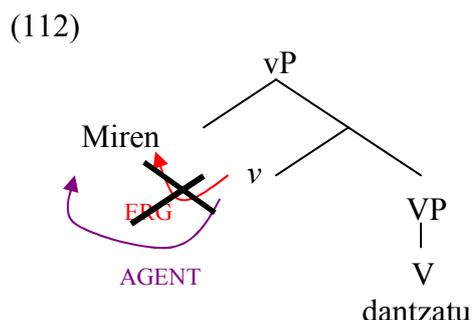
Oyharçabal (1990) already reported those cases in which agentive subjects lacked ergative case in monovalent predicates. He argued in favour of the inherent approach, but had a slightly different view of it. According to this scholar, ergative case, is theta related, whereas, absolutive is not. Since absolutive is not theta-related, absolutive DPs constitute a semantic open class. Therefore, he suggests that ergative DPs are always agents but that not all agents are ergative DPs.

In this weaker version of the inherent approach, dissociation of the (i) type – represented in Type B data– does not go against the claim that ergative case is assigned by v in the argument's theta position. However, if the inherent ergative case hypothesis was indeed correct, then, some questions would need to be answered. One was formulated in Torrego (2009): "why is it that little v assigns inherent case to external arguments in ergative-absolutive languages and not in nominative-accusative languages?"

Taking the line of this question we can formulate two more regarding Basque varieties:

(i) Why is it that little v assigns inherent ergative case to agentive subjects in simplex unergative predicates in western varieties and not in eastern varieties?

(ii) Within north-eastern varieties, why does little v assign ergative inherent case to agentive subjects in transitive predicates, and not to agentive subjects of simplex unergatives?

Proposals for the explanations of this puzzle are given in works such as Torrego (2009) and Markmann and Grashchenkov (2009) and are related to the idea that inherent ergative case assignment takes place when v is unable to license an external argument: because v is unaccusative in Torrego (2009) or because v is non-thematic in Markman and Grashchenkov (2009).

2.3.1.2. Type C data: non-agent ergative DPs?

Another problem identified for the inherent approach of ergative assignment is the presence of some unergatively aligned verbs whose subjects are not agents.

Predicates that have been classified in Type C data take an ergative subject but, unlike subjects in Type A or B, these subjects are not prototypical agents: non-animate activity verbs (*funtzionatu* 'work', *zirkulatu* 'to circulate'), non-volitional emission verbs (*distiratu* 'shine' , *dirdiratu* 'sparkle', sub-standard *usaindu* 'smell'), a durative verb (*iraun* 'persist') and an internal motion verb (*irakin* 'boil' (113)).

Among all these predicates, those that are used across varieties, do not show subject case alternation. They are always unergative verbs that take ergative subjects in all varieties.

(113) Ura-k   irakin d-u-ø
       water-ERG boil   x-have-3sgERG
       'The water has boiled'

Some of these verbs –non-volitional emission verbs and durative verbs– have been classified in previous literature as unaccusative predicates (Perlmutter 1978). According to the *Unaccusative Hypothesis* formulated by Perlmutter, the only argument of an unaccusative predicate is an internal object, that is to say, it is generated in the complement position of the verb.

The argument in the unergative predicate tends to be agentive, whereas the argument of unaccusative predicates tends to be a theme, patient or undergoer. Perlmutter listed verb meaning related to the two configurations (114):

(114) <u>Unergative predicates</u>:
       - Predicates describing willed or volitional acts e.g. *work, play, speak, smile, walk, laugh, dance*; manner of speaking verbs, e.g. *whisper, shout*; predicates describing sounds made by animals e.g. *bark, quack, roar*.
       - Involuntary bodily processes e.g. *cough, sneeze, burp, sleep*.

(115) <u>Unaccusative predicates</u>:

- Predicates expressed by adjectives in English; predicates describing size, shapes, weights, colour, smells.

- Predicates whose initial nuclear term is semantically a patient, e.g. *burn, fall, drop, sink, float, tremble, shake, melt, freeze, evaporate, solidify, crystallize, dim, redden, darken*.

- Predicates of existing or happening, e.g. *exist, happen, occur, take place*.

- Involuntary emission of stimuli, e.g. *shine, glow, clink, pop, smell, sting*.

- Aspectual predicates: *begin, start, stop, cease*.

- Durative verbs: *last, remain, stay, survive*.

If Basque verbs like *distiratu* 'shine', *iraun* 'remain' or *funtzionatu* 'work' are considered unaccusative, then, the ergative assignment of their subjects would be far from being inherent because its licensing would not be related to agentive theta role assignment or to the merge position of the argument. Ergative case would need to be explained turning to some other syntactic operation, such as argument raising to the specifier position of vP from its original VP complement position. This operation is illustrated in (116) for the sentence in (113).

(116)
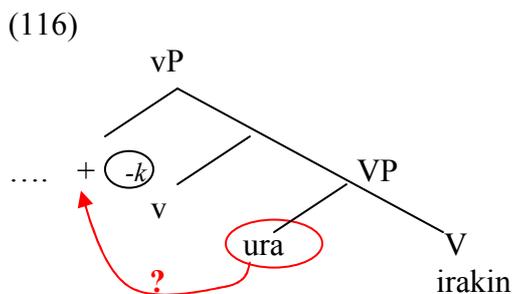
In the literature, we can find a proposal related to this idea. Preminger (2009b) argues that the ergative case is assigned within vP, but unlike in the inherent approach, he denies its licensing comes together with agent role. Their usual combination takes place because both ergative case and agent role are licensed in the same position.

We are dealing with this hypothesis in §2.4.

As we will comment in chapter 3, we do not consider verbs of the *distiratu* type to be unaccusative verbs. We belief they are true unergative verbs, whose subject has

been merged in [spec, vP] due to their internal causation. This way, I account for the fact that these verbs are unable to introduce internal objects, and do not activate the head responsible for assigning absolute case (§3.3.1).

2.4. Ergative case as lexically conditioned (Preminger 2009b)

According to Preminger (2009b), non-agentive simplex verbs with ergative subjects are true unaccusative verbs. The ergative case assignment occurs because the single argument, after originating in complement position, has landed in the specifier of vP, due to a lexical feature of *v*.

Therefore, Preminger claims that ergative case assignment in monovalent predicates is lexically conditioned and that it is triggered by a syntactic position. In this section, I pose some of the problems that Preminger faces when presented with dialectal data. Furthermore, I claim that these non-agentive surface unergative verbs are deep unergative predicates (§3.1).

Within this proposal, ergative assignment does not go hand in hand with agent role assignment. Agent theta role is assigned by *v* only to those arguments which have originated in specifier of vP. Ergative case, on the other hand, is assigned to any argument sitting in this position, regardless of being base-generated there. This way, this scholar accounts for the cases in which ergative case is licensed to arguments not bearing agent theta role –like raising-to-ergative structures (discussed in the second chapter (118)– or monovalent predicates with non-agentive ergative subjects (114).

(118)   Jokalari-ren bat-ek Rojo-rekin minduta d-ago-ela   ema-te-n
            player-GEN a-ERG Rojo-SOC upset   x-be-Comp give-N-loc
    d-u-ø   (Artiagoitia, 2001)
    x-have- 3sgERG
            'Some player seems to be upset with Rojo'

An internal argument of a predicate like *irakin* can rise to specifier of vP and there, it can be licensed ergative case, like in (116).

The rising of an internal object to the specifier position of vP is lexically conditioned by a property of *v*. Preminger argues that there are two types of *v*-s which differ in a single property.

(i) v^+: has an EPP feature.

(ii) v^-: does not have an EPP feature.

When a given verb is selected by v^-, it will not have the necessity of having an external argument. This would be the case of unaccusative verbs like *hondoratu* 'sink' or *desagertu* 'disappear'.

(119)
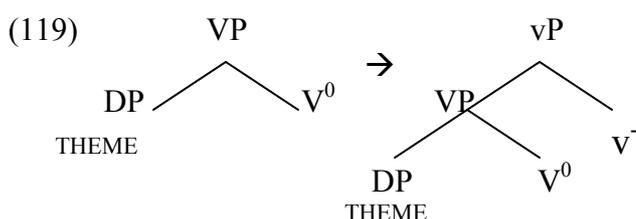
(120)   Txalupa-ø   hondoratu   d-a
           boat-ABS   sink   x-be
   *'The boat has sunk'*

(121)   Peio-ø   desagertu   d-a
           Peio-ABS   disappear   x-be
           'Peio has disappeared'

Some of these verbs, although not having the necessity of satisfying *v*'s EPP feature, can introduce an external argument and merge it in specifier of vP. This is the case of *hondoratu*. It gives rise to inchoative/causative alternating verbs.

(122)   Ekaitza-k   txalupa-ø   hondoratu   d-u-ø
           storm-ERG   boat-ABS   sink   x-have-3sgERG
           'The storm has sunk the boat'

Ekaitza-k 'the storm', is in [spec, vP] and there it receives ergative case from *v*. Since it has been base generated in this same position, it is also assigned agent theta role. As we can see, ergative case does not necessarily go together with the presence of v^+.

Other possible scenarios are presented by Preminger, where a verb is selected by v^+. In these cases, *v* has an [EPP] feature that needs to be satisfied with an argument in [spec, vP]. In the verb *dantzatu* 'dance', V^0 does not introduce any argument by itself.
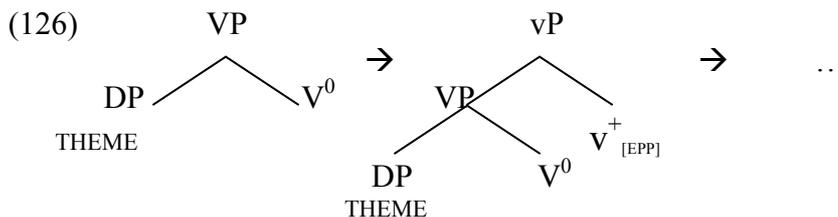
(123)

$$VP \quad\quad \rightarrow \quad\quad vP \quad\quad \rightarrow \quad \dots$$

$$|$$

$$V^0 \quad\quad\quad\quad VP \quad\quad v^+_{[EPP]}$$

$$V^0$$
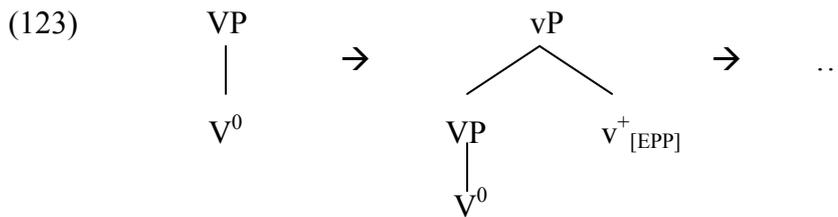
In order to satisfy the [EPP] feature on *v*, an argument must be merged externally in its specifier position. This merged DP checks ergative case, and *v* assigns agent theta role to it, because it has originated in that position. This way, predicates like in Type A data surface, as in (124).
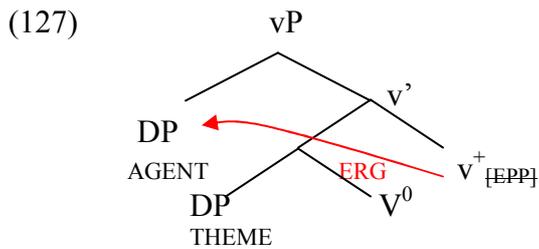
(124)

$$vP$$

DP   *v'*

AGENT

VP   ERG $v^+_{[EPP]}$

$$V^0$$
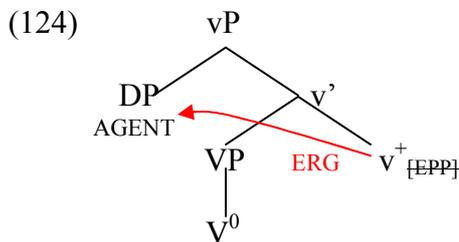
(125)   Jon-ek   dantzatu   d-u-ø
           Jon-ERG   dance   x-have-3sgERG
           'Jon has danced'

There is another possible scenario yet, in which the V^0 selected by v^+ introduces a theme argument. This is the situation we find in *irakin* 'boil'. The [EPP] feature of *v* requires an argument to be merged in [spec, vP].

(126)

$$VP \quad\quad \rightarrow \quad\quad vP \quad\quad \rightarrow \quad \dots$$

DP V^0 VP $v^+_{[EPP]}$

THEME

                    DP V^0

                   THEME

In this point, there are two ways to check *v*'s [EPP] feature: One is merging externally a DP in the specifier position of vP. This DP, then, would receive ergative case and agent theta role from *v*.

This would be the case for the predicate in (128).

(127)

```
                    vP
                 ／    ＼
               ／        v'
            DP ◄――――――  ／  ＼
          AGENT      ／ERG     v⁺[EPP]
              ＼   ／
               DP
              THEME    V⁰
```

(127)

$$vP$$

DP (AGENT) ... v' ... ERG ... v^+[EPP] ... DP (THEME) ... V^0

(128)   Ni-k   ura-ø   irakin d-u-t
            I-ERG   water-ABS   boil   x-have-3sgERG
            'I have boiled the water'

The second way is to merge internally the DP_THEME in specifier position of vP. In this case, this DP will receive ergative case because of its position, but unlike the subject in (127)-(128), it will not be assigned agent theta role since it has not been base-generated in there.

This second option of satisfying the [EPP] feature of *v* surfaces in unergative predicates where the ergative argument is not a prototypical agent, like in (130).

(129)

$$vP$$

DP$_1$ (THEME) ◄―― ERG ... v' ... v^+[EPP] ... t_1 ... V^0
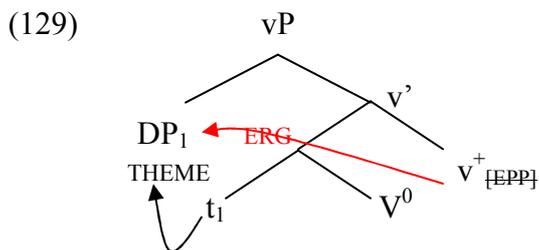
(130)   Ura-k   irakin d-u-ø
            water-ERG   boil   x-have-3sgERG
   *'The water has boiled'*

I consider Preminger's proposal positive in the sense that it captures the idea that ergative case and agent theta role relation is not as straightforward as it has been stated. Nevertheless, I do not agree with Preminger in the claim that ergative case is lexically motivated. It is true that ergative case is lexically conditioned in some respect, but not because of the presence of an [EPP] feature on *v*. I claim that ergative case assignment in monovalent predicates is a syntactic consequence of a lexical semantic property which triggers (or not) the assignment of the absolutive case. Then, it is the absolutive case, and not the ergative, the one that is lexically (and semantically) conditioned. If this lexical-semantic feature activates the functional head responsible for the abolutive case,

then, ergative does not need to be assigned in a monovalent predicate. If it is not activated, then the subject will look for another probe to check its case features, and ergative will be assigned.

As a matter of fact, Preminger's proposal does not seem to apply in Type B data. In north-eastern varieties, predicates like *dantzatu* 'dance' take an agentive absolutive argument.

(131)   Ni-ø   dantzatu n-aiz
         I-ABS   dance   1sgABS-be
         'I have danced'

Following the derivation presented in (123), *dantzatu* 'dance' would introduce no argument by itself, and since it has been selected by v^+, a DP would need to be merged externally in order to satify *v*'s [EPP] feature. It would follow that the DP *ni* 'I' is inserted in the specifier position of vP (132). Then, as it is base generated in this position, *v* assigns agent theta role to *ni*, but against his prediction, it does not license ergative case. The subject surfaces with absolutive case, namely, zero case. This type of data –Type B– cannot be explained within this theory.

(132)
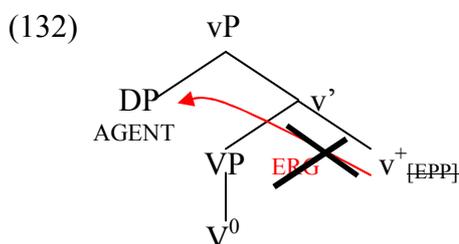
Another aspect which I do not agree with in Preminger's proposal is the unaccusative alignment suggested for *irakin* 'boil' or *distiratu* 'shine' kind verbs. I believe that they are syntactically true unergative verbs, although their subjects are not agentive. I suggest that the only argument in *funtzionatu*, *distiratu* and *irakin* is externally merged in [spec, vP] due to their semantic property of internal causation (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995).

This claim, which is argued in the next chapter, favours my proposal that those unergative verbs do not have the ability to license an internal object, since their only argument is merged in specifier position. It would also favour the inherent approach of ergative case assignment (Oyharçabal 1990, Holmer 1999, Laka 2006), since there would not be dissociations of the type non-agentive arguments bearing ergative case.

However, the inherent approach still has to face other problems: on the one hand, the existence of null expletive in raising-to-ergative structures, and on the other, the inability to explain the subject case variation found simplex unergatives.

3. <u>Unergativity in Basque</u>

3.1.   Non-agentive unergatives

There are several intransitive verbs that, despite selecting an ergative subject, cannot be considered agentive. These are some of them:

- Non-animate activity verbs: *funtzionatu* 'work' and *zirkulatu* 'circulate'
- Non-volitional emission verbs: *dirdiratu* 'shine' and *distiratu* 'glimmer' (denoting light emission) and *usaindu* 'smell' (denoting smell emission, in non-standard uses), *erauntsi* 'rumble'
- *Iraun* 'remain'.
- *Irakin* 'boil'

The subjects of these predicates are clearly not agents. Still, it is difficult to identify which theta role they have, as long as they are not prototypical themes or patients either.

Despite not having an agent argument, we belief these predicates are purely unergative. We argue that their sole arguments are deep subjects in syntax, due to their internal causation property. Besides, we claim that these verbs are not able to license an internal object, which would be, in our theory, a crucial aspect for not selecting an absolutive subject.

Agentivity has been considered a determining factor for the division of unergative and unaccusative verbs (Perlmutter 1978, Pinker 1989). Following the Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978), a linking generalization covers both transitive and intransitive verbs: agentive arguments are base-generated in specifier position of vP (D-structure subject position), whereas patient/theme arguments originate in complement position of VP (D-structure object position).

Levin (1983) proposed a similar theory for Basque instransitives and considered their subject case marking a surface realization of these two configurations: verbs with ergative subjects (termed NORK verbs) are active verbs, while those with absolutive subjects are patient-verbs. According to her, there is a closed relation between verbs' agentive/patient properties and their case alignment.

(133)   <u>The NOR Verb Hypothesis</u> (Levin 1983: 298)

        i.   Only verbs with a patient single argument are NOR verbs.

       ii. Other verbs will not be NOR verbs.

    (They might be NOR-NORK verbs or NORK verbs)

Other researches such as Tenny (1987) argued that the crucial semantic factor separating unnaccusative from unergative verbs is telicity: unaccusative verbs tend to be telic, while unergative ones tend to be atelic.

Lately, unergative and unaccusative division has proved to be more complex. Agentivity or telicity have not proved to be good indicators of the cutting point between the two configurations. Scholars found many cases of imperfect match between what was semantically expected from a verb and its behaviour in varios unaccusativity diagnostics (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995), like in *verbs of manner of motion* or *existence verbs* (Sorace, 2004).

As a result of these mismatches, scholars have adopted different approaches to explain the nature of unaccusativity and unergativity of intransitive verbs. Two main views can be distinguished:

(i)   syntax based models, and

(ii)   semantics based models.

In the syntactic approach, it is denied that unaccusativity or unergativity is fully predictable from the semantics of the verb, and it is argued that the different configurations are syntactically motivated. Consequently, there is no semantically homogeneous class which gathers all the verbs that have the syntactic properties attributed to the unaccusative configuration.

Those adopting a semantic approach, on the contrary, claim that unaccusative/unergative division can be established on semantic grounds.

Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) –L&RH from now on– have proposed that unaccusativity (and consequently, unergativity) is both semantically defined and syntactically encoded.


They suggest that each verb is associated with two levels in the lexicon: a lexical semantic representation (also termed *Lexical Conceptual Structure*) and a lexical

syntactic representation (also called *argument structure*). The lexical semantic representation encodes syntactically relevant aspects of verb meaning, whereas the argument structure, encodes the syntactic relevant argument-taking properties of the verb. Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou and Everaert (2004) point out that the LCS is unique for a verb or class of verbs and that it decomposes the meaning into structures containing variables and meta predicates (e.g. CAUSE, BE, etc.). This semantic representation maps onto the argument structure and this is where the distinction between unaccusative and unergative predicates apply. This way, the argument structure specifies how many arguments a verb takes and which syntactic position they occupy. This level of representation is then mapped onto a syntactic representation.

(134)

| Lexical conceptual structure | Argument structure | Syntactic structure |

Lexicon

Syntax

(Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou and Everaert, 2004:11)
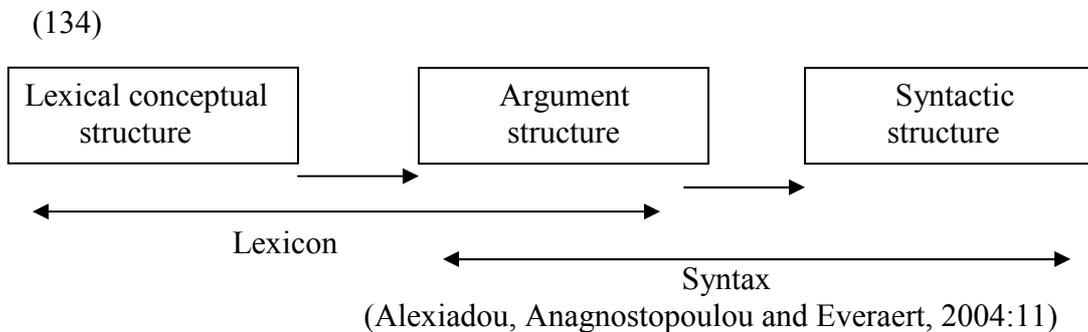
L&RH claim that the many-to-one characteristic of the mapping from lexical semantics to the argument structure explains why verbs showing syntactic properties of unaccusative predicates cannot be classified within a homogeneous semantic class.

Syntactically relevant lexical semantic features of the verb will determine whether it is unaccusatively or unergatively aligned. Depending on these features, a verb will be syntactically encoded as unergative or as unaccusative, that is to say, it will take a VP internal direct object or an argument is specifier position of a semi-functional head v.

(135) *a.* vP (Unaccusative) *b.* vP (Unergative)
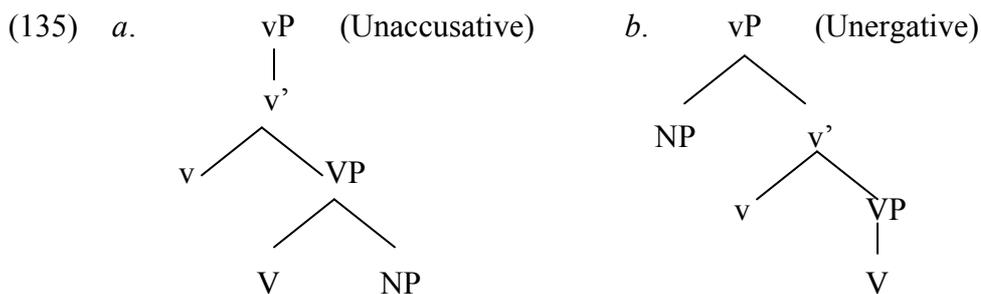
It is important to identify which syntactically relevant properties are leading a verb to align in the unaccusative or in the unergative construction, because, this way, we would be able to know the argument structure of the verbs we are analysing. If the sole arguments in *funtzionatu*, *distiratu* etc. occupied the syntactic position of specifier of *v* in the argument structure, then, they would be true unergative verbs, despite the fact that their subjects are not agentive. The question is what kind of semantic property an argument needs in order to end up in specifier position of vP.

Dowty (1991) argued that role types are not discrete categories with clear boundaries, but cluster concepts of what we intuitively know to be an agent or a theme. For this reason, this researcher suggested that we only need two role types in order to describe argument selection –PROTO-AGENT (p-agent) and PROTO-PATIENT (p-patient)– and made a list of properties (136) (137) that construct each role.

(136)   Contributing properties for the Agent Proto-Role:
  (i) volitional involvement in the event or state
  (ii) sentence (and/or perception)
  (iii)causing an event or change of state in another participant
  (iv)movement (relative to the position of another participant)
  (v) exists independently of the event named by the verb

(137)   Contributing properties for the Patient Proto-Role:
  (i) undergoes change of state
  (ii) incremental theme
  (iii)causally affected by another participant
  (iv)stationary relative to movement of another participant
  (v) does not exist independently of the event, or not at all

These properties apply in agentive unergatives, but not in non-volitional emission or non-animate verbs like the ones we presented. Their subjects do not seem to belong to any of these types.

Cruse (1973) decomposed *agent* role using four features (Dowty 1991):

(i) Volitive: an act of the will is stated or implied

(ii) Effective: exerts a force ... because of its position, movement, etc.

(iii)Initiative: initiation of an action by giving a command

(iv)Agentive: performed by an object (living things, certain types of machine, and natural agents) regarded as using its own energy in carrying out the action.

These aspects are slightly related to what L&RH proposed to be one of the syntactically relevant semantic properties. They argued that *activity*, *change of sate* and *causation* are the relevant semantic properties for the syntactic encoding of unergative and unaccusative verbs.

Causation leads verbs to align unergatively. It can be external –in the case of causative verbs– or internal –in the case of unergatives. Externally caused verbs –such as *break*–, denote eventualities that are under the control of some external force. Internally caused verbs –like *laugh*, *play* or *speak*–, on the other hand, are actions that can only be controlled by the individual engaged in them.

In verbs of internal causation, it is some property inherent to the argument the one "responsible" of bringing about the event. This is similar to the *effective* and *agentive* notions of Cruse's agency. But L&RH do not consider internal causation a kind of agency. For these scholars, the concept of internal causation subsumes agency. The inherent property responsible of carrying out the eventuality in agentive verbs is the will or volition of the argument. Therefore, agentive verbs are just a subclass of a broader kind of verbs of internal causation.

Actually, there are internally caused verbs which are not agentive. In English verbs like *blush* or *tremble*, the sole arguments are animate but non-agentive. The eventuality arises from internal properties (like emotional reactions) of the arguments. The same applies to English and Basque verbs of emission. In *distiratu* 'shine' or the sub-standard *usaindu* 'smell', the shining or smelling comes about as a result of some physical internal characteristic of the arguments.

The subjects in the examples (138)-(139) of the verb *distiratu* 'shine' –*izar bat* 'a star' and *haren luma ederrek* 'its beautiful feathers'– are effective in the sense that they exert a light because of their position and physical characteristics. In (140), the subject

is compared with *mila eguzkik* 'a thousand suns', which is able to emit light using its own energy. Therefore, it can also be considered agentive in Cruse's terms.

(138) Izar   bat beste   guztiak baino gehiago distira-tz-en   z-u-en-a
       star   a   other   all   than   more   shine-N-loc   x-have-tns-det
       'A star that shined more than the rest'

(139) Haren   luma   ederre-k,   eguzkia-k jorik,   urruti-tik distira-tze-n
       his/her   feather beautiful-ERG sun-ERG   hitted   far-ABL   shine-N-loc
z-u-te-n
x-have-3plERG-tns
       'Its beautiful feathers, hitted by the sun, shined from far away'

(140) Mila   eguzki-k bezala distiratu-z.
       thousand sun-ERG like   shine-INS
       'Shining like a thousans suns'

<div align="right">(Sarasola 1996: 191)</div>

According to L&RH, in emission verbs there are strong restrictions on the selection of their single argument. Only a limited set of things are qualified to be the arguments of any verb of emission, due to their nature of internal causation. As they point out, there are not such restrictions in externally caused verbs.

The same analysis would apply for non-animate activities such as *funtzionatu* 'work' or *zirkulatu* 'circulate'. The subject arguments (e.g. entities, machines, vehicles, …) belong to a specific set of things and they carry on the eventuality a result of an internal property inherent to them.

(141) Nire sakela-ko telefonoa-k   ez d-u-ø   ondo funtziona-tze-n
       my pocket-P telephone-ERG no x-have-3sgERG well work-N-loc
       'My mobile phone doesn't work properly'

(142) Gobernu   horr-ek funtzionatu z-u-en   eta gauza asko lortu
       government that-ERG work   x-have-tns and thing a lot get
z-it-u-en   (*Berria*, 2004-06-30)
x-pl-have-tns
       'That government worked properly and they got many things'

(143) Santander-Bilbao linetatan zirkulatu z-u-en
       Santander-Bilbao lines-INE circulate x-have-tns
       'It circulated in the lines Santander-Bilbao'

<div align="right">(EuskoTren; *Berriak*, 2009-05-15)</div>

Zirkulatu is also used to express blood circulation around the body (144). In this case, it is not the blood itself, but the heart pumping that makes the blood circulate. In this case, the argument does not use its own energy, but the circulation is only possible thanks to the special physical aspects of blood.

(144)   Odola-k   gorputza-ren zehar   zirkulatzen d-u-ø (Sarasola, 1996: 790)
         blood-ERG body-GEN   throughout circulate   x-have-3sgERG
         'The blood circulates throughout the body'

All these verbs have in common is that the eventuality is carried out because of a special property inherent to their arguments.

Funtzionatu and *zirkulatu* are Spanish loan words that Alberdi (2003) analysed. This researcher suggested Basque uses loan words as unergative predicates when their subjects are agentive. He realized of the fact that some loan works like *funtzionatu, zirkulatu* or *kotizatu* are non-agentive verbs, as long as their subjects are non-animate objects, and he suggested that these predicates are aligned in the unergative construction due to their internal causation.

The verb *kotizatu* shows a different behaviour to that of *funtzionatu* and *zirkulatu*. It has been attested with both an ergative and an absolutive subject. According to Sarasola (2010), this verb can have three meanings: (i) pay a quote, (ii) reach a value in the stock market and (iii) participate in the stock market. It is a Spanich loan verb, mainly used in southern varieties of Basque. In the first sense an ergative subject is always preferred. Altought it is not agentive, the subject in always animate, like in (145).

(145)   Franko-ren   garaia-n ikastol-etan   lan   egin eta Gizarte Segurantz-an
         Franco-GEN time-INE   ikastolas-INE work   do   and social   security-INE
kotizatu ez z-u-te-n   andereñoak-ø dira   (*Berria,* 2006-03-17)
quote   no x- have-3plERG-Comp teachers-ABS x-pl-be
         'They are schoolteachers who worked in the ikastolas *in Franco's time and who didn't quote'*

 In the other two senses, the subject is non-animate, and we find variation in the subject case marking. The examples below belong to the third meaning. It is found with the ergative in (146) and with absolutive in (147).

(146) CAF-ek   Madril-go burtsa-n   kotiza-tze-n d-u-ø
      CAF-ERG Madrid-P stockmarket-INE quote-N-loc x-have-3sgERG
                                             (*Berria*, 2004-08-31)
      'CAF is quoted in the stock market of Madrid'

(147) Petrolioa-ø dolarr-etan kotizatzen   da   (*Berria*, 2004-04-14)
      oil-ABS   dolars-INE quote-N-loc x-be
      'Oil is quoted in dolars'

A possible explanation to this variation can be that, in (146), the CAF enterprise is kind of personified, whereas that of (147) is the object of an impersonal eventuality. This second use is similar to the Spanish verb *cotizarse*. *Kotizatu* in this sense can be considered an unaccusative verb, since the argument –*petrolioa*$_{ABS}$– is a patient.

The analysis of the verbs *irakin* and *iraun* is slightly more complicated. The example of *irakin* (130) is written below (148) for convenience.

(148) Ura-k   irakin d-u-ø
      water-ERG boil   x-have-3sgERG
      'The water has boiled'

(149) Ni-k   ura-ø   irakin d-u-t
      I-ERG water-ABS boil   x-have-1sgERG
      'I have boiled the water'

Irakin 'boil' can be considered a verb of internal causation, since boiling can only happen as a result of the water's physical property of being a liquid. It is a controversial issue, though, because it needs the help of an external force –namely, heat– to perform the action and, actually, an external subject can be included to the predicate, as in (149), like the entity of providing the heat to the water.

If we defend the claim that *irakin* in (148) is an internally caused verb, then, we would need an approach where *irakin*$_1$ in (148) and *irakin*$_2$ in (149) are different lexical entries, since we have to explain why both allow *urak* in (148) and *nik* in (149) to originate in [spec,vP].

L&RH point out that some verbs can be externally or internally caused. Since humans' way to conceive events is implicated in the distinction between external and internal causation, then, we can predict there will be events that can be interpreted into

one or the other category. These researchers predict that this type of variation can exist both within and across languages.

Taking a different perspective, someone can argue that *irakin* in (148) is a detransitivized instance of a causative event, similar to the intransitive instance of the causative-inchoative pair associated with verbs like *apurtu* 'break' (150)-(151).

(150) Mikel-ek   makila-ø   apurtu d-u-ø
       Mikel-ERG stick-ABS   break x-have-3sgERG
       'Mikel has broken the stick'

(151) Makila-ø   apurtu   d-a
       stick-ABS   break   x-be
       'The stick has broken'

There is a visible morphological difference between the pair in *irakin* and in *apurtu*, though. While the subject in the intransitive variant of *apurtu* bears absolutive case – *makila-ø*– and *izan* auxiliary is selected, the subject in the intransitive variant of *irakin* bears ergative case –*ura-k*– and **edun* auxiliary is selected.

I believe that this difference is a consequence from the fact that these subjects occupy different positions in the argument structure. *Makila-ø* is in the complement position of the V, whereas *ura-k* is in the specifier position of *v*.

The pairs are instances of different phenomena. Although both transitive variants are dyadic, they are inherently different. The verb *apurtu* in (150) is the causative alternant of an externally caused verb, whereas *irakin* in (149) is a causative predicate involving an internally caused event.

Similar phenomena have been found among non-agentive verbs of internal causation (Smith 1970) and among emission verbs of English (L&RH).

(152) a. The baby burped

       b. The nurse burped the baby   (Smith 1970: 107)

(153) a. The doorbell buzzed/rang

b. The postman buzzed/rang the doorbell

(154)   a. The flashlight beamed/shone

b. We beamed/shone the flashlight   (L&RH 1995: 115)

L&RH argue that the pair in (152) is non-representative of any regular kind of causativization and therefore, term it *idiosyncratic*.

The pairs in (153) and (154), on the other hand, are considered *spurious* causative verbs, in the sense that, what looks to be a causative verb really involves two distinct verb meanings (one of them causative (153b)-(154b) and the other internally caused (153a)-(154a)) that are not derivationally involved. This is what I suggest for the verb *irakin*. *Irakin*1 (147) is an internally caused verb, whereas *irakin*2 (148) is an externally caused verb. Unlike the *apurtu* pair, they are not derivationally related. This way, we can explain that both subjects in (147) and (148) are base-generated in specifier position of vP.

Iraun is another problematic case for its analysis. This verb can have two senses: (i) remain in the same state and (ii) last a period of time expressed (Sarasola, 1996). None of them seems to bear the property of causation.

Lack of telicity is a relevant semantic property of this verb and, although not explored yet, it can be related to the hypothesis presented in this paper (§1).

We still do not have a proper explanation to argue that the subject in *iraun* is originated in [spec,vP]. Anyway, it seems that both *irakin* and *iraun* are somehow specified to take an ergative DP as subject.

Lafon (1975) proposed that both *iraun* 'remain' and *irakin* 'boil' are causative verbs coming from *egon* 'stay' and *jaiki* 'get up'. The affix *ra* would correspond to the causative morpheme (Oyharçabal 1990). This approach on the nature of *iraun* and *irakin* seems interesting for the idea of that their sole argument occupies the specifier postion in the argument structure.

Summing up, we propose that these non-agentive unergative verbs are deep unergative predicates and that their subject is base-generated in specifier position of *v*. Assuming this, we will suggest that some of these verbs do not have the ability to

introduce internal objects (§3.3.1) and that this specification is established from the lexicon.

3.2. Unaccusatively aligned unergatives

As we have been mentioning throughout this work, there are several agentive simplex predicates in Basque which take absolute subjects and *izan* auxiliary, in a similar fashion to deep unaccusative verbs. In this section we are going to argue that these simplex verbs are pure unergative predicates despite having a surface unaccusative appearance and that auxiliary selection in Basque is not an appropriate diagnostic to test *deep unaccusativity*.

This is a summary of the verbs which take the unaccusative surface appearance. The ones that are used across varieties, show subject case alternation, as we have pointed in § 1.1.

- Speech verbs: *mintzatu, solastatu, elekatu/elestatu, hizkatu/hizketatu*.
- Meal related verbs: *bazkaldu, afaldu, askaldu*.
- Manner of motion verbs: *dantzatu, saltatu, lasterkatu, hegatu, airatu, igerikatu, paseatu, biratu, nabigatu*.
- Animate activity verbs: *jostatu, jokatu, borrokatu, gudukatu, jarraiki, trufatu, oldartu, entrenatu*.

This phenomenon is similar to the variation of auxiliary selection of many other languages. In order to explain this alternation, many scholars have adopted a semantivally directed approximation (L&RH, Sorace 2004).

In these approaches, unergative or unaccusative alignment variation has often been related to semantic properties of the verbs. L&RH pointed that their variable behaviour, both within and across languages, is the consecuence of subtle meaning differences precisely in those semantic properties which are syntactically relevant. According to

them, auxiliary alternation can arise due to semantic ambiguities in the verb meaning, which make a verb be compatible with a syntactic configuration or another.

Agentive manner of motion verbs have often been reported to show this kind of alternation. It has been proposed that they are aligned unaccusatively when they have a directed motion sense. This would be the case of examples (155) and (156), where a PP attributes this notion to the predicate.

(155)   The soldiers marched to the tents

(156)   The mouse ran through the maze

Since these verbs have a deep unaccusative construction, they can occur in the causative alternation (157a) (158a).

(157)   a. The general marched the soldiers to the tents

             b. ??The general marched the soldiers

(158)   a. We ran the mouse through the maze

             b. *We ran the mouse
                       (L&R 1995: 188)

When there is not a PP giving the directed motion sense to the predicate, as in (156b) and (157b), the causative variant of the verb is ruled out.

Therefore, these verbs can indeed be associated with two meanings; one consistent with an unaccusative construction and the other with an unergative one. Subtle semantic differences are responsible for the variable behaviour of the verbs.

Sorace (2004) also argued in favour of such a semantic approach. She proposed a hierarchy of verb classes in which verbs in an extreme tend to select *be* auxiliary, whereas those in the other extreme usually select *have*.

(159)   <u>The Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy</u> (Sorace, 2004: 256)

- Change of location   Selects BE (least variation)
- Change of state
- Continuation of a pre-existing stage
- Existence of state
- Uncontrolled process
- Controlled processes (motional)
- Controlled processes (non-motional)   Selects HAVE (least variation)

According to Sorace, verbs at the extremes of the hierarchy, which she terms 'core' verbs, have the following properties: they have categorical and consistent behaviour, both within and across languages, and are not sensitive to compositional properties of the predicate. Furthermore, she points out that their use is early acquired, that native speakers have clear intuitions about them and that they show diachronic stability.

Telicity and agency are also factors Sorace considers to be influencing auxiliary choice. Telicity marks the cutting point between *be* and *have*. Agency, on the other hand, differentiates among *have* verbs. Intermediate verbs which are neither telic nor agentive are the most variable and less determinate and will depend in a great extend on the properties of the predicate; telicity proportioned by predication etc.

The postulation of this hierarchy does not mean that all languages are going to classify verb classes in a similar way, but it predicts that there will not be any hierarchical reversal of the type uncontrolled processes selecting *have* more consistently than non-motional activity verbs.

In Basque, this prediction is not borne. As we have reviewed at the beginning of this section, not only verbs denoting uncontrolled processes or motional controlled processes show alternation, but also verbs denoting non-motional controlled activities, such as speech verbs, meal related verbs and animate activity verbs (see §1.1). Properties of core *have* verbs predicted by Sorace's hierarchy are not attested in Basque.

Verbs expressing non-motional controlled processes are expected to always select *have* auxiliary, due to inherent lexical aspects. This is not the case in north-eastern varieties of the language. Their absolute subjects and *izan* auxiliary is apparently non-

motivated by compositional properties of the predicate, as long as they do not require the presence of an event delimiting PP.

(160)   Finala   galdurik ere denak ongi borrokatu d-ir-a   (*Herria*, 2004-05-13)
        final-ABS losing   also all-ABS well fight   x-pl-be
        'Despite losing the final, they have fought properly'

In the following examples, an event delimiting PP has been included, and an ergative subject choice is still possible (161), as well as an absolutive subject.

(161)   Partida guzti-etan azken momento-ra   arte borrokatu d-u-ø
        match   all-INE   last   momento-ADL until fight   x-have-3sgERG
   garaipena-ø lor-tzeko   (*Berria*, 2004-11-13)
   victory-ABS get-to
        'She/he has fought until the last moment to get the victory'

(162)   Hondarre-raino borrokatu g-ara,   baina Tolosa-k   ez d-u-ø
        sand-until   fight   1plABS-be but   Tolosa-ERG no x-have-ø
   burua-ø   galdu   (*Berria*, 2004-04-25)
   head-ABS lose
        'We have fought until the end, but Tolosa has not lost blown away'

As we can see, the unergative or the unaccusative use of *borrokatu* does not imply a change in the meaning or in their deep structure. They are both internally caused and their subjects are originated in [spec, vP].

Nonetheless, the syntax in north-eastern varieties seems to make a difference between verbs like *borrokatu* and *distiratu*. In the theory proposed in this paper, we propose that this discrimination can be related to verb's configurational and semantic properties, like the ability to become telic with the introduction of an internal object.

3.2.1. Diagnostics for unaccusativity/unergativity

L&RH suggested that unaccusativity diagnostics can be of two types: *diagnostics of surface unaccusativity* and of *deep unaccusativity*. In surface unaccusativity diagnostics, like Italian *ne*-cliticization or Engligh *there*-insertion

construction, the single argument of a monovalent predicate occupies the surface syntactic position of the object of a transitive verb.

Ne-cliticization applies only if the argument of the unaccusative verb remains in a postverbal position (163) and there-insertion is only compatible with a certain subclass of unaccusative verbs –like verbs of existence and appearance (exist, remain, appear, emerge,…);– but not with change of state verbs (like melt) (164).

(163)   a. Ne   arriver-anno molti-ø
        of them   arrive-fut3pl many-NOM
        'Many of them will arrive'   (Burzio 1986: 22, (5i))

        b. *Molti-ø   ne   arriver-anno
        Many-NOM of them   arrive-fut3pl
        'Many of them will arrive'   (Burzio 1986: 23, (7c))

(164)   a. There appeared a ship in the horizon

        b. *There melted a lot of snow on the streets of Chicago
                                 (L&RH 1995: 19)

On the other hand, auxiliary selection is considered a diagnostic of deep unaccusativity, because it applies regardless of the surface position of the arguments.

(165)   a. Gianni-ø   è   già   arrivato
        Gianni-NOM 3sgbe already arrived
        'Gianni has already arrived'.

        b. È   arrivato Gianni-ø
        3sgbe arrived Gianni-NOM
        'Gianni has arrived'   (L&RH 1995: 18-19)

Levin (1983) also considered auxiliary selection and case assignment in Basque a diagnostic of deep unaccusativity and so was stated in *the NOR Verb Hypothesis* presented in §3.1. According to this hypothesis, all NOR verbs –verbs having a single absolutive argument and *izan* auxiliary– are patient verbs. In addition, case marking on arguments is stated to be a reflection of their deep syntactic position.

(166)   <u>Case marking</u> (Levin 1983: 330):
        a.   NOR case [absolutive case] is the surface case of deep objects
        b.   NORK case [ergative case] is the surface case of deep subjects

The compatibility with the *zerik* (Levin 1983) or partitive 'case' has also been used to reflect the division between unergative and unaccusative verbs in Basque. Salaburu (1992) argues that only patient arguments can bear partitive case. Therefore, we are only going to find this marking in objects of transitive clauses (167) and subjects of unaccusative verbs (168). Partitive 'case' on transitive subjects (170b) or unergative subjects (169b) is ruled out:

(167)   a. Ez d-u-t   haurra-ø   ikusi
           no x-have-1sgERG   child-ABS see
           'I have not seen the child'

       b. Ez d-u-t   haurr-ik   ikusi
           no x-have-1sgERG   child-PART   see
           'I have not seen any child'

(168)   a. Ez d-a   haurra-ø   etorri
           no   x-be   child-ABS come
           'The child has not come'

       b. Haurr-ik   ez   da   etorri
           child-PART   no   x-be   come
           'No child has come'

(169)   a. Ez d-u-ø   haurra-k   deitu
           no x-have-3sgERG   child-ERG   call
           'The child has not phoned'

       b.* Ez d-u-ø   haurr-ik   deitu
           no x-have-3sgERG   child-PART   call
           'No child has phoned'   (Salaburu 1992: 427)

(170)   a. Haurrak ez   d-u-ø   ogia-ø   jan
           child-ERG no   x-have-3sgERG bread-ABS   eat
           'The children has not eaten bread'

       b. *Haurr-ik   ez   d-u-ø   ogia-ø   jan
           child-PART   no   x-have-3sgERG bread-ABS   eat
           'No child has eaten bread'

If auxiliary selection, absolutive/ergative case marking and partitive case were diagnostics of deep unaccusativity, then, simplex predicates like *borrokatu, dantzatu* or *mintzatu* would be pure unaccusative predicates when used with *izan* auxiliary and absolutive subject.

(171) a. Haurrak-ø   borrokatu d-ir-a
          children-ABS fight   x-pl-be
          'The children have fought'

       b. Haurrak-ø   dantzatu d-ir-a
           children-ABS dance   x-pl-be
           'The children have danced'

       c. Haurrak-ø   mintzatu d-ir-a
          children-ABS talk   x-pl-be
          'The children have talked'

(172) a. Haurr-ik   ez d-a   borrokatu
          child-PART   no x-be   fight
          'No child has fought'

       b. Haurr-ik   ez d-a   dantzatu
           child-PART   no x-be   dance
           'No child has danced'

       c. Haurr-ik   ez d-a   mintzatu
          child-PART   no x-be   talked
          'No child has talked'

I do not think that this is actually the case. We have analysed approaches that claim that meaning differences in the verbs are responsible for the variable unergative or unaccusative alignment of verbs, and we have seen that this analysis is not valid for Basque simplex unergatives like *borrokatu*, *dantzatu* or *mintzatu*. We have assumed, then, that simplex agentive unergatives occurring with *izan* auxiliary and absolutive subjects are true unergative predicates.

Basing on this, auxiliary selection, case marking and partitive marking cannot be considered diagnostics for deep unaccusativity, at least in Basque. The fact that subjects check absolutive case in these verbs (171) is not related to the argument position subjects have occupied in the argument structure. Some other syntactic operation or principle must be at play; one that prevents them from checking ergative case like subjects do in Type A or C data.

The ability of these verbs to occur in impersonal structures can be considered evidence in favour of the classification of these verbs as pure unergative verbs. Fernández (1997) already reported this fact in a footnote. According to her, verbs of the *mintzatu* kind –absolutive unergative simplex verbs– can appear in impersonal

construction, just like other unergative verbs and unlike unaccusative verbs. Compare the impersonal sentence with *mintzatu* (173a) with that of *hitz egin* (a complex unergative) (173b), and both (173ab) with *jaio* 'be born' (an unaccusative) (173c):

(173)   a. Asko mintzatu d-a   horr-etaz
            a lot   talked   x-be   that-about
            'People has talked a lot about that' or *'That has been much commented'*

         b.Asko hitz   egin d-a   horr-etaz
            a lot   word do   x-be that-about
            'People has talked a lot about that' *'That has been much commented'*

         c.*Asko jaio   d-a
            a lot   be born x-be
            'People was born a lot' or *'It was born a lot'*

While simplex and complex unergative verbs are able to appear in impersonal constructions, unaccusative verbs like *jaio* cannot.

(174)   Asko borrokatu da herri honetan
         a lot fight x-be town this-INE
         'People has fought a lot in this town'

(175)   Etxe   honetan oso   ondo dantzatzen   d-a
         house this-INE very well dance-N-loc x-be
         'People dances very well in this house'

It seems that looking at impersonal structures, *borrokatu* and *dantzatu* verbs are also true unergative verbs. Their absolutive marking and *izan* auxiliary selection could not be considered a direct reflection of their argument structure.

3.2. Conclusion and further aspects

We have argued that non-agentive unergative verbs like *distiratu* or *funtzionatu* are true unergative verbs, whose sole argument originate in [spec, vP]. Therefore, the fact that non-agentive simplex verbs take ergative subjects cannot be considered a valid argument against the inherent approach. However, we have concluded that the inherent ergative case approach or the *Incorporation Time Hypothesis* cannot explain the range of variation found in simplex unergatives, since many agentive verbs select an absolutive subject especially in north-eastern varieties, and some verbs keep taking an ergative subject even in those varieties.

On the other hand, some other aspects seem to be relevant for the question we are analysing: verbs in Type B data –those taking absolutive subjects– are able to occur in certain transitive telic predicates, that is to say, these verbs allow the presence of internal objects which telicizes its meaning.

Below, we are going to present a feature of non-variable verbs that is relevant for our proposal.

3.3.1. Non-variable unergatives do not accept an internal object that would telicize its meaning

These verbs cannot take an internal complement which puts an end to the event denoted by the verb. This inability to take a telicizing internal object might be related to the fact that these verbs do not show subject case variation across varieties.

(176)   *Kristala-k lurra-ø   distiratu d-u-ø
          glass-ERG ground-ABS shine   x-have-3sgERG
          'The glass has shoned the ground'

(177)   *Ura-k   mila   burbuila-ø irakin d-it-u-ø
          water-ERG thousand   bubble-ABS boil   x-pl-have-3sgERG
          'The water has boild a thousand bubbles'

(178)   Eguzkia-k dirdira-ø   dirdiratu d-u-ø
          sun-ERG glimmer-ABS glimmer x-have-3sgERG
          'The sun has glimmered a glimmer'

(179) *Jon-ek   kotxea-ø funtzionatu d-u-ø
        Jon-ERG car-ABS   work   x-have-3sgERG
        'Jon has worked the car'

(180) *Jonek   kotxea zirkulatu d-u-ø
        Jon-ERG car-ABS circulate x-have-3sgERG
        'Jon has circulated the car'

Within our theory, these verbs have been termed [-telicize] since they cannot introduce an event measuring object. It seems that their [-teliceze] feature of verbs and their inability to be marked absolutive can be related in north-eastern varieties.

The only argument of these verbs originates in specifier position of vP and they are unable to introduce telicizing objects. As a direct consequence, Asp head will remain inactive. If Asp is non-active, it will not be able to check absolutive case. The sole argument must look for another functional head with which check case features.

All possible scenarios of the derivation are going to be presented in the next chapter.

4. <u>Derivation in Basque varieties</u>

In this chapter we are going to show how we account for all the possible scenarios of predicate formation in our theory. We explain the auxiliary and case selection occurring in different varieties and in different verb types.

Firstly, we propose that if a verb is [+telicize], that is to say, if it can telicize taking an internal object, then, an Asp head will activate in the fuctional skeleton. On the contrary, if a verb is [-telicize], Asp will be non-active.

Secondly, we suggest that the only difference between Basque varieties is that the syntax of south-western varieties is losing the sensitivity towards the [telicize] features of verbs. In other words, the [+telicize] feature is not transferred from the lexicon to the syntax, and Asp does not activate by itself.

Let us see step by step the possible scenarios that can occur, firstly in north eastern varieties, and then, in south-western varieties:

In north-eastern varieties, if V can telicize taking an internal object, Asp activates in the syntax. Once Asp is active, three possibilities can take place:

SCENARIO#1

In the argument structure, V takes an internal object and vP takes an argument is its specifier position. The object in complement position of V looks for the nearest functional projection capable of assigning case and checks absolutive case with the head Asp in an agree relation.

The argument in [spec, vP] looks for another functional projection that would license case features and finds T. The subject checks ergative case with T. This way, a bivalent transitive clause emerges, where the subject bears ergative and the object bears absolutive case. This is the case of common transitive activity verbs (181), simplex verbs taking an object (182) and complex unergatives (183).

(181)   Aingeru-k   bizikleta bat-ø   erosi d-u-ø
        Aingeru-ERG bike   a-ABS buy   x-have-3sgERG
        'Aingeru has bought a bike'

(182)   Aingeru-k   tango bat-ø dantzatu d-u-ø
        Aingeru-ERG tango a-ABS dance   x-have-3sgERG
        'Aingeru has danced a tango'

(183)   Aingeru-k negar egin d-u-ø
          Aingeru-ERG cry do x-have-3sgERG
          'Aingeru has cried'

(184)
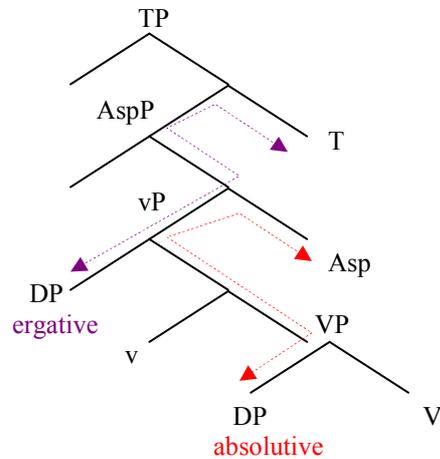
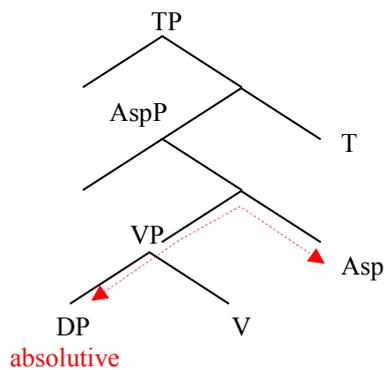### SCENARIO#2

V takes an internal object but *v* does not. The sole argument of the predicate looks for a suitable probe with which check its case feature. It finds Asp, and it checks absolutive case with it. This is the case of unaccusative verbs.

(185)   Aingeru-ø erori d-a
   Aingeru-ABS fall x-be
          'Aingeru has fallen'

(186)

SCENARIO#3

V does not take an internal object and *v* takes an argument in its specifier position. The fact that V does not actually take an internal object does not alter the

functional skeleton, since the feature [+telicize] is visible and sufficient for the syntax to activate Asp. This is the case of agentive unergative simplex verbs.

(187) Aingeru-ø dantzatu d-a
Aingeru-ABS dance x-be
'Aingeru has danced'

(188)
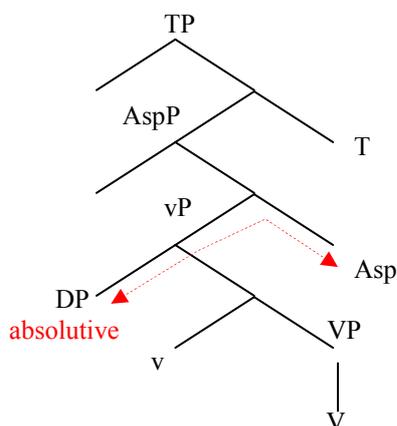
These are the three possible configurations where a V which licenses a telicizing internal object, can occur: bivalent transitives or complex unergatives (scenario#1), unaccusatives (scenario#2) and variable simplex unergatives (scenario#3).

Now, we are going to present the configuration that emerges when V is not able to introduce an event measuring object. The head Asp does not activate in the functional skeleton.

SCENARIO#4

V is unable to take an internal object, but *v* introduces an argument in its specifier position. Since the head Asp is inactive, it does not have a [+case] feature. When the sole argument of the verb looks for a suitable probe to check its case feature, it finds T. The DP licenses its ergative case with it.

(189) Eguzkia-k distiratu d-u-ø
sun-ERG shine x-have-3sgERG
'The sun has shone'

(190)

TP

AspP

T

vP

Asp

DP
ergative

VP

v

V
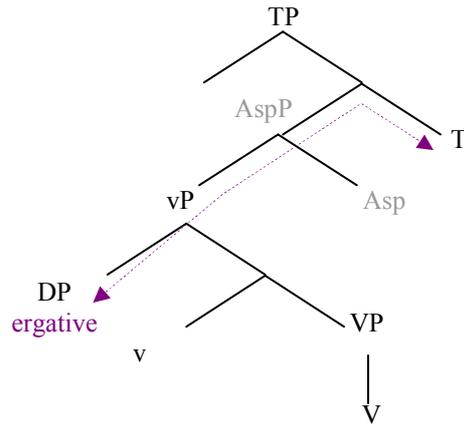
As I have mentioned previously, in south-western varieties, there is a tendency to lose the sensitivity towards the lexical [telicize] feature of V. I argue that, in these varieties, the head Asp only activates if V really takes an internal object. Even though V has a [+telicize] feature, as in some agentive unergative simplex predicates, Asp is going to be a non-active head, unless V takes an internal object.

Therefore, the context we introduced in scenario#3 gives rise to a different configuration in south-western varieties. This is what it actually happens:

SCENARIO#5

V has a [+telicize] feature, but Asp does not activate by itself in the syntax. V does not take an internal object either, so Asp remains inactive. On the other hand, *v* introduces an argument in its specifier position. This DP looks for a head in order to license its case feature. T is the nearest active [+case] head, and the DP checks ergative case with it.

(191)   Aingeru-k dantzatu d-u-ø
         Aingeru-ERG dance X-have-3sgERG
         'Aingeru has danced'

(192)
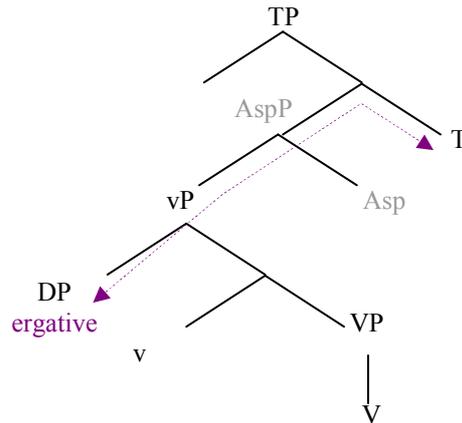
As the reader would have noticed, scenario#4 and scenario#5 are very similar. The sole difference between them is that V is [-telicize] in scenario#4 (that of *distiratu*), while V is [+telicize] in scenario#5 (of *dantzatu*).

In a system where this feature is transferred to the syntax, this difference will surface. This is what actually happens in north-eastern varieties: syntax is sensitive to [+telicize] feature, and Asp activates. The DP in [spec,vP] checks absolutive case (scenario#3 ≠ scenario#4).

On the other hand, in a system where the syntax is not sensitive to such a feature, this difference of the verbs will be invisible in the overt syntax. In south-western varieties, Asp does not activate, whether V is [+telicize] or [-telicize], and therefore, *dantzatu* and *distiratu* will apparently have the same form (scenario#4 = scenario#5).

5. <u>Conclusions and further research</u>

In this work, I have presented the picture of the ergative/absolutive case variation in subjects of monovalent simplex unergatives. Dialectal alternation has been described and data has been classified in three groups: **Type A data** –showing the south-western use of unergative predicates in which an ergative subject is selected–; **Type B data** –the use of north-eastern varieties in which an absolutive subject is chosen; and finally, **Type C data** –the use of some verbs general for all varieties in which an ergative subject is always selected–.

A theoretical explanation has been proposed: we have suggested that the locus of variation resides in the activity or inactivity of an aspectual head responsible for the absolutive case assignment, and which depends on the verb's ability to introduce an an event measuring object. Interestingly, verbs taking an absolutive subject is north-eastern varieties are those that can occur in certain transitive telic configurations.

Unergative verbs that can telicize their meaning, and which are consequently [+telicize] featured verbs, are speech verbs, meal related verbs, verbs of manner of motion and animate activity verbs. These verbs select absolutive subjects and *izan* auxiliary.

Among them, those that are used in all varieties show subject case alternation. Our proposal wants to explain this variation. We have suggested that verbs that can have an event measuring object are [+telicize], whereas those which cannot are [-telicize]. This feature of verbs, contained in the lexicon, is transferred to the syntax in north-eastern varieties. If a verb is [+telicize], then Asp will activate by itself in the functional skeleton, and it will assign absolutive case to the subject.

On the contrary, syntax in south-western varieties has lost the sensitivity towards this feature and it is blind to whether a given verb is [+telicize] or [-telicize]. This way, the Asp head only activates if an internal object is really inserted by the verb. If no internal object is introduced, Asp will remain inactive, and the single argument of the predicate will be assigned ergative from T.

With this proposal, we have accounted for Type A and Type B data. In doing so, we also have discussed other approaches to ergative case assignment, such as the transitive view of unergative verbs (Laka 1993 and Fernández 1997), the inherent

approach of ergative assignment (Oyharçabal 1990, Holmer 1999, Laka 2006) and the lexically motivated hypothesis from Preminger (2009b). As we have seen, all these theories are not able to capture the whole range of variation found in simplex unergative verbs.

On the other hand, we have concluded that verbs of the non-volitional emission class or non-animate activity class are true unergative verbs, so that their sole argument is inserted in the specifier position of *v* in the argument structure. Additionally, we have shown that this kind of unergative verbs cannot occur in transitive telic constructions. This is the causer of their irregular use in north-eastern varieties. These verbs are [-telicize] and therefore, Asp will not activate in the functional skeleton. This way, we account for Type C data.

For future research, there are a number of issues that need to be studied, in order to have a better understanding of the variation of in subject case marking.

Fernández has pointed to the role that the morpheme *-ta-* can have in the absolutive marking of some verbs: *solas-ta-tu, eles-ta-tu, hizke-ta-tu*. This is an issue that needs to be analysed in this study, because it could be related to telicity and may have an influence on the absolutive marking of their subjects.

In addition, the relation between this ergative/absolutive alternation phenomenon and the absolutive/dative object alternation phenomenon is also another aspect which seems to be relevant for our theory. Predicates with an absolutive/dative object alternation have been reported to occur both in the unaccusative construction and in the unergative (Mounole 2008, Fernández and Ortiz de Urbina 2009ab).

(193)   Miren-ek   Pello-ø   jarraiki   d-u-ø
            Miren-ERG Pello-ABS follow   x-have-3sgERG
            'Miren follows Pello'

(194)   Miren-ø   Pello-ri   jarraiki   z-ai-o
            Miren-ABS Pello-DAT follow   x-be-3sgDAT
            Miren follows Pello'

(195)   Miren-ek   Pello-ri   jarraitu   d-i-o-ø
            Miren-ERG Pello-DAT follow   x-have-3sgDAT-3sgERG
             'Miren follows Pello'

Two types of bivalent configurations have been attested in northern varieties:

(i)   One in which the subject is an ergative DP, and the object is an absolute DP –bivalent transitive construction– (193).

(ii)   Other in which the subject is marked with absolutive and the object with dative –unaccusative bivalent configuration– (194).

In southern varieties, on the other hand, a third bivalent construction tends to be more common:

(iii)   One in which the subject is marked ergative and the object is marked dative –bivalent unergative configuration– (194).

Two points are of matter here: it seems that, nowadays, in northern varieties, the unaccusative configuration is preferred when the object is marked dative. Furthermore, it is historically attested that some verbs –like *lagundu* 'help' or *eskatu* 'ask'– used to mark their objects with dative case. The dative marking of these objects has been lost, and the same has happened with the unaccusative use of these verbs. It would be very interesting for our theory to study the relation between the dative marking of objects and the unaccusative use of the verbs in northern varieties. For a matter of time, we have been unable to conduct such a study on this relation, but we have planned to do it in near time.

This study is framed in a broader project on Basque ergativity and syntactic variable phenomena related to ergative assignment. There are still a lot of syntactic variables that need to be analysed. We suspect that some of them can be closely related to the phenomenon we have studied in this work, like the use of non-canonical reciprocals and reflexives in southern varieties (197).

(196)   Bizarra-ø   moztu   d-u-ø
          beard-ABS cut   x-have-3sgERG
          'He has shaved off this beard'

(197)   Bizarra-ø   moztu   d-a
          beard-ABS cut   x-be
          'He has shaved off this beard'

This work has just been a first approximation to the subject case and auxiliary selection variation found in Basque varieties. It still needs to deal with several aspects and questions that have not been explained, such as the following:

(i)   *Izan* auxiliary selection has usually been related to change of state or telic predicates. Why do *dantzatu* kind verbs select it?

(ii)   What does it mean that north-eastern varieties are sensitive to that [+telicize] feature? How is this feature transferred?

This study has to go on, in order to solve these issues. Furthermore, a fieldwork project is going to be conducted, with the objective of obtaining a more detailed picture of the phenomenon and to find new factors that would be at play. Basing on Albizu's (2009) questionnaire proposal, our aim is to prepare a syntactic elicitation task to be completed in both south-western and north-eastern varieties.

6. <u>References</u>

Alberdi, Xabier. 2003. 'Euskal aditz mailegatuen erregimena: hurbilketa', In Makatzaga and Oyharçabal (eds.) *P. Lafitteren sortzearen mendemugako biltzarra. Gramatika gaiak.* Iker 14 (I). Bilbo: Euskaltzaindia. 37-60.

Albizu, Pablo. 2001. "Sobre la distribución sintáctica de las formas finitas del verbo vasco: condicionamiento léxico y sintáctico", *ASJU* 35, 65-106.
_____. 2007. 'Euskararen ergatibotasuna: ohar batzuk dakigunaz eta ez dakigunaz'. *Koldo Mitxelena Katedraren II. Biltzarra.* UPV/EHU 2007/10/08-11. Gasteiz.
_____. 2009. 'Euskararen kasu-sistema ergatiboa ala ergatiboak? Ergatibotasunaren azterketa dialektologiko baetrako lehen urratsak'. Baiona: *Lapurdum*.

Aldai, G. 2006. "Is Basque morphologically ergative?(i) The semantic split-intransitive case marking system of Western Basque". In B. Fernandez and I. Laka (eds.) *Andolin Gogoan. Essays in honour of Professor Eguzkitza*, Leioa: UPV/EHU, 117-138.
_____. 2009. "Euskararen kasu markaketaren aldakortasun dialektala". In B. Fernández, P. Albizu and R. Etxepare (eds) *Euskara eta euskarak: aldakortasun sintaktikoa aztergai,* supplements of ASJU 52. Donostia: UPV/EHU and Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia. 5-19.

Alexiadou, A, Anagnostopoulou, E and M. Everaet. 2004. *The Unaccusativity Puzzle.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Arregi, Karlos. 2004. 'The *have/be* alternation in Basque'. Ms., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Artiagoitia, X. 2001. 'Seemingly ergative and ergatively seeming', In J. Herschensohn, E. Mallén and K. Zagona (eds.) *Features and Interfaces in Romance.* Washington: University of Washington. 1-22.

Baker, M.C. 1988. *Incorporation: A Theory of Grammatical Function Changing.* Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press.

Bobaljik, Johnatan D. 1992. *Nominally absolutive is not Absolutely Nominative.* Proceedings of WCFFL XI, UCLA.

Borer, H. 1994. "The projection of arguments". In E. Benedicto and J. Runner (eds.) *Functional Projections, University of Massachusetts Occasional Papers 17.* Amherst, GLSA.

Chomsky, N. 1981. *Lectures on government and binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.
_____. 1986. *Knowledge of language*. New York: Praeger.
_____. 1992. 'A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory', *MIT Occasional Papers in Linguistic #1*.Cambridge, Massachusetts: MITWPL.
_____. 1995. *The minimalist program*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press

_____. 2000. "Minimalist inquiries: The framework". In *Step by step: Essays on minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*, ed. by R. Martin, D. Michaels, and J. Uriagereka, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. 89-155.

_____. 2001. "Derivation by phase", In *Ken Hale: A life in language*, ed. By Michael Kenstowicz, 1-52. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. 1-52.

Cruse, D.A. 1973. "Some thoughts on agentivity". *Journal of Linguistics* 9.1-204.

Dowty, David. 1991. "Thematic proto-roles and argument relations". In *Language* 67/3. Baltimore. 547-619.

Etxepare, R. 2003. "Valency and argument structure in the Basque verb". In J.I. Hualde and J. Ortiz de Urbina (eds.) *A Grammar of Basque*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 392-394.

Euskara Institutua. 2001-2007. *Ereduzko Prosa Gaur (EPG)*. UPV/EHU. [http://www.ehu.es/euskara-orria/euskara/ereduzkoa/]

Fernández, Beatriz. 1997. *Egiturazko kasuaren erkaketa euskaraz*. Bilbao: UPV/EHU.

_____. 2008. "Quirky dative objects in Basque". *European Dialect Syntax Meeting III,* Venezia, 2008 September 18-21.

Fernandez, B. and M. Rezac. 2010. "Datibo osagarri bitxiak eta Datiboaren Lekualdatzea: *ari nahi diyot* eta *kanta egin nazu* bidegurutzean" In B. Fernández, P. Albizu and R. Etxepare (eds.) *Euskara eta euskarak: aldakortasun sintaktikoa aztergai*. Supplements of ASJU 52, Donostia: UPV/EHU and Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia. 113-149.

Fernández, B. and J. Ortiz de Urbina. 2009. "Datibo alternatiboak hiztegian eta hizkeretan". In *Euskaren sintaxia: aldakortasun sintaktikoa euskal hizkeretan.* 18th Summer Courses of UPV/EHU in Donostia / 21st European Courses. Donostia-San Sebastián, July 2-3.

_____. 2010. *Datiboa hiztegian*. Bilbo: UPV/EHU-ren Argitalpen Zerbitzua.

Hale, K. and S.J. Keyser.1993. "On Argument Structure and the Lexical Expression of Syntactic Relations". In Hale and Keyser (eds.) *The View from Building 20.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT press

Holmer, A. 1999. "An active analysis of Basque ergativity". *Fontes Linguae Vasconum* 31, 189-225.

Hualde, J.I. 2003. 'Finite forms' In J.I. Hualde and J. Ortiz de Urbina (eds.) *A Grammar of Basque*, 363-426. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lafon, R. 1975. "Indices personnels n'exprimant rien de déterminé Dans les verbes basques", In *Mélanges linguistiques offerts á Emile Benveniste,* Société Linguistique de Paris, 331-337.

Laka, Itziar. 1993a. "Unergatives that assign ergative, unaccusatives that assign accusative". In Johnatan D.Bobaljik and C.Phillips (eds.) *Papers on Case and Agreement* I, MITWPL 18, 149-172.

_____.1993b. "The Structure of Inflection: A Case Study in X° Syntax" In J.I. Hualde and J. Ortiz de Urbina (eds.) *Generative Studies in Basque Linguistics*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co. 21-70.

_____. 2006. "On the nature of case in Basque: structural or inherent?". In H. Broekhuis, N. Corver, J.Koster, R.Huybregts and U.Kleinhenz (eds.), *Organizing Grammar*, Berling: Mouton de Gruyter, 374-382.

Legate, J.2008. "Morphological and Abstract Case". *Linguistic Inquiry* 39.1.

Egaña, M, Artola, K et al. 1983. *Euskalerriko Atlas Etnolinguistikoa*, EAEL. Donostia: Aranzadi Zientzia Taldea, Etnologia mintegia.

Levin, B. 1983. *On the Nature of Ergativity*. Doctoral Dissertation, Cambridge (Massachusetts): MIT.

Levin, B. and Rappaport Hovav, M. 1995. *Unaccusativity at the Syntactic-Semantics Interface.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Markman, V.G. and P. Grashenkov. 2009. "On the adpositional nature of ergative subjects: ergative 'case' is not a case. *International Ergativity Workshop,* UPV/EHU, November 3-4. Bilbao.

Mitxelena, K. and Sarasola, I. 1989-2005. *Orotariko Euskal Hiztegia (OEH)*. Bilbo: Euskaltzaindia.

Mendikoetxea, A. 1999. "Construcciones inacusativas y pasivas". In I.Bosque and V. Demonte *Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española,* lib.2, 1575-1629.

Mounole, C. 2008. "Evolution of the transitive verbs in Basque and apparition of datively marked patients". In G. Authier & K. Haude (eds.) *Ergativity, Valency and Voice,* [in press] Berlin / New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Ortiz de Urbina, Jon. 1986. *Parameters in the grammar of Basque*. Dordrecht, Foris, 1988 .

_____. 1987. "Kasu ezarketa eta ez-ergatibitatea euskaraz". In P. Salaburu (eds.) *Sintaxi arazoak.* 35-48.Donostia: EHU. 35-48.

Oyharçabal, Bernard. 1990. "Structural and inherent case-marking; Ergaccusativity in Basque", In J.A.Lakarra and J.Ortiz de Urbina (eds.)(1992), *Syntactic Theory and Basque Syntax*, Donostia, 309-342.

Perlmutter, D.M. 1978. "Impersonal Passives and the Unaccusative Hypothesis". In *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistic Society*. Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistic Society, University of California. 157-89.

Preminger, Omer. 2009a. "Breaking Agreements: Distinguishing Agreement and Clitic Doubling by their failures". In *Linguistic Inquiry* 40, 619–666.

_____. 2009b. "Basque unergatives, Case-competition, and ergative as inherent case" *International Ergativity Workshop,* UPV/EHU, November 3-4. Bilbao.

Rebuschi, G. 1985. "Sujeto, Ergatibidad y (no)configuracionalidad; lugar del Euskara en la tipologia generativa". In *Euskal Sintaxiaren zenbait arazo,* Donostiako Udako IV. Ikastaroak. Bilbo: EHUko Argitalpen Zerbitzua.

Rezac, Milan. 2008. "Phi-agree and theta related Case". In D. Harbour, D.Adger and S.Béjar (eds.) *Φ Theory: Φ-Features across Interfaces and Modules*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Salaburu, P. 1992. "Euskara, hizkuntza ergatiboa ote da?" In J. H. Duhalde (ed.) *Luis Villasanteri omenaldia*. Bilbao: Euskaltzaindia. 417-433.

Sarasola, Ibon. 1977. "Sobre la bipartición inidical en el análisis en constituyentes", *ASJU*, XI, 51-90.
_____. 1996. *Euskal Hiztegia*. Donostia: Kutxa Fundazioa.

Sorace, A. 2004. "Gradience at the lexicon-syntax interface: evidence from auxiliary selection"**.** In A. Alexiadou, M. Everaert and E. Anagnostopoulou (eds.). *The Unaccusativity Puzzle*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 243-268.

Tenny, C.L. 1987. *Grammaticalizing aspect and affectedness*. Cambridge, MA: MIT dissertation.

Torrego, E. 2009. "Aspects of Case and Agreement: Some Puzzles of Ergative Case". *International Ergativity Workshop,* UPV/EHU, November 3-4. Bilbao.

Uribe-Etxebarria, M. 1989. *Some notes on the Structure of IP in Basque*. ms. UConn, Storrs.

Woldford, Ellen. 2006. Lexical Case, Inherent Case, and Argument Structure. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37.1.