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Looking for the verbal category in Basque syntax: not found

Ane Berro (University of the Basque Country, UMR 7023)

i. In this talk, I am going to propose that the verbal category does not syntactically exist in Basque and that it is a post-syntactic construct derived from the configuration in which the predicate is lexicalized. This proposal is supported by two analyses about Basque predicates: (i) a study of Basque derived predicates, and (ii) an analysis of the analytic and synthetic verbal forms.

ii. Most predicates in Basque are derived, formed attaching the *-tu* suffix to almost any kind of element like a noun *-ama-tu* (mother-TU) ‘become a mother or turn sb into a mother’– an adjective – *lehor-tu* (dry-TU) ‘dry’, *etxe-gabe-tu* (home-without-TU) ‘to evict’–, an adposition *-etxe-ra-tu* (home-ALL-TU) ‘go home, take sb home’, *ur-ez-ta-tu* (water-INSTR-TA-TU) ‘water’– or an adverbial kind of element *-azkar-tu* (quick-TU) ‘quicken’, *sail-ka-tu* (class-KA-TU) ‘to classify’. Looking at this data and adopting an event configuration approach like that of the *First Phase Syntax* (Ramchand 2008), we could think that *-tu* is a kind of verbalizer which conveys a part of event configuration and which is related to the *process* subevent: it gives a transitional kind of meaning and it turns the element in its complement into a verb. Nevertheless, as I explain below (section v) *-tu* does not seem to have verbal category, but nominal one.

iii. The case of location predicates formed by means of the allative adposition (e.g. *etxe-ra-tu* (home-ALL-TU) ‘go home, take sb home’) is particularly enlightening. Hale & Keyser (1993) argue for similar predicates in English (e.g. *shelve*) that they are built on a silent verb to which an adposition and its complement have been incorporated. However, this analysis cannot explain why in Basque we can have location predicates only consisting of the allative adposition, and not, for example, of the ablative (like in **etxe-tik-tu* (home-ABL-TU), with an intended meaning of ‘going from home’) or of the approximative allative (like in **etxe-rantz-tu* (home-APPROX-TU), intended ‘going towards home’). If there were a silent verb, location predicates must be, in principle, able to be formed from any kind of Path adposition. Establishing a parallel and isomorphic relation between the event decomposition (à la Ramchand 2008) and the inner structure of Path adpositions (à la Pantcheva 2011), I argue that, in this case, the allative is lexicalizing the *process* subevent. A consequence of this analysis is that the process head must not be obligatorily verbal, since, in this case, it is lexicalized by an element which is usually selected to spell out an adposition.

iv. Regarding verbal configurations, there are two forms in which a predicate can surface in Basque. The analytic configuration is the most widespread one. As a matter of fact, the number of predicates which can align in the synthetic form is very small (no more than 15, Euskaltzaindia 1997, e.g. *etorri* ‘come’, *joan* ‘go’, *egon* ‘be’, etc.) and in some cases, they have defective paradigms. Furthermore, the synthetic form is nowadays restricted to the imperfective category. In contrast, the analytic configuration can be used with all verbs, is the only productive configuration and can be used to convey several aspectual categories like the perfect (1), the perfective (2), the imperfective (3) and also the prospective (4).

The analytic configuration consists of a lexical predicate marked for aspect and an auxiliary which supports all inflectional morphology like person, case and number agreement, and also tense and mood markers.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) Miren etorr-i da
Mary.ABS come-TU aux.3sgABS
‘Mary has come’ | (2) Miren etorr-i zen
Mary.ABS come-TU aux.3sgABS.PST
‘Mary came’ |
| (3) Miren etor-tze-n da
Mary.ABS come-TZE-INE aux.3sgABS
‘Mary comes’ | (4) Miren etorr-i-ko da
Mary.ABS come-TU-GEN aux.3sgABS
‘Mary will come’ |

v. In the analytic form, the predicate has nominal category. Actually, the nominal category of *-tze* is standardly assumed in the literature: predicates headed by *-tze* have been traditionally considered verbal nouns (Euskaltzaindia 1997), and the *-tze* suffix has been analyzed as a nominalizer (Goenaga

1985, Ortiz de Urbina 1989, Mateu & Amadas 1999, Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2000, Laka 2004 2006). Furthermore, in the imperfective and in the prospective, the predicate is headed by an adposition that is actually morphologically realized: the inessive *-n* in the imperfective and the genitive *-ko* in the prospective. I argue that the morpheme *-tu* (or its variant *-i* in the examples) is also indicating the nominal category of the predicate (see also Haddican & Tsoulas 2012). As a matter of fact, *-tu* headed predicates show nominal distribution in several contexts: they can be headed by determiners (Euskaltzaindia 1997, Hualde 2003, Artiagoitia 2003) (5), they can be headed by adpositions (6) and also by Axial Parts (Svenonius 2006, Etxepare 2013) in temporal clauses (Uribe-Etxebarria 2014) (7).

- (5) a. Urra-tu bat
scratch-TU DET
'a scratch'
b. begira-tu bat
look-TU DET
'a look'
- c. irabaz-i-a
win-TU-DET
'the winning'
- d. uki-tu-a
touch-TU-DET
'the touch'
- (6) [egi-n-ez] ikasten da
[do-TU-INSTR] it is learnt
'you learn by doing' lit. 'it is learnt by doing'
- (7) a. Miren etorr-i oste-an
Miren.ABS come-TU back-INE
'After Miren comes',
lit. 'in the back of Mary coming'
- b. Miren etorr-i aurre-tik
Miren.ABS come-TU front-ABL
'Before Miren comes',
lit. 'in the front of Mary coming'

vi. In the spirit of Laka (1993), I argue that in the analytic configuration, the predicate is lexicalized below the head responsible for viewpoint aspect (realized by the inessive *-n* in the imperfective). In the synthetic, in contrast, the predicate is lexicalized high, together with other inflectional morphology like tense. Following partially Embick's (2000) analysis of Latin synthetic and analytic forms, I propose that when the predicate is lexicalized high, together with tense, it surfaces like a verb (see also Svenonius 2007), and that when it is lexicalized low, below Asp, it is lexicalized as a noun.

vii. In summary, these data leads me to the following conclusions. On the one hand, it seems that the First Phase Syntax (Ramchand 2008) must be divorced from the verbal category, since parts of this structure can be lexicalized with elements having other categorial status. On the other hand, the verbal category is not morphologically identified in Basque, and positing a zero morph is also proved to be problematic. I rather propose that the verbal category is a post-syntactic construct that emerges when the predicate is lexicalized high, together with tense and other functional heads, and that it is not syntactically represented in a little *v* head (cf. Marantz 1997). If the predicate is lexicalized low, like in complement position of the Asp head responsible for viewpoint aspect, it surfaces with nominal category. This is actually the case of the Basque analytic verbal configuration.

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