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Externalization and
morphosyntactic parameters
in Basque

HISAO TOKIZAKI

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Ekaitz Santazilia

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Eneko Zuloaga

Borja Ariztimuño



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HISAO TOKIZAKI

Sapporo University

toki@sapporo-u.ac.jp

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ABSTRACT

Basque has interesting morphosyntactic properties such as head-finality, agglutinativity and recursive compounding. In generative grammar, these properties have been discussed in terms of parameters such as head-directionality and the Compounding Parameter (Snyder, 2001). In the minimalist program (Chomsky, 1995 *et seq.*), it is argued that head directionality is an externalization parameter. The properties of this parameter have not been much discussed. In this paper I will argue that these morphosyntactic properties can be attributed to left-edge stress (stress on the initial or the second syllable of a word), which is common in all Basque dialects despite their apparently different prosody.

Keywords: head-finality; agglutinativity; recursive compounding; word stress; minimalist program.

1. Introduction

Basque has interesting morphosyntactic properties such as head-finality, agglutinativity and recursive compounding (Duguine, Irurtzun & Boeckx, 2017). In generative grammar, these properties have been discussed in terms of parameters such as the head-directionality parameter and the Compounding Parameter (Snyder, 2001). In the minimalist program (Chomsky, 1995 *et seq.*), it is argued that head directionality is an externalization parameter at the interface between syntax and the Articulatory-Perception system. However, the mechanisms of the externalization parameter have not been much discussed.

In this paper, I will argue that these morphosyntactic properties can be attributed to a prosodic property of Basque, left-edge stress (i.e. stress on the initial or the second syllable of a word). Namely, the left-edge stress system of Basque favors head-final word order, which in turn gives agglutinativity and recursivity of compounding because of the strong juncture between constituents in a left-branching structure.

In Section 2 I present the morphosyntactic properties of Basque. In Section 3 I discuss the prosody of the Basque language and its dialects. Section 4 is a discussion of how to derive the morphosyntactic properties of Basque from its prosody in the minimalist program. Section 5 is devoted to the problem of mismatch between prosodic variation and syntactic unity in Basque dialects. Section 6 concludes the discussion.

2. Morphosyntactic properties of Basque

2.1. Head-finality

The word order of Basque can be described as head-final. Verbs and adpositions (postpositions) follow their objects. For example, *The world atlas of language structures online* (Dryer & Haspelmath, 2013) contains the following descriptions of word orders in Basque, where the numbers are those of chapters in Dryer and Haspelmath (2013).

- (1) a. Equal prefixing and suffixing (26A) (Dryer, 2013a)
- b. Object-Verb (83A) (Dryer, 2013b)
- c. Postpositions (85A) (Dryer, 2013c)
- d. Genitive-Noun (86A) (Dryer, 2013d)
- e. Noun-Adjective (87A) (Dryer, 2013e)

- f. Noun-Demonstrative (88A) (Dryer, 2013f)
- g. Numeral-Noun (NP or NumP) (89A) (Dryer, 2013g)
- h. Relative clause-Noun (90A) (Dryer, 2013h)
- i. Degree word-Adjective (91A) (Dryer, 2013i)
- j. Other position [Polar Question Particles] (92A) (Dryer, 2013j)
- k. Final subordinator word (94A) (Dryer, 2013k)

These descriptions show that most of the word orders in Basque are head-final (1b, c, d, g, h, i, k).

As for affixation, Dryer (2013a) describes that Basque has equal prefixing and suffixing as in (1a). However, Hualde (1991, p. 15) and Hualde and Ortiz de Urbina (2003, p. 349) observe that Basque has a large number of suffixes and very few prefixes (e.g. *ber-/bir-* ‘re’, *ez-/des-* ‘un-, dis-’) in its derivational morphology. If we assume that an affix is the head of a derived word while a stem is its complement, the order in derived words in Basque is mostly head-final.

Noun-Adjective (1e) might be considered to be a head-initial order [_{NP} N-A], which is seen in Romance languages such as Spanish and French. We could remove Noun-Adjective order (1e) from this list of head-complements because an adjective is not a complement in its strict sense, but a specifier of the head noun¹.

Note that Noun-Demonstrative in (1f) is ambiguous. If we take the whole constituent to be a demonstrative phrase, it is a head-final DP [_{DP} N-D] (cfr. Artiagoitia [2008]); if we take the constituent to be a noun phrase, it is a head-initial NP [_{NP} N-D]. Similarly, Numeral-Noun order in (1g) can be ambiguous between head-final Noun Phrase, [_{NP} Num-N], or head-initial Number Phrase, [_{NumP} Num-N].

The position of the polar question particle (1j) is different between dialects: Saltarelli (1988, p. 3) reports that in *Gipuzkera* the question particle *al* is placed immediately before synthetic verbs or between the main verb and the auxiliary in periphrastic verbs, while in other dialects the enclitic *-a* is suffixed to the auxiliary.

Although we still have these points to consider, it is fair to say that Basque is a head-final language rather than a head-initial language. See Ortiz de Urbina (1999) and Elordieta (2013) for the idea that the clause structure below FinP is head-final while all other functional categories over FinP are head-initial.

2.2. Agglutinativity

The second property of Basque morphosyntax is its morphological agglutinativity. For example, function words such as article, postposition, plural marker and case marker are encliticized to the preceding noun as shown in (2) and (3) (Manterola, 2008, p. 3).

- (2) *mendi-a-n*
 mountain-DEF-LOC
 ‘in the mountain’

¹ See Artiagoitia (2006) for the idea that adjectives are heads rather than specifiers/complements [_{FP} NP-F/A].

- (3) *mendi-e-k*
 mountain-PL-ERG
 'the mountains (ergative)'

Bickel and Nichols (2013) describe Basque as exclusively concatenative with respect to the «fusion of selected inflectional formatives». By way of contrast, they give an example in Fijian, an exclusively isolating language, where all formatives with more than one mora are isolating.

- (4) Boumaa Fijian (Dixon, 1988, p. 53)
- | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| <i>Au</i> | <i>aa</i> | <i>soli-a</i> | <i>a=niu</i> | <i>vei</i> | <i>ira</i> . |
| 1SG | PST | give-TR | ART=coconut | to | 3PL |
- 'I gave the coconut to them'.

Here the past tense formative *aa* is an independent word. The contrast between Basque (2) and (3) and Boumaa Fijian (4) shows that Basque is an agglutinative language.

2.3. Productive and recursive compounding

The third property of Basque morphosyntax is that Basque allows productive and recursive compounding. Basque has productive noun + noun compounding as shown in (5) (Duguine, Irurtzun & Boeckx, 2017, p. 462).

- (5) a. *liburu-saltzaile* 'book-seller'
 b. *haize-errota* 'windmill'
 c. *behi-esnea* 'cow-milk'
 d. *esne-behia* 'milk-cow'
 e. *oliba-olio* 'olive oil'

Basque also allows recursive compounding as shown in (6) (Saltarelli, 1988, p. 226).

- (6) a. *albistari- saltzaile bilera*
 news vendors meeting
 'newspaper vendors' conference'
 b. *jan- gela mahai-a*
 eat room table-ABS
 'the dining room table'

Snyder (2001) proposes The Compounding Parameter (TCP), which he argues decides the productivity and recursivity of compounding and the acceptability of some syntactic constructions such as resultatives in languages. He notes that «Basque provides a clear example of a language in which nominal compounding is fully productive, yet resultatives are unavailable» (Snyder, 2001, p. 330). In this paper, I will focus on compounding, and will not discuss its relation to syntactic constructions.

In sum, we have seen that Basque has three morphosyntactic properties: head-final order, agglutinativity and productive/recursive compounding. It should be noted that these properties are common to all Basque dialects. The morphosyntax in Basque dia-

lects is mostly the same. In the next section, I investigate prosodic differences between dialects in Basque, and argue that the original/basic location of word stress is on the initial or the second syllable of a word.

3. Word-stress location in Basque dialects

3.1. Basque accentuation

Word prosody is quite different in Basque dialects. Hualde (1999) describes the accentual system of Basque dialects as in (7).

- (7) a. «[...] a Western type, where a crucial distinction is made between accented and unaccented words».
- b. «[...] the Central type, where the accent generally falls on the second syllable, except in some marked cases, where it falls on the initial syllable».
- c. «[...] the Hondarribia/Old Labourdin system, in which accent is computed counting from the right edge of the stem».
- d. «In most of the territory of High Navarrese, Low Navarrese and Labourdin dialects, as well as in some small areas of Gipuzkoan and Biscayan speech, accentuation is not phonologically distinctive».
- e. «[...] in the easternmost Basque dialect, Souletin, the accent falls on the penultimate syllable of the word in the unmarked case, and on the final in exceptional cases».

These descriptions might give the impression that Basque dialects are totally different in their prosody. However, if we plot the accent system of each dialect reported by Hualde (1999) on his map (Hualde, 1999, p. 949), we can find a gradual change in the accentual systems over geographical areas, as shown in Figure 1.

Here I use bold and underscore for left-hand stress such as initial, second and left-edge (first or second) and italics for right-hand stress such as antepenult, penult, right-oriented (antepenult, penult or ultimate) and right-edge (penult or ultimate). Roman is used for other stress systems such as lexical stress or non-contrastive stress. Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of accentual/stress systems in Basque dialects: pitch accent system in the western area, left-hand stress in the central area and right-hand stress in the central coast and eastern area.

The geographical distribution of stress variety shows the possibility that each Basque dialect has developed from an original source, i.e. Proto-Basque. Hualde (1995) argues that the original word-accent location in Basque is initial or second. This view is in line with Martinet (1950, 1955) and Michelena (1977). Martinet (1950, 1955) argues that stress originally fell on the initial syllable of a word in proto-Basque, based on the fact that aspiration occurs only on the initial syllable *khaka*/**kakha*/**khakha* (cfr. Hualde, 1995, p. 172). Michelena (1977) claims that stress was normally assigned to the second syllable, pointing out that the aspiration does not normally fall later than the second syllable (for the aspiration and its evolution, see Gorrochategui and Lakarra [2013] and

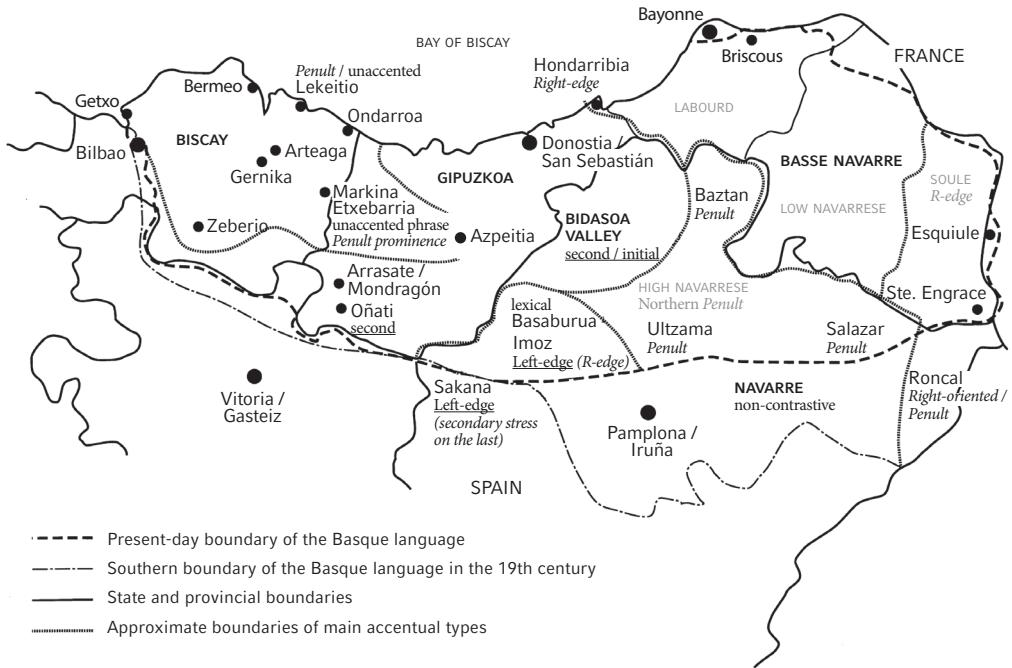


Figure 1. Accentual systems in Basque dialects (based on the map in Hualde, 1999, p. 949).

the references cited there). In contrast, Hualde (1993, 1995) proposes a regular word-final accent in modern Basque based on the accentual facts of the western dialects. Citing these arguments, Trask (1997, p. 166) concludes that «each proposal has certain advantages and certain drawbacks» (*cfr.* Blevins, 2018).

In this paper, I assume that stress originally fell on the initial or second syllable of a word in Proto-Basque, following Martinet (1950, 1955) and Michelena (1977). This left-edge stress has been retained in the central area. Although the left-edge stress might have become less prominent, I argue that it has been retained somehow in the other dialects as well. This idea allows us to derive the morphosyntactic properties of Basque from its phonology as I argue in Section 4.

3.2. Historical process of accent shift

Here we should note how the prosody of Basque dialects has changed historically. I will not discuss the historical development of pitch accent in the western dialect, but will focus on the word-stress location. It is interesting to note that word-stress location has changed historically either leftward or rightward in some dialects.

Hualde (1999, p. 958) points out that in some varieties within Northern Biscayan, an accent shift has retracted the accent one syllable to the left in some specific contexts, which is seen in borrowings, e.g. Sp. *tomáte* > *tómate* ‘tomato’. This leftward stress shift can be considered as a nativization of a borrowed word. That is, the right-edge stress

in Spanish is replaced by the initial stress of the original Basque even in the area where right-hand stress is now dominant.

Hualde (1999, p. 960) also points out that historical accent shifts have also taken place rightward. In Lekeitio and some neighboring areas, all lexical accents have shifted to the penultimate syllable of the word. However, we should be careful about what *accent* means in this description. It can be stress accent or pitch accent. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish these two types of accent in languages. I assume here that it is pitch accent that has shifted rightward in these western areas, and that words have retained some strength on the initial or the second syllable in these dialects as well as in the central dialects.

3.3. Prosody in Western Basque and Tokyo Japanese

In relation to the distinction between stress accent and pitch accent, it is interesting to compare Western Basque with the accent system in Tokyo Japanese. It has been pointed out that the western dialects of Basque are similar to Tokyo Japanese (Selkirk & Elordieta, 2010). Firstly, both have a distinction between lexically accented and unaccented words. Secondly, in both, lexically accented words show a single culminative pitch accent in the surface representation: $\omega(\dots H^*L\dots)\omega$. Thirdly, in both, the distribution of a word-initial LH rise diagnoses the presence of the left edge of a phonological phrase (φ): $\varphi(LH-\dots)\varphi$. Here I would like to highlight the fact that both Basque and Japanese have a wide dialectal variation in the accent/stress system.

Let us consider Japanese word prosody and its analyses. The traditional one-accent model for Japanese defines a pitch fall (HL) as the accent in accented words. However, Tokizaki (2019) argues that this model has conceptual and empirical problems, and proposes the stress & pitch model (S&P) (cfr. Duanmu, 2008). The S&P is stated as in (8).

- (8) Japanese words have strength at the initial mora and an optional pitch-fall accent on a (ante-)penultimate mora in accented words.

The analyses of Japanese words in the traditional one-accent model and the S&P are shown in (9), where pitch-fall accent is marked with an apostrophe (') and stress in bold.

(9)	one-accent	Stress & Pitch	gloss
a.	ma' kura-ga	ma' kura-ga	'pillow-NOM'
b.	tama' go-ga	tama' go-ga	'egg-NOM'
c.	atama' -ga	atama' -ga	'head-NOM'
d.	sakana-ga	sakana -ga	'fish-NOM'

Here I argue that the Stress & Pitch analysis can also be applied to the western dialects of Basque, which use pitch accent: content words in these dialects have strength at the initial or the second syllable as well as the pitch accent on the right. This idea allows us to characterize the prosody of all Basque dialects in a unified way: despite apparent differences in their prosody, all Basque dialects have strength on the initial or the second syllable of a word. Although we need to find more evidence for this claim, I assume this unified characterization of Basque word-prosody.

4. Deriving morphosyntactic properties from prosody

4.1. Deriving head-finality from left-edge word stress

In this section, I claim that the morphosyntactic properties of Basque can be derived from its word prosody. Assuming that the word prosody parallels phrasal prosody, I argue that the head-finality in Basque is derived from its left-edge stress in words. It is argued that the order of constituents is determined as head-final at the Externalization of morphosyntactic structure according to the left-hand stress in Basque. I argue that the head-final order gives the agglutinativity and the productivity/recursivity of compounding in Basque.

Firstly, let us consider how the head-finality in Basque is derived from its left-edge stress in words. I assume the minimalist program by Chomsky (1995 *et seq.*), which claims that linear order is determined at Externalization of hierarchical syntactic structure. I argue that the left-edge word stress in Basque matches the left-edge phrasal stress rather than the right-hand stress if we assume the parallelism of word-stress and phrasal stress (*cfr.* Bally, 1944; Donegan & Stampe, 1983; Plank, 1998). Cinque (1993) argues that stress is assigned to the most deeply embedded element in a structure. Then, head-final constituents have stress on the left, i.e. on the bottom element Z in the complement YP as in (10a). Left-hand stress in Basque would conflict with the head-initial order in (10b), which should have right-hand stress on Z in the complement YP on the right.

- (10) a. $[_{XP} [_{YP} Z \dots] X]$
b. $[_{XP} X [_{YP} \dots Z]]$

For example, in a verb phrase consisting of a verb and its object, the object YP receives the phrasal stress because it contains the most deeply embedded element in the VP. Basque chooses the head-final order Object-Verb because this order matches the left-edge word/phrasal stress in the language. Thus, we can ascribe the head-finality in Basque to the left-edge stress in the language.

Note that the correlation between word-stress location and word-order generally holds in the languages of the world. Bally (1944) argues that German has left-hand stress and head-final order while French has right-hand stress and head-initial order. Similarly, discussing Austroasiatic languages, Donegan and Stampe (1983) argue that Munda languages have left-hand stress and head-final order while Mon-Khmer languages have right-hand stress. Based on the data in Goedemans and Van der Hulst (2013a, 2013b) and Dryer (2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2013k), Tokizaki (2011) and Tokizaki and Kuwana (2013) argue that the word-stress location correlates with word-order in the world's languages. The correlation, as long as it is real, allows us to derive head-finality from left-hand stress.

4.2. Deriving agglutinativity and productive/recursive compounding from head-finality

Based on phonological and morphosyntactic evidence, Tokizaki (2011) argues that if an asymmetric structure is externalized in the head-final order, the head and its complement are closely tied together making a phonological compound. For example, Tokizaki (2013)

shows that head-final languages have productive and recursive compounding while head-initial languages do not. Hyman (2008, p. 323) argues that suffixes are more closely tied to the stem than prefixes in languages. This fact is explained if we assume that an affix (prefix/suffix) is the head of a word while a stem is the complement of an affix (prefix/suffix): stem and suffix are closely tied together because they are in head-final order; prefix and stem are loosely tied because they are in head-initial order. For more evidence and arguments for the compactness of head-final constituents, see Tokizaki (2011).

This idea of junctural asymmetry allows us to derive agglutinativity and productive/recursive compounding of Basque from its head-finality, which in turn is derived from its left-edge stress. Thus, we can derive the head-finality, agglutinativity and recursivity of compounding in Basque from its left-edge stress.

5. Prosodic variation and unitary morphosyntax

Now we need to explain why Basque dialects have variation in word-stress location while they have almost the same morphosyntax. I argue that the original stress location in Basque set the value of the morphosyntactic parameter (e.g. head-final), which was hard to change, even if the stress location changed from left-edge to right-edge in some dialects through contact with Romance languages. Also, I would like to point out that change in word-stress location may not be apparent. Most of the simple words generally consist of less than four syllables in Basque as well as in many languages in the world. The penultimate stress in a two-syllable word equals the initial stress in the word: [_{Word} σ σ]. In three-syllable words, the second syllable is the penultimate syllable: [_{Word} σ σ σ]. Thus, changes in word-stress location by language contact may be overlooked by native speakers of the language.

Another possibility is that Basque dialects have kept the original left-edge stress, which gives head-final word order, agglutinativity and productive/recursive compounding, in addition to right-hand pitch accent, as we have seen in the case of Tokyo Japanese in Section 3.3. It will be interesting to explore the possibility that both Basque and Japanese, which have head-final word order and wide accentual variations, have the word stress on the initial mora.

6. Conclusion

I have argued that Basque dialects have left-hand word-stress in common although their word prosody seems to be different, with the presence of pitch accent on the right in the western dialects. The left-hand stress in words and phrases in Basque determines its word order as head-final at the Externalization of morphosyntactic structure. The head-final order, which has strong juncture between a head and its complement, in turn gives the language agglutinativity and productive/recursive compounding. Thus, Basque dialects have almost the same morphosyntax despite their apparently different prosody. In sum, morphosyntactic properties such as head-finality, agglutinativity and productive/recursivity

sive compounding can be attributed to a prosodic property of (Proto-)Basque, left-edge stress (i.e. stress on the initial or the second syllable of a word).

To conclude, the Basque language and its dialects present an interesting case of a seeming mismatch between morphosyntax and phonology. I hope I have shown that a careful study of the Basque language and its dialects can shed light on a theoretical typology and the minimalist approach to linguistic theory, which try to ascribe the variation of languages to Externalization of morphosyntactic structure (Chomsky, 2017).

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