

Week 4

Basic morphosyntax of the noun phrase

November 10, 2009

1 Basics

This is the template for the Basque DP. Note that case marking and postpositions attach to the whole DP, not to nouns.

[[[Complex modifier* - DET ₁ - N - ADJ* - DET ₂] CASE] POSTPOSITION]

Unlike in German, Basque has no DP-internal agreement

- (1) *ein dickes Buch* vs. *eine dicke Zeitung*

Therefore, inflection only happens on full DPs.

- (2) [_{DP} Liburu handi] -a
book big DET

Most Basque nouns are not marked for gender, but occasionally one finds the feminine suffix *-sa* (borrowed from Romance).

- (3) *jainko* 'god' vs. *jainko-sa* 'goddess'
okin 'baker' vs. *okin-tsa* 'female baker'

Male and female animals are distinguished by the suffixes *-ar* and *-eme*.

- (4) *katu* 'cat (unspecified gender)'
kat-ar 'male cat' vs. *kat-eme* 'female cat'

Some pairs have suppletive gender morphology.

- (5) *gizon* 'man' vs. *emakume* 'woman'
zezen 'bull' vs. *behi* 'cow'

However, some cases miss one of their members:

- (6) *zaldi* 'horse (unspecified gender)' vs. *behor* 'mare'
no word for 'male horse'

Animate nouns (humans and higher animals) differ in the inflection for locative and directional cases.

- (7) *etxe* 'house' → *etxe-ra* 'to the house'
(8) *gizon* 'man' → *gizon-aren-gana* 'to the man'

2 Determiners

2.1 DET₁ and DET₂ positions

In the schema above, the DET₁ position is reserved for:

- numerals except *bat* 'one'
- quantifiers like *hanitz* 'many', *zenbait* 'some', or *hainbat/hainbeste* 'so many/so much'
- wh -words.
- free choice determiners: *edozein*, *zeinnahi* 'any'/'whichever'

On the other hand, the DET₂ position is reserved for:

- the definite article *-a*
- demonstratives *hau* 'this', *hori* 'that', *hura* 'that yonder'
- the partitive marker *-ik*
- the numeral *bat* 'one'
- quantifiers like *batzuk* 'some' and *gutxi* 'few/little'

2.2 The definite article

The definite article has a wider use than English *the*. We will look at this in much more detail next week. The Basque definite article is used with:

- definite DPs.
 - (9) Kotxe berri-a erosi dut
car new.DEF bought AUX
"I have bought a new car"
- Generic nouns
 - (10) Ardo gorri-a nahiago dut
wine red.DEF prefer AUX
"I prefer red wine"
- Non-specific and existential nouns
 - (11) Leku ederr-a-k daude Bizkaian
place pretty.DEF.PL are Bizkaia.LOC
"There are pretty places in Bizkaia"
- Predicative adjectives in copular clauses.
 - (12) Liburu hau interesgarri-a da
book this interesting.DEF is
"This book is interesting"
- abstract nouns
 - (13) *edertasun-a* 'beauty'; *bizitz-a* 'life'

2.3 The indefinite article

The indefinite article is *bat*, homophonous with the numeral 'one'. It's only used with indefinite specific nouns.

- (14) Seme-a daukat
son.DEF have
"I have a son (I am not childless)"
- (15) Seme bat daukat
son INDEF have
"I have a certain son"
"I have one son (not two or three)"

2.4 The proximate plural

The standard plural is *-ak*, but it is also possible to use *-ok* to refer to the current group.

- (16) *gizonak* 'the men' vs. *gizonok* 'we men'
- (17) *etxeak* 'the houses' vs. *etxeok* 'these houses here'

2.5 Nouns without determiners

They only occur in environments indicating capacity or transformation

- (18) Amerikara joan zen artzai
America.ADL go AUX shepherd
"He went to America as a shepherd"
- (19) Zuzendari izendatu dute
manager name AUX
"They made him manager"

3 Adjectives

3.1 Lexical adjectives

Most adjectives are postnominal, whether they are appositive or restrictive. If multiple adjectives are present, they present the opposite order as in English/German.

- (20) etxe zuri txiki polit bat
house white small pretty INDEF
"A pretty little white house"/"ein hübsches kleines weisses Haus"

A few adjectives may precede the noun, but still following the DET₁ position. These are

- Ordinals: *lehen* 'first', *bigarren* 'second'...
- Nationalities *frantzes* 'French', *alemaniar* 'German'...
- adjectival participles *ongi ikasi* 'well educated'
- a few eclectic ones like *eskuin* 'right', *ezker* 'left', or *gazte* 'young'

3.2 *-ko* suffixation

The suffix *-ko* can be added to any adverbial constituent to produce the corresponding adjective. This is a very productive mechanism.

- Lexical adverbs:

(21) *hemen* ‘here’
hemen-go gizonak ‘the local men’

- Morphologically complex adverbs:

(22) *hitzez hitz* ‘word for word/literally’
hitzez hitz-eko itzulpena ‘a literal translation’

- DPs with locative, directional, or locative cases

(23) *mendi-etan* ‘in the mountains’
mendi-eta-ko haitzuloak ‘the caves in the mountains’

(24) *gu-rekin* ‘with us’
gu-reki-ko umeak ‘the children that are with us’

- Finite adverbial clauses and clauses complement to nouns

(25) *izarra agertu zitzaientean*
‘when the star appeared to them’
izarra agertu zitzaiene-ko garaia
‘the time when the star appeared to them’

(26) *hil dutela* ‘that he has been killed’
hil dutela-ko kontua ‘the report that he has been killed’

4 Pronouns and case

4.1 Case

The major property of the Basque case system is that it is ergative-absolutive

- *Ergative* is used for subjects of transitive verbs.
- *Absolutive* is used for:
 - Subjects of intransitive verbs.
 - Objects of transitive verbs.

The rest of the case system is very rich, but most of the cases are equivalent to adpositions in other languages. Here is the whole paradigm for the noun *leku* ‘place’. The “indefinite” column is used when a bare noun, or a [N-ADJ] combination is embedded under a numeral, quantifier, indefinite, or interrogative determiner, e.g.,

(27) a. *zazpi leku-tan*
seven place.LOC
“in seven places”

- b. zenbait leku-tan
several place.LOC
“in several places”

	INDEFINITE	DEFINITE		
		SINGULAR	PLURAL	
			GENERAL	PROXIMATE
ABSOLUTIVE	leku	lekua	lekuak	lekuok
ERGATIVE	lekuk	lekuak	lekuek	lekuok
DATIVE	lekuri	lekuari	lekuei	lekuoi
GENITIVE	lekuren	lekuaren	lekuen	lekuon
BENEFACTIVE	lekurentzat	lekuarentzat	lekuentzat	lekuontzat
COMITATIVE	lekurekin	lekuarekin	lekuekin	lekuokin
INSTRUMENTAL	lekuz	lekuaz	lekuez	lekuoz
PARTITIVE	lekurik			
PROLATIVE	lekutzat			
LOCATIVE	lekutan	lekuan	lekuetan	lekuotan
ABLATIVE	lekutatik	lekutik	lekuetatik	lekuotatik
ALLATIVE	lekutara	lekura	lekuetara	lekuotara
DIRECTIONAL	lekutarantz	lekurantz	lekuetarantz	lekuotarantz
TERMINATIVE	lekutaraino	lekuraino	lekuetaraino	lekuotaraino
RELATIVE	lekutako	lekuko	lekuetako	lekuotako

4.2 Postpositions

Basque doesn't have *prepositions* – it has *postpositions*, which follow a case-marked DP. The cases vary from postposition to postposition, but are always either one of genitive, dative, instrumental, or partitive.

- Genitive (especially for locative relations)

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| – <i>aurrean</i> ‘in front of’ | – <i>aurka</i> ‘against’ |
| – <i>atzean</i> ‘behind’ | – <i>zain</i> ‘waiting for’ |
| – <i>ondoan</i> ‘besides’ | – <i>bila</i> ‘looking for’ |
| – <i>gainean</i> ‘on top of’ | – <i>truke</i> ‘in exchange for’ |
| – <i>azpian</i> ‘underneath’ | |

- Instrumental:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| – <i>gain</i> ‘in addition to’ | – <i>landa</i> ‘except for’ |
| – <i>kanpo</i> ‘out of’ | – <i>bestalde</i> ‘on the other side of’ |

- Dative:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| – <i>begira</i> ‘looking at’ | – <i>esker</i> ‘thanks to’ |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|

- Partitive:

- *gabe* ‘without’

