

A BRIEF GRAMMAR OF  
**EUSKARA** THE BASQUE LANGUAGE



Euskararako Errektoreordetza  
Office of the Vice-Rector for  
the Basque language

**Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea**  
**University of the Basque Country**

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# INTRODUCTION.

## 1. ABOUT THIS GRAMMAR:

This is a short grammar of the Basque language, or **Euskara** as it is called by its speakers. What follows is a partial description of the syntax of Euskara.

The text has been arranged in the following fashion: there is an index where you can find the distribution of topics. Within each of the topics, an effort has been made to arrange information from general to specific, so that as you read into a given section, you will get into more details about the topic being under discussion.

This grammar hopes to be useful to a wide variety of users. Therefore, it will probably not satisfy anyone completely: Those who want a quick 'feel' for the language will be disappointed by the slow and messy details the text dives into. Those who want a detailed, professional description will be disappointed by the lack of depth in the discussion. The text hopes to sit somewhere in the middle, and if it tells too much to those who want to know a little, and too little to those who want to know a lot, then it will have done its job.

On more than one occasion, the description will probably state what seems obvious to **the professional of language**, but perhaps not so obvious to the curious general reader, and hopefully more than once the reverse will happen too; every effort has been made to present all the basic information that is necessary to grasp the mechanics of Euskara, paying most attention to the basics, as should be the case in such a limited text.

The curious and careful reader is sure to construct many sensible questions that are not answered in the text, and to the extent of my capacity I have tried to become an inquisitive reader of this grammar, and then I have tried to answer the questions that seemed most obvious to me. No doubt, many have escaped my fingers, and I would be happy to hear about them from you.

**The informed reader** who already knows Euskara or about Euskara will find wholes, exceptions that are not mentioned, constructions that are not described, dialectal variants that are completely missing. I have attempted to explain the central facts of Euskara to those who are not acquainted with the language, and I have tried to keep it simple. Any deep, serious and thorough grammar of a language must include all exceptions, constructions and variants, but this one is more like a short visit to the language of the Basques, and thus not everything could be told. At least I hope it manages to make a few readers curious enough to want to look for more in better sources.

**About glosses.** If you are a really methodical reader, of the kind that actually reads the glosses of the examples, you will notice that the same word may appear glossed in different ways in various parts of the grammar. The reason is that glosses have been kept to the simplest, in order to make the examples easier to read. Since the text provides explanations of examples, the parts not deemed relevant are often glossed rather generally. Details about various parts are provided in different sections. For instance, you may notice that the determiner **a** is sometimes glossed as 'the', sometimes as 'det'. The reason becomes clear, I hope, in the section devoted to the determiner **a**, where it is

shown that it is not really a definite article ('the'), but very often it can be translated as such. In those examples where the determiner **a** was not the issue, and where its translation was indeed 'the', I have chosen to write 'the' in the gloss, so you can find it easily.

**Naming morphemes.** You will notice also that I don't follow the standard practice of attaching a dash in front of a morpheme when mentioning it. I simply write the morpheme, or whichever form it takes more generally, as if I were quoting a word. For instance, and to continue with the example, I write about the determiner **a**, although it is not written as a separate word, but attached to another one. The standard use is to refer to it as **-a** instead. But since you can see for yourself that it is indeed attached, I fail to see what is wrong with calling it determiner **a**. So I do.

**About grammars.** A grammar is a rather complex mechanism, built out of various elements, which are in turn constructed out of more basic elements, much in the way the entire universe works. Some of these units might be familiar to any user (pretty much anyone who can read knows something about units like 'verb' or 'noun'), but others might only be familiar to a linguistically educated user (for instance, elements like 'morpheme', 'anaphoric', 'irrealis' or 'agreement marker'); still there are other elements that have been recently discovered, and whose very existence might be under debate within the broader linguistic community (terms such as 'unnacusative' or 'complementizer', for instance). This grammar makes an attempt to provide information at various levels of linguistic knowledge, and various types of terms are used, generally the more descriptive ones at the beginning and the more technical ones as the discussion progresses. If you are not a linguist, and not even curious about linguistics, you can simply skip the discussion if it gets too strange, and move on.

**Apologies.** Writing the description of a human grammar feels like knitting an infinite sweater that never fits. At some point a decision is made that this much knitting is enough for the sleeves, and this much knitting will have to do as far as the neck is concerned. Grammarians know there is more to be said about this construction here, and that further questions could be investigated regarding that other one there. They might stop and declare a given text finished, but they know there is much that was left untouched. In fact, as a grammarian I have often felt like one of the four blind men that Buddha introduced to an elephant to illustrate the complexity of truth, but I was the one who had to knit a sweater for the elephant on top of it all. So this sweater will never quite fit, but the hope still remains that it might at least cover a few parts of the elephant's humongous body. It is in this hope that I offer you this forever incomplete piece of work.

**Itziar Laka**

## 2. LOCATION: WHERE IS EUSKARA SPOKEN?

Euskara is spoken by a population of around 600.000 to 700.000 people. The Basques call themselves **euskaldun**, a term that means 'euskara speaker' (for the names **euskara**, **vasco**, **vascuence**, **vascongado**, see [Mitxelena \(1977:13-16\)](#)). Languages exist in the minds of their speakers, they do not have a land of their own. Thus, when locating Euskara on the world's map, we are simply pointing out those areas where Euskara speakers are more likely to be found, that is, where Euskara is most likely to be heard, or where it is most likely to be used as primary language. In this sense of geographical location, Euskara is spoken mostly within the Basque Country (or *Euskal Herria* in Euskara). The Basque Country is found in the western Pyrenees, a land within Spanish borders to the West, and within French borders to the East. The areas where native Basque speakers are most likely to be found covers totally or partially the seven lands of the Basque Country. From West to East, this area includes: the land of Biscay (except for the corner to the west of the city of Bilbao and Bilbao itself), the Valley of Aramaiona in the northern side of the land of Alava, the land of Guipuscoa, the northwestern area of the land of Navarre, the land of Labourd (except for the urban areas of Bayonne, Anglet and Biarritz), the land of the Lower Navarre, and the land of Soule.

## 3. A LITTLE ABOUT EUSKARA'S HISTORY.

**Euskara** appears to have always been spoken by a rather small community, never beyond 600.000 or 700.000 individuals in its known history. In the Middle Ages, the geographical area where Euskara was the main language covered all the Basque Provinces in their entirety, except for the western tip of Biscay and the southernmost tip of Navarre and Alava. For some centuries, this area expanded beyond the Basque Country to the south, into parts of the Rioja region and north of Burgos. It is also likely that in the high valleys of the Pyrenees, east of today's Basque Country, varieties of the language were alive well into the Middle Ages.

Since the Middle Ages, the area where Euskara is the main language of communication has shrank relentlessly. By the eighteenth century it lost large parts of the province of Alava, and during the nineteenth century large areas of Navarre lost the language as well. In contrast to the southern area, where the language has disappeared increasingly in the last three centuries, the northern borders of the Euskara speaking area have remained stable, probably in relation to the fact that the neighboring language was not French but rather Gascon, a very distinct variety of Occitan. Nowadays, Euskara's territory has been reduced to Biscay -except the western tip and the city of Bilbao-, Guipuscoa, the valley of Aramaio in the north of Alava, the northwestern area of Navarre and all the Northern Basque Country (the Basque area within French borders), except for the urban areas of Bayonne, Anglet and Biarritz.

The oldest traces of Euskara in history are a set of proper names found in Roman inscriptions in the Aquitaine. They consist mostly of person and divinity names, which are easily recognizable given modern Basque: thus for instance, **Andere** corresponds to **andere** 'woman, lady', and **Nescato** corresponds to **neskato** 'maiden'. There are also a few adjectives and suffixes that further confirm the fact that these are the first written traces of Euskara, dating from the first centuries after Christ.

While up to the present century the predominant and often only language used in the Euskara speaking area was Euskara, we cannot say the same about this century. Nowadays, even within the Euskara speaking region, a minority of the population knows the language: only a fourth of the inhabitants of the Basque country and slightly less than half of the inhabitants of the Euskara speaking area. However, the number of speakers is increasing in the younger generations of the areas that include Euskara at school, and there is also a large number of adults who have learned or are learning the language (see Intxausti (1990) for more details).

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**For more information about the History of Basque and the Basques, as well as Basque Culture and where to learn Basque, look into these pages:**

<http://www.euskara.euskadi.net/r59-734/en/>

<http://buber.net/Basque/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basque\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basque_language)

**For more information, questions... about this grammar you can send a mail to:**

Itziar Laka

E-mail: itziar.laka@ehu.es

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**(c) Itziar Laka**



# 1. THE SENTENCE

## 0. Basic elements of the sentence: a few examples

A declarative sentence in Euskara contains: a verb and its arguments, an aspect marker attached to the verb, and the verbal inflection, which contains the agreement morphemes, tense, and modality. It can also contain other phrases, such as adverbials or postpositional phrases. Examples are provided in (1):

- (1)
- a. umea kalean erori da  
child-the street-in fall-asp is  
'the child fell in the street'
  
  - b. emakumeak gizona ikusi du  
woman-the-E man-the seen has  
'the woman has seen the man'
  
  - c. gizonak umeari liburua eman dio  
man-the-E child-the-D book-the given has  
'the man has given the book to the child'

In (1a), there is a sentence constructed with the intransitive verb **erori** 'fall'. The verb is marked for perfective aspect with the morpheme **i**; it denotes a completed event. The auxiliary verb is **da**, a form of **izan** 'be', which is inflected for present tense, third person singular. The subject **umea** 'the child' is marked with absolutive case, which bears a zero morpheme, that is, no manifest ending for the case. There is also a locative postpositional phrase **kalean** 'in the street'. The word order in (1a) is said to be neutral, that is, the sentence in (1a) is a natural answer to a question such as **zer gertatu da?** 'what happened?'. In other words, the entire sentence is informationally relevant.

In (1b), the sentence is constructed with a transitive verb, **ikusi** 'to see', which has the perfective aspectual morpheme **i** attached. The auxiliary verb is a form of **ukan** 'have', inflected for present tense, third person subject, and third person object. The subject **emakumea** 'the woman' is marked for ergative case (morpheme **k**), and the object **gizona** is case marked absolutive (morpheme zero). The word order in (1b) is neutral.

In (1c), the sentence contains a transitive verb, **eman** 'give', which has a variant of the perfective aspectual morpheme, namely, the final **-n** on the verb. The auxiliary verb carries the inflection, which in this case is specified for present tense, third person object, third person dative and third person subject. The subject **gizona** is marked for ergative case (morpheme **k**), the dative phrase is marked for dative case (morpheme **i**) and the object is marked for absolutive case (morpheme zero). The word order in (1c) is neutral.

# 1. Order of phrases in the sentence.

## 1.0. Neutral word order.

The neutral order of elements in the sentence is the one illustrated in the examples above (1a,b,c), and schematized in (2):

(2) [Ergative] [Dative] [Absolutive] [verb + inflection]

That is, given the language typology proposed by Greenberg, it is standardly assumed that Euskara is a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) type language (de Rijk (1969)). Regarding phrases that do not agree with the verbal inflection, such as adverbs and postpositional phrases, it is not so clear what the neutral word order is. For instance, the EGLU grammar provides examples like (3) as neutral word orders:

(3)  
duela bi ordu sekulako istripua izan da San Martin kalean  
ago two hours huge accident been is Saint Martin street-in  
'there has been a huge accident in Saint Martin street two hours ago'

where the locative phrase **San Martin kalean** 'in San Martin street', follows the verb. This is a possible word order if, as noted by the EGLU grammar, we get home and want to provide this information, which is entirely new to our listeners. In this case, we would be implicitly answering the question **zer gertatu da?** 'what happened?', which triggers neutral word order in the sentence, because the entire sentence is informationally relevant in this case.

## 1.1. Euskara is a free word order language.

Euskara is known to be a 'free word order' language; this means that the order of the phrases in the sentence can vary. The variations yield different informational patterns, as discussed further in section 1.2. Consider sentence (1a) above. The variations on the order of phrases of (1a) shown in (4) are all possible:

(4)  
a. kalean umea erori da  
street-in child-the-A fallen is  
b. umea erori da kalean  
c. kalean erori da umea

Sentences with initial verb and auxiliary are also possible, as shown in (5a, b). The order of the phrases following the **verbal complex** allows for variation, as shown in (5b).

(5)  
a. erori da umea kalean  
fallen is child-the-A street-in  
b. erori da kalean umea

Sentences where the inflected auxiliary precedes the participle are possible if at least one phrase precedes the auxiliary, as illustrated in examples (6a,b). This type of word order is used mostly in eastern varieties of Euskara.

(6)

- a. emakumeak du kalean gizona ikusi  
woman-the-E has street-in man-the-A seen  
'It is the woman who has seen the man in the street'
- b. kalean du emakumeak gizona ikusiko  
'It is in the street that the woman will see the man'
- c. \*du emakumeak kalean gizona ikusiko

The phrase immediately preceding the auxiliary is emphasized (see the section about [galdegaia](#)). More than one phrase can precede the auxiliary (6b), but the variation where the auxiliary is initial is not possible (6c) (The asterisk in front of the sentence indicates its ungrammaticality). When the inflected auxiliary precedes the main verb, any number of phrases can intervene between the auxiliary and the main verb (6a,b).

There is one more restriction in word order in declarative sentences: If the auxiliary follows the participle, no element can appear between them (7):

(7)

- b. \*erori umea da kalean  
fallen child-the-A is street-in
- c. \*erori kalean da umea
- d. \*erori umea kalean da

In general, this is the only restriction in the variation of the order of phrases in matrix declarative sentences. There are a number of further word order restrictions in negative sentences.

## 1.2. Galdegaia: The informationally relevant phrase.

As mentioned above, the various word orders in the sentence yield different informational patterns. In particular, and leaving aside cases of neutral word orders discussed previously, the position immediately preceding the verb is occupied by the phrase that provides the relevant information in the sentence. Consider the sentence in (8), which is (1c) repeated under a new number:

(8)

- gizonak umeari liburua eman dio  
man-the-E child-the-D book-the given has  
'the man has given the book to the child'

By means of (8) we can provide information about the entire event, that is, we can answer the question **zer gertatu da?** 'what happened?'. In that case, the entire sentence constitutes relevant information. But suppose we knew the man had given something to the child, and yet we were not certain as to what was given. Then we could ask the question in (9):

- (9)
- zer eman dio gizonak umeari?  
what given has man-the-E child-the-D  
'what has the man given to the child?'

and all the word order variations in (10) would be felicitous answers to the question asked:

- (10)
- a. **liburua eman dio** gizonak umeari
  - b. **liburua eman dio** umeari gizonak –
  - c. gizonak umeari, **liburua eman dio**
  - d. umeari gizonak, **liburua eman dio**
  - e. gizonak **liburua eman dio** umeari
  - f. umeari **liburua eman dio** gizonak

All the sentences in (10) have two common properties:

- (I) The element providing the information requested in the question immediately precedes the verbal complex.
- (II) The element providing the information requested is pronounced in the same phonological phrase as the verbal complex, without a break.

This preverbal position is called **galdegaia** in the Basque grammatical tradition ([Altube \(1929\)](#)). The word **galdegaia** means 'the questioned element', that is, the element asked about. In other words, we can say that the **galdegaia** is the informationally relevant phrase in the sentence.

In eastern dialects, and occasionally in literary western usage, the **galdegaia** position precedes the inflected auxiliary, where the main verb appears left behind. Examples have been provided in (6).

Sometimes, the relevant information in the sentence is not a phrase, but the verb itself. In that case, the verbal complex, that is, the main verb and the auxiliary are stressed, separating all other phrases that might precede with a break:

- (11) liburua, **eman dio** gizonak umeari

An example like (11) may be used to emphasize either the verb itself, or the fact that the event has indeed taken place. In the first case, what is emphasized is that what the man has done with the book is **give it** to the child, as opposed to, say, read it. In the second case, what is emphasized is that the man has indeed given the book to the child, in case someone was doubting or denying that the event might have happened.

In western dialects, the dummy verb **egin** 'to do, to make' is inserted between the main verb and the auxiliary, as in (12):

(12) gizonak umeari, **eman egin dio** liburua

Sentences like this unambiguously emphasize the verb itself. That is, (12) means that what the man has done with the book is give it to the child, and not buy it or burn it or throw it, for instance. In order to emphasize the actuality of the event, western dialects unambiguously use the strategy in (11).

## 2. Absent phrases.

The phrases that agree with the verb need not be overtly manifest in the sentence: Ergative, dative and absolutive noun phrases or pronouns can be absent and understood. In (13), we repeat example (1c), a sentence with ergative, dative and and absolutive phrases, which will be used to illustrate the absence of verbal arguments:

(13)  
gizonak umeari liburua eman dio  
man-the-E child-the-D book-the given has  
'the man has given the book to the child'

This sentence has been described in [section 0](#) above. In example (14a) below, we see the same sentence, but now the ergative argument has been omitted. It is understood that someone gave a book to the child. In (14b), the dative argument is omitted. It is understood that the man gave a book to someone. In (14c), the absolutive argument is omitted. It is understood that the man gave something to the child.

- (14)
- a. umeari liburua eman dio  
child-the-D book-the given has  
'(someone) gave a book to the child'
  - b. gizonak liburua eman dio  
man-the-E book-the given has  
'the man gave a book (to someone)'
  - c. gizonak umeari eman dio  
man-the-E man-the-D given has  
'the man gave (something) to the child'

More than one of these arguments can be omitted, as shown in (15), where all three are absent.

- (15)  
eman dio  
given has  
'(he/she) gave (this) (to him/her)'

## 2.1. In infinitival sentences.

It is generally assumed that the agreement morphemes carried by verbal inflection make these omissions possible. It must be noted, however, that arguments can also be omitted in infinitival sentences, where there is no visible agreement morphology, as shown in the examples in (16):

- (16)
- a. [emakumeak gizonari liburua ematea] nahi du umeak  
woman-the-E man-the-D book-the give-inf want has child-the-E  
'The child wants [the woman to give a book to the man]'
- b. [gizonari liburua ematea] nahi du umeak  
man-the-D book-the give-inf want has child-the-E  
'The child wants [(him/her) to give the book to the man]'
- c. [liburua ematea] nahi du umeak  
book-the give-inf want has child-the-E  
'The child wants [(him/her) to give the book (to him/her)]'
- d. [ematea] nahi du umeak  
give-inf want has child-the-E  
'The child wants [(him/her) to give (it)(to him/her)]'

The sentence in (16a) contains an infinitival sentence, the object of **nahi** 'want'. The infinitival sentence does not contain any visible agreement morphology. As shown in (16b), the ergative argument can be omitted and understood. As shown in (16c) both the ergative and dative arguments can be omitted and understood. As shown by (16d), all three arguments can be omitted and understood.

## 2.2. Absent phrases and galdegaia.

Only phrases that are not informationally relevant can be absent. In particular, if an argument is the galdegaia of the sentence, it cannot be absent, even if it is understood or unambiguously represented in the verbal morphology. Consider for instance the example in (17):

- (17)  
zuk umea ikusi duzu kalean  
you-E child-the-A seen have-you street-in  
'you have seen the child in the street'

This sentence contains a second person singular pronoun **zuk** 'you' as subject. The pronoun agrees with the auxiliary, by means of the morpheme **zu** 'second person' that appears at the end of the inflected auxiliary. Now, if the relevant information of the sentence were the place where the event took place, we would be implicitly answering the question in (18a), and thus (18b) would be a felicitous answer, because the phrase **kalean** 'in the street' occupies the preverbal position, the **galdegaia** position:

- (18)
- a. non ikusi duzu umea?  
where seen have-you child-the-A  
'where have you seen the child?'
  - b. kalean ikusi duzu umea  
street-in seen have-you child-the-A  
'you have seen the child in the street'

in (18b), the subject pronoun need not be manifest. It can be omitted. The object **umea** 'the child' need not be manifest either, although the example has chosen to express it. The relevant piece of information in (18b), the answer to (18a), is the phrase **kalean** 'in the street'. Now suppose we were asking who saw the child, as all the possible questions illustrated in (19) do:

- (19)
- a. nork ikusi du umea kalean?  
who-E seen has child-the-A street-in  
'who has seen the child in the street?'
  - b. nork ikusi du kalean umea?
  - c. umea kalean nork ikusi du?
  - d. kalean umea nork ikusi du?
  - e. nork ikusi du kalean?
  - f. kalean nork ikusi du?

the last two examples, (19e,f) would be felicitous if we knew that we were talking about a certain child. The answers to (19) must include an overtly expressed phrase corresponding to the entity that saw the child. In the case we are considering, the felicitous answers must include the second person pronoun **zu** 'you', as the examples in (20) show:

(20)

- a. zuk ikusi duzu umea kalem  
you-E seen have-you child-the-A street-in  
'you have seen the child in the street'
- b. zuk ikusi duzu kalem umea
- c. umea kalem zuk ikusi duzu
- d. kalem umea zuk ikusi duzu
- e. zuk ikusi duzu kalem
- f. kalem zuk ikusi duzu

it would be totally infelicitous to reply with sentences such as the ones in (21). The symbol # indicates that the sentence is a possible one in other situations, but is not felicitous as an answer to (21):

(21)

- a. #ikusi duzu kalem umea
- b. #ikusi duzu umea kalem
- c. #umea kalem ikusi duzu
- d. #kalem umea ikusi duzu
- e. #umea ikusi duzu kalem
- f. #kalem ikusi duzu umea
- g. #ikusi duzu umea
- h. #ikusi duzu kalem
- i. #umea ikusi duzu
- j. #kalem ikusi duzu
- k. #ikusi duzu

That is, even though all the sentences in (21) unambiguously provide the information that 'you saw...', none of them can be used when the relevant information, or the **galdegaia**, is precisely 'you'. Phrases that are the **galdegaia** of the sentence cannot be omitted even if they are unambiguously understood. Phrases that are not informationally relevant and can be understood when omitted, are usually not expressed in actual discourse.

### 2.3. Absent pronouns.

Pronouns tend to be absent. Exceptions to this rule are (a) pronouns that are the **galdegaia** of the sentence, as shown immediately above in examples (19) to (21), and (b) pronouns that are used contrastively in the discourse (see discussion of example (19-21)).

If the entire sentence is informationally relevant, that is, if the sentence implicitly or explicitly answers the question **zer gertatu da?** 'what happened?', pronouns are absent. Consider the example in (22):



(22)

opari bat ekarri dizut  
present one brought it-have-you-I  
'I have brought you a present'

there are two absent pronouns in this sentence: the first person pronoun that is the subject of the sentence, and the second person pronoun that is the recipient of the present. They are manifest in the [agreement morphology](#), as noted in the glosses: the morpheme **t** stands for the first person pronoun 'I', and the morpheme **zu** stands for the second person pronoun 'you'. The sentence in [\(22\)](#) is felicitous used as the beginning of a conversation, for example if I were entering your apartment for a visit. In this context, the entire sentence is informationally relevant, and the appropriate form is the one with the absent pronouns.

There are cases when pronouns are not absent even though they are not the **galdegaia** of the sentence. In this case, they are used in contrast to some other entity that has been mentioned or is in the minds of the participants in the discourse. To see this, consider the example in [\(23\)](#):

(23)

nik opari bat ekarri dizut  
I-E present one brought it-have-you-I  
'I have brought you a present'

the only difference between [\(22\)](#) and [\(23\)](#) is the presence of the first person pronoun **ni** 'I' in the second example. Note that the pronoun could not be the **galdegaia** of the sentence, since it does not appear immediately preceding the verb.

This sentence would be felicitous if, for example, there were other people who had come or would come to visit, and I wanted to say something like 'as for me, I have brought you a present', in a situation where someone else might have just shown up to wish you good luck, or to do your groceries, or to tidy up your place... what [\(23\)](#) conveys in that case is that what I am doing is bringing you a present.

### 3.Types of sentences.

Sentences can be of various types, and different descriptions provide different taxonomies of sentences. Here, we will consider declaratives, negatives and interrogatives.

#### 3.1. Declarative sentences.

So far, we have illustrated our discussion of [word order](#), [galdegaia](#) and [absent phrases](#) using simple declarative sentences. Thus, we take it that the main properties of declarative sentences have been described. Here, other types of sentences will be described, against the background of the standard properties of declarative sentences.

#### 3.2. Negative sentences.

Negative sentences in Basque display the negation word **ez** 'not' immediately preceding the inflected auxiliary if there is one [\(22a\)](#), or the inflected verb if there is no auxiliary [\(22b\)](#):

(22)

a. emakumea ez da etorri  
woman-the not is arrived  
'the woman has not arrived'

b. emakumea ez dator  
woman-the not come  
'the woman is not coming'

The negation word **ez** is written separate from the inflected auxiliary or verb, but it is phonologically part of it and they cannot be separated by any other phrase. The only other elements that can appear between the negation word and the inflected verb are certain particles, such as **omen**, **bide** 'uncertain truth value' and **ohi** 'habituality', or the interrogative particles **ote** and **al**, as shown in (23):

(23)

a. emakumea ez omen da etorri  
'apparently, the woman has not arrived'

b. emakumea ez bide da etorri  
'apparently, the woman has not arrived'

c. emakumea ez ohi da etortzen  
'the woman does not usually arrive'

d. ez ote dator emakumea?  
'is the woman perhaps not coming?'

e. emakumea ez al dator?  
'is the woman not coming?'

### 3.2.1. Negation and word order.

Negative sentences present a different word order from declaratives. This different word order is manifest when there is an inflected auxiliary and the sentence is not an embedded one. In main negative sentences, the inflected auxiliary must precede the main verb, as already shown in (22a). Main negative sentences where the inflected auxiliary follows the main verb are not possible, as shown in the paradigm in (24):

(24)

a. emakumea etorri da  
woman-the arrived is  
'the woman has arrived'

c. \*emakumea etorri ez da

b. emakumea ez da etorri  
woman-the not is arrived  
'the woman hasn't arrived'

The paradigm shows a declarative sentence, where the main verb precedes the inflected auxiliary (24a). In (24b), the negative sentence displays the reverse order, where the negated auxiliary precedes the main verb.

Finally, the ungrammatical example in (24c) shows that the order available in declarative sentences is not available in negative ones. Word orders like the one in (24c) are possible and sometimes obligatory in embedded negative sentences, and exclamative negative sentences, as the examples in (25) illustrate:

(25)

a. [etorri ez den] emakumea  
arrived not is-that woman-the  
'the woman [that has not arrived]

b. emakumea etorri ez bada  
woman-the arrived not if-is  
'if the woman has not arrived'

c. etorriko ez da ba!  
arrive-irr not is indeed  
'will (she) not come!'  
(of course she will come!)

In (25a), we find a relative clause, which precedes its head noun in Basque; in (25b) a conditional sentence, and in (25c) an exclamative sentence. All three display a word order where the negated auxiliary follows the main verb.

Finally, regarding the example in (24c), it must be said that although it is ungrammatical in modern Euskara, we find exactly this word order in the first Basque written sentence that we know about. It is a negative sentence, written on the corner of a latin text: **guc ajutu ez dugu** where the main verb **ajutu**, precedes the negation word **ez** and the inflected auxiliary **dugu** 'we have it'. It is not certain what the meaning of the verb **ajutu** might have been. This word order is not too infrequent in older written texts, and it also appears occasionally in songs, such as this children's rhyme:

**a, e, i, o, u,**  
a, e, i, o, u,

**ama meriendea biogu**  
mommy a snack we need

**txokolatea eta opiltxu**  
chocolate and bread

**bestelan eskolan ikasiko ez dogu**  
otherwise in school learn not will we

A second property of main negative sentences and their word order, is that any number of phrases can appear, in any order, between the negated auxiliary and the main verb.

This is illustrated in the examples in (26), where we use the negative version of sentence (1b) for illustration:

- (26)
- a. emakumeak ez du gizona ikusi  
woman-the-E not has man-the seen  
'the woman has not seen the man'
  - b. ez du emakumeak gizona ikusi
  - c. ez du gizona emakumeak ikusi
  - d. ez du emakumeak ikusi gizona
  - e. ez du gizona ikusi emakumeak
  - f. gizona ez du emakumeak ikusi
  - g. emakumeak gizona ez du ikusi
  - i. ez du ikusi emakumeak gizona
  - j. ez du ikusi gizona emakumeak

As the permutations of phrases in (26) illustrate, all orders of phrases are possible, as long as the negated auxiliary precedes the main verb.

Any number of phrases can intervene between the negated auxiliary and the main verb, in any order (26a, b, c, d). Any number of phrases can precede the negated auxiliary, in any order (26a, f, g, h). Any number of phrases can follow the negated auxiliary, in any order (26d, e, i, j).

### 3.2.2. Negation and galdegaia.

As it is usually the case with word-order permutations, not all variations are identical from an informational point of view. In negative sentences, the word order indicates which one is the relevant part of the sentence that is negated. Before we enter into considerations about the relation between the **galdegaia** phrase and negation, the reader must be cautioned that this is a complex area, where some facts are still not very well understood even at a descriptive level.

There appear to be two **galdegaia** sites in negative sentences:

- (I) one site follows the negated auxiliary or verb,
- (II) the other one immediately precedes it.

Let us consider them one at a time.

(I) The phrase following the negated verb or auxiliary receives a contrastive interpretation. In the case of a negated auxiliary, this position must precede the main verb, as in example (27):

- (27)  
emakumeak ez du **gizona** ikusi  
woman-the-E not has man-the seen  
'the woman hasn't seen the man'

in this example, what is conveyed is that 'it is not the man that the woman has seen', and thus it is very naturally followed by an explanation that states what the woman has seen, as in (28):

- (28)  
emakumeak ez du **gizona** ikusi, umea baino  
woman-the-E not has man-the seen, child-the but  
'the woman hasn't seen the man, but the child'

in this position, the phrase is under the scope of negation, and negation and focus can be associated, yielding a contrastive reading.

(II) The position immediately preceding the negated verb or auxiliary can also behave as a **galdegaia**, in the sense that it is the natural position for a phrase that answers a question. Consider the question in (29):

- (29)  
nor ez duzu ikusi?  
who not have-you seen  
'who did you not see?'

a natural answer to this question is the sentence in (30):

- (30)  
Iruno ez dut ikusi  
Iruno not have-I seen  
'I haven't seen Irune'

where the phrase answering the question immediately precedes the negated auxiliary. This phrase must be pronounced with some stress and within the same phonological phrase as the negated auxiliary, as in the case of **galdegaia** in declarative sentences. In (30), there is no contrastive reading; what the sentence conveys is akin to 'it is Irune that I have not seen'. We may therefore say that this second **galdegaia** position is outside the scope of negation.

### 3.3. Interrogative sentences.

Interrogative sentences, or questions, can be of various kinds: (I) yes/no questions, and (II) partial questions.

#### 3.3.1. Yes/no questions.

Yes/no questions do not present a distinctive word order from declarative sentences. They must however have an interrogative intonation, raising at the end. Consider the examples in (31):

- (31)
- a. emakumea etorri da?  
Woman-the arrived is  
'has the woman arrived?'
  - b. etorri da emakumea?

both interrogatives are possible yes/no questions.

There are two particles that are used in certain varieties of Euskara in yes/no questions, and they are illustrated in (32):

- (32)
- a. emakumea etorri dea?
  - b. emakumea etorri al da?

In (32a), the yes/no interrogative particle **a** is illustrated, attached to the auxiliary **da** 'is'. The combination of **da+a** yields the form **dea** in the example. This interrogative particle is used in eastern dialects. In (32b), we see the yes/no interrogative particle **al**, which is used in central dialects.

#### 3.3.2. Partial questions.

Partial questions contain a question phrase. The question phrase is the informationally relevant part of these sentences, and therefore it occupies the [galdegaia](#) position. Consider the examples in (33):

- (33)
- a. Nor erori da kalean?  
Who fallen is street-in  
'Who fell in the street?'
  - b. Nork ikusi du gizona?  
Who-E seen has man-the  
'who has seen the man?'
  - c. Gizonak nori eman dio liburua?  
man-the-E who-D given has book-the  
'to whom has the man given the book?'

Considerations made previously regarding word order and **galdegaia** apply therefore to these sentences. Any number of phrases can precede or follow the phonological phrase containing the **galdegaia** and the verb with its inflection, in any order.

In [eastern dialects](#) and literary western usage, partial questions can be formed where the main verb follows the question phrase and auxiliary, as shown in [\(34\)](#):

- (34)
- zer dio gizonak umeari eman?  
what has man-the-E child-the-D given  
'what has the man given to the child?'

these question parallel the examples provided in [\(6\)](#) above.

**3.4. Causative sentences** are formed with the causative verb **arazi** (or **eragin**, in western varieties of the language), which is attached to the caused verb, as illustrated in the pair in [\(35\)](#):

- (35)
- a. emakumeak liburua irakurri du  
woman-det-E book-det read has  
'The woman has read the book'
  
  - b. irakasleak emakumeari liburua irakurr**arazi** dio  
teacher-det-E woman-det-D book-det read-cause has  
'The teacher has made the woman read the book'

In example [\(35a\)](#), a simple transitive sentence is illustrated. In [\(35b\)](#), the causative version of the sentence is provided: the causative verb **arazi** has been attached to the verb **irakurri** 'to read'. The causer phrase **irakaslea** 'the teacher' is marked with ergative case (**k**). The cause phrase, **emakumea** 'the woman', receives dative case (**ri**). The example in [\(35\)](#) involves a causative sentence [\(35b\)](#) built on a transitive sentence [\(35a\)](#). In these cases, the causee always receives dative case.

In the case of causative sentences built on intransitive sentences, two possibilities arise: either the causee is marked with absolutive case, or it is marked with dative case. The later choice is only possible in western varieties of the language, with animate and preferably human noun phrases. Examples are given in [\(36\)](#):

- (36)
- a. umea etorri da  
child-det arrived is  
'The child has come'
  
  - b. emakumeak umea etorr**arazi** du  
woman-det-E child-det come-made has  
'The woman has made the child come'

c. emakumeak umeari etorrarazi dio  
woman-det-E child-det come-made has  
'The woman has made the child come'

The example in (36a) illustrates a simple intransitive sentence. In (36b), a causative version is provided, where the causee **umea** 'the child' receives absolutive case. The example in (36b) illustrates the western variety, where the causee, it being human, receives dative case, **umeari** 'to the child'.

Note that the agreement pattern of the auxiliary verb changes accordingly, to reflect the presence of a dative phrase.

**3.5. Impersonal sentences** in euskara are constructed by simply eliminating the ergative subject argument of a transitive sentence. The resulting sentence contains only the absolutive object phrase. This is illustrated in the pair in (37):

(37)

a. jabeek etxeak saltzen dituzte  
owners-det<sub>pl</sub>-E house-det<sub>pl</sub>sell-impf them- have-they  
'The owners sell houses'

b. etxeak saltzen dira  
house-det<sub>pl</sub> sell-impf are  
'Houses are sold'

As you can see from the examples, the only difference between the transitive sentence in (37a) and the impersonal sentence in (37b) is the absence of the ergative phrase **jabeek** 'the owners'. The absence of this phrase in (37b) carries a change of auxiliary verb as well: whereas in (37a) the auxiliary contains agreement markers for both the ergative phrase and the absolutive phrase, and it is therefore a form of **ukan** 'to have', the auxiliary in (37b) contains only an agreement marker for the absolutive phrase **etxeak**, and it is therefore a form of **izan** 'to be'.



## CHAPTER 2: THE NOUN PHRASE

### 1. NOUN PHRASES: THE BASICS.

A Noun phrase is a phrase constructed around a Noun. In this sense, we will say that the Noun 'heads' its phrase. Noun phrases in Euskara have a very fixed word order, in contrast to the **sentences**, where phrases can be arranged in many different ways. Let us consider a few examples:

(1)

a. gure haur txiki-a  
we-gen baby small-the  
'our small baby'

b. neska gazte hau  
girl young this  
'this young girl'

c. Bilboko zazpi gizon  
Bilbo-from seven man  
'seven men from Bilbo'

d. azkarra den emakume-a  
smart-the is-that woman-the  
'the woman that is smart'

As we can see in (1a) and (1b), adjectives follow the Noun, and articles and demonstratives follow the [Noun + Adj] group (1a,b). Other modifiers, such as possessive phrases, postpositional phrases, relative clauses and most quantifiers, always precede the noun. Thus, for instance, in (1a), the possessive phrase *gure* 'our' appears before the Noun; in (1c), the postpositional phrase *Bilboko* 'from Bilbo', and the quantifier *zazpi*, 'seven', both precede the Noun *gizon* 'man'. Similarly, in (1d), the relative clause *azkarra den* 'who is smart' precedes its head Noun, *emakume* 'woman'.

We can now consider a longer example, where more elements are combined: final position, while complements and other modifiers precede them. In other words, Euskara is a 'head-final' language. We can say that the Noun follows its complements and heads the Noun Phrase as illustrated in (3):

(3)

[[emakumearen] argazki<sub>NP</sub>]  
woman-the-gen photograph  
'woman's photograph'

In the same fashion, since articles and demonstratives follow the Noun, as shown in examples in (1) and (2), we can say that articles and demonstratives, grouped under the common name of 'determiners', follow the Noun Phrase and head the **Determiner Phrase**, as in (4):

- (4)
- [[[emakumearen] argazki<sub>NP</sub>] a<sub>DP</sub>]  
woman-the-gen photo the  
'the photograph of the woman'

However, a few items appear to break this head-final pattern: The **Adjective** follows the Noun for instance, as shown in previous examples. There is also a small subset of modifiers that can either precede or follow the Noun:

- (I) modifiers with the morpheme **dun**, which denotes a possessed entity,
- (II) modifiers ending in the morpheme **tar**, which denote geographic origin, and
- (III) modifiers without the morpheme **tar** which also denote geographic origin.

They are all illustrated in the examples in (5):

- (5)
- a. dirudun emakumea  
money-poss woman-det  
'a rich woman/ a woman that has money'
  - b. emakume diruduna
  - c. Gasteiztar laguna  
Gasteiz-from friend-det  
'the friend from Gasteiz'
  - d. lagun Gasteiztarra
  - e. frantses liburua  
French book-det  
'a french book'
  - f. liburu frantsesa

These modifiers can either precede or follow the Noun, without any difference in meaning. It must be noted that example (5e) can refer to a french book, but also more specifically to a book to learn French, while (5f) can only refer to a french book. That is, the string in (5e) can correspond also to a compound noun.

## 2. NOUNS.

Let us now start from the bottom of a Noun Phrase: the Noun. Regarding the types of Noun Phrases they build, we can distinguish two main kinds of Nouns, **proper Nouns** and **common Nouns**. They differ in their relation to **Determiners**:

- (I) Noun phrases headed by common Nouns require Determiners, but
- (II) Noun Phrases headed by proper Nouns don't occur with determiners.

We will discuss each of these generalizations now.

## 2.1. Noun phrases headed by common Nouns require Determiners.

(6)

- a. \*emakume gazte etorri da  
woman young arrived is
- b. emakume gaztea etorri da  
woman young the arrived is  
'the young woman has arrived'

The few exceptions to generalization (I) have to do with syntactic conditions external to the structure of the Noun Phrase, and they are overviewed in the section corresponding to Determiners, more specifically in the discussion on the **determiner a** (section 6.1.). One exception to be mentioned here, since it is not syntactically conditioned, is the case of common Nouns that can be used as proper Names: names of family relations like *iseko* 'aunt', can be used as proper Names and thus display no Determiner:

(7)

- a. iseko ikusi dut  
aunt seen have-I  
'I have seen auntie'

It is important to note that Noun Phrases like (7) are grammatical only if they refer to the speaker's or the hearer's aunt or relative.

The family relations that are subject to this treatment are the following: **ama** 'mother', **aita** 'father', **osaba** 'uncle', **amama** 'grandmother', **aitite** 'grandfather'. We use **iseko** 'aunt' for the illustration in the text because its ending is phonologically distinct from the determiner -a. Nouns like **errege** 'king', or **faraoi** 'pharaoh', were also used as proper names in older stages of the language, when referring to one's king or pharaoh.

## 2.2. Noun Phrases headed by proper Nouns cannot appear with a determiner:

(8)

- a. Irune etorri da  
Irune arrived is  
'Irune has arrived'
- b. \*Irunea etorri da  
Irune-det arrived is

The only exception to generalization (II) has to do with the nature of the Noun Phrase itself. If a Noun Phrase is headed by a proper name which is used to refer to a single individual, but to a group of individuals (i.e. a group of individuals with the name "Alex"), or it is used to refer to different stages of the existence of an individual as if the stages were actually different individuals, then that Noun Phrase can take Determiners and modifiers that are otherwise not possible for standard proper Nouns. From a descriptive point of view, we can say that, in these cases, the proper Noun is used almost as a common Noun. A few different types of examples are provided below:

(a) **Demonstratives** and **bat** 'one', can co-occur with proper Nouns used as common Nouns, as shown in (9):

- (9)
- a. Nor da Alex hori?  
Who is Alex that  
'Who is that Alex?'
  
  - b. Aspaldi ezagutu nuen Patxi bat  
Long-ago known had-I Patxi one  
'A Patxi that I knew long ago'

Even in these cases, however, proper Nouns never co-occur with the **determiner a**, as shown below in (10). In this respect, the behavior of this determiner is distinct from all other elements we have included in the category of **Determiners**, and it is also distinct from definite articles in Indo-European languages, where it is common to have the definite determiner in these cases, as well as the demonstratives:

- (10)
- a. gure Alex  
our Alex  
'our Alex'
  
  - b.\*gure Alex-a  
our Alex-the
  
  - c. Guk miresten genuen Irune hura  
we-E admiring had-we Irune that  
'That Irune that we admired'
  
  - d.\*Guk miresten genuen Irune-a  
we-E admiring had-we Irune-the

As the examples in (10) illustrate, even when they are used to refer to a group of individuals with the same name, proper Nouns cannot take the determiner **a** on them. Note that if instead of the proper Nouns **Alex** and **Irune** we put the common Nouns **gizon** 'man' and **emakume** 'woman' in the examples, then (10a) would be ungrammatical and (10b, c, d) would be grammatical. For a type of construction where the determiner **a** and proper Nouns appear to co-occur, see discussion on examples (13), (14) and (15) below.

(b) Proper Nouns can occasionally take the **partitive** marker, although this is not a common usage in the language:

- (11)
- a. ez dut Irunerik ikusi  
not have-I Irune-part seen  
'I have not seen (any) Irune'  
'I have not see Irune (at all)'
  - b. Josu Anderrik ikusi duzu?  
Josu Ander-I seen have-you  
'Have you seen (any) Josu Ander?'  
'Have you seen Josu Ander (at all)?'
  - c. Bada Garikoitzik hemen  
yes-is Garikoitz-part here  
'There are Garikoitz here'  
'There is (someone named) Garikoitz here'

As the English translations try to convey, these sentences can be used to refer to groups of individuals with the same name, or to talk about a single individual, in which case the second translation is more accurate.

(c) **Quantifiers** can co-occur with proper nouns used as common Nouns:

- (12)
- a. Alex asko  
Alex many  
'Many Alex'
  - b. Zenbait Irune  
Some Irune  
'Some Irune'

**Quantifiers** that require the determiner **a** can also co-occur with proper Nouns. In these cases, the determiner **a** seems to appear in the same constituent as the proper Noun (13):

- (13)
- a. Alex guzti-ak  
Alex all-the<sub>pl</sub>  
'All (of) the Alexes'
  - b. Irune gehien-ak  
Irune most-the<sub>pl</sub>  
'Most Irunes'

It is likely that the Nouns in (13a, b) are complements of the quantifiers, which would account for the fact that the quantifiers appear following the Noun rather than preceding it (remember the discussion of examples in (1) and (2)). It is significant that also in English, these constructions appear to take the Noun as complement of the Quantifier: 'All [(of) the guests]', 'most [of the guests]'.

The example (13b) is a superlative construction, where arguably the quantifier takes the preceding Noun Phrase as a complement. Interestingly, there is a further difference between common Nouns and proper Nouns that surfaces in this construction:

- (14)
- a. emakume(rik) gehi-en-ak  
woman(part) more-than-thepl  
'most (of the) women'
  
  - b. Irune(\*rik) gehi-en-ak  
Irune more-than-thepl

whereas common nouns can optionally take the partitive marker, this is not possible for a proper Noun in this construction.

(d) There are two other constructions where a proper Noun used as a common Noun appears to take the determiner **a**. They are illustrated in (15):

- (15)
- a. Peru gure-a  
Peru our-det  
'Our Peru'
  
  - b. Alex gaixo-a  
Alex poor-det  
'the poor Alex'

The example in (15a) has a possessor following the Noun (a non-canonical order, since possessors typically precede the Noun, as shown in example (1a)). The possessor has the determiner **a** attached. It is likely that the determiner in (15a) is not attached to the Noun Phrase headed by the proper Noun **Peru**. Rather, this construction is probably best analyzed as containing an appositional Noun Phrase, which is attributive to the preceding Noun Phrase that contains the proper Noun. The structure would then be like (16):

- (16)
- Peru [gurea]

Assuming this to be the constituent structure of the construction, a number of its distinctive properties could be accounted for:

(a) It is impossible to have the determiner **a** with a proper Noun if the possessor appears in its canonical place, preceding the Noun, as shown in (10b);

(b) Only the determiner **a** can appear following the attributive. Demonstratives and indefinite articles are barred from this construction, as shown in (17):

(17)

a. \*Peru gure hau  
Peru our this  
'This Peru of ours'

b. \*Peru gure bat  
Peru our one  
'A Peru of ours'

c. gure Peru hau our Peru this  
'This Peru of ours'

d. gure Peru bat  
our Peru one  
'A Peru of ours'

The equivalents of (15) in English and Spanish have the structure in (17): 'Mary [the great]', \*'Mary [this great]', 'Pedro [el grande]', \*'Pedro [este grande]', where the definite article does not correspond to the proper Noun, but rather to the attributive that follows, and where any determiner other than the definite article yields ungrammaticality.

The example in (15b) constitutes the best case for a Noun Phrase headed by a proper Noun bearing a determiner **a**. Compare (18a) and (18b), with (10b) and (10d):

(18)

a. Gure Alex txiki-a  
our Alex little-the  
'Our little Alex'

b. guk miresten genuen Irune gazte-a  
we admiring 4E-havepst-Comp Irune young-the  
'The young Irune we admired'

It is not clear how examples like (15b), and (18a,b) could be argued to have a structure similar to (15a), where the determiner and the possessor make a constituent leaving out the proper Noun. These examples do seem to constitute genuine cases of proper Nouns heading Noun Phrases that have the determiner **a** attached to them. As shown by the data, the presence of the Adjective is required to make the construction grammatical.

**Summary:** proper Nouns almost never co-occur with the definite article **a** in Euskara. Only when used as denominators of a set of elements can proper Nouns co-occur with demonstratives or the indefinite article. Even in this latter case, proper Nouns resist co-occurrence with the determiner **a**.

### 2.3. Gender.

There is no grammatical gender in the nominal system. The only area of Euskara grammar where gender morphology can be found is the **familiar treatment** in the verbal morphology. Nouns and adjectives have no distinct endings depending on gender.

In modern spoken language, and only in Western dialects, there can be found some instances where the gender endings of Spanish have been kept in borrowings and a distinction is made between masculine and feminine, but this is a rather modern and marginal phenomenon.

### 3. ADJECTIVES: WORD ORDER.

As we have already seen, adjectives always follow the Noun in Euskara(1) (19):

(19)

a. zaldi zuri hau  
horse white this  
'this white horse'

b. \*zuri zaldi hau

There is no word-order difference between appositive and attributive adjectives of the sort found in certain Romance languages; both attributive and appositive adjectives follow the Noun. More than one adjective can appear following the noun:

(20)

zaldi zuri txiki argal hau  
horse white small thin this  
'this thin small white horse'

#### 3.1. Adjectives and their complements.

Adjectives appear to have some difficulty taking syntactic complements in Euskara, that is, they do not easily take complements with which they make a separate constituent. For instance, constructions like 'a woman [proud of her work]' or 'a man [fond of his paintings]' are not possible:

(21)

\*emakume [bere lanaz harro]a  
woman her work-ins proud-the  
(A woman proud of her work)

Rather, Euskara resorts to relative clauses or participial infinitivals in those cases:

(22)

bere lanaz harro dagoen emakumea  
his work-ins proud is-3A-Comp woman  
'A woman who is proud of his work'

Although we are far from being able to suggest a reason why bare adjectives in Euskara are unable to have complements, it is intriguing to relate this fact with a well known restriction on the distribution of Adjectival phrases in English. Although the canonical position of the Adjective in English is prenominal, Adjectives with complements are banned from that position:



- (23)
- a. a proud (\*of his son) father
  - b. a father proud \*(of his son)

With respect to the placement of phrasal heads, Euskara and English are mirror images: English is head-initial and Euskara is head-final. Note that adjective placement is also the mirror image: they are prenominal in English, and post nominal in Euskara. Since the equivalents of English Adjectival Phrases appear as prenominal complements of Euskara (although they never display the bare Adjective as head), it is possible that at a deeper level of analysis both phenomena will turn out to be the same constraint.

**3.1.1. Participials.** Participials can function as adjectives in Euskara, as the examples in (24) illustrate:

- (24)
- a. hosto eroriak  
leave fallen-det<sub>pl</sub>  
'fallen leaves'
  - b. itsaso harrotua  
sea swollen-det  
'the swollen sea'

In these cases, the participial behaves exactly like an adjective, that is, it follows the Noun and precedes the Determiner. Participials in adjectival position such as the ones in (24) can hardly constitute clauses with complements. However, especially in eastern dialects, construction of the sort in (21) are possible to a certain extent with adjectival participials. Thus, for instance, examples like the ones in (25) are acceptable in these dialects, according to [EGLU \(1991\)](#) and [Euskaltzaindia \(1993\)](#):

- (25)
- a. haur ongi ikasi batzuk  
child well learned some  
'some well learned children'
  - b. bere seme gudan hilei  
her son war-in dead-det-D  
'to her sons dead in the war'

Participial clauses, that is, clauses headed by a participial form of the verb, precede the Noun like all other complements, as shown in (26):

- (26)
- a. [lurrean eroritako] hostoak  
ground-in fallen-**ta-ko** leave-det<sub>pl</sub>  
'the leaves fallen on the ground'

- b. [harrak jotako] sagarra  
 worm-det-E bitten-**ta-ko** apple-det  
 'the apple eaten by the worm'

as we can see in the examples, these participial clauses have the ending **ta** and to this ending the morpheme **ko** is attached. Therefore, they belong to the class of **ko** phrases, which are discussed immediately below.

## 4. COMPLEMENTS OF THE NOUN.

Under this heading, we will group all other phrases that appear in the Noun Phrase. There are basically two big groups, the first of which we will name '**ko** and **ren** phrases', the second one includes the modifier **beste** 'other'. The modifiers in both groups must precede the Noun.

### 4.1. 'ko' and 'ren' phrases.

The morpheme **ko** can indicate location, and this is why it is sometimes referred to as a 'locative genitive', but as we will see location is not the only relation it can convey. However, one general guideline that is helpful in distinguishing the use of **ko** and **ren** phrases involves location: **ko** is attached to phrases that denote location, or phrases that denote a property. All other relations a phrase may bear with respect to a Noun are dealt with by means of the morpheme **ren**. Let us consider a few examples in detail. Consider first the examples in (27):

- (27)
- a. [etxe handiko] leihoak  
 house big-ko window-detpl  
 'the windows from/in the big house'
- b. [margolari ezagun horren] erretratoa  
 painter known that-ren portrait-det  
 'that (well)known painter's portrait'

In (27a), the relation between the big house (**etxe handi**) and the windows (**leihoak**) is one of location: the big house is the place where the windows are located. That is why the big house is placed in a **ko** phrase. In (27b), the relation between that well-known painter (**margolari ezagun hori**) and the portrait (**erretratoa**) is not one of location. That is why the well-known painter is placed in a **ren** phrase. The relationship expressed by **ren** in (27b) can be either: (a) possession, where the painter owns the portrait in question, regardless of who painted it, or (b) agency, where the painter is the author of the portrait, but not necessarily the owner, or (c) theme, where the painter is the entity portrayed in the portrait, which may have been painted by someone else, and owned by someone else as well.

To continue in a little more detail with **ko** phrases, let us add that they can also relate a property with the head noun. Thus for instance, in (28):

(28)

a. [jenio biziko] neska  
temper lively-ko girl-det  
'a quick-tempered girl'

b. [bihotz oneko] mutila  
heart good-ko boy-det  
'a good-hearted boy'

the two examples illustrate **ko** phrases that convey properties which are predicated of the head Nouns, not locative relations.

Included in the predicative type of **ko** phrases are the examples involving participial clauses, like the ones illustrated previously in example (26). Participials can carry one of the two endings **ta** or **rik** that form resultatives. These resultative phrases can then take the ending **ko** and become modifiers of the Noun, as we further illustrate in (29):

(29)

a. [atzo Bilbon erositako] eraztuna  
yesterday Bilbo-in bought-ta-ko ring-det  
'the ring bought yesterday in Bilbao '

b. [txoriak kabira ekarririko] abarra  
bird-det-E nest-to brought-rik-ko branch-det  
'the branch brought to the nest by the bird'

In (29a), we have **ko** phrase containing a resultative phrase headed by **ta**, which in turn contains a participle **erosi** 'bought', and a locative and a time adverbial belonging to it. In (29b), we see a **ko** phrase containing a resultative phrase headed by the morpheme **rik**, with contains a participle **ekarri** 'brought' and its subject argument **txoriak** 'the bird (ergative case)', plus a postpositional complement **kabira** 'to the nest'.

Ordinal numerals can be considered a subtype of **ren** phrases. They are headed by the morpheme **garren**. See more about ordinals in the section devoted to **numeral quantifiers**. Occasionally, **ko** and **ren** phrases can appear apposited to the right of the Noun phrase, particularly if it is headed by a proper name. This type of construction has been considered in example (15), within the discussion of proper Nouns.

#### 4.2. Other: beste.

This word, **beste** 'other', 'another', does not naturally fall under any of the categories we have considered so far. Distributional facts discriminate it from quantifiers, determiners and other complements of the Noun. **Beste** must always precede the Noun, never follow it:

- (30)
- a. beste neska alai bat  
other girl happy one  
'another happy girl'
  - b. \*neska alai beste bat  
girl happy other one

**Beste** attaches to a full Noun Phrase, which must conform to the description provided so far. When the Noun Phrase is complete, **beste** can always appear at the beginning of it:

- (31)
- a. beste Bilboko hiru neska alai hauek  
other Bilbo-from three girl happy these  
'These other happy three girls from Bilbo'

**beste** must always precede the numeral quantifier if there is one. But it seems that it can either precede or follow the **ko** and **ren** phrases.

- (32)
- a. amaren beste Bilboko hiru lagunak  
mother-gen other Bilbo-from three friend-detpl  
'mother's other three friends from Bilbo'
  - b. amaren Bilboko beste hiru lagunak
  - d. beste amaren Bilboko hiru lagunak
  - e. \*amaren Bilboko hiru beste lagunak

The modifier **beste** must also be placed following relative clauses, which, in general, tend to be the most external modifier of the Noun:

- (33)
- a. [etorri den] beste lagun hori  
arrived is-comp other friend that  
'that other friend that has arrived'
  - b. \*beste [etorri den] lagun hori

It appears therefore that **beste** can be placed in between **ren** complements and **ko** complements, but always preceding, that is, taking scope over numeral quantifiers. To see this, consider now the word order alternations between **ko** phrases and quantifiers:

- (34)
- a. hiru Bilboko lagun  
three Bilbo-from friend  
'three friends from Bilbo'
  - b. Bilboko hiru lagun

As shown in (34), a **ko** phrase can either follow or precede a numeral quantifier. It has been shown in (32), that **beste** can either follow or precede the **ko** phrase. However, if we include the modifier **beste** in a Noun phrase like the one in (34), as we have done in (35), we see that **beste**, unlike **Bilboko**, cannot follow the quantifier:

- (35)
- a. Bilboko beste hiru lagun  
Bilbo-from other three friend  
'Three other friends from Bilbo'
  - b. beste Bilboko hiru neska
  - c. \*hiru beste Bilboko neska
  - d. beste hiru Bilboko neska

When the Noun is deleted, the resulting paradigm regarding complement distribution changes slightly. As shown in (36), if the Noun is deleted, the modifiers and determiner, if there is one, stay put, and no extra element needs to be added (unlike the case of English, as you can judge from the translations):

- (36)
- a. bestea  
other-det  
'the other one'
  - b. beste hiru  
other three  
'another three'
  - c. beste hiruak  
other three-detpl  
'the other three'

But if we delete the Noun in a Noun phrase containing **beste** and either a **ko** phrase or a **ren** phrase, then **beste** must follow, not precede:

- (37)
- a. Bilboko bestea
  - b. \*beste Bilbokoak
  - c. Mariren bestea
  - d. \*beste Marirena

## 5. QUANTIFIERS.

We will divide quantifiers into three groups, depending on their ability to co-occur with a determiner:

- (5.1) Numeral quantifiers;
- (5.2) Quantifiers that require a determiner;
- (5.3) Indefinite/determiner less quantifiers;

Regarding their distribution within the Noun Phrase, numerals in group (5.1), precede the Noun except for **bat** 'one', which must follow, and **bi** 'two', which must follow the Noun only in Western varieties of Euskara. In group (5.2) there are only two quantifiers, and both of them must follow the [Noun+Adjective] group. Finally, in group (5.3), most quantifiers precede the noun while a few of them must follow the [Noun+Adjective] group, as the examples below will illustrate.

### 5.1. Numerals.

Numeral quantifiers must appear in determiner less Noun Phrases when they are indefinite (38a), and with determiners when they are definite (38b, c). In this latter case, Noun phrases containing numeral quantifiers can accept either the determiner **a** or a demonstrative.

(38)

- a. Hiru txori  
three bird  
'three bird'
- b. hiru txoriak  
three bird-the<sub>pl</sub>  
'the three bird'
- c. hiru txori hauek  
three bird this<sub>pl</sub>  
'these three bird'

As mentioned above, numerals precede the Noun. The only exception is the numeral **bat** 'one', which must follow the [Noun+Adj] group in all dialects, and the numeral **bi** 'two', which also follows the Noun in western varieties of Euskara (39c), but it patterns like all other numerals in all other dialects (39d):

(39)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| a. txori bat<br>bird one<br>'one bird'  | c. txori bi<br>bird two<br>'two birds' |
| b.*bat txori<br>one bird<br>'two birds' | d. bi txori<br>two bird<br>'two birds' |

**5.1.1. Ordinal quantifiers** are built by attaching the suffix **garren** to the cardinal (40a,b), except for the case of 'first', which is not \***batgarren** but it is independently formed as **lehen**, **lehenengo** or **lehendabiziko**, depending on the dialect. Ordinal quantifiers always precede the Noun, even in the case of ordinals for 'first' and 'second', in all varieties of the language, as shown in examples (40c,d):

(40)

a. zazpigarren etxea  
seventh house-the  
'the seventh house'

b. hirugarren leihoa  
third window-the  
'the third window'

c. lehenengo etxea  
first house-the  
'the first house'

d. bigarren leihoa  
second window-the  
'the second window'

As discussed previously in example (29), ordinal quantifiers can be thought of as a subclass of **ko** and **ren** phrases. It is therefore not surprising that Noun phrases containing ordinal quantifiers must have a determiner. There is no definite/indefinite contrast like the one in (38), depending upon the presence of the determiner. As the examples in (40) already illustrate, the presence of the determiner is required, and its absence yields ungrammaticality.

**5.1.2. Distributive quantifiers** are built by attaching the suffix **na** to cardinal quantifiers: thus for instance, from **sei** 'six', the distributive **seina** 'six each' can be constructed, or from the cardinal **bi** 'two', the distributive **bina** 'two each'. Distributive quantifiers are placed wherever the cardinal they are formed upon is placed. Thus, the distributive **bana** 'one each', formed upon **bat** 'one', always follows the Noun, while **seina** 'six each', mentioned above, behaves like its cardinal **sei** and precedes the Noun:

(41)

a. seinu musu  
six-each kiss  
'six kisses each'

b. musu bana  
kiss one-each  
'one kiss each'

Noun phrases containing distributive quantifiers do not take determiners, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (42):

- (42)  
\*seina musuak  
six-each kiss-thepl

These distributive quantifiers are rather interesting when compared to Germanic or Romance languages. In English, for example, the translations of (41a, b) involve what is referred to as 'Binomial each' (Safir & Stowell (1988)), which is dependent not on the Noun Phrase being distributed but rather on the Noun Phrase that is the recipient of the distribution:

- (i) [NP2The women] bought [NP1three books] [NP2each]  
(ii) [NP2The women] [NP2each] bought [NP1three books]

In Euskara, the distributive suffix is attached to the quantifier of the Noun Phrase being distributed, as the examples in the text show. Moreover, the quantifier the suffix attaches to belongs in the distributed Noun Phrase and cannot be placed anywhere else; that is, it is not of a 'floating' kind. Noun Phrases containing the distributive quantifier are constrained to appear in environments similar to **reciprocal pronouns** like **elkar** 'each other'. Thus, for instance, they cannot appear in subject positions:

- (43)  
\*emakume binak gu ikusi gaituzte  
woman two-each-erg we seem us-have-they  
(two women each have seen us')

**5.1.3. A partial list of numerals in Euskara.** Here we provide a list of numerals in euskara, as well as instructions to construct numerals. First, let us consider the numbers up to twenty:

- 0 zero
- 1 bat
- 2 bi
- 3 hiru
- 4 lau
- 5 bost
- 6 sei
- 7 zazpi
- 8 zortzi
- 9 bederatzi
- 10 hamar
- 11 hamaika
- 12 hamabi
- 13 hamairu
- 14 hamalau
- 15 hamasei
- 17 hamazazpi
- 18 hamazortzi
- 19 hemeretzi
- 20 hogei



Twenty is an important number; it is the base to construct numerals up to a hundred. Thus, the numbers from twenty one up to forty are built repeating the list above after twenty, like this:

21 hogeita bat  
22 hogeita bi...

and when we reach the number thirty, we add twenty and ten:

30 hogeita hamar  
31 hogeita hamaika...

up to number forty, which is something like 'again twenty':

40 berrogei

Up to sixty, we keep on adding the numbers from one to twenty after the number for forty, like this:

41 berrogeita bat  
42 berrogeita bi...

so you already know that fifty is 'forty and ten':

50 berrogeita hamar  
51 berrogeita hamaika...

Now all you need to know is the numbers for sixty and eighty, which are translatable as 'three twenties' and 'four twenties', respectively:

60 hirurogei  
80 laurogei

So we are done up to ninety nine, which is, as you know now, **laurogeita hemeretzi**. Some numbers beyond this one are:

100 ehun	1.000 mila
200 berrehun	2.000 bimila
300 hirurehun	3.000 hirusmila
400 laurehun	4.000 laumila...
500 bostehun	1.000.000 milioi bat
600 seiehun	2.000.000 bi milioi/milioi bi
700 zazpiehun	3.000.000 hiru milioi
800 zortziehun	
900 bederatziehun	

And finally, a few examples for your practice:

2001 bi mila eta bat	666 seiehun eta hirurogeita sei
1984 mila bederatziehun eta laurogeita lau	77 hirurogeita hamazazpi

## 5.2. Quantifiers that require a determiner.

The quantifiers **guzti** 'all', **bakoitz** 'each', and **gehien** 'most' require the presence of a determiner, as shown in (44):

(44)

a. haur guzti-ak  
child all-thepl  
'All the children'

b. lur guzti-a  
earth all-the  
'All the earth'

c. haur bakoitz-a  
child each-the  
'Each child'

d. \*haur bakoitz-ak  
child each-thepl

e. haur(rik) gehienak  
child(prt) most-detpl  
'most children'

As shown in (45e), the Noun preceding the quantifier **gehien** 'most' can carry the **partitive** marker, which indicates that **gehien** takes an entire determiner phrase as its complement, ([[DP] DP]) much in the way of the examples in (47) with **guzti** 'all'.

There are two main differences between **guzti** 'all' and **bakoitz** 'each': **guzti** 'all' can take plural or singular determiners (44a, b); it can also take demonstratives as a determiners (45a, b). On the other hand, **bakoitz** 'each' does not accept plural determiners (44d) or any kind of demonstratives, (45c,d):

(45)

a. **haur guzti hauek**  
child all this<sub>pl</sub>  
'All these children'

b. **lur guzti hau**  
earth all this  
'all this earth'

c. \***haur bakoitz hau**  
child each this

d. \***haur bakoitz hauek**  
child each thispl

The only way in which demonstratives can be made to co-occur within the same Noun Phrase as **bakoitz** 'each' is by resorting to a partitive construction, as shown in (46):

- (46)
- a. **hauetariko haur bakoitza**  
thispl-part-gen child each-the  
'each of these children'

In this construction, the demonstrative **hauek** 'these' takes the **partitive marker rik** and the ending **ko**, becoming a **ko phrase** that acts as a complement of the Noun **haur** 'child'.

Regarding the co-occurrence of the universal quantifier **guzti** 'all' with demonstratives, it must be noted that (45a,b) are not the only choices. There is another usage, which is also current and in fact prevalent in written records, illustrated in (47):

- (47)
- a. haur hauek guztiak  
child these all-detpl  
'all these children'
- b. lur hau guztia  
earth this all-det  
'all this earth'

In these examples, the quantifier appears apposed after the Noun phrase. This is why there are two determiners: the demonstrative heading the first phrase, which takes the Noun in it, and the determiner **a**, in its plural form in (47a) and in its singular form in (47b), constituting the second phrase, which take the quantifier in it.

### 5.3. Determiner less quantifiers.

The group of quantifiers that never take determiners is the group of indefinite quantifiers. Most of them cannot co-occur with any determiner:

- (48)
- a. zenbait gizon  
some man  
'some men'
- b. ume asko  
child many  
'many children'

The examples in (48) illustrate the indefinite quantifiers **zenbait** 'some' and **asko** 'many'. While the first one precedes the Noun, the other one follows it. None of them accept the presence of a determiner, as shown in (49):

(49)

a. \*zenbait gizon-ak  
some man-detpl

b. \*zenbait gizon-a  
some man-det

d. \*ume asko-ak  
child many-detpl

f. \*ume asko-a  
child many-det

It must be noted that, contrary to English, the quantifier **zenbait** can only quantify count Nouns, not mass Nouns, whereas the quantifier **asko** can quantify both over count and mass Nouns, that is, **asko** can be translated both as 'many' and as 'much', if, for example, it modified a mass noun such as **gari** 'wheat' (**gari asko** 'much wheat', 'a lot of wheat').

Other quantifiers that do not allow the presence of a determiner are: **hainbat** 'many, much', **gutxi** 'few, little', **edozein**, **zeinnahi**, whichever, **oro** 'all', and the interrogatives **zenbat**, 'how many', 'how much' and **zein**, 'which'. Examples containing all these quantifiers are given in (50):

(50)

a. hainbat aburu  
many opinion  
'many opinions'

b. irudimen gutxi  
imagination little  
'little imagination'

c. ikasle gutxi  
students few  
'few students'

d. edozein gona  
whichever skirt

e. herrialde oro  
country all  
'all countries'

f. zenbat lagun  
how many friend  
'how many friends'

g. zein esku  
which hand

In these cases, the presence of the determiner, regardless of number or syntactic environment, induces ungrammaticality. The only possible exception to this statement is the quantifier **gutxi** 'few', which can take the plural indefinite determiner **batzuk** 'some, ones', as in the following example:

- (51)
- ikasle gutxi batzuk
  - student few ones
  - 'a few students'

this quantifier can occasionally take the determiner **a** as well, in eastern varieties, but in this case it is not the equivalent of English 'a/the few...' but rather, a free variant of the down-entailing quantifier 'few' illustrated in (50c).

## 6. DETERMINERS.

Within the class of determiners, we will group the demonstratives and the determiner **a**. This is the category that must appear last in the order of elements in the Noun Phrase. The Determiner takes the entire Noun Phrase as its complement, constituting the Determiner Phrase. That is to say, there is only one determiner corresponding to each Noun phrase, as the examples in (52) illustrate:

- (52)
- a. [irakurle gazte]a
  - [reader young]det
  - 'the young reader'
  
  - b. [asto zahar] hau
  - [donkey old] this
  - 'this old donkey'

With the exception of **proper Nouns** discussed above, Noun Phrases in Euskara present a strong tendency to be headed by an overt Determiner; that is, there are no instances of 'bare plurals' and hardly any instances of 'bare nouns'. A second type of Noun phrase that displays no final determiner is constituted by those containing **indefinite quantifiers**, which have been discussed in the previous section.

We start in 6.1. with an overview of the usage of the determiner **a**, which is perhaps the most intricate one in this group. Next, in 6.2., we will discuss demonstratives.

### 6.1. The determiner 'a'.

This determiner is also called 'article' in many descriptions of Euskara. As we will see in some detail, it is used in all environments where a definite article is required, but its usage goes well beyond the definite article, since it also heads generic and indefinite Noun Phrases, as well as some predicative phrases even when they do not contain Nouns. The determiner **a** appears to be

the unmarked determiner, in the sense that it often surfaces in environments where other languages display determiner less Noun Phrases.

When the determiner **a** is added to a word that ends in the vowel **a**, the two vowels fuse into one: **gona** 'skirt' **gona+a** > **gona** 'a/the skirt'.

Let us consider the distribution of this determiner:

**6.1.1. Definite Noun Phrases.** The determiner **a** is used to convey definiteness, in Noun phrases containing common Nouns:

(53)

a. goizeko izarra  
morning-of star-the  
'the morning star'

b. Euskal Herriko lehendakari-a  
Basque Country-of president-the  
'the president of the Basque Country'

Definite Noun phrases headed by proper Nouns or pronouns do not allow the presence of the determiner **a**.

**6.1.2. Indefinite environments.** There are many other syntactic environments where this determiner is used despite the fact that the phrase it heads is not definite. Among those cases we find the following:

6.1.2.1. Attributes. Many predicative attributes in Euskara require the determiner **a**. Predicates in copular sentences like the ones in (54), for instance, require the determiner **a**:

(54)

a. Josu on-a da  
Josu good-det is  
'Josu is good'

b. Miren irakasle-a da  
Miren teacher-det is  
'Miren is a teacher'

c. liburu hau interesgarri-a iruditzen zait  
book this interesting-det seems is-to me  
'This book seems interesting to me'

6.1.2.2. Generic sentences require the determiner **a**, whether their subjects are singular or plural:

(55)

a.Edurr-a zuri-a da  
snow-det white-det is  
'Snow is white'

b.Txakurr-ak ugaztun-ak dira  
dog-detpl mammal-detpl are  
'Dogs are mammals'

6.1.2.3. Indefinite objects and subjects, which can often appear determiner less in many languages, also require the determiner **a**:

(56)

a.Guk arto-a erein dugu  
we-E corn-det planted have-we  
'We have planted corn'

b.Zuek sagarr-ak jan dituzue  
You-E apple-detpl eaten have-you  
'You have eaten apples'

c.Kamioi-ak etorri dira  
truck-detpl arrived are  
'Trucks have arrived'

There are no cases in Euskara where objects can appear as bare Noun Phrases, regardless of number. In the realm of subjects, there is formally no difference between **unaccusative** and intransitive predicates in the sense of **Perlmutter (1978)**, in that both require the determiner **a**. However, a clear difference can be found when looking at the interpretation of the Noun Phrases involved: whereas objects of transitive verbs and subjects of ergative predicates (that is, all arguments bearing an initial 2 relation, in **Relational Grammar** terms, or being D-Structure complements of the Verb as in **Burzio's (1986)** work within the Government and Binding framework), are subject to an existential interpretation, the subject of the **unergative** predicate cannot receive such existential interpretation; rather, it must be interpreted as either definite or universal. Considering the examples in the text, this means that (56a, b, c) can be naturally interpreted as 'some corn', 'some apples' and 'some trucks' respectively, but (57) cannot be interpreted as 'some men':

(57)

gizonek negar egin dute  
men-det-E cry made have  
'the men have cried'

It is only interpretable as 'all men' or 'the men', which are truth-functionally equivalent.

6.1.2.4. Existential or presentational sentences, which involve an indefinite subject, bear the determiner **a**:

(58)

a. Bada ogia mahai gainean  
yes-is bread-det table top-in  
'There is bread on the table'

b. Badira sagu-ak etxe honetan  
yes-are mouse-detpl house this-in  
'There are mice in this house'

These existential sentences can also display partitive case, but the presence of the determiner **a** is also possible, maintaining the indefiniteness of its Noun phrase.

## 6.2. Demonstratives.

There are three demonstratives, **hau** 'this', **hori** 'that' and **hura** 'that (further)'. The demonstratives indicate varying degrees of proximity in either real or figurative space or time. Thus, **hau** is closer to the speaker, **hori** is closer to the entity addressed, and **hura** is not close to any of them.

**zuhaitz hau** 'this tree'  
**zuhaitz hori** 'that tree'  
**zuhaitz hura** 'that tree (farther)'

The plural forms of the demonstratives are:

**zuhaitz hauek** 'these trees'  
**zuhaitz horiek** 'those trees'  
**zuhaitz haiek** 'those trees (farther)'

**6.2.1. Emphatic demonstratives.** Demonstratives have an emphatic form, which is constructed adding the morpheme **xe**, as shown in (59):

(59)

a. hauxe da irakurri dudan liburua  
this-xe is read have-I-that book-det  
'**this** is the book I've read'

b. horixe esan dut nik  
that-xe said have-I I-E  
'that (is what) I have said'

c. zuhaitz huraxe da aititek landatu zuena  
tree that-xe is grandfather-E planted had-that  
'It is **that** tree that grandfather planted'



there is a certain degree of variation among dialects regarding whether the morpheme **xe** is added before or after the case ending or the postposition if there is one, with the exception of ergative and genitive, where the morpheme is always inserted after the demonstrative but before the case ending:

(60)

- a. honexek/horrexek/harexek ekartzen du egunkaria  
this-xe-E/that-xe-E/that-xe-E brings has newspaper-det  
'this one/that one/that one brings the newspaper'
  
- b. honexen/horrexen/harexen arraina da freskuena  
this-xe-gen/that-xe-gen/that-xe-gen fish is freshest-det  
'this one's/that one's/ fish is the freshest'

In the case of the dative case and other postpositions, some varieties of the language insert the **xe** morpheme before the case or postposition, whereas others insert it after, as the contrast between (61a) and (61b) illustrates for the dative:

(61)

- a. hone-xe-ri erosi diot arraina  
this-xe-D bought have fish-det  
'(it is) to this one (that) I have bought the fish'
  
- b. hon-i-xe erosi diot arraina  
this-D-xe bought have fish-det  
'(it is) to this one (that) I have bought the fish'

Emphatic demonstratives are most naturally used when the phrase headed by the demonstrative is the **galdegaia** of the sentence.

**6.2.2. Demonstratives used as pronouns.** There are no distinct forms for third person pronouns in Euskara, and demonstratives are used as third person pronominals.

When considering the use of demonstratives as third person pronouns, there is a third series of demonstratives that has special relevance. This series is formed adding the prefix **ber** 'same, again' to the demonstrative: **berau**, **berori**, **bera** (this third one is formed not by the combination of **ber** and **hura**, but rather by the combination of **ber** and **a**, which is a variant of **hura**, still in use in western varieties of Euskara). They are used anaphorically, that is, when the entity they referred to is already known in the discourse. The second one in the series, **berori**, is still nowadays used as a very polite form of second person singular, to address authority figures, such as a priest, or a doctor, among others (62a). The third one in the series, **bera**, is very frequently used as third person pronoun (62b), alternating with the third demonstrative **hura** (62c):

(62)

- a. berori joango da?  
that go-irr is  
'will that one go?'  
'will your honour go?'

b. bera etorri da  
that arrived is  
'she/he/it arrived'

c. hark ikusi nau  
that-E seen me-has  
'she/he has seen me'

The criteria that determine when to use **bera** and when to use **hura** are rather complex and vary from dialect to dialect. We can mention a few of them, (listed also in [EGLU](#)):

(I) if the antecedent and the demonstrative are in the same sentence, **bera** must be used, and not **hura**

(II) if the antecedent and the demonstrative are not in the same sentence, eastern varieties prefer **hura** whereas western varieties prefer **bera** if the antecedent has been mentioned. This western usage has two exceptions:

(a) if the sentence containing **bera** contains another Noun phrase that could count as its antecedent, **hura** is preferred even if its antecedent has been mentioned previously in another sentence;

(b) if the antecedent of the demonstrative belongs to a group that has been mentioned.

## 7. NUMBER.

Singular is the unmarked case, and only plural is marked overtly. Hence, the best way to think of the category number is to consider it in terms of a binary category [+plural] versus [-plural].

**7.1. Number and Determiners.** The specification for number in the Noun Phrase belongs in the Determiner category and it is morphologically inseparable from it. Therefore, determiner less Noun

Phrases cannot be marked for number even if they are semantically plural (63c). Only Noun Phrases that are headed by an overt determiner can have plural marking on them (63 b,d).

(63)

a. txakurr-a c. lau txakur  
dog-det four dog  
'the dog' 'four dogs'

b. txakurr-ak d. lau txakurr-ak  
dog-detpl four dog-detpl  
'the dogs' 'the four dogs'

There is no way of marking the Noun phrase in (63c) with a plural morpheme without involving the determiner as in (63d). Therefore, there are no morphologically plural determiner less Noun phrases in Euskara. Plurality can also be encoded in the demonstratives, since they belong in the class of determiners. Their plural forms have been illustrated in 6.2., where demonstratives were overviewed.

## 7.2. Proximity plural determiner ok.

The plural determiner **ak** has the variant **ok**, which indicates proximity in real or imaginary space or time. Thus, for instance, it is often used as the determiner of a vocative Noun phrase that refers to the audience addressed, for its proximity to the speaker:

- (64)  
goazen, lagun-ok  
let's go, friend-detpl  
'let us go, my friends'

It is also often used to refer to a group that includes the speaker:

- (65)  
gizakiok ez dugu lurra ondo zaintzen  
human-det<sub>pl</sub> not have-we earth-det well take-care-of-imp  
'we humans do not take good care of the earth'

But it can be used generally to refer to any plural entity that is near the speaker:

- (66)  
a. kendu platerok mahai gainetik  
take plate-det<sub>pl</sub> table top-from  
'take those plates from the table'  
  
b. egun-o-tan ez dugu berririk jaso  
day-detpl-in not have-we new-prt received  
'we have not received news these days'

(66a) illustrates an example where the proximity is spatial, since the plates are near the speaker. The example in (66b) illustrates the proximity determiner in a postpositional phrase. The postpositional phrase is headed by the **locative postposition**, and the determiner loses its final **k**. In this second example, the proximity of the days is of course temporal.

## 8. PRONOUNS.

Pronouns are perhaps best thought of as determiners that do not take Noun phrases, but we will consider them in a separate class of their own. It must be noted, however, that often times the border that separates indefinite quantifiers, determiners and pronouns is not very clear, indicating possibly that they all belong in the same category. In this respect, the curious reader is encouraged to compare some indefinite quantifiers considered in 5.3., with what we will call indefinite pronouns in this section, to assess their similarities.

## 8.1. Person pronouns.

The basic paradigm of personal pronouns is the following:

**ni**: first person singular pronoun. It always refers to the speaker:

(67)  
ni joango naiz  
I go-irr am  
'I will go'

**hi**: Second person singular pronoun. It always refers to the hearer. This pronoun is only used in family or friendship settings, and it is not used in all varieties of Euskara. It has the peculiarity of obligatorily triggering addressee agreement, which is discussed in [chapter 4](#).

(68)  
hi joango haiz?  
you go-irr are  
'will you go?'

**zu**: Second person singular pronoun. It always refers to the hearer. It is used in all varieties of the language, and in varieties where **hi** is used, **zu** is used in all environments where the former is not appropriate.

(69)  
zu joango zara  
you go-irr are  
'you will go'

**gu**: First person plural pronoun. It always refers to a group that includes the speaker.

(70)  
gu joango gara  
we go-irr are  
'we will go'

**zuek**: Second person plural pronoun. It always refers to a group that includes the hearer.

(71)  
zuek joango zarete  
you go-irr are  
'you will go'

There are no special forms for third person pronouns. Euskara makes use of the demonstrative system to refer to third person entities. A given form of a demonstrative is also used as a very polite second person pronoun. Pronominal uses of demonstratives have been discussed in [6.2.2](#).

**8.1.1. Emphatic person pronouns.** There is a second series of emphatic personal pronouns that can be used alone or following a basic person pronoun. The emphatic pronouns have different forms depending on the variety of Euskara:

- emphatic of **ni**: **neu, nerau, nihaur.**
- emphatic of **hi**: **heu, herori, hihaur.**
- emphatic of **zu**: **zeu, zerori, zuhaur.**
- emphatic of **gu**: **geu, gerok, guhaur.**
- emphatic of **zuek**: **zeuek, zerok, zuihauk.**

In general, western varieties of Euskara have a stronger tendency to use emphatic pronouns than eastern varieties. Emphatic pronouns can be used in the following circumstances:

(I) they are used alone when the pronoun is the **galdegaia** of the sentence, especially if it is used contrastively (72)

(72)

- a. neuk ekarri dut hori  
I-emph-E brought have that  
'I have brought that/ It's me who brought that'
- b. zeuk agindu duzu  
you ordered have  
'you have ordered it'

Emphatic pronouns in **galdegaia** function cannot be used in **negative sentences**, regardless of what **galdegaia** position is chosen:

(73)

- a.\*zeuek ez duzue ekarri  
you-emph-E not have brought
- b.\*ez dun heuk ekarri  
not have you-emph-E brought

(II) Emphatic pronouns are also used in other contrastive environments, typically in topic functions, even if they are not the **galdegaia** of the sentence, as in (74). When immediately following a normal pronoun they also constitute topics, equivalents of English 'as for me', as shown in (74b).

(74)

- a. geuk behintzat, ez dugu hori ekarri  
we-emph-E at least, not have that brought  
'as for us, we have not brought that'
- b. nik neuk, ez dakit zer egin  
I-E I-emph-E not know what do  
'as for me, I don't know what to do'

Emphatic pronouns cannot be used as vocatives:

(75)

a. \*heu mutil, erdu hona!  
you, boy, come here

b. hi mutil, erdu hona!  
'you boy, come here!'

**8.2. Interrogative pronouns.** Interrogative pronouns are used to construct **partial questions**. Here, we present the basic list of interrogative pronouns:

**nor** 'who'  
**zein** 'which'  
**zer** 'what'

These interrogative pronouns can inflect for **case**:

**nor nori nork**  
who who-dative who-ergative  
**zer zeri zerk**  
what what-dative what-ergative  
**zein zeini zeinek**  
which which-dative which-ergative

They can also take **postpositions**, and constitute various interrogative postpositional phrases:

<b>nor-en</b>	<b>zer-tan</b>	<b>zein-etatik</b>
who-gen	what-in	which-from
'whose'	in what	'from which'

Adverbial interrogatives in general cannot be directly derived by combining one of these basic interrogative pronouns with a postposition. Consider, for instance, **non** 'where' and **noiz** 'when'. Other adverbial interrogatives are derived by combining the base **non** 'where' with the relevant postposition: **non-dik** 'where-from', **no-ra** 'where-to', etc...

### 8.3. Indefinite pronouns derived from interrogatives.

There are several paradigms of indefinite pronouns that are formed taking the interrogative pronoun as a base.

**8.3.1. Existential indefinites.** They are formed by adding the morpheme **bait**: **norbait** 'someone', **zerbait** 'something', **nonbait** 'somewhere'... in western varieties, these are formed by repeating the interrogative and inserting the conjunctive **edo** 'or': **nor edo nor** 'someone', **zer edo zer** 'something', **non edo non** 'somewhere'.

**8.3.2. Universal, free-choice indefinites.** There are two ways to construct them:

(a) in western varieties, they are derived by prefixing **edo** to the interrogative: **edonor** 'whoever', **edozer** 'whatever', **edozein** 'whichever', **edonon** 'wherever' etc...

(b) in eastern varieties, they are derived by suffixing **nahi** to the interrogative pronoun: **nornahi** 'whoever', **zernahi** 'whatever', **zeinhai** 'whichever', **nonahi** 'wherever' etc...

These quantifiers most often take the semantic value that 'free choice **any**' has in English. Consider a few examples:

(76)

a. edonork egin dezake hori  
anyone do it-can that  
'anyone can do that'

b. edozer eros daiteke diru horrekin  
anything buy can-be money that-with  
'anything can be bought with that money'

c. edonon aurkitzen dira bedar hauek  
anywhere find-hab are grass these  
'these grass can be found anywhere'

**8.3.3. Negative Polarity Items.** They are formed by prefixing **e** or **i** to the **interrogative pronoun**:

**inor** anybody  
**ezer** anything  
**inon** anywhere

and they can be declined for **case**, or take **postpositions** in the same fashion that simple interrogatives do. Negative Polarity Items can only appear under the scope of downward entailing operators such as negation (77a) (**Ladusaw (1979)**), quantifiers such as **gutxi** 'few' (77b), conditionals (77c), and yes/no questions (77d), for instance:

(77)

a. ez da inor etorri  
not is anybody arrived  
'Noone arrived'

b. ikasle gutxik ikasi dute ezer  
student few-E learned have anything  
'Few students have learned anything'

c. inon aurkitzen baduzu, harrituko naiz  
anywhere find-hab if-have-you, surprise-irr am  
'if you find it anywhere, I will be surprised'

d. inork ekarriko al du?  
anyone-E bring-irr int has  
'Will anyone bring it?'

Environments that are not downward entailing do not permit the presence of these pronouns, as the ungrammaticality of (78a, b) shows:

- (78)
- a. \*ikasle guztiek ikasi dute ezer  
student all-det learned have anything
  - b. \*zoriona inon dago  
happiness-det anywhere is

These Negative Polarity Items can appear in environments that are not downward entailing, and receive a 'free-choice' interpretation, similar to the pronouns overviewed in 8.3.2. Examples are given in (79):

- (79)
- a. inoren eritzia da hori  
anyone-gen opinion-det is that  
'that is anyone's opinion'
  - b. inork esango luke erregearen alaba zarela!  
anyone say-irr would king-det-gen daughter-det are-that  
'Anyone would say that you are the king's daughter'

The example in (79a) refers to an opinion that anyone can hold, and the example in (79b) is a sardonic exclamation, only applicable to someone who is absolutely not the king's daughter. Occasionally, and particularly in ready-made sentences and aphorisms, these polar pronouns can also take on meanings such as 'someone else'. We provide an example in (80):

- (80)
- inork beti errua  
anyone-E always blame-det  
'someone else always (bears) the blame'

**8.3.4. Plural Interrogatives.** In western varieties mostly, interrogative pronouns can take the plural morpheme **tzuk** to indicate plurality. The reader is invited to read again the considerations made regarding the relationship between **number** and the determiner class. Given what was said there, the presence of a plural morpheme that can be attached to interrogatives strengthens the hypothesis that **determiners and pronouns** in general constitute a natural class in Euskara.

The forms created by the addition of the plural marker are:

**nor** 'who' **nortzuk** 'who (plural)'  
**zer** 'what' **zertzuk** 'what (plural)'  
**zein** 'which' **zeintzuk** 'which (plural)'



#### 8.4. Anaphors and reciprocals.

Strictly speaking, there are no anaphoric pronouns in Euskara. Anaphors pronouns in Euskara, like in many other languages of the world, make reference to a body part. In the case of Euskara, the body part is the head. Hence, 'my own head' is the translation of the Noun phrase corresponding to English 'myself'. The anaphor is thus a determiner phrase headed by the determiner **a**. The determiner phrase contains a Noun phrase, headed by the Noun **buru** 'head'. This Noun phrase contains a genitive phrase which contains the relevant personal pronoun. This 'Russian doll' structure is illustrated in (81):

- (81)
- [ [ [ [ **neu** ] **re** ] **buru** ] **a** ]  
[DP[NP[PP[DPpronoun]genitive] noun] determiner]

The paradigm of anaphors is:

<b>neure burua</b> myself	<b>geure burua(k)</b> ourselves
<b>heure burua</b> yourself	<b>zeuen burua(k)</b> yourselves
<b>bere burua</b> her/himself	<b>bere burua(k)</b> themselves

In the plural persons, the determiner can either be singular or plural; the parenthesis indicates this option. Third person anaphors are made by using the anaphoric pronominal **bere**, overviewed in 6.2.2.

The reciprocal pronoun in Euskara is **elkar** 'each other'. There is a variant of this reciprocal: **bata bestea**, literally 'the one the other', which is also used as a reciprocal. Although their antecedent must be plural, **elkar** and **bata bestea** themselves are not plural, and therefore they do not trigger plural agreement on the verb:

- (82)
- a. Anek eta Jonek elkar maite dute  
Ane-E and Jon-E each-other love have-they  
'Ane and Jon love each other'
- b. Anek eta Jonek bata bestea maite dute  
Ane-E and Jon-E one-det-E other-det love have  
'Ane and Jon love each other'

Anaphor phrases and reciprocals can be inflected for **case**, and they can also take **postpositions** to form postpositional phrases:

- (83)
- a. gaur ez naiz neure buruarekin ondo konpontzen  
today not am my own head-with well get-along  
'today I am not getting along well with myself'
- b. Ane eta Jon elkarrekin bizi dira  
Ane and Jon each-other-with live are  
'Ane and Jon live with each other'

Anaphors and reciprocals must have their antecedent in the same sentence:

(82)

- a. Mirenek bere burua zaintzen badaki  
Miren-E herself take-care-hab yes-knows  
'Miren knows (how) to take care of herself'
  
- b. Jonek bere buruari hitz egiten dio sarri  
Jon-E himself-D word make-hab has-it-him often  
'Jon often talks to himself'

The antecedent of the anaphor need not precede it linearly, as the comparison between the examples in (82) and (83) illustrate:

(83)

- a. bere burua zaintzen badaki Mirenek  
herself take-care-hab yes-knows Miren-E  
'Miren knows (how) to take care of herself'
  
- b. bere buruari hitz egiten dio Jonek sarri  
himself-D word make-hab has-it-him Jon-E often  
'Jon often talks to himself'

It is generally accepted that the antecedent must be higher in the basic syntactic structure than the anaphor or the reciprocal. Thus, for instance, anaphors and reciprocals do not usually appear as subjects, presumably because there is no antecedent high enough to command them:

(84)

- a. \*elkar gurekin etorri gara  
each-other we-with arrived are
  
- b. gu elkarrekin etorri gara  
we each-other-with arrived are  
'we have arrived together (with each other)'

However, this issue might turn out to be a little more complex. The examples in (85) appear rather acceptable, despite the fact that the anaphoric expression is marked with ergative case, the subject case, which there are good reasons to believe is the highest in the basic syntactic structure:

(85)

- a. egunotan, neure buruak kezkatzen nau  
day-det-in my-own head-det-E worry-hab me-has-it  
'these days, my(own)self worries me'
  
- b. neure buruak agintzen dit zer egin eta zer ez  
my-own head-E order-hab has-me-it what do and what not  
'My own self orders me what to do and what not (to do)'

Whatever turns out to be the explanation for examples like the ones in (85), it is generally true however, that most predicates do not allow subject anaphors:

(86)

\*neure buruak ikusi nau ni  
my-own head-E seen me-has-it I  
(\*myself has seen me)

---

1. There is only one exception to this rule, which involves the noun **jente** 'people', in combination with the adjective **gazte** 'young' :

(i) gazte jentea  
young people  
'the young people'

It is used in some varieties of the language to refer to 'the youth'.

## CHAPTER 3: CASES AND POSTPOSITIONS

### 1. GRAMMATICAL CASES: THE BASICS.

There are three grammatical cases in Euskara: Ergative, Dative and Absolutive. They are marked on the **Noun phrases** by the following endings or morphemes: **k** for the ergative, **i** for the dative and zero for the absolutive. Example (1) inflects the Noun phrase **hamaika pauso** 'eleven steps' for each case:

- (1)
- a. hamaika pausok  
eleven step-E  
'eleven steps (ergative)'
  
  - b. hamaika pausori  
eleven step-D  
'eleven steps (dative)'
  
  - c. hamaika pauso  
eleven step-A  
'eleven steps (absolutive)'

The example chosen being a **determinerless Noun phrase**, all that is added is the case ending itself. Notice that one case morpheme attached at the end suffices to mark the entire Noun phrase; that is, we do not have to attach an ergative marker to each of the words of the Noun phrase in (1a), nor do we have to add more than one dative marker in (1b). Adding the case ending at the end of the last word, whichever this might be, is enough to mark the entire phrase.

(1a) illustrates a Noun phrase inflected for ergative case (this is another way to say that the Noun phrase has the case marker corresponding to the ergative). The case morpheme **k** is glued to the last word and the Noun phrase now bears ergative case. We will see later what ergative case is, in [section 1.2](#).

In (1b), things are a little more complex: if we take the Noun phrase **hamaika pauso** and add the dative case morpheme **i**, we should obtain **\*hamaika pausoi** (the asterisk is there to remind us that this is not the form the grammar eventually creates). There is an extra **r** that does not belong to the Noun phrase or to the case ending. This extra **r** is called an **epenthesis**, and the reason why it is there, is that (the phonotactics of) Euskara will not accept the combination **o-i** at morpheme boundaries. To avoid it, an **r** is inserted. Euskara accepts the combination **ori** because it has a consonant separating those two vowels. Languages differ as to what combinations they like or dislike, and therefore they insert epenthetic sounds in different places, for different reasons. We will encounter other instances of epenthetic insertions throughout this chapter.

Finally, (1c) illustrates the Noun phrase inflected for absolutive case. This one is absolutely the easiest, because the way to inflect it is to do nothing, or at least nothing visible. Another way to say 'nothing' is to say that there is a 'zero morpheme' (linguists will actually say that a 'zero morpheme' is not the same as 'nothing', and they have good reasons for it, but at this

level of discussion, let's at least conclude that another way of saying 'nothing visible' is 'zero morpheme').

Now pay attention to the glosses (those would be the funny sentences that look like English but are not quite English right underneath the examples in Euskara). You see that the gloss for the ergative ending is 'E', and the gloss for the dative case ending is 'D'. The gloss for the invisible morpheme in the absolutive case is 'A'. From now on, ergative and dative cases will be glossed as E and D respectively. As for the gloss of the absolutive, it will oscillate between A and no gloss at all. Linguists are not yet in agreement as to whether the ending of the absolutive is something invisible or nothing at all. Glossing the silent ending as A leans towards the first option, since we name in the gloss something that we don't perceive but which is nevertheless there. Not providing a gloss indicates there is nothing to gloss at all. This description would like to remain noncommittal regarding this issue, hence the hesitation in the gloss. Mostly, Noun phrases marked with absolutive case will receive no gloss for case, but when discussing verbal morphology in [chapter 4](#), the gloss A will be used to mark [agreement with absolutive](#), which is mostly visible.

### 1.1. Absolutive case.

Let us start with the case that seems easiest; the absolutive, also called the null case, or the unmarked case. A Noun phrase bears absolutive case under two conditions:

- (I) if it is the subject of a verb that only takes one argument, that is, if it is the subject of an intransitive verb, as shown in [\(2a\)](#) and
- (II) if it is the object of a verb that takes at least two arguments, that is, if it is the object of a transitive verb, as shown in [\(2b\)](#).

(2)

a. otsoa etorri da  
wolf-det arrived is  
'The wolf has arrived'

b. ehiztariak otsoa harrapatu du  
hunter-det-E wolf-det caught has  
'the hunter has caught a/the wolf'

Vocatives also take absolutive case, or at least they do not take any other visible case ending:

(3)

a. Nekane, alde hemendik!  
Nekane, out here-from  
'Nekane, get out of here!'

b. Eskerrik asko, alkate andrea!  
thanks many mayor lady-det!  
'Thank you, (lady) major!'

Some descriptions of Euskara extend the distribution of absolutive case to many other domains, such as predicate phrases and measure phrases. This grammar will not include those domains, since there appears to be little evidence that those phrases do actually bear absolutive, aside from the fact that they have no visible case ending. It is possible that they are simply caseless, as it is common in other languages.

## 1.2. Ergative case.

The morpheme for ergative case is, as we have seen, **k**. If the word it attaches to ends in a consonant, then an **epenthetic vowel e** is inserted, as illustrated in (4):

- (4)
- a. zazpi gizon+k  
seven man-E
  
  - b. zazpi gizek  
seven man-E  
'seven man (ergative)'

(4a) presents the Noun phrase and the case marker, which yield an output that is not acceptable in Euskara. (4b) presents the same Noun phrase and the case marker, where the epenthetic vowel **e** has been inserted. This is the output Euskara creates in this case. Noun phrases are inflected for ergative case if they are subjects of **transitive verbs**:

- (5)
- a. zazpi gizek ekarri dute pianoa  
seven man-E brought have piano-det  
'seven men have brought the piano'
  
  - b. etxeko txakurrak ikusi gaitu  
house-of dog-det-E seen us-has  
'the dog of the house has seen us'
  
  - c. Mirenen anaiek ez dakite kanta hau  
Miren-gen brother-detpl-E not know song this  
'Miren's brothers don't know this song'

(5a) illustrates our previous example Noun phrase as the subject of the transitive verb **ekarri** 'to bring'. (5b) illustrates a singular definite Noun phrase marked with ergative case, since it is the subject of the verb **ikusi** 'to see'. Finally, (5c) illustrates a plural definite Noun phrase inflected for ergative. Note that when the ergative marker **k** attaches to the plural determiner **ak**, the resulting form is **ek**. Again, this Noun phrase is the subject of a transitive verb, in this case, **jakin** 'to know'. Along these lines, it must also be noted that the combination of the proximity determiner **ok** and ergative **k** yields **ok**. Thus, regarding Noun phrases ending in the proximity determiner **ok**, the absolutive and the nominative forms are identical; this is called 'syncretism'.

There is a small set of verbs that require ergative subjects, despite the fact that they do not

appear to be transitives. Some of these verbs are: **iraun** 'to remain' (6a), **irakin** 'to boil' (6b), and **ihardun** 'to be engaged' (6c).

(6)

a. gure etxeak zutik irauten du  
our house-det-E standing remain-hab has  
'our house remains standing'

b. urak irakin du  
water-det-E boiled has  
'the water has boiled'

c. langileak lanean dihardu  
worker-det-E work-in engages  
'the worker is (engaged in) work(ing)'

### 1.3. Dative case.

The morpheme for the dative case is **i**. If it attaches to a base ending in a vowel, an **epenthetic r** is inserted. Consider the following examples:

(7)

a. zazpi gizoni eman diet lana  
seven man-D given have-them-I work-det  
'I have given work to seven men'

b. etxeko txakurrari hezur bat eman diozu  
house-of dog-det-D bone one given have-it-you  
'You have given a bone to the dog of the house'

c. Mirenen anaiei oparia ekarri diezu  
Miren-gen brother-detpl present-det brought have- them-you  
'You have brought a present to Miren's brothers'

As it is to be expected, in example (7a) the word **gizon** 'man' and the dative morpheme **i** get together directly. In (7b), the epenthetic **r** is inserted between the determiner **a** that is attached to the Noun **txakur** 'dog' and the dative morpheme **i**, resulting in **txakurr+a+r+i**. The double **rr** at the end of **txakur** does not reflect a morphological process, nothing has been added in the morphology.

In (7c), the dative morpheme has been attached to the plural determiner **ak**. The components are **anaia+ak+i**. Note that given the pieces to put together, there is no reason to insert the epenthetic **r**. Phonological processes that we will not consider here turn the underlying form **anaiaaki** into **anaiei**.

The dative case is given to Noun phrases with various different jobs in the sentence; in this sense, it is harder to give a characterization of conditions for dative assignment without running into a longish list. This is a clear indication that it is the least well understood case in the system.

Dative case is given to the second object, or the indirect object in a verb that has three arguments. For instance, if we consider the examples in (7), we can see that the verbs in the sentences are: **eman** 'to give', which normally takes the subject giver, the object given, and the indirect object which is the recipient of the object; the other verb is **ekarri** to bring, where, besides who brings what, we can talk about who it was brought for.

Some verbs that have only two arguments require that one of them be marked with dative case. Some of these verbs are **ekin** 'to start on, to engage on' (8a), **eutsi** 'to hold' (8b), **begiratu** 'to look at' (8c):

(8)

a. lanari ekin behar diogu  
work-det-D engage must have-it-we  
'we must engage in work'

b. Mikelek zezenari adarretatik eutsi dio  
Mikel-E bull-det-D horn-detpl-from held has-it-him  
'Mikel held the bull from the horns'

c. sugeak txoriari begiratu dio  
snake-det-E bird-det-D look-at has-it-it  
'the snake has looked at the bird'

## 2. PARTITIVE CASE.

A Noun phrase can be marked with partitive if it meets the conditions for **absolute** case. However, not all Noun phrases that meet the conditions for absolute case can be marked with partitive. For a Noun phrase to be marked with partitive case, further conditions must be met that go beyond grammatical function, and that are irrelevant to absolute case in general.

In fact, as we will see throughout this discussion, it is not clear whether the partitive morpheme should be treated as a case morpheme or as a **determiner**. In this description, we v include partitive among the grammatical cases, following the standard practice in descriptions of Euskara, but various pieces of evidence will be presented that suggest that this might not be the best way to classify it. Rather, what is called partitive case in Euskara might turn out to be best thought of as an indefinite, **polar determiner**, akin to the English polar determiner **any**.

### 2.1. Partitive as a polar determiner.

Let us start our discussion with a few examples of partitive case. In particular, we will consider the example sentence in (9) in contrast to the example sentences in (7).

(9)

a. zazpi gizoni ez diet lanik eman  
seven man-D not have-them-I work-prt given  
'I have not given any work to seven men'



b. etxeko txakurrari hezurrik eman diozu?  
house-of dog-det-D bone-prt given have-it-you  
'Have you given any bone to the dog of the house?'

c. Mirenen anaiei oparirik ekarri badiezu  
Miren-gen brother-detpl present-prt brought if-have- them-you  
'If you have brought any present to Miren's brothers'

There are two differences between the examples in (9) and the examples in (7):

(I) the first difference is that whereas the sentences in (9) are all declarative, the sentences in (7) are negative (7a), interrogative (7b) and conditional (7c). What these three have in common is that they are all **downward entailing environments**.

(II) The second difference is that the objects of the three sentences in (9) do not have the same endings as the sentences in (7): whereas in (7a) and (7c) the object bears the determiner **a**, and in (7b) the object has the numeral **bat** 'one', in (9) they all have the partitive ending **ik** (with the **epenthetic consonant r** inserted in (7c)). Correlating with this difference in morphology, the meaning of the object has changed too, as the translations reflect.

The two differences are in fact correlated. Partitive in Euskara is licensed in downward entailing environments, the same environments where Negative Polarity Items are licensed (see [8.3.3.in chapter 2](#)). Declarative sentences do not allow the presence of the partitive:

- (10)
- a. \*txakurrari hezurrik eman diot  
dog-det-D bone-prt given have-it-I
- b. \*dirurik eskatu dut kalean  
money-prt asked have-I street-in

There is one environment where the partitive can appear that is not downward entailing, however. Partitive marking on a Noun phrase is possible in existential sentences:

- (11)
- a. bada ogirik etxe honetan  
yes-is bread-prt house this-in  
'there is bread in this house'
- b. bada zorionik munduan  
yes-is happiness-prt world-in  
'there is hapiness in the world'

This is one environment where the distribution of partitive does not coincide with the distribution of **Negative Polarity Items**:

- (12)  
\*bada inor etxe honetan  
yes-is anyone house this-in

The partitive marker **ik** is incompatible with any other determiner, which suggest that this marker is in complementary distribution with the elements in the determiner class. Moreover, unlike the **grammatical cases**, the partitive marker carries a semantic value with it, one of polar indefiniteness. That is, not all indefinites can be marked with partitive. Only indefinites in downward entailing environments and existential predicates can carry the partitive morpheme. Partitive Noun phrases are also possible, although never obligatory, in some quantificational environments, as illustrated in (13) (see section **5.2. in chapter 2**):

- (13)  
liburu(rik) gehien irakurri duena Ane da  
book-(prt) most read has-her-that Ane is  
'the one who has read most books is Ane'

## 2.2. Partitive and absolutive.

As it has been mentioned in the introductory paragraph to this section, Noun phrases carrying the partitive marker must meet the conditions for absolutive case assignment. That is, they have to be either objects of transitive verbs, or subjects of intransitive verbs. Consider(14), which consists of the negative versions of the examples in (2):

- (14)  
a. otsorik ez da etorri  
wolf-prt not is arrived  
'no wolf has arrived'  
(literally: 'isn't any wolf arrived')  
  
b. ehiztariak ez du otsorik harrapatu  
hunter-det-E not has wolf-prt caught  
'the hunter hasn't caught any wolf'  
  
c. \*ehiztaririk ez du otsorik/otsoa harrapatu  
hunter-prt not has wolf-prt/wolf-det caught

Both (14a) and (14b) are grammatical sentences, where the subject of the intransitive verb **etorri** 'arrive' and the object of the transitive verb **harrapatu** 'to catch' respectively carry the partitive morpheme **ik**. However, (14c) is not grammatical, the reason being that the partitive marker is attached to the subject of the transitive verb, whose case is ergative. Partitive is not available for dative Noun phrases either, as shown in (15):

- (15)  
\*ez diot etxeko txakurrarik(i) hezurra/ik eman  
not have-I house-of dog-prt-(D) bone-det/prt given

(15) illustrates the impossibility of adding the partitive morpheme to a Noun phrase inflected for dative case. The sentence is ungrammatical in all the choice provided by the parentheses: whether we actually add the dative case morpheme on top of the partitive, or whether the direct object carries the **a determiner** or the partitive.

The behavior of the partitive just illustrated in the discussion can be interpreted in two different ways:

(I) either the partitive itself is a subvariety of absolutive case, and this would account why it cannot be placed where other cases are required, or

(II) the partitive is not a variety of a case, but a type of determiner, which is incompatible with any overt case ending, and it can only appear in environments of absolutive case because this is the only case with no ending.

### 3. POSTPOSITIONS.

Euskara has a strong tendency to place the heads of phrases at the end of the phrase; this property has already been considered in the first and second chapters of this grammar, when talking about **the sentence** and the **Noun phrase**. It is not surprising, therefore, that instead of having **prepositions** at the beginning of prepositional phrases, it chooses to have **post-positions**, that appear at the end of postpositional phrases. Prepositions and postpositions are in this sense one and the same grammatical category, and Euskara being a head-final language, places them at the end of the postpositional phrase. Note, by the way, that **case morphemes** are no exception to this generalization, and they have been argued by some linguists to head case phrases as well.

#### 3.1. Declension versus agglutination.

Many descriptions of Euskara state that Euskara has nominal **declensions**, and they provide paradigms for them. We will not follow this practice here, since it is by now agreed that the concept of **declension** is rather misleading in order to describe the language Euskara works more like a child's construction game: phrases are constructed by attaching elements, typically at the end of the previous phrase. This way of constructing phrases by attaching morphemes is known as **agglutination**. Euskara is therefore and **agglutinative** language. We have seen in **chapter 2** that agglutination is the strategy for constructing Noun phrases. The same strategy is used to mark these Noun phrases with a grammatical case, as shown above, and this strategy is maintained when building postpositional phrases. Let us consider a couple of examples:

(16)

a. [Bilboko kale bat]-ean  
[Bilbo-of street one]-in  
'in one street of Bilbo'

b. [zazpi leiho]tatik  
[seven window]from  
'from seven windows'

In (16a), the locative postposition has been attached to the last word of the Noun phrase in brackets, the numeral **bat** 'one', but it is the entire Noun phrase that the postposition takes as its complements, as the bracketed structure indicates. Similarly, in (16b), the postposition is physically attached to the last word of its complement Noun phrase, in this case the Noun **leiho** 'window'.

### 3.2. Changes induced by morpheme merger.

In some cases, the merger of the last word of the Noun phrase and the postposition suffers phonological processes that result in an output that is different from the mere conjunction of the two words. We have already seen examples of this in our discussion of examples (1b) and (7c), involving dative case.

Concerning postpositions, the processes that alter slightly the final output of the form involve mostly the merger with the **determiner**. As we consider particular postpositions, we will point out the idiosyncrasies that merger processes may yield in each case. There are three cases that apply to all merger processes and postpositions:

(I) The **plural determiner ak** becomes **e** when a postposition follows it. Thus, for instance, the plural **lagunak** and the instrumental postposition **z** yield the form **lagunez**, where the change is **ak > e**.

(II) When a merger involves a vowel-ending word and a vowel-initial postposition, the **epenthetic consonant r** is inserted. Recall the discussion of (1b) and (7c)

(III) When a merger involves a consonant-ending word and a consonant-initial postposition, the **epenthetic vowel e** is inserted. Thus, for instance, the combination of the Noun **mutur** 'snout, mouth' and the instrumental postposition **z** yields the form **muturrez** 'with the mouth (downward)'. It must be kept in mind that the diphthong **au** counts as a consonant in this respect: **gau** 'night' also becomes **gauez** after the addition of the instrumental postposition.

### 3.3. Location postpositions.

They involve postpositions whose function is to place their complement in some relation with space or time. The location postpositions are six:

1. locative **n** 'in/on'
2. directional **ra** 'to'
3. directional towards **rantz** 'towards'
4. directional (endpoint) **raino** 'up to'
5. origin **tik** 'from'
6. genitive locative **ko** 'of'

Location postpositions have two particularities that do not extend to other postpositions we will consider later. On the one hand, they treat differently animate Nouns and inanimate Nouns.

On the other hand, they treat inanimate phrases headed by singular determiners differently from all others. In both cases, the distinction involves the addition of a morpheme: **ga** in the case of animates, **ta** in the case of inanimate phrases lacking a singular determiner.

Regarding the sixth postposition, **ko**, see also section 4.1. in chapter 2. This is the only location postposition that does not accept animate complements, therefore the considerations in 3.3.1. do not apply to it.

**3.3.1. Animacy: the morpheme ga.** Location postpositions differentiate between phrases headed by animate Nouns, and phrases headed by inanimate Nouns. When a location postposition takes an animate Noun phrase as its complement, the morpheme **ga** is placed between the Noun phrase and the postposition, as shown in (17):

- (17)
- [[[gure ama]ren]ga]n  
[[[our mother]gen]ga]in  
'in/on our mother'

The example in (17) provides a bracketed representation, hoping to make the discussion easier to follow. Surrounded by the innermost brackets, we have the Noun phrase **gure ama** 'our mother'. In order to put it together with the locative postposition **n**, the noun phrase takes the genitive ending **ren**, and then the morpheme **ga**, after which the postposition is finally attached. The presence of the genitive morpheme is optional in singular Noun phrases, as illustrated in (18):

- (18)
- a. adiskide leial-a-ren-ga-n  
friend loyal-det-gen-ga-in  
'in/on the/a loyal friend'
- b. adiskide leial-a-ga-n  
friend loyal-det-ga-in  
'in/on the/a loyal friend'
- c. adiskide leial-en-ga-n  
friend loyal-det<sub>pl</sub>+gen-ga-in  
'in/on (the) loyal friends'

As the examples show, in the case of the singular Noun phrase the genitive morpheme can either surface or not (18a, b), but in the case of a plural Noun phrase, the genitive marker is necessary (18c). In example (18c), the plural determiner **ak** and the genitive marker **en** merge into **en**, as the gloss indicates. As discussed in the section on **number**, plurality is encoded in the determiner. Therefore, the difference between a singular and a plural Noun phrase for the purposes of morphology depends on whether the determiner is singular or plural.

What counts as an animate Noun in the grammar of Euskara is not determined by modern biology. Most cases are rather straightforward, but in trying to draw a border between animates and inanimates, curious pairs are often encountered, some of which we will mention here.

Abstract entities can be treated as animate or inanimate (19a, b), and the reciprocal **elkar** is always treated as an animate, regardless of whether it refers to an inanimate entity (19c).

(19)

a. zure ideiangan ez daukat nik konfiantza handirik  
your idea-detpl-in not have-I I-E confidence big-prt  
'I don't have much confidence in your ideas'

b. bere burutazioetan murgildurik dago  
her/his thoughts-detpl-in immersed is  
's/he is immersed in her/his thoughts'

c. etxe hauek elkarrengandik hurbilegi daude  
house these each-other-gen-ga-from near-too are  
'these houses are too near each other'

Example (19a) treats the abstract Noun **ideia** 'idea' as animate, while in (19b), the abstract noun **burutazio** '(sudden) thought' is treated as inanimate.

There are other cases where an animate entity is treated as an inanimate. There are hardly any instances of the reverse process, however, which would indicate that the specification for animacy treats the animate as the marked value, and the inanimate as the unmarked or default value.

(20)

a. alabengan aitarenganako joera nabari ohi da  
daughter-gen<sub>pl</sub>-in father-gen-towards tendency-det notice usually is  
'in daughters, a tendency towards the father is usually noticeable'

b. alabetan bihurriena, neure Matxalen duzu  
daughter-in<sub>pl</sub> naughtiest, my Matxalen have-you  
'of all daughters, the naughtiest is my Matxalen'  
(literally: 'in daughters, the naughtiest you have my Matxalen')

In (20a), the Noun phrase headed by the animate noun **alaba** 'daughter' is treated as animate in the grammar, that is, the morpheme **ga** is inserted between the genitive morpheme attached to the Noun phrase and the locative postposition. In (20b), however, the same Noun is treated as inanimate, and no **ga** morpheme surfaces. As for the **ta** marker that appears in (20b), we consider it in the next section.

The presence of the **ga** marker induces certain changes in some location postpositions, which we indicate in the paradigm below, made on the basis of the initial paradigm provided in [section 3.3](#). above:

2. directional **ga+ra>gana** 'to'
3. directional towards **ga+rantz>ganantz** 'towards'
4. directional (endpoint) **ga+raino >ganaino** 'up to'
5. origin **ga+tik>gandik** 'from'

**3.3.2. Singular determiners versus others: the morpheme *ta*.** There is a second distinctive property of location postpositions. Among inanimate phrases, they distinguish those that have a singular determiner from those that do not. Noun phrases that do not have a singular determiner must carry the morpheme **ta** before the postposition. Let us see this by means of an example. We will compare an inanimate phrase with a singular determiner (21a), with another one that does not have a singular determiner (21b):

- (21)
- a. [adiskidearen argazkia]n  
[friend-det-gen photo-det]in  
'in the friend's photo'
  - b. [hiru argazki]ta-n  
[three photo]ta-in  
'in three photos'

You recall from [chapter 2, section 5.](#), that indefinite Noun phrases containing a numeral do not carry a determiner. Hence, the basic contrast between the Noun phrases in (21a) and (21b) is that the former ends in the singular determiner **a**, whereas the later does not. As you can see, the locative marker **n**, attaches straightforwardly(1) in (21a), but in (21b), it requires the presence of the marker **ta**.

Other cases where no singular determiner ends the Noun phrase are constituted by plural Noun phrases, which are ended in the [plural determiners \*ak\* or \*ok\*](#), or in the plural versions of demonstratives. They also carry the marker **ta**:

- (22)
- a. adiskidearen argazki-e-ta-n  
friend-det-gen photo-detpl-ta-in  
'in the friend's photos'
  - b. Pirinioko mendi-o-ta-n  
Pyrenees-of mountain-detpl-ta-in  
'In the(se) mountains of the Pyrenees'
  - c. liburu zahar haue-ta-n  
book old these-ta-in  
'in these old books'

As you can see in (22a), the plural determiner **ak** becomes **e** after the merger with the morpheme **ta**. However, the proximity determiner **ok** and the plural demonstrative **hauek** 'these', only lose their final **k**.

### 3.4. Other postpositions.

In what follows, we will list the remaining postpositions, providing examples and stating, when necessary, what changes may happen the merger of the postposition and the Noun phrase.

1. Comitative **ekin** 'with': When added to a word ending in a vowel, the **epenthetic consonant r** must be inserted (23a, b). When added to the **plural determiner ak**, the result is **ekin** (23d):

(23)

- a. Gasteizko lagunarekin  
Gasteiz-from friend-det-with  
'with the friend from Gasteiz'
  
- b. zazpi zapirekin  
seven handkerchief-with  
'with seven handkerchiefs'
  
- c. zenbait gizonekin  
some men-with  
'with some men'
  
- d. Gasteizko lagunekin  
Gasteiz friend-detpl-with  
'with the friends form Gasteiz'

2. Instrumental **z** 'with', 'by': when it is added to a word ending in a consonant, the **epenthetic vowel e** is inserted (24b):

(24)

- a. zure giltzaz  
your key-det-ins  
'with your key'
  
- b. hamaika oharrez jositako liburua  
eleven note-ins sewed book-det  
'a book full of notes'  
(literally: 'a book sewed with eleven notes')
  
- c. Bizkaiko mendiez mintzatu gara  
Biscay-from mountain-detpl-ins spoken are-we  
'we have spoken of the mountains of Biscay'

3. Cause, motive **gatik** 'because', 'for': the genitive **en** is inserted between the postposition and its complement. The genitive is optional in phrases containing a singular determiner (25a), not so frequently in phrases containing a plural determiner.



(25)

a. argia(ren)gatik gustatzen zait Menorca  
light-det-(gen-)because like is-to me Menorca  
'I like Menorca because of the light'

b. arrazoi birengatik ukatu didate dirulaguntza  
reason two-gen-because denied have-me-they grant-det  
'they have denied the grant to me because of two reasons'

c. gure adiskideengatik egingo dugu  
our friend-det<sub>pl</sub>-gen-because do-irr have-we  
'we will do it for our friends'

4. Goal **entzat** 'for': the usual **epenthetic processes** apply when necessary.

(26)

a. Amaiarentzat erosi dut oparia  
Amaia-for bought have-I present-det  
'I have bought the present for Amaia'

b. bost mutilentzat dira mozerro horiek  
five boy-for are costume those  
'those costumes are for five boys'

c. gure familiako umeentzat egingo dugu jaia  
our family-from child-det<sub>pl</sub>-for do-irr have-we party-det  
'we will have a party for the children in our family'

---

1. It is far from clear that the singular inanimate phrases that take the locative marker are built up by merging the determiner **a** and the locative ending **n**, but the reasons that bring us to this conclusion would complicate our current discussion. Therefore, we have opted to leave this issue aside.

## CHAPTER 4: THE VERB AND ITS MORPHOLOGY

### 1. THE VERB AND ITS MORPHOLOGY: A QUICK OVERVIEW.

In this introduction, we will provide a quick overview of the verb and its morphology in Euskara, distinguishing some basic components that will be described in more detail in the following sections. We will use a few examples as guides. Consider first a rather simple sentence:

- (1) emakumea heldu da  
woman-det arrived is  
'the woman has arrived'

The sentence in (1) contains an intransitive verb **heldu** 'to arrive'. As an intransitive, it takes one argument, **emakumea** 'the woman'. The verb is accompanied by a third person singular form of the verb **izan** 'to be', which is **da** 'is'.

Let us focus on the verb **heldu** 'to arrive'. You can see that, out of the two, this is the most relevant one as far as the meaning of the sentence is concerned: the sentence in (1) talks about an arrival, not about being. Therefore, we will say that **heldu** in (1) is the '[main verb](#)', and we will refer to the accompanying **da** verb as the '[auxiliary verb](#)'. When talking about all the verbal material, including main and auxiliary verb, we will often use the term 'verbal complex'. The main verb determines what event the sentence refers to, whether one of arriving, loving, or writing. Now compare (1) and (2):

- (2) emakumea heltzen da  
woman-det arriving is  
'the woman arrives'

The only difference between the two sentences is the ending of the main verb. Whereas in (1) the ending was **du** (**hel+du**), in (2) the ending is **tzen** (**hel+tzen**). The reader should be warned that the glosses and translations we have provided in these initial examples do not cover exactly the semantic range of the examples, but from them it can already be inferred that (1) expresses an event of arriving that has already taken place, whereas (2) expresses an event of arriving that is under way but not completed. These differences in meaning are due to the [aspect](#) of the verb; the endings **du** and **tzen** on the main verb are **aspectual morphemes**. Aspectual morphemes in Euskara are attached to the end of the main verb.

Let us now focus on the auxiliary verb **da** 'is'. The [auxiliary verb](#) carries information about the arguments in the sentence, whether the sentence is present or past, etc... The form **da** in particular, says that there is only one argument in the sentence, that this argument is a third person, and that the sentence is present tense. We will now see a couple of examples where the information the auxiliary must convey is different, and you will see that the form of the auxiliary changes accordingly:

(3) a. zu heldu zara  
you arrived are  
'you have arrived'

b. emakumea heldu zen  
woman-det arrived was  
'the woman arrived'

In (3a), the sentence does not contain a third person subject; this time the subject is a second person singular [pronoun](#). The auxiliary reflects this change, by inflecting for the form of the verb **izan** 'to be' that corresponds to second person singular: **zara**. In (3b), the time of the event denoted by the sentence is not present, but past. Accordingly, the auxiliary takes the form of the verb **izan** 'to be' that corresponds to a third person singular, past tense: **zen**. As we will see throughout the chapter, the information that the verbal complex is capable of encoding in Euskara can be very elaborate: it encodes the nature of the subject, and also of the object and the indirect object, if there are any; it encodes modality variations, and it can even encode the gender of the person we talk to. We will consider all these issues under the name of [Inflection](#).

Sometimes, we find sentences that have a single verb, as the ones in (4), which do not display a main verb and an auxiliary:

(4) a. Zuk asko dakizu  
you-E much it-know-you  
'you know a lot'

b. nire gurarien kontra naramazue zuek ni hara  
I-gen desire-gen<sub>pl</sub> against me-take-you<sub>pl</sub> you<sub>pl</sub>-E I-A there  
'You are taking me there against my will'

In (4a), we find a form of the verb **jakin** 'to know'. You can see the root of this verb, **aki**, inside the form in the example: **d-aki-zu** 'you-know-it'. The surrounding morphemes are indications of the type of arguments this verb takes in this sentence: first, an indication that the object of the verb is a third person [d](#), then, an indication that the subject of the verb is a second person singular [zu](#) 'you'. From the form of the morpheme corresponding to the third person object **d**, plus lack of any other specification regarding tense, we conclude that it is present.

In (4b), we find a form of the verb **eraman** 'to take (away)'. You can find the root of this verb (**rama**) inside the form in the example: **na-rama-zue** 'me-take-you(plural)'. The surrounding morphemes tell us how many and what kind of arguments the verb takes: the morpheme [na](#) indicates that the object is first person singular, and the morpheme [zue](#) indicates that the subject is a second person plural. Since there is no manifest indication for tense, we conclude that it is present.

These verbs that bring together the main verb and the inflection are called [synthetic verbs](#) in the Basque grammatical tradition, and the complex ones illustrated in (1), (2), (3) are called [periphrastic verbs](#).

Regarding word order in the verbal complex, see [section 1 in chapter 1](#).

## 2. THE VERB.

We will start out with the verb, leaving for later considerations concerning [aspect](#) and [inflection](#). Here, we will look at different types of verbs, regarding two parameters: [transitivity](#) on the one hand, and the way in which they inflect on the other. As you will see, [causative verbs](#) have been included in the transitivity parameter, given the fact that they add one more actant to the array of actants of the base verb.

Verbs in Euskara are named in their [perfective](#) form. That is, when we refer to a verb such as **heldu** 'to arrive', the form we quote is not the bare verbal root, which, as we saw in examples (1) and (2) above, is actually **hel**. The form quoted is the combination of the verbal root and the perfective aspectual morpheme, which together form a perfective participle. As we will see throughout the chapter, some verbal inflections make use of the root alone, for instance the formation of [causatives](#), or inflected forms containing modals, as in **hel daiteke** 's/he can arrive'. Nevertheless, in referring to verbs we will use the standard usage of quoting the perfective participle, despite the fact that it is morphologically complex.

### 2.1. Transitives and intransitives.

Verbs can be transitive or intransitive: transitive verbs are those that have a subject and an object, intransitive verbs lack an object. In general, transitive and intransitive verbs in Euskara behave differently: transitives display a subject marked with [ergative case](#), and an object marked with [absolutive case](#) (5a). Intransitives display a subject marked with absolutive case (5b):

- (5)    b. txakurak katua ikusi du  
         dog-det-E cat-det-A see-prf has  
         'the dog has seen the cat'
- c. katua joan da  
         cat-det-A gone is  
         'the cat has left'

Another property that distinguishes transitive verbs from intransitives is the [auxiliary verb](#) they display: transitive predicates take forms of the verb **ukan** 'to have' for auxiliaries (5a), whereas intransitives take forms of the verb **izan** 'to be' for auxiliaries (5b).

As for the verbs themselves, however, there is no special morpheme signaling whether a given verb is transitive or intransitive. Transitivity is manifested in the number of arguments, the [cases](#) they bear, and the [auxiliary selected](#).

**2.1.1. Weather predicates.** Weather predicates constitute a special class of transitives: they do not express their [ergative](#) argument. Consider (6):

- (6)                    gaur euria egin du  
                         today rain-det made has  
                         'it has rained today'

The sentence in (6) contains an [absolute](#) Noun phrase, **euria** 'the rain', and a transitive verb **egin** 'make, do'. The auxiliary selected is a form of **ukan** 'to have', inflected for present tense, third person object and third person subject. However, there is no expressed ergative Noun phrase, nor can there be. Other weather predicates are illustrated in (7):

- (7) a. Gorbeian elurra egiten du neguan  
Gorbea-in snow-det make-hab has winter-in  
'In Gorbea, it snows in the winter'  
(literally: 'In Gorbea, (it) makes (a) snow in winter')
- b. haize handia egingo du bihar  
wind big-det make-irr has tomorrow  
'tomorrow there will be big winds'  
(literally: 'tomorrow (it) will make a big wind')

As you can see in the examples, there are no weather verbs in Euskara, strictly speaking. Rather, weather predicates are composed of the verb **egin** 'to make, do', and the corresponding meteorological phenomenon in a determined Noun phrase, inflected for absolute case

**2.1.2. Borderline transitive verbs: unergatives.** There are some verbs that are intransitive in English (and other languages), but take subjects marked with ergative case, and ['have' auxiliaries](#) in Euskara. Out of these, we can distinguish two groups. The smaller one has been considered in section [1.2. of chapter 3](#). The larger group is constituted by [unergative](#) predicates. Examples are given in (8):

- (8) a. umeak barre egin du  
child-det-E laugh made has  
'the child has laughed'
- b. irakasleak hitz egin du  
teacher-det-E word made has  
'the teacher has spoken'

These predicates have certain similarities with the weather predicates reviewed above: what translates in English as a single verb appears to be rendered in Euskara by the combination of the verb **egin** and a direct object. In the case of weather verbs, the direct object is the meteorological phenomenon; in the case of these unergative predicates, the direct object is the Noun referring to the activity: **barre egin** 'make laugh(ter)'. However, there is an important difference between objects of weather predicates and objects of these unergative predicates: whereas the former carry a [determiner a](#), the latter do not. For this reason, there is no shared agreement among linguists as to whether the predicates in (8) are a special class of transitive predicates with determinerless objects, or whether they are a special class of intransitives that mark their subject with ergative case ([Levin \(1983\)](#)).

Favoring the first view is the fact that the relation between the activity Noun and the verb **egin** is not one of compounding. The Noun and the verb can be separated (9a), and the Noun can receive the partitive marker (9b):

- (9) a. nork egin du barre?  
 who-E made has laugh  
 'who has laughed?'
- b. nik ez dut barrerik egiten  
 I-E not have laugh-prt made-hab  
 'I don't laugh'

Favoring the second view is the fact that not all predicates of the type in (8) permit operations like (9). The best known case is **alde egin** 'to leave' (literally, 'side make'), which we illustrate in (10):

- (10) a. umeak alde egin du  
 child-det-E side made has  
 'the child has left'
- b. nork alde egin du  
 who side made has  
 'who has left?'
- c. \*nork egin du alde?  
 who made has side
- d. nik ez dut alde egin  
 I-E not have side made  
 'I have not left'
- e. \*nik ez dut alderik egin  
 I-E not have side-prt made

Many of the unergative predicates in this class behave like the one in (9), while others are closer to the examples in (10).

Other predicates in this general unergative class include: **amets egin** 'to dream', **dantza egin** 'to dance', **dehadar egin** 'to scream', **eztul egin** 'to cough', **izerdi egin** 'to sweat', **kaka egin** 'to shit', **lan egin** 'to work', **lo egin** 'to sleep', **negar egin** 'to cry', **so egin** 'to look at', **txiza egin** 'to pee', **zintz egin** 'to blow the nose'.

A second fact that favors the view of these unergatives as a special kind of transitives is that they do not allow for the presence of another, so-called 'cognate' object in the sentence:

- (11) a. \*amets eder bat amets egin dut  
 dream beautiful one dream made have-I  
 ('I have dreamt a beautiful dream')
- b. \*ezpatadantza dantza egin dute  
 sword dance dance made have-they  
 ('they have danced the sword dance')

Some of the unergatives in this group have variants that consist of a verb, not of a complex predicate:

- (12) dantzari<sub>pl</sub> berehala dantzatuko dute  
dancer-det<sub>pl</sub>-E immediately dance-irr have-they  
'the dancers will dance immediately'

in these variants, the presence of an object is allowed. Compare (11b) and (13):

- (13) dantzari<sub>pl</sub> ezpatadantza dantzatuko dute orain  
dancer-det<sub>pl</sub>-E sword dance-det dance-irr have-they now  
'the dancers will dance the sword dance now'

However, there are a few unergative predicates, such as **funtzionatu** 'to function', **dimititu** 'to resign', **frenatu** 'to brake', that consist of a simple verb, which assign ergative to the subject and still do not allow for the presence of an object:

- (14) a. makina honek ez du funtzionatzen  
machine this-E not has function-hab  
'this machine does not work'
- b. parlamentariak dimititu du azkenik  
parliament-member-det-E resigned has finally  
'the parliament member has finally resigned'

Finally, some unergative verbs display different behaviors depending on dialectal variation. Thus, for instance, verbs like **bazkaldu** 'to lunch', or **afaldu** 'to dine', mark their subjects with ergative case in western varieties (15a), but with absolutive case in eastern varieties (15b). Accordingly, they select auxiliary 'have' in western usage, but auxiliary 'be' in eastern usage:

- (15) a. neba-arrebek elkarrekin bazkaldu dute  
brother-sister-det<sub>pl</sub>-E each-other-with lunched have-they  
'the brothers and sisters have lunched together'
- b. senide guztiak elkarrekin bazkaldu dira  
relative all-det<sub>pl</sub> each-other-with lunched are  
'all the relatives have lunched together'

**2.1.3. Unaccusatives.** The group of true intransitive verbs in Euskara is mostly constituted of [unaccusative](#) verbs. That is, most verbs that mark their subjects with absolutive case and [select 'be' auxiliaries](#) fall naturally in the class of unaccusatives. Some examples are provided in (16):

- (16) a. astoa erori da  
donkey-det fallen is  
'the donkey has fallen'

b. umea jaio da  
child-det be-born is  
'the child has been born'

c. ikasleok azken iladetan jezartzen gara  
student-det<sub>pl</sub> last row-det<sub>pl</sub>-in sit-hab are  
'(we) students sit in the last rows'

To this big group, a few other must be added, which do not fall in the unaccusative class. One of them is the group of unergative predicates in eastern usage, discussed regarding example [\(15b\)](#) immediately before this section.

A second important group is constituted by impersonal sentences, which involve in Euskara a ditransitivization process, out of which an intransitive emerges, formally identical to the ones in [\(16\)](#). Consider the pair in (17):

(17) a. norbaitek etxea saldu du  
someone-E house-det sold has  
'someone has sold the house'

b. etxea saldu da  
house sold is  
'the house has been sold'

[\(17a\)](#) is a standard transitive sentence with an indefinite subject. In [\(17b\)](#) we have an impersonal sentence, where the subject of the verb **saldu** 'to sell' has been taken out of the sentence. As a result, the [auxiliary](#) becomes a form of 'be', and the only argument of the sentence is marked [absolute](#), as it was in the transitive version.

**2.1.4. Inchoatives.** Inchoatives, or causative alternations as they are also called, involve contrasts that are formally identical to the one illustrated in [\(17\)](#). Thus, consider a verb like **apurtu** 'to break', which has an inchoative form (18a) and an unaccusative form (18b):

(18) a. umeak jostailua apurtu du  
child-det-E toy-det broken has  
'the child has broken the toy'

b. jostailua apurtu da  
toy-det broken is  
'the toy has broken'

As you can judge from the example given, there is no specific inchoative morphology on the verb, and the pair involves simply the addition (or subtraction, depending on your point of view) of one argument to the sentence.

**2.1.5. Causatives.** Causative verbs are constructed by adding the causative verb **arazi** 'to cause' to the root of base verb, as illustrated in (19):



- (19) a. arazo hau ikuserazi digute  
 problem this see-cause it-have-us-they  
 'they have made us see this problem'
- b. himnoa kantaerazten diete umeei  
 anthem-det sing-cause-hab it-have-them-they child-det<sub>pl-D</sub>  
 'They make children sing the anthem'

## 2.2. Synthetic and periphrastic.

The distinction between synthetic and periphrastic verbs has been briefly illustrated in examples (3) and (4) in the introductory section to this chapter. The distinction concerns the manner in which verbs inflect:

- (I) a **synthetic** verb is a verb that inflects without the help of an [auxiliary verb](#)
- (II) a **periphrastic** verb is a verb that must inflect with the help of an [auxiliary verb](#).

This said, it must be noted that the terms **synthetic** and **periphrastic** are used ambiguously to refer either to:

- (a) verbs that can inflect synthetically, such as **jakin** 'to know', versus verbs that can only inflect periphrastically, such as **tolostu** 'to fold', or
- (b) particular verbal forms that are synthetic, such as **dakizu** 'it-know-you' (you know), versus particular verbal forms that are periphrastic, such as **jakin dezakezu** 'know it-have-pot-you' (you can know).

We will start by considering the opposition in (a), and will then focus on the opposition in (b), which will become a natural introduction to the category [aspect](#), to be discussed in the next section

(a) Verbs that can inflect synthetically: The number of verbs that can inflect some of their forms synthetically is very small, compared to the entire set of verbs in Euskara. The overwhelming majority of verbs can only inflect with the help of an auxiliary verb. Older stages of the language had a much larger set of synthetic verbs (see [Lafon \(1944\)](#)). The grammar of the Royal Academy of Basque Language ([EGLU](#)) estimates that in modern spoken Basque there are only about ten verbs where synthetic form are used: **egon** 'stay', **joan** 'go', **etorri** 'arrive', **ibili** 'walk', **izan** 'to be', **jakin** 'know', **eduki** 'have', **ekarri** 'bring', **eraman** 'take', **ihardun** 'engage'. Some other verbs, like **jarin** 'to ooze, to flow', **erabili** 'to use', **irudi** 'to look like', **esan** 'to say' are used synthetically only in a few forms, and finally there is a third set of verbs, like **atxeki** 'attach', **jarraiki** 'follow', **esan** 'say', **eman** 'give' or **entzun** 'hear', which are occasionally used in synthetic fashion in literary language.

It is not at all clear what syntactic or semantic feature, if any, defines the set of synthetic verbs; as far as modern Euskara is concerned, it appears to be a lexical idiosyncrasy of the verbs listed above. It must be noted, however, that all synthetic verbs have the older participial endings (**n**, **I**), not the nowadays productive one (**tu**), which was borrowed from Latin. Hence, all synthetic

verbs are 'old verbs' in this sense, but not all the 'old verbs' belong in the synthetic class. In general, both the number of verbs that can inflect synthetically, and the number of forms that are used synthetically within the paradigms of those verbs appears to be getting progressively smaller, some forms become more and more literary as they are used less often in spoken language

(b) Synthetically inflected forms: synthetic forms have the same morphological markers as periphrastic forms with one exception: they contain no visible [aspect](#) marker. Let us see this by comparing a periphrastic and a synthetic form of the verb **ekarri** 'to bring':

- (20) a. Mikelek katakume bat ekarri du  
Mikel-E kitten one bring-prf has  
'Mikel has brought a kitten'
- b. Mikelek katakume bat dakar  
Mikel-E kitten one brings  
'Mikel brings a kitten'

Let us first consider the morphology of the two verb forms. In (20a), the root of the verb, **ekar** takes a [perfective](#) aspectual morpheme **i** and forms the perfective participial. Following it we find the auxiliary verb **du**, which contains a morpheme **d**, which appears in present tense forms when the absolutive phrase is third person, and a morpheme **u**, the root of the verb [ukan](#). Lack of any other visible specification entails that the ergative phrase is third person singular. In (20b), the only morphemes missing are the [perfective](#) marker **i** and the root of the [auxiliary](#) **u**. Thus, the form **dakar** contains the root of the verb, **kar**, and the morpheme **d** for present tense and third person absolutive. Comparing the perfective participle in (20a) and the synthetic form in (20b), you have probably noticed that the initial **e** in (20a) is also missing in (20b). This initial vowel does not appear to be a morpheme, but rather, a superficial phonological addition to the root.

Thus, the relevant differences between (20a) and (20b) are the [perfective](#) marker, and the root of the [auxiliary](#). The very name of 'auxiliary' indicates that these types of verbs are thought to appear when for some reason the verb is not capable of carrying the verbal morphology on itself. Put differently, it is probably the case that the auxiliary is contingent on the presence of the perfective marker, a consequence of it. If this is the case, then the only relevant difference between (20a) and (20b) is the presence of the perfective marker in (20a), and its absence in (20b).

Considering the meaning of the examples, whereas (20a) has a perfective meaning (it talks about a completed event of bringing), (20b) does not. The meaning of (20b), is that 'Mikel is now bringing a kitten'. Hence, the sentence talks about an [imperfective](#) event, one that is talked about as it is happening. Put more technically, (20b) has a [punctual aspect](#).

Synthetic forms are only possible when the aspectual specification is punctual. Synthetic forms can be specified for either present (20b) or past tense (21a). They can also be specified for modality (21b) (even though this usage is almost exclusively literary), and they can carry as many [agreement morphemes](#) as [periphrastic](#) forms do (21c):

- (21) b. Mikelek katakume bat zekarren  
Mikel-E kitten one brought  
'Mikel was bringing a kitten'
- c. Mikelek katakume bat dakarke  
Mikel-E kitten one bring-can  
'Mikel can bring a kitten'
- d. Zuek ni nakarzue  
You-E I me-bring-you  
'You(guys) (are) bring(ing) me'

Once a given verb belongs to the synthetic group, the relevant issue that determines whether it will display a synthetic or a periphrastic form is verbal [aspect](#). Synthetic forms can never convey [perfective](#), [habitual](#) or [future](#) events. These distinctions depend crucially on the aspectual category in Euskara. The place of aspect in the verbal morphology of Euskara is discussed in the next section.

### 3. ASPECT.

Many different phenomena are classified under the name tag 'aspect' in linguistics, and everyone agrees that this is a still rather poorly understood area of human language. In order to clarify matters in this description, we will approach the discussion on aspect from a strictly formal point of view. That is, the criteria that guides this section rests on the morphological distinctions found in Euskara, and the various phenomena they give raise to. The expert on aspect will find that many issues related to aspect in a broader sense, are not touched upon here.

We group under the category 'aspect' the morphemes that appear attached to the verbal root in [periphrastic](#) forms. These are basically three:

1. [The perfective](#), which denotes a completed event.
2. [The imperfective](#), which denotes an ongoing, non-completed event.
3. [The unrealized](#), which denotes an event that has not even started taking place.

It must be noted that no overt aspect marker surfaces when the inflected auxiliary is a [potential](#) form, involving the modal morpheme **ke**. In those cases, the root of the verb is used, as shown in [the examples](#) provided when discussing those forms

#### 3.1. The perfective.

The perfective morpheme can have three forms, depending on the verb: **tu**, **i**, **n**. The morpheme **tu** is the most frequent one. It was borrowed from Latin (dictum). All verbs of new creation must take this morpheme in their perfective form; that is, it is the unmarked one of the set. After the sounds **n** and **l**, it becomes **du**, for instance in **lagundu** 'to help'. The morphemes **i** and **n** are the older perfective markers. The perfective morpheme indicates a completed action, either in the present ([22a](#)) or in the past ([22b](#)):

- (22) a. Olatz poztu da  
 Olatz rejoice-perf is  
 'Olatz has rejoiced'
- b. Olatz poztu zen  
 Olatz rejoice-prf was  
 'Olatz rejoiced'

In (22a), the perfective participle **poztu** takes a present tense auxiliary **da** 'is'. The result is a present tense perfective form. In (22b), the same participle takes a past tense auxiliary **zen** 'was', and the result is a past tense perfective form. Perfective forms must always carry an [auxiliary verb](#); they can never inflect synthetically.

As mentioned in the beginning of [section 1](#) of this chapter, the perfective participle is the form used for naming verbs. Regarding perfective participials in adjective function, see [3.1.1. of chapter 2](#)

### 3.2. The imperfective.

The imperfective morpheme is **tzen**, sometimes surfacing as **ten**. In the case of verbs that do not inflect [synthetically](#), the imperfective aspect marker is used both for denoting a punctual, ongoing event, that is, something that is happening right now, and for denoting a habitual event, that is, something that happens with a certain frequency. Consider the examples in (23):

- (23) a. Paulek liburua irakurtzen du  
 Paul-E book-det read-impf has  
 'Paul reads the book'
- b. Olatz etxean gelditzen da  
 Olatz house-in stay-impf is  
 'Olatz stays home'

The sentence in (23a) can be used to refer to an event that is taking place as the sentence is uttered. What is meant to say is that Paul is reading the book. The example can also refer to an event that takes place with a certain frequency, for instance, if Paul were in the habit of reading the book every morning. The same is true of (23b): it can refer to the event of Olatz staying home right now, as the rest of us leave, for instance, or it can be a statement about a habitual event.

In the case of [synthetic forms](#), as we pointed out above, matters are slightly different. A synthetic form denotes a punctual aspect; in order to convey habituality, the marker **tzen** and an auxiliary verb must be used. Consider the pair in (24):

- (24) a. Mikelek katakumea dakar  
 Mikel-E kitten-det brings  
 'Mikel brings/is bringing the kitten'

- b. Mikelek katakumea ekartzen du  
 Mikel-E kitten-det bring-impf has  
 'Mikel brings the kitten'

In (24a), since **ekarri** 'to bring' is a synthetic verb, punctuality is conveyed by means of the synthetic form. That is, (24a) means that Mikel is bringing the kitten as we speak. The sentence in (24b), where the verb **ekarri** takes the imperfective morpheme, yielding **ekartzen**, denotes a habitual event. It could be used if, for instance, Mikel brought the kitten every time we went on a hike to the mountains, and we wanted to talk about his habit of his.

**3.2.1. The progressive ari construction.** There is a progressive construction, used mostly in central varieties of the language. It involves the aspectual verb **ari**, which is inserted between the imperfective participle and the auxiliary, as illustrated in (25):

- (25) Josune aspertzen ari da  
 Josune bore-impf prog is  
 'Josune is getting bored'

The progressive verb **ari** alters the case pattern of a transitive sentence. The ergative Noun phrase surfaces in absolutive, and the auxiliary becomes a form of **izan** 'to be', as if the sentence were now intransitive. The object remains marked for absolutive as well. This is illustrated in (26), which can be compared to (23a):

- (26) Paul liburua irakurtzen ari da  
 Paul book-det read-impf prog is  
 'Paul is reading the/a book'

There are a few exceptions to this change in the case pattern. In eastern varieties, it is reported ([EGLU](#)) that transitive sentences using the progressive **ari** may keep [ergative marking](#), but it is not clear under what conditions. In central varieties, [weather predicates](#) constitute a clearer exception. In weather predicates, **ari** is used to denote punctuality, with or without the help of a participle. The [auxiliary](#) remains a form of **ukan** 'to have'. Examples of weather predicates constructed upon **ari** are provided in (27):

- (27) euria ari du orain  
 rain-det prog has now  
 'it is raining now'

Occasionally, the **ari** construction can also be used with verbs that inflect synthetically as the examples in (28), (from [EGLU](#) and [Euskaltzaindia \(1993\)](#)) show:

- (28)
- a. liburu honi kolorea joaten ari zaio  
 book this-D color-det go-impf prog is-to it  
 'This book is losing its color'  
 (literally: 'to this book color is leaving')

- b. jendea uholdeka etortzen ari da  
 people flooding-by come-impf prog is  
 'People are flooding in'  
 (literally: 'people are coming by floodings')

In (28a), the synthetic verb **joan** 'to go, to leave' takes the periphrastic progressive **ari** form, and denotes an event that is taking place as we speak. It is probably the fact that the fading of the color takes such a long period of time what makes the use of **ari** better suited than the synthetic form of the verb. In (28b), the verb **etorri** 'to come' is used in the **ari** construction, despite it being a synthetic verb. In this case, it is probably the fact that the event described is more episodic than punctual what makes the use of a periphrastic form more adequate.

The aspectual element **ari** can be used without a participle if there is a [locational phrase](#) that denotes an activity:

(29)

- a. lanean ari naiz  
 work-in prog am  
 'I am working'
- b. bertsoan ari gara  
 verses-in prog are-we  
 'we are making verses'

Finally, **ari** itself can be inflected for aspect, which indicates that it is probably best thought of as a verb, whose meaning is akin to 'to engage'.

(30)

- a. gaur goizean umeak jolasean aritu dira  
 today morning-in child-det<sub>pl</sub> play-in engage-perf are  
 'Today in the morning the children have been playing'
- b. bihar goizean umeak jolasean arituko dira  
 tomorrow morning-in child-det<sub>pl</sub> play-in engage-irr are  
 'tomorrow morning the children will be playing'

### 3.3. The unrealized.

The third aspectual morpheme is **tuko**, **iko** or **ngo**, depending on the participial form. That is, verbs that make participials with the ending **tu** will make the unrealized as **tuko**, whereas verbs that make participials in **i** make the unrealized as **iko**, and verbs whose participials end in **n** make their unrealized forms as **ngo**. The unrealized is built by adding the morpheme **ko** to the perfective participial form. In [eastern varieties](#), the morpheme added to the participial form is **en** instead of **ko**.

In most descriptive grammars, this aspect is commonly referred to as a 'future' marker, but here we will take it to be an aspectual marker indicating that an event has not started happening. As we will see, the marker **tuko** can yield verbal forms that are not future, even if the future is one of the verbal forms it may yield. The unrealized morpheme will be glossed as **irr**, for the grammatical term 'irrealis'. Let us consider a few examples in (31):

(31)

b. idazle honek eleberri bi idatziko ditu  
writer this-E novel two write-irr has  
'This writer will write two novels'

c. hegoak ebaki banizkio, nirea izango zen  
wing-det<sub>pl</sub> cut if-had-I, I-gen-det be-irr was  
'If I cut its wings, it would be mine'

In (31a), we can see a future verbal form. It is built by combining a main verb with the unrealized aspect marker, in this case **idatziko**, and an **auxiliary** in present tense, in this case **ditu** a form of **ukan** 'to have'. Thus, the future requires an auxiliary in present tense and the unrealized aspect marker. In (31b), we see another use of the unrealized aspect morpheme, which does not yield a future tense. In this case, we have a conditional sentence, 'if I cut its wings', followed by the consequence, which is the one we focus on. It combines the main verb **izan** 'to be', to which the unrealized aspect has been attached, **izango**, and this main verb combines now with a past tense auxiliary verb, **zen**, a form of the auxiliary **izan**, 'to be'.

These examples illustrate the two main uses of this aspectual marker: with present tense forms it yields the future, and with past tense or modal forms it yields conditionals. A few more forms are given in (32), now using other kinds of conditionals:

(32)

a. Miren etorriko balitz, Mikel joango litzateke  
Miren come-irr if-were, Mikel leave-irr would  
'If Miren came, Mikel would leave'

b. Miren etorri balitz, Mikel joango zatekeen  
Miren come if-were, Mikel leave-irr would-have  
'Had Miren come, Mikel would have left'

As we can see in the examples, the unrealized aspect marker is used in the first part of the conditional in (32a), and in the consequence as well. In this example, the verbal form of the consequence, **litzateke**, includes a modal marker **ke**. If you consider (32b), which illustrates a counterfactual conditional, the unrealized aspect marker surfaces only in the consequence, **joango**.

## CHAPTER 6: VERBAL INFLECTION

Let us now leave the main verb and its morphology, to focus on the information that the auxiliary verb carries in it. As we saw briefly in the introduction to this chapter, in the discussion of examples (1) to (4), the Inflection of the verb can carry information about:

- (a) the arguments of the verb, not only the subject, but also the object and the indirect object; whether they are first, second or third person; whether they are singular or plural;
- (b) the tense of the sentence, whether it is present or past, or neither of the two;
- (c) whether there is a modal force to the sentence and if so, of what kind;
- (d) whether the sentence is matrix or embedded, and if so, of what kind;
- (e) in some varieties, the verbal inflection can also carry information about the person we are addressing, whether it is male or female.

### 1. AUXILIARY SELECTION.

We will start by considering the different types of auxiliary verbs that are available. As we have already seen in section 2.1., through our discussion of transitivity, there are mainly two auxiliaries in Euskara: the auxiliary **izan** 'to be', and the auxiliary **ukan** 'to have'. In general terms, the auxiliary **ukan** 'to have' is used when there is an ergative phrase in the sentence. Otherwise, the auxiliary **izan** 'to be' is used. We illustrate this contrast in (33):

(33)

- a. igela agertu da  
frog-det appeared is  
'the/a frog has appeared'
- b. Josebak igela ikusi du  
Joseba-E frog-det seen has  
'Joseba has seen the/a frog'

As the pair illustrates, a sentence with no ergative phrase like (33a) selects a form of the auxiliary **izan** 'to be', in this case a present tense third person singular form. However, a sentence with an ergative phrase, such as (33b) selects a form of the auxiliary **ukan** 'to have', in this case a present tense third person singular subject and third person singular object.

If there is a dative phrase in the sentence, it does not affect this basic contrast, although the morphology of the auxiliary changes to reflect the dative phrase:

(34)



- a. Aitziberri igela agertu zaio  
Aitziber-D frog-det appeared is  
'the/a frog appeared to Aitziber'
- b. Josebak Aitziberri igela eman dio  
Joseba-E Aitziber-D frog-det given has  
'Joseba has given the/a frog to Aitziber'

In the sentences in (34), the auxiliary verbs have changed their form to reflect the presence of the dative phrase (we discuss changes of this kind in the section devoted to ['agreement'](#)), but the auxiliary is a form of **izan** 'to be' in (34a) and a form of **ukan** 'to have' in (34b).

For the sake of thoroughness, it must be said that the actual root of the auxiliary verb in (34b) belongs to an extinct verb **\*edun** (the asterisk here means that the verb is a 'reconstruction', that is, historical linguists think this is most plausibly the participial form of the verb), which can no longer be used as a normal verb. But in terms of auxiliary selection, we can group these forms under the general group of **ukan** 'to have' auxiliaries. There is a small number of extinct verbs like **\*edun** whose roots are used to inflect verbal forms with modal morphemes, but we will not enter into a discussion of those in this grammar, and we will stick to the basic distinction between **izan** 'be' and **ukan** 'have'.

There is one exception to this distribution of auxiliary verbs: it involves a case where the auxiliary form used is **ukan** 'to have' despite the fact that there is no ergative phrase in the sentence. This use of **ukan** in ergative less sentences takes place when the verbal inflection carries in it an agreement marker for the addressee of the speech.

## 2. AGREEMENT.

Verbal inflection in Euskara carries information about the [absolute phrase](#) in the sentence, the [ergative phrase](#) if there is one, and also about the [dative phrase](#) if there is one. The [auxiliary](#) verb carries some markers, or morphemes, which indicate whether these phrases are first or second person, singular or plural. As we will try to illustrate, it is also the case that sometimes the absence of morphemes provides information. Typically, absence of morphemes indicates the presence of a third person phrase, as we will see.

### 2.1. How agreement works: the basic combinations.

Let us start with a few examples, as usual:

(35)

- a. ni erori naiz  
I fallen am
- b. hi erori haiz  
you fallen are

Here, in (35), we see examples of auxiliaries that provide us with information about the absolute phrase in the sentence. The main verb chosen is [intransitive erori](#) 'to fall', therefore it only takes an absolute phrase, and it takes as an [auxiliary](#) verb a form of the verb **izan** 'to be'.

In (35a), the absolutive phrase happens to be a first person singular pronoun **ni** 'I'. The auxiliary verb reflects this fact, by means of the morpheme **n**, which only appears if there is a first person singular absolutive phrase in the sentence. In (35b), the absolutive phrase happens to be a second person singular pronoun **hi** 'you'. The auxiliary verb reflects this fact, now by means of the morpheme **h**, which only appears if there is a second person singular absolutive phrase in the sentence.

The reader must remember that when we talk about the presence of a given phrase in the sentence, we do not necessarily mean that the phrase is overtly manifest in the sentence. Thus, for instance, in the examples in (35), the agreement markers in the auxiliary must be there regardless of whether the pronouns are manifest or absent. What we mean by the presence of a phrase is that the phrase is part of the sentence, whether manifest or not.

As we have seen in (35), then, whenever there is a first person singular absolutive phrase, the morpheme **n** will appear in the inflection. Let us see another example, which incorporates a first person singular absolutive phrase, and something else:

- (36)
- hik ni ikusi n-au-k  
you-E I seen me-have-you(male)  
'You have seen me'

Comparing (36) and (35a) we see that the main verb is no longer the intransitive **erori** 'to fall', but rather a transitive, **ikusi** 'to see'. Accordingly, there is an ergative phrase, **hik** 'you', that is, a second person singular ergative phrase, and the auxiliary is now a form of **ukan** 'to have'. As you can see for yourself by comparing (35a) and (36), what concerns the absolutive first person singular has not changed: the marker continues to be **n**, and it sits in the same position in the auxiliary, that is, at the beginning. What has changed is the morphological material that accompanies the first person singular marker. Thus for instance, the root of the auxiliary is no longer **aiz**, as in (35a), but **au**, the root the verb **ukan** 'to have'. And following the root of the auxiliary verb we find a morpheme for the ergative phrase. In this case, the morpheme is **k**, which reflects the fact that the ergative phrase is a second person singular, and moreover, that the individual the ergative phrase denotes is male.

You can see that the glosses of example (36) include this information, and that the example itself contains dashes separating the morphemes. We will continue doing this, in order to clarify the workings of the agreement morphology. In separating inflectional morphemes, we will try to make only those separations that are relevant to this discussion, glossing over others that are not. In particular, you will notice that the examples gloss over certain changes in the root area, that would complicate our description of the mechanics of the agreement system.

Looking at (36), you can see that:

- (a) the marker corresponding to the absolutive phrase appears at the beginning of the inflected auxiliary, and
- (b) the marker corresponding to the ergative phrase appears at the end of the inflected auxiliary, or at least it appears following the root of the verb. One more form will confirm this:

- (37)  
Nik hi ikusi h-au-t  
I-E you seen you-have-me  
'I have seen you'

In (37), the absolutive phrase is a second person singular pronoun, therefore the morpheme at the beginning of the auxiliary is **h**, the same one we find in (35b). The ergative phrase is a first person singular pronoun, and the **t** morpheme at the end of the auxiliary reflects this. The root is the same as in (36), only the agreement markers have changed.

Now let us consider a few examples that contain dative phrases as well. First, consider the sentences in (38), which are the equivalents of (35), with dative phrases added:

- (38)
- b. ni hiri erori n-atzai-k  
I you-D fallen me-be-you(male)  
'I have fallen on you'
- c. hi niri erori h-atzai-t  
you me-D fallen you-be-me  
'You have fallen on me'

In (38a), there is a dative phrase **hiri** 'to you', which is reflected in the auxiliary verb. As you can see, the morpheme for the dative second person singular pronoun is **k**, and it follows the root of **izan** 'to be', which is in this case **atzai**. The morpheme for the first person singular absolutive continues to be **n**, of course, and it sits at the beginning of the auxiliary. If you now consider (38b), you will see that the agreement morpheme for the dative first person singular pronoun is **t**, and it also appears following the root **atzai**.

If you compare the forms in (36), (37) and (38), you can see that the agreement morphemes for the ergative phrases and the morphemes for the dative phrases are identical, **k** for second person singular male and **t** for first person singular. Moreover, these agreement morphemes appear after the root in both cases. So how are they distinguished? In the case of the examples we are considering here, the root of the auxiliary is different: in the cases where the morpheme signals the presence of an ergative phrase (36), (37), the root is **au**, that is, the auxiliary is a form of ukan 'to have'. But in the cases where the morpheme signals the presence of a dative phrase (38), the root is **atzai**, that is, the auxiliary is a form of izan 'to be'. Remember that **ukan** 'to have' is used as an auxiliary only if there is an ergative phrase in the sentence. Therefore, the morphemes in (38) correspond necessarily to dative phrases, since the auxiliary is a form of **izan** 'to be'.

Now we need to know how to handle a sentence where there are both ergative and dative phrases. Let us pick a couple of examples:

- (39)

- b. Nik hiri liburu bat oparitu d-i-a-t  
 I-E you-D book one present-made it-have-you-me  
 'I have given you a book (as a present)'
- c. Hik niri liburu bat oparitu d-i-da-k  
 You-E I-D book one present-made it-have-me-you  
 'You have given me a book (as a present)'

Consider first the example in (39a): it is a sentence with an absolutive phrase **liburu bat** 'one/a book', an ergative phrase '**nik**' 'I', and a dative phrase **hiri** 'to you'. The main verb is **oparitu** 'to make a present', which displays perfective [aspect](#). The auxiliary verb contains the following elements, from left to right:

- (a) the morpheme **d**, which appears in present tense forms if the absolutive phrase is a third person, as it is in this case;
- (b) the morpheme **i**, the root of the auxiliary verb, which appears in this form only when there are both a dative and an ergative phrase in the sentence;
- (c) the morpheme **a**, which indicates that the dative phrase is a second person singular male;
- (d) and the morpheme **t**, which indicates that the ergative phrase is a first person singular.

Now consider (39b), which contrasts minimally with (39a): the morphemes are the same, except for the ones corresponding to dative and ergative. The morpheme corresponding to the dative is now **da**, which indicates first person singular, and the morpheme corresponding to the ergative is now **k**, indicating second person singular male.

As you have seen in these examples, the ergative agreement morpheme is the one that appears last. The dative morpheme appears after the root of the auxiliary, but it precedes an ergative morpheme if there is one. The absolutive morpheme appears at the beginning of the auxiliary verb.

Hopefully, the discussion of these examples has shown you that building an auxiliary form in Euskara, with all its agreement markers, is just a matter of putting a few pieces together. All you have to know is what the pieces are, and where they belong. So let us now take a look at the inventory of pieces, what linguists would call the paradigms of agreement morphology.

## 2.2. The paradigms of agreement morphology.

Here we will provide the different morphemes that correspond to the different persons in the agreement morphology, depending on whether they correspond to absolutive, dative or ergative phrases in the sentence. The rest of the variables in the auxiliary verb will be kept constant, and will be discussed later. That is, we will stick to present tense forms, without modal markers. The only element that will vary is the root of the auxiliary, as you have already seen in the examples discussed above.

Only three paradigms are necessary, one for each [case](#). Thus, we will have an absolutive paradigm, a dative paradigm and an ergative paradigm. In order to construct an inflected form the relevant morpheme is selected from the relevant paradigm, and placed in the appropriate position: the absolutive morpheme immediately before the root, the dative morpheme immediately after the root, and then the ergative morpheme.

Let us first see the agreement paradigms in isolation, and we will then combine them with the auxiliary roots to create actual inflected forms. Underneath the case names, you find in brackets the names those cases receive in Euskara. The cases are named after the personal [interrogative pronoun](#), inflected for the corresponding case:

**NOR** is 'who' in absolutive, and the name of the absolutive case and agreement paradigm;

**NORI** is 'who' with the dative case morpheme, and the name of the dative case and agreement paradigm;

**NORK** is 'who' with the ergative case morpheme, and the name of the ergative case and agreement paradigm. If you ever decide to learn the language, that is how you will learn to name the cases and the verbal paradigms according to the number of cases they reflect.

<u>PERSONS</u>	ABSOLUTIVE (NOR)	DATIVE (NORI)	ERGATIVE (NORK)
NI	N	T/DA	T/DA
<u>male</u>	H	K/A	K/A
HI	H	N/NA	N/NA
<u>female</u>	H	N/NA	N/NA
HURA	(D)	O	-
GU	G	GU	GU
ZU	Z	ZU	ZU
ZUEK	Z	ZUE	ZUE
HAIEK	(D)	E	TE

Let us now discuss a few issues concerning these paradigms.

**2.2.1. The persons.** Starting from left to right, let us consider the column corresponding to the [person](#) distinctions. You see that there are seven different categories in that column. The first three are singular persons, the first (**ni**), the second (**hi**) and the third (**hura**). The next four

belong to the set of plural persons. Here we find the first person plural (**gu**), and two second person plurals, **zu** and **zuek**, which have been distinguished in the paradigm by calling the first one 'second person plural', and the second one 'second person plural plural'.

In older stages of the language, there was only one second person plural, **zu**. Later, this pronoun started being used as a polite form of addressing, and finally it took the place of a polite second person singular. A new second person pronoun was created, **zuek**, to denote only second person plural. As you can see and will see later, the morphology of **zu** makes it similar to plural forms, even though its meaning is nowadays singular. This is the reason why there are two second person forms in the verbal paradigms of modern Euskara, the original one, **zu**, and the second one, **zuek**, created on top of the original one.

**2.2.2. Phonological changes.** If you consider the dative and ergative paradigms, you will see that the first two persons in the singular group have two different markers. The one on the left is the one that surfaces if it happens to be at the end of the form. The one on the right is the one that surfaces if it happens to be followed by other morphemes. This alternation has already been illustrated in the examples in (39).

**2.2.3. The third person.** You can see that the morpheme corresponding to the third person singular and the third person plural appears in brackets. This is due to the fact that the shape of the third person morpheme varies depending on the paradigm and the tense or modality of the verbal form. Thus, for instance, in present tense paradigms, like the ones we discuss here, it is often a **d** that surfaces, and that is what the paradigms above show. In past tense forms, the third person marker can be a **z**, or nothing at all, and in forms with [modals](#) it can also be a **l** morpheme. We will discuss these variations when addressing the morphology of [tense](#).

**2.2.4. A few full paradigms and how to use them.** Let us now consider a few actual paradigms of auxiliary verbs, where the agreement paradigms seen above are combined with auxiliary roots.

Let us start with a paradigm containing only absolutive agreement. The auxiliary root corresponds to the verb **izan** 'to be'. The following paradigm in (40) is thus both the auxiliary verb for intransitive verbs, and the paradigm for the verb 'to be'.

(40)

PERSON	NOR	ROOT
NI	N	AIZ
HI	H	AIZ
HURA	D	A
GU	G	ARA
ZU	Z	ARA
ZUEK	Z	ARETE

HAIEK     D             IRA

In this paradigm, the root varies quite a lot. It is often the case across languages that the paradigm of the verb 'to be', one of the most used verbs, presents a high degree of irregularity, and Euskara is no exception to this.

Consider now the paradigm of an auxiliary verb containing absolute and a dative agreement. In the Basque grammatical tradition, the paradigm in (41) is called a NOR-NORI paradigm:

(41)

PERSON	NOR	ROOT	NORI
NI	NA	TZAI	T
HI	HA	TZAI	K/N
HURA	-	ZAI	O
GU	GA	TZAI ZKI	GU
ZU	ZA	TZAI ZKI	ZU
ZUEK	ZA	TZAI ZKI	ZUE TE
HAIEK	-	ZAI ZKI	E

Let us see how this paradigm works. In order to obtain the actual forms, what you have to do is pick the morpheme you need from each column, and put them together in the order indicated by the paradigm. For instance, suppose we had a sentence with a first person absolute pronoun, and a second person plural (by this we mean **zuek**) dative pronoun. The sentence could be something like (42):

(42)  
ni zuei etorri .....  
I you-D come

In order to complete this sentence, we look in the **NOR** column and we select the morpheme corresponding to the first person singular: **na**. Now we take the root of the auxiliary, **tzai**, and then we select the morpheme corresponding to **zuek** in the **NORI** column, which is **zue**. We put all these together in the order **NOR-ROOT-NORI**, and the form is created: **natzaizue**. This is indeed the form needed to complete the sentence in (42):

(42)

ni zuei etorri natzaizue  
I you-D come me-be-you  
'I have come to you (plural)'

You have probably noticed that the plural persons have an extra morpheme **te** after the root. This morpheme indicates plurality of the absolutive phrase, so it is used when the sentence contains a plural absolutive phrase. For instance, suppose we have a sentence like (43):

(43)  
gu amamari bisita egitera joan .....  
we grandmother-D visit-det make-to gone

where the absolutive phrase is a first person plural pronoun **gu** 'we'. We look in the **NOR** column and we find the morpheme **ga**. Then we take the root **tzai**. Now, after the root morpheme we must also select the plural morpheme **zki**, and now we can consider the dative morpheme. In the sentence in (43), the dative morpheme is a third person singular **amamari** 'to grandmother', so we must select the morpheme **o**. We put everything together, and the resulting form is: **gatzaizkio**. Now we can complete our sentence:

(43)  
gu amamari bisita egitera joan gatzaizkio  
we grandmother-D visit-det make-to gone we-be-pl-her  
'we have gone to grandmother to make a visit'

In the familiar second person singular **hi**, you can find two morphemes in the **NORI** (dative) column. The first one (**k**) corresponds to a male, the second one (**n**) to a female (gender). This is the only person where the morphology makes distinctions according to sex, and it only makes them in the **NORI** (dative) and **NORK** (ergative) paradigms. Compare the two examples in (44):

(44)  
a. gu hiri laguntzera etorriko gatzaizkik  
we you-D help-to come-irr we-be-pl-you(male)  
'We will come to you(male) to help'  
b. gu hiri laguntzera etorriko gatzaizkin  
we you-D help-to come-irr we-be-pl-you(female)  
'We will come to you(female) to help'

The third person singular and third person plural have zero morphemes in the **NOR** (absolutive) column. Thus, the forms for sentences with third person absolutive phrases look like the ones illustrated in (45):

(45)  
a. aititeri txapela erori zaio  
grandfather-D hat fallen it-be-him  
'The hat fell (to)from grandfather'



- b. amamari betaurrekoak erori zaizkio  
 grandmother-D glasses-det<sub>pl</sub> fallen it-be-pl-her  
 'The glasses fell (to)from grandmother'

Finally, note that there is a **te** morpheme following the **NORI** column and corresponding to the second person plural **zuek**. This **te** morpheme belongs to the **NOR** column, and it is used when the absolutive phrase is the pronoun **zuek**. It distinguishes a form where the absolutive phrase is the second person singular **zu**, from the plural with **zuek**, since only the latter adds this extra plural **te** marker at the end of the form. To see this with an example, consider the contrast in (46):

(46)

- a. niri zu gustatzen zatzaizkit  
 I-D you like-impf you-be-pl-me  
 'I like you(sing)'
- b. niri zuek gustatzen zatzaizkidate  
 I-D you like-impf you-be-pl-me-pl  
 'I like you(pl)'

Now let us consider another paradigm, this one including **NOR** (absolutive), **NORI** (dative) and **NORK** (ergative) agreement morphemes. First, let us see what the paradigm looks like and then we will see how to use it with examples. The paradigm in (47) is known as a NOR-NORI-NORK paradigm.

(47)

PERSON	NOR	ROOT	NORI	NORK
NI	D	I	T(DA)	T
HI	D	I	K(A)/N(NA)	K/N
HURA		I	O	-
GU		I	GU	GU
ZU		I	ZU	ZU
ZUEK		I	ZUE	ZUE
HAIEK		I ZKI	E	TE

The first thing you probably noticed looking at [this paradigm](#) is that the **NOR** column only contains morphemes for third person, singular and plural. The reason is that there is a restriction in the **NOR** paradigm of NOR- NORI-NORK forms. Inflected forms with three agreement morphemes can only have third person agreement in the absolutive ([48a](#)). It is not possible to

have auxiliaries that agree with three arguments if the absolute agreement is first or second person. This is illustrated in (48b), where the form has been made up for this example. Although it is possible to combine the different morphemes that would yield the desired output, the combination is nevertheless ungrammatical.

- (48)
- a. Zuk niri liburua saldu d-i-da-zu  
you-E I-D book-det sold it-have-me-you  
'You have sold me the book'
- b. \*zuk harakinari ni saldu n-(a)i-o-zu  
you-E butcher-D I sold me-have-him-you  
'You have sold me to the butcher'

It is important to note that this restriction concerns only the inflection of Euskara. In infinitival sentences, which contain no overt auxiliary or agreement morphology, it is possible to have sentences like (48b). Thus, consider (49):

- (49)
- gaizki iruditzen zait [ zuk ni harakinari saltzea]  
wrong look-impf it-be-me you-E me-A butcher-D sell-inf  
'It seems wrong to me for you to sell me to the butcher'

As you can also see by looking at the paradigm, the only difference between third person singular and third person plural is the plural marker **zki** that appears after the root in the third person plural.

If you consider the NORI column, you will see that first and second person morphemes come in two different shapes, one of which appears in brackets. The first form, the one that is not in brackets, surfaces if it happens to be the last morpheme of the auxiliary verb, and the one in brackets surfaces if there are other morphemes following. As we have seen before, the familiar second person **hi** has different morphemes in the dative and the ergative, depending on whether the individual it denotes is male or female.

Now we are ready to construct a few examples. Consider a sentence like (51):

- (51)
- guk zuri liburu hau eman .....  
we-E you-D book this given

The auxiliary needed here involves a third person singular **NOR** (absolute), which is **d**. Then comes the root, which is **i**. Then we need a polite second person dative, which is **zu**. Finally, we need a first person plural ergative, which is **gu**. The form is **dizugu**:

- (51)
- guk zuri liburu hau eman dizugu  
we-E you-D book this given it-have-you-we  
'We have given you this book'

Let us try one more. Consider a sentence like (52):

(52)  
gurasoek niri belarritako ederrak erosi .....  
parent-det<sub>pl</sub>-E I-D earring beautiful- det<sub>pl</sub> bought

There is a third person plural absolutive phrase; looking at [the paradigm](#), we see that the corresponding morpheme is **d** and then the root follows, **i**, and the plural marker, **zki**. There is a first person dative, and here we have to decide which one of the two forms to select. We must look to see whether the selection of ergative will add morphemes after the dative or not. The ergative phrase is a third person plural, so the morpheme to select is **te**. Therefore, the dative form must be **da**. The resulting form is:

(52)  
gurasoek niri belarritako ederrak erosi **dizkidate**  
parent-det<sub>pl</sub>-E I-D earring beautiful- det<sub>pl</sub> bought it-have-pl-me-they  
'(my) parents have bought me beautiful earrings'

And finally, let us consider another type of paradigm that combines [absolutive](#) and [ergative agreement](#). These paradigms are called NOR-NORK paradigms. We will illustrate the present tense NOR-NORK in (53):

(53)

PERSON	NOR	ROOT	NORK
NI	NA	U	T
HI	HA	U	K/N
HURA	D	U	-
GU	GA IT	U	GU
ZU	ZA IT	U	ZU
ZUEK	ZA IT	U ZTE	ZUE
HAIEK	D IT	U	TE

Let us get some practice with [this paradigm](#): suppose you wanted to say something like 'Miren sees Patxi'. Since this is a transitive sentence, it involves an ergative phrase **Mirenek**, and an absolutive phrase **Patxi**. There is the main verb **ikus** to which we attach the imperfective marker **ten**, resulting in **ikusten**. Now we are ready to figure out the auxiliary verb: it combines a third person **NOR**, so the morpheme we need is **d**, then comes the root which is **u**, and then it combines a third person **NORK**, so the morpheme we need is a zero. The resulting auxiliary verb is **du**. The sentence we wanted to say is 'Mirenek Patxi ikusten du'.

If you consider [this paradigm](#), you will see that there is a *zte* morpheme following the root. This morpheme distinguishes auxiliary verbs that have a second person singular absolutive from forms that have a second person plural absolutive. The morpheme is only used when the auxiliary reflects agreement with a second person plural. For instance, take the sentence 'Miren sees you guys'. Think about it...

Yes! The answer is correct. This sentence in Euskara is 'Mirenek zuek ikusten *zaituzte*'.

As you see, the way to construct inflected verbs in Euskara is rather simple: it involves putting pieces together, one after the other in a fixed order. There are few instances where the order of the elements is altered, typically in forms involving [third person](#) absolutive phrases and past tense or modals. We will discuss those instances in the following sections, as we lay out the morphology of tenses and modals, which is simpler than the [agreement](#) morphology, because it involves alternations of less elements.

### 3. TENSE.

There are two tenses: past and present. Past tense is manifest in the verbal inflection by means of the morpheme **n** at the end of the inflected form. Present tense is a zero morpheme, as illustrated in [the paradigms](#) above. The presence of past tense alters the shape of the initial material of the verbal root, and it can also alter the order of morphemes, as we will see in [1.3.1](#).

Let us take some of the verbal paradigms we have already discussed and see what they look like when they are inflected for past tense.

Consider the paradigm of the verb **izan** 'to be', involving only absolutive agreement. In [\(40\)](#), it was inflected for present tense. In (54) below, the past tense forms are illustrated:

(54)

PERSON	NOR	ROOT TENSE
NI	<i>Nin</i>	TZE N
HI	<i>Hin</i>	TZE N
HURA	<i>Z</i>	E N
GU	<i>Gin</i>	E N
ZU	<i>Zin</i>	E N
ZUEK	<i>Zin</i>	E TE N
HAIEK	<i>Zi</i>	RE N

Comparing (40) and (54) you find the following differences: in the column corresponding to the absolutive agreement (NOR), the marker for third person has changed from **d** to **z**. Present tense forms have **d** for third person absolutive, while past tense forms have **z** for third person absolutive. The vowel **a** that appeared in all other person morphemes has now changed into **in**. Concerning the root of **izan** 'to be', there have been changes as well. At the end of the form appears the past tense morpheme **n**.

Consider next a verbal paradigm containing absolutive and dative agreement, that is, a **NOR-NORI** paradigm. In (41), the present tense forms were illustrated, and (55) below illustrates the past tense paradigm:

(55)

PERSON	NOR	ROOT	ZKI	NORI	TENSE
NI	Nin	TZAI	ZKI	DA	N
HI	Hin	TZAI	ZKI	A/NA	N
HURA	Zi	TZAI	ZKI	O	N
GU	Gin	TZAI		GU	N
ZU	Zin	TZAI		ZU	N
ZUEK	Zin	TZAI		ZUE	TE N
HAIEK	Zi	TZAI		E	N

As you can see by comparing (55) and (41), the absolutive agreement changes a little in the presence of past tense. In the **NORI** (dative) column, we have chosen to illustrate the markers **da** and **a, na** for first and second familiar persons. **Recall** that this is the form those agreement morphemes take when something else follows them in the auxiliary, as it is the case in past tense forms, where the final **n** is required to indicate past tense.

**3.1.Past tense and ergative agreement.** We can now consider past tense paradigms where there are ergative (**NORK**) agreement markers. In these paradigms, some forms present a different order of agreement morphemes. Let us first consider the forms where there is no morpheme-order alterations. In (56) below, you can see the overall NOR-NORK past tense paradigm. That is, the paradigm of forms containing **NOR** (absolutive) and **NORK** (ergative) agreement markers and past tense:

(56)

PERSON	NOR	ROOT	NORK	TENSE
NI	Nind	U	DA	N
HI	Hind	U	A/NA	N
HURA	{}	U	-	N
GU	Gint	U	GU	N
ZU	Zint	U ZTE	ZU	N
ZUEK	Zint		ZUE	N
HAIEK	{}		TE	N

If you ignore forms that involve third person absolutive, which are discussed below in (57), the paradigm in (56) provides all the necessary combinations. A few changes occur in between absolutive agreement and the root, which we have put under absolutive agreement, and the final **n** morpheme is added. Otherwise, all remarks made concerning the present tense paradigm in (53) apply to this past tense paradigm as well.

But what about forms involving third person absolutive? These are the ones that present a slight change in the order of the agreement morphemes, so they are best discussed in a separate paradigm. Consider the paradigm in (57) below:

(57)

PERSON	NORK	ROOT	TENSE
NI	N	U	N
HI	H	U	N
HURA	Z	U	N
GU	G EN	U	N
ZU	Z EN	U	N
ZUEK	Z EN	U TE	N
HAIEK	Z	IT U TE	N

This is what happens when third person absolutive forms are involved in forms containing ergative agreement and past tense: the markers that usually signal the presence of an absolutive phrase now signal the presence of an ergative phrase, and no markers appear signaling the presence of the absolutive phrase, except for the plural marker *it*. Let us consider a couple of examples. In (58), the contrast between a present tense form and a past tense form is illustrated:

(58)

- a. **Zuk emakumea** ikusi **d-u-zu**  
 you-E woman-det seen her-have-you  
 'You have seen the woman'
- b. **Zuk emakumea** ikusi **zen-u-en**  
 you-E woman-det seen you-have-past  
 'You saw the woman'

By comparing the inflected auxiliaries in (58a) and (58b), you can see that (58a) has markers for both the absolutive phrase **emakumea**'the woman', whose marker in the auxiliary is **d**, and the ergative phrase, **zuk**'you', whose marker in the auxiliary is **zu**. Moreover, those markers follow the standard order: absolutive precedes the root and ergative follows it. Now consider the form in (58b): there is no marker for the absolutive phrase, and in the place usually reserved for the absolutive phrase there appears a marker for the pronoun**zu**, as if there were a second person absolutive pronoun in the sentence. In these forms, the ergative phrase is signaled in the auxiliary by means of the marker that normally signals absolutive, as the paradigm in (57) indicates.

Further, it must be noted that there remains one aspect in which the absolutive phrase gets reflected in the auxiliary in these cases: if the absolutive phrase is plural, a plural marker appears signaling the fact, as shown in (59), where again present tense and past tense forms are compared:

(59)

- a. **Nik liburuak** irakurri **d-it-u-t**  
 I-E book-det<sub>pl</sub> read it-pl-have-me  
 'I have read (the) books'
- b. **Nik liburuak** irakurri **n-it-u-en**  
 I-E book-det<sub>pl</sub> read me-pl-have-past  
 'I read (the) books'

As you can see comparing the forms in (59a) and (59b), the plural marker **it** signals the plurality of the absolutive phrase **liburuak**'the books' both in the present tense form **ditut** and in the past tense form **nituen**, despite the fact that the way in which the ergative phrase **nik**'I' is marked has varied in form and place. This phenomenon is discussed by [Ortiz de Urbina \(1986\)](#) and [Laka](#)

(1993), among others. It is also triggered in the case of forms involving [modals](#), in [hypothetical](#) forms.

Hence, the paradigm in (57) yields the following forms:

- (60)
- n(it)uen**
  - h(it)uen**
  - z(it)uen**
  - gen(it)uen**
  - zen(it)uen**
  - z(it)uzten**

Finally, we are ready to see the NOR-NORI-NORK past tense paradigm. That is, the paradigm to construct auxiliary forms that contain absolutive, dative and ergative agreement markers, and past tense. The paradigm is illustrated in (61):

(61)	PERSON	NORK	ROOT	ZKI	NORI	TE	TENSE
	NI	N	I		DA	TE	N
	HI	H	I		A/NA		N
	HURA	Z	I		O		N
	GU	G EN	I		GU		N
	ZU	Z EN	I		ZU		N
	ZUEK	Z EN	I		ZUE		N
	HAIEK	Z	I		E		N

Recall that tripersonal forms, that is, forms that contain all three agreement markers have a restriction regarding the absolutive, which must be third person. This is explained in the discussion of examples (48) and (49) above.

When we turn to the past tense paradigm, then, in the case of (61) all forms contain some ergative marker and a third person absolutive. As we have just seen before, in these cases the order of the morphemes changes, as in the paradigm in (57).

The paradigm in (61) reflects this alteration of the morpheme-order: now the morphemes in the leftmost column signal the presence of the ergative phrase. Let us see an example contrasting present (62a) and past tense (62b) forms:



- (62) a. zuk guri lore bat ekarri **d-i-gu-zu**  
 you-E we-D flower one brought it-have-us-you  
 'you have brought us one flower'
- b. zuk guri lore bat ekarri **z-en-i-gu-n**  
 you-E we-D flower one brought you-have-us-past  
 'you have brought us one flower'

The only morpheme that is sensitive to the absolutive phrase in (61) can be found right after the root, in blue. It is the morpheme **zki**, which also appears in the paradigm in (55). It is to be used if the absolutive phrase in the sentence is plural, in the same way that the morpheme **it** is used in the **NOR-NORK** paradigm in (57), which we have discussed in examples (59) and (60). Thus, compare the form in (62b), which contains a singular absolutive phrase **lore bat** 'one flower', with the form in (63), where the absolutive phrase is plural:

- (63) zuk guri lore batzu ekarri **z-en-i-zki-gu-n**  
 you-E we-D flower some brought you-have-pl-us-past  
 'you have brought us some flowers'

Finally, the **te** morpheme that appears after the **NORI** (dative) agreement column and immediately before the past tense morpheme **n** in the last two persons of [the paradigm](#), is to be used when the sentence contains an ergative phrase that is either second person plural **zuek** or third person plural **haiek**. That is, this **te** morpheme is a continuation of the morpheme at the very beginning of [the paradigm](#). Consider the examples in (64), and compare them with (62b) and (63) respectively:

- (64) a. zuek guri lore bat ekarri **z-en-i-gu-te-n**  
 you<sub>pl</sub>-E we-D flower one brought you-have-us-pl-past  
 'you(pl) have brought us one flower'
- b. zuek guri lore batzu ekarri **z-en-i-zki-gu-te-n**  
 you<sub>pl</sub>-E we-D flower some brought you-have-pl-us-pl-past  
 'you(pl) have brought us some flowers'

So far, then we have managed to combine all agreement markers in present and past tense. It is time to talk about how to include modals in the picture.

Examples of the sort of (48b) can occasionally be found in literary works, and whether they ever existed in spoken language or are a literary creation has been a topic for debate among Basque grammarians for a long time. The modern varieties of Basque we are concerned with do certainly not allow forms like (48b).

#### 4. MODALITY: THE MORHEMES 'KE' AND 'BA'.

There are two kinds of modals that affect directly verbal inflection. The first one involves the morpheme **ke**, which is used to create potential forms like the one in (65a), and consequences of conditionals, like the one in (65b):

- (65) a. Mirenek Patxi ikus d-eza-ke  
Miren-E Patxi-A see him-root-mod  
'Miren can see Patxi'
- b. itsua ez balitz, Mirenek Patxi ikusiko l-u-ke  
blind-det not if-were, Miren-E Patxi-A see-irr him-root-mod  
'If she were not blind, Miren would see Patxi'

As you can see in (65), the root of the auxiliary changes when the form is potential, and when it is a consequence of a conditional. The second modal morpheme in the auxiliary is the conditional 'if', and it involves the morpheme **ba.**, which you see illustrated in the first half of (65b)

#### 4.1. Modality and tense.

In the previous sections, when discussing verbal paradigms, we have considered [present tense](#) forms and [past tense](#) forms. Inflected forms containing modal morphemes can also combine with present tense and past tense. But there is a third possibility, which we may call the 'hypothetical', which involves no tense at all. These hypothetical forms are neither present nor past. They lack a specification for tense. Examples of the three-way alternation are given in (66):

- (66) a. Mirenek Patxi ikus d-eza-ke  
Miren-E Patxi-A see him-root-mod  
'Miren can see Patxi'
- b. Mirenek Patxi ikus z-eza-ke-en  
Miren-E Patxi-A see him-root-mod  
'Miren could see Patxi'
- c. Mirenek Patxi ikus l-eza-ke  
Miren-E Patxi-A see him-root-mod  
'Miren could/might see Patxi'

If you consider the auxiliary forms in (66), you can see that (66a) contains a [d morpheme](#) for the third person absolutive phrase in the sentence. This is an indication that the form is a present tense form. In (66a), we find the equivalent form inflected for past tense: the [past tense](#) morpheme **n** has been attached to the modal morpheme **ke**, and an [epenthetic](#) vowel **e** has been inserted. The marker for the [third person](#) absolutive phrase is now **z**. Finally, in (66c), we find a form that is neither present nor past. It is the hypothetical. In this form, the marker for third person is the morpheme **l**, and there is no tense morpheme attached at the end of the form.

Therefore, when considering the various paradigms involving modal morphemes, we will often have to consider present tense forms, past tense forms, and hypothetical forms.

We will start considering paradigms containing the modal morpheme **ke**. In particular, we will start with forms denoting potentiality.

#### 4.2. The modal morpheme 'ke': potentiality.

In earlier stages of the language, this morpheme created future forms, but no longer ([Lafon \(1944\)](#)). The modal morpheme **ke** appears in inflected forms that indicate a potentiality, a possibility. For instance, if something may happen, or can be done. The appearance of this morpheme induces changes in the root of the auxiliary, as we will see in the paradigms.

The verbal participle or main verb displays no [aspect](#) marker when it is used in conjunction with an inflected potential form, as you can see in [the examples](#). Thus, the verb **etorri** 'to come' must display its root only, without any aspectual morpheme attached: **etor**.

We will now consider the paradigms that result from the combination of different agreement types and tense specifications. As we have done [before](#), we start with forms that contain only one agreement marker, and we will build it up from there.

#### 4.2.1. Potential paradigms: absolutive.

For general instructions as to how to use these paradigms, see the [previous paradigms](#). Special remarks concerning potential paradigms are discussed [below](#), after each relevant paradigm. [Examples](#) of a few forms will be given at the end of each section.

##### *Present tense potential paradigm*

(67)	<b>PERSON</b>	<b>NOR</b>	<b>ROOT</b>	<b>MODAL</b>
	NI	<b>Na</b>	ITE	KE
	HI	<b>Ha</b>	ITE	KE
	HURA	<b>Da</b>	ITE	KE
	GU	<b>Ga</b>	ITE <b>Z</b>	KE
	ZU	<b>Za</b>	ITE <b>Z</b>	KE
	ZUEK	<b>Za</b>	ITE <b>Z</b>	KE
	HAI EK	<b>Da</b>	ITE <b>Z</b>	KE

##### *Past tense potential paradigm*

(68)	<b>PERSON</b>	<b>NOR</b>	<b>ROOT</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>MODAL</b>	<b>TE</b>	<b>TENSE</b>
	NI	<b>Nin</b>	TE	<b>Z</b>	KE		eN
	HI	<b>Hin</b>	TE	<b>Z</b>	KE		eN
	HURA	<b>Zi</b>	TE	<b>Z</b>	KE		eN
	GU	<b>Gin</b>	TE		KE		eN

ZU	Zin	TE	KE	eN
ZUEK	Zin	TE	KE	N
HAIEK	Zi	TE	KE	eN

In this paradigm, notice that an epenthetic vowel is inserted between the modal morpheme and the past morpheme. The epenthetic vowel is not necessary in the case of the second person plural, **zuek**, which inflects as **zintezketen**, because there is a morpheme in between the modal **ke** and the past tense morpheme **n**.

*Hypothetical potential paradigm*

(69)	<b>PERSON</b>	<b>NOR</b>	<b>ROOT</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>MODAL</b>	<b>TE</b>
	NI	Nin	TE	Z	KE	
	HI	Hin	TE	Z	KE	
	HURA	Li	TE	Z	KE	
	GU	Gin	TE		KE	
	ZU	Zin	TE		KE	
	ZUEK	Zin	TE		KE	
	HAIEK	Li	TE		KE	

By means of these paradigms, we can construct potential inflected auxiliaries for sentences involving only absolutive agreement. Some examples are given in (70):

(70)

- a. Miren Bilbora etor daiteke  
Miren-A Bilbo-to come she-root-mod  
'Miren can come to Bilbo'
- b. gu Bilbora etor gintezkeen  
we-A Bilbo-to come us-root-mod-tns  
'we could have come to Bilbo'
- c. hi Bilbora etor hinteke  
you-A Bilbo-to come you-root-mod  
'you could come to Bilbo'

**4.2.2. Potential paradigms: absolutive and dative.** Next we will consider the inflected forms necessary to construct potential forms in sentences containing both an absolutive phrase and a dative phrase. For comparison, you may look back at the paradigms of absolutive-dative (**NOR-NORI**) we have already seen [before](#).

*Present tense potential, absolutive and dative agreement.*

(71)	PERSON	NOR	ROOT	ZKI	NORI	MODAL	TE
	NI	Na	KI	ZKI	DA	KE	
	HI	Ha	KI	ZKI	A/NA	KE	
	HURA	Da	KI	ZKI	O	KE	
	GU	Ga	KI		GU	KE	
	ZU	Za	KI		ZU	KE	
	ZUEK	Za	KI		ZUE	KE	
	HAIEK	Da	KI		E	KE	

As we have done [before](#), the morphemes in the dative (**NORI**) column are given in the form they must take when other morphemes follow. In this paradigm, the modal morpheme always follows the dative morpheme. The morpheme **te** at the end of the paradigm distinguishes the absolutive second person singular **zu** from the absolutive second person plural [zuek](#):

(72)

a. zu guri bisita egitera etor zakizkiguke  
 you-A we-D visit make-to come you-root-us-mod  
 'you can come to pay us a visit'

b. zuek guri bisita egitera etor zakizkigukete  
 you(pl)-A we-D visit make-to come you-root-us-mod  
 'you (pl) can come to pay us a visit'

*Past tense potential, absolutive and dative agreement.*

(73)	<b>PERSON</b>	<b>NOR</b>	<b>ROOT</b>	<b>ZKI</b>	<b>NORI</b>	<b>MODAL</b>	<b>TE</b>	<b>TENSE</b>
	NI	Nen	KI	ZKI	DA	KE		N
	HI	Hen	KI	ZKI	A/NA	KE		N
	HURA	Ze	KI	ZKI	O	KE		N
	GU	Gen	KI		GU	KE		N
	ZU	Zen	KI		ZU	KE		N
	ZUEK	Zen	KI		ZUE	KE		N
	HAIEK	Ze	KI		E	KE		N

*Hypothetical potential, absolutive and dative agreement.*

(74)	<b>PERSON</b>	<b>NOR</b>	<b>ROOT</b>	<b>ZKI</b>	<b>NORI</b>	<b>MODAL</b>	<b>TE</b>
	NI	Nen	KI	ZKI	DA	KE	
	HI	Hen	KI	ZKI	A/NA	KE	
	HURA	Le	KI	ZKI	O	KE	
	GU	Gen	KI		GU	KE	
	ZU	Zen	KI		ZU	KE	
	ZUEK	Zen	KI		ZUE	KE	
	HAIEK	Le	KI		E	KE	

As you can see, in general the only difference between the past tense paradigm and the hypothetical is the lack of the final past tense morpheme, and the difference in marking third person. A few examples of the forms these paradigms generate are given in (75):

(75)

a. Patxi bihar etor dakiguke, nahi badu  
Patxi-A tomorrow come he-root-us-mod want if-has  
'Patxi can come to us tomorrow, if he wants'

b. atzo etor nenkizukeen, baina ez zenidan eskatu  
yesterday come me-root-you-mod-tns but not you-root-me-tns ask  
'I could have come to you yesterday, but you didn't ask me'

c. edonori eror lekioke teilatu zati bat  
anyone-D fall it-root-her/him-mod roof piece one  
'A piece of roof could fall onto anyone'

In these examples, some arguments are [absent](#), only manifest in verbal inflection.

#### 4.2.3. Potential paradigms: absolutive and ergative.

*Present tense potential, absolutive and ergative.*

(76)	<b>PERSON</b>	<b>NOR</b>	<b>ROOT</b>	<b>MODAL</b>	<b>NORK</b>
	NI	Na	ZA	KE	T
	HI	Ha	ZA	KE	K/N
	HURA	De	ZA	KE	-
	GU	Ga IT	ZA	KE	GU
	ZU	Za IT	ZA	KE	ZU
	ZUEK	Za IT	ZA	KE TE	ZUE
	HAI EK	D IT	ZA	KE	TE

The root of the [auxiliary](#) has now changed, because this is a transitive form. As you can see, ergative agreement follows the modal morpheme. The plurality morphemes for the absolutive phrases (*it*) precede the root of the transitive auxiliary, while they followed the root of the intransitive auxiliary the [previous](#) paradigms.

To create the past tense paradigm, we must add the past tense morpheme **n**, and as a result, we must now differentiate those forms that have third person absolutive, from the others. This phenomenon that alters the order of the morphemes has been discussed [before](#), you may look back at it. here, we will first consider the past tense paradigm containing all persons except third persons in the absolutive class, and next to it the paradigm corresponding to third person absolutive, singular and plural, where the order of the morphemes is altered.

*Present tense potential, absolutive and ergative.*

(77)	PERSON	NOR	ROOT	MODAL	TE	NORK	TENSE
	NI	N int	ZA	KE		DA	N
	HI	H int	ZA	KE		A/NA	N
	HURA	G int	ZA	KE		GU	N
	GU	Z int	ZA	KE		ZU	N
	ZU	Z int	ZA	KE		ZUE	N
	ZUEK					TE	N
	HAIEK						N

For the inflected forms involving third person absolutive phrases, the relevant paradigm is provided in (78):

(78)	PERSON	NORK	PLURAL	ROOT	MODAL	TENSE
	NI	N	IT	ZA	KE	N
	HI	H		ZA	KE	N
	HURA	Ze		ZA	KE	N
	GU	Gen		ZA	KE	N
	ZU	Zen		ZA	KE	N
	ZUEK	Zen		ZA	KE TE	N
	HAIEK	Z		ZA	KE TE	N

In the hypothetical paradigm, this morpheme order is kept. To create the hypothetical paradigms, all that needs to be done is:

(a) to take off the past tense morpheme **n** at the end of paradigms (77) and (78), and

(b) to replace third person morpheme **z** with the hypothetical third person morpheme **l** and the hypothetical forms result (79d). We provide examples of present tense, past tense and hypothetical forms in (79):



(79)

a. Mirenek ni ikus nazake *present tense* (76)

Miren-E I-A see me-root-mod

"Miren can see me"

b. Zuk gu maita gintzakezun *past tense* (77)

You-E we-A love us-pl-root-mod-you-tns

"You could have loved us"

c. Nik Miren ikus nezakeen *past tense* (78)

I-E Miren-A see me-root-mod-tns

"I could see Miren"

d. Mirenek Patxi maita lezake *hypothetical* (78) *altered*

Miren-E Patxi-A love her-root-mod

"Miren might love Patxi"

#### 4.2.4. Potential paradigms: absolutive, dative and ergative.

*Present tense:*

(79)	PERSON	NOR	ROOT	NORI	MODAL	NORK
	NI	D	IEZA	DA	KE	T
	HI	D	IEZA ZKI	A/NA	KE	K/N
	HURA			iO	KE	-
	GU			GU	KE	GU
	ZU			ZU	KE	ZU
	ZUEK			ZUE	KE	ZUE
	HAIEK			iE	KE	TE

Examples of forms generated by this paradigm are given in (80):

(80)

a. Hik Alazneri larrosa eman diezaioken

You-E Alazne-D rose-A give it-root-her-mod-you

'You(fem) can give a rose to Alazne'

b. Neskek mutilei liburu bana opari diezaiekete  
 Girl-pl-E boy-pl-A book one-distr present it-root-them-mod-they  
 'The girls can give one book to each boy'

*Past tense*

(81)	PERSON	NORK	ROOT	PLUR	NORI	MODAL	PLUR.	TENSE
	NI	N	IEZA	ZKI	DA	KE	TE	N
	HI	H	IEZA		A/NA	KE	TE	N
	HURA	Z	IEZA		iO	KE		N
	GU	Gen	IEZA		GU	KE		N
	ZU	Zen	IEZA		ZU	KE		N
	ZUEK	Zen	IEZA		ZUE	KE		N
	HAIEK	Z	IEZA		E	KE		N

Examples of forms generated by the paradigm in (81) are given in (82) below:

(82)

a. Klarak guri beldurra eman ziezagukeen  
 Klara-E we-D fear-A give it-root-us-mod-tns  
 'Klara could have frightened us'

b. Zuek irakasleari azterketa lapur zeniezaioketen  
 You-pl-E teacher-det-D exam-det-A steal it-root-him-mod-pl-tns  
 'You guys could have stolen the exam form the teacher'

As [before](#), in section 4.2., all we need to do to create the hypothetical forms is to take off the past tense morpheme marker **n**, and substitute the third person morpheme **z** for the third person morpheme **l**. Some hypothetical forms are illustrated in (83):

(83)

a. guk hizlariari galdera zailak egin geniezaizkioke  
 we-E speaker-det-D question difficult-det<sub>pl</sub>-A make we-root- pl-her-mod  
 'We could ask difficult questions to the speaker'

b. Mirenek Patxiri musu eman liezaioke  
 Miren-E Patxi-D kiss give her-root-him-mod  
 'Miren could give a kiss to Patxi'

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