

Word and phrase stress

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Some examples of a tonal system

- (1)
- a. ni↗re laguná↘('my friend')
 - b. ni↗re lagunen amá↘('my friend's mother')
 - c. ni↗re lagunen txakur ederrarí↘('to my friend's pretty dog')

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Distribution of sentential stress

Normally, the main prominence of the sentence is perceived to be on the constituent immediately preceding the verb, regardless of whether the previous words are accented or not.

Distribution of sentential stress

- (2) Mirének umiari **sagar bát** emo(n) (d)otzo.
 Miren.ERG child.DAT apple one.ABS give AUX
- (3) Mirének sagar bat **umíari** emo(n) (d)otzo.
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- (4) umiari sagar bat **Mirének** emo(n) (d)otzo.
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It is not possible to assign main stress to phrases that are not in preverbal position.

- (5) * **Maixúak** liburúa ekarri dau
teacher.ERG book.ABS bring AUX

Focus spread

- In the canonical order [S-IO-DO-V-Aux], semantic focus can be assigned to either the preverbal constituent, to the verb phrase, or to the whole sentence. This is known as **focus spread**
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Focus spread: canonical order

(6) *What happened?*

✓ Mirének umiari **sagar bát** emo(n) (d)otzo.
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(7) *What did Miren do?*

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Stress on verbs (I)

In order to indicate that an action happens (as opposed to not happening), Basque attaches the particle **ba** to the verb. The verb also receives main stress.

- (15) Ba datór gero aitxítxa.
ba comes later grandpa

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- (16) Mikélek deitxú eiñ ddotzo Mirenéri.
Mikel.ERG call do AUX Miren.DAT

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Stress in negative sentences

The negative particle *ez* receives stress depending on whether the following auxiliary is accented or not.

(17) Amak es totzú esan ori étxeko
mom.ERG not AUX say that to.do

(18) Guri és gaitúe eser emon
us.DAT not AUX anything give

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Stress in negative sentences

As in affirmative sentences, a preverbal constituent in negative sentences can receive main stress.

- (19) **Képak** es táu amaitxu ondiñóko.
Kepa.ERG not AUX finish yet

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Main stress with complex constituents (I)

Only words that can receive an accent may be focalized. In a complex preverbal phrase consisting only of unaccented words, only the last one might be focused.

(20) Neure semien **etxía** ikusi dot
 my son.GEN house see AUX

(21) * Neure **semién** etxia ikusi dot
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Main stress with complex constituents (II)

However, inherently accented words can bypass this restriction.

(22) **Lagúnen** liburúak erun doras.
friends.GEN books take AUX

(23) Lagúnen libúruak erun doras.
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Main stress with complex constituents (II)

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Declarative sentences

In declarative sentences, the pitch drops after the syllable with main stress and stays low and flat until the end.

Yes/no interrogatives

- Yes/no interrogatives have the same contour as declarative ones, *without* a pitch rise at the end (unlike Spanish, English, German. . .).
- However, the overall pitch is higher, which helps distinguishing declarative and interrogative sentences.

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Declaratives vs. interrogatives

- (24) Diruá emon dotzo nebiari?
money.ABS give AUX brother.DAT
- (25) Diruá emon dotzo nebiari.
money.ABS give AUX brother.DAT

Declaratives vs. interrogatives

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Wh- interrogatives

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