

Morphological Evidence of Abstract Verbs in Basque

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0. In many languages, there are clause structures which sometimes and perhaps typically function as complements of verbs, but which can also function as independent sentences. One strategy for analyzing such clauses, which may permit a simple description of their distribution and facilitate an explanation of their meanings, is to hypothesize that at some underlying level they occur only as complements of verbs. In some circumstances, a verb which has such a clause as its complement may be deleted, and the clause appears in the surface structure as an independent sentence. The deleted verbs have sometimes been called «abstract verbs» (1).

An analysis employing this strategy for Latin subjunctives has been given by R. Lakoff (1968) (2), who notices that they may occur either as complements of certain verbs or as independent sentences. Further, she notices that *venias*, for example, is ambiguous as an independent sentence: it may express a wish, a possibility, or an imperative. It may be negated with either *ne* or *non*, depending on the meaning. When it functions as the complement of a verb

(1) There has been some debate concerning whether these verbs are to be identified with particular verbs which show up in surface structure, or to be regarded as having no phonological shape. Although some of the material discussed in this paper may bear on this question, there will be no explicit discussion of it here.

(2) To the best of my knowledge, this sort of analysis was first used by J. Katz and P. Postal (1964), for English imperatives and questions.

which appears in surface structure, the meaning of the verb of which it is the complement determines (except for a few verbs which do not take the expected negative in their complements) which negative may be used to negate it. To explain these facts, Lakoff hypothesizes that the subjunctive mood is a marker of complementation. *Venias* as an independent sentence has several underlying sources, in which it is the complement of one of several different abstract verbs. With this proposal, it is possible to account for its ambiguity, and, since abstract verbs behave syntactically like other verbs in their meaning class, to explain at the same time where *ne* and *non* may be used.

Below, we will look at the major Basque sentence types to see which of them have morphological features which suggest that they originate as complements of abstract verbs. The first three sections deal with sentences which are roughly interrogative, imperative, and declarative. In the fourth section, the possibility that tense functions as an abstract verb is considered.

1. Interrogative clauses which are complements of explicit verbs always have an *-(e)n* complementizer (3) suffix, regardless of the meanings of the verbs of which they are complements. For yes-no

erran dazu nor den hor «tell me who is there»
ez dakit zertako egina duen «I don't know why he did it»

question complements, an *-etz* may follow the *-(e)n* suffix:

ez dautazu erran ikusi duzunetz «you have not told me if you
 have seen it»
ez dakit etorriko denetz «I don't know whether he will come».

There are some constructions which share the structural features of these complements which we have noticed, but which are not complements of the sorts of verbs we would expect. In some cases, they are not complements of any verbs at all. In these cases, a

(3) The notion of a complementizer was first suggested by P. Rosenbaum (1967), who treated them as transformationally inserted markers of subordination. R. Lakoff (1968) claims that the subjunctive mood serves the same function in Latin. More recently, J. Bresnan (1972) has proposed that complementizers have semantic content, and that they are inserted by phrase structure rules. Their distribution is determined by selectional restrictions. For our purposes here, it is not necessary to decide between these two possibilities.

gau guzia nigarrez ari izan zen, ea ez zenetz hunkitua «he cried all night: (judge) if he was not touched!»
etorri zitzaikun, jan nahi ginuenetz «he came to us (to ask, find out) if we wanted to eat»
banindagon nola behar ginen jalgi «I was wondering (lit. 'I stayed'; sometimes used as an auxiliary verb) how we would have to leave»

verb of judgement, perception, or communication is understood. For these sentences, the strategy of analysis which we are interested in may be expected to lead to a reasonable account of the facts.

Both independently and in complements, it is possible to use the verb radical or participle rather than a full verb phrase. Independently,

zer ikas «what to learn»
zer egin «what to do»
erran daut zer ikas «he told me what I should learn»
badakit zer egin «I know what I will do»

such constructions cannot be genuine requests for information, but are somewhat like rhetorical questions. The meaning of these constructions is not clear enough to me to permit me to postulate an underlying source for them with confidence, but they may come from sources meaning something like «can you tell me what I should learn, what I will do?» A rule which optionally drops auxiliaries in complements of explicit verbs is necessary, and we can let it also apply in complements of abstract verbs. By deriving these constructions in this way, we are in a position to use the deleted material to explain the meaning: if they were derived from sources which differ from them only in that they have an auxiliary, we would expect them to have the same meaning as ordinary questions (see below), and they don't; if they were derived by phrase structure rules only, we could not predict from their underlying structure what they would mean.

In contrast to these two sorts of independent structure, ordinary questions show no morphological indication of being derived from underlying sources in which they are complements (except the sort of structure to be considered in section 4 below). They may have an *-a* suffix, or no suffix at all, or they may be formed with

ikusi duzuia «have you seen it?»
girixtino zare «are you Christian?»
nor da «who is it?»

ez ahal nute ikusi «they haven't seen me, I trust?»
ikusi ote nute «have they really seen me?»

the modal *ahal* or *ot(h)e*. None of these constructions can be used as the complement of an explicit verb. The *-a* suffix may not occur in complements, and all complements must have an *-(e)n* comple-

ez dautazu erran ikusi duzun(etz) «you have not told me if you have seen it»
ez dakit girixtino zaren «I don't know if you are Christian»
ez dakit nor den «I don't know who it is»
ez dakit ikusi ote nuten «I don't know if they have really seen me»

mentizer. On the basis of the sort of evidence we are investigating here, there seems to be no reason to postulate abstract verbs for direct questions. In fact, if we do postulate such verbs, we must attribute to them grammatical properties which are not shared either by explicit verbs or by other abstract verbs. On the other hand, if such underlying sources could be motivated on the basis of other considerations, they could be easily accommodated by restricting the rule which inserts complementizers or having a rule which deletes them in these sentences.

2. There are several constructions in Basque which are used to give something like imperative or hortative force, as exemplified in the following chart, based on the verb *joan* «to go»:

Person	Simple	Periphrastic	Simple + <i>-(e) la</i>	Periphrastic + <i>-(e) la</i>
1	sg. <i>noan</i>	<i>joan nadin</i>	*	<i>(ez nadila joan)</i>
	pl. <i>goazin</i>	<i>joan gaiten</i>	*	<i>(ez gaitela joan)</i>
2	fam. <i>hoa</i>	<i>joan hadi</i>	*	<i>(ez hadila joan)</i>
	sg. <i>zoazi</i>	<i>joan zaite</i>	*	<i>(ez zaitela joan)</i>
	pl. <i>zoazte</i>	<i>joan zaitezte</i>	*	<i>(ez zaitezte la joan)</i>
3	sg. <i>bioa</i>	<i>joan bedi</i>	<i>doala</i>	<i>joan dadila</i>
	pl. <i>bioaz</i>	<i>joan bitez</i>	<i>doatzila</i>	<i>joan ditela</i>

Person	Participle	Infinitive radical
2	<i>joan</i>	<i>joan</i>

Either the infinitive radical or the participle, without an auxiliary, may be used as an imperative. In our example, the infinitive radical and the participle are homonymous, but this is not true of all verbs: compare *gal* (inf. rad.), *galdu* (part.) «to lose»; and *etor* (inf. rad.), *etorri* (part.) «to come».

Simple imperatives differ from ordinary present tense forms in several ways: a) First person forms must have an *-(e)n* suffix. (Some dialects have no first person singular imperatives.) b) In second and third person forms, the third person agreement prefix is \emptyset -: *emadazu* «give it to me» but *demakogun* «let's give it to him», with some variation in different dialects. c) When an imperative is addressed to a third person, a *b(e)*- prefix is necessary before the person agreement prefix. The corresponding forms with *-(e)la* are commonly used in place of those with *b(e)*-. Neither the \emptyset - nor the *b(e)*- prefix occurs in any nonimperative construction.

Most verbs have only a periphrastic conjugation. The auxiliary used in periphrastic imperative forms exhibits the same peculiar features which were noted in simple imperatives above. Depending on whether the verb is transitive or not, the auxiliary employed must be either *izan* or *edin*, the same auxiliaries that are used in subjunctives. Both periphrastic imperatives and subjunctives are formed with the infinitive radical. Subjunctive forms occur without an *-(e)n* or *-(e)la* suffix in only a few constructions.

Imperative forms with an *-(e)la* suffix differ from ordinary subjunctives only in that not all subjunctives have an *-(e)la* suffix. They never have a *b(e)*- prefix or a \emptyset - third person agreement prefix.

Simple forms and simple forms with *-(e)la* cannot be negated: **ez zoazi*, **ez doala*. Further, in some dialects at least, forms without an *-(e)n* or *-(e)la* suffix cannot be negated: *ez gaiten joan*, *ez gaitela joan*, **ez zaite joan*. All imperatives with an *-(e)la* suffix, except those directed to a third person, cannot go unnegated: **joan zaitez-tela*.

The infinitive radical imperative could plausibly be analyzed as having a deleted auxiliary: the infinitive radical is also used in all periphrastic imperatives. However, it is more difficult to explain the use of the participle as an imperative, since it does not occur in any other form in the imperative chart. Possibly a semantically satisfactory source for these imperatives could be found by making use of the fact that participles occur with verbs like *gogo* «to intend», *behar* «to need», and *nahi* «to want», as in *jan nahi dut* «I want to eat». This sort of construction is possible only when the intender, needer or wanter is the same as the actor (in this sentence, the eater), so

the underlying source of the participle imperative *jan* «eat» would have to be something like *jan behar duzu* «you need to eat». Alternatively, and perhaps equally plausibly, the participle imperative construction could be a result of the participle's being confused with the infinitive radical. As mentioned above, the two forms are sometimes homonymous, but they can usually be distinguished by the auxiliaries with which they occur. This suggestion can be formalized by having a transformation which substitutes a participle for an infinitive radical in this sort of construction.

First person imperatives with *-(e)n* are morphologically similar to complements of sentences like *nahi dut egin dezazun* «I want that you do it». Though there are a few other constructions where the same morphological features (i.e. *-(e)n* suffix and subjunctive auxiliary) are found, a construction with *nahi* seems semantically most satisfactory as a possible underlying source.

Simple and periphrastic imperatives without *-(e)n* or *-(e)la* are particularly difficult to suggest sources for because they do not occur in any other sort of construction. (Simple forms and the corresponding indicatives may sometimes be homonymous.) The most closely similar construction which I have been able to discover is that of a sentence like *nahi nuke jin baladi* «I would like it if he came». Since this is a conditional, no *-(e)n* or *-(e)la* suffix is necessary. The auxiliary is the same as in the imperatives, and the *ba-* prefix bears some resemblance to the *b(e)-* prefix which is used with some of the imperatives. Because of these similarities and the semantic similarity between this sentence and these imperatives, it does not seem totally unreasonable to suggest that these imperatives are derived from constructions with an abstract verb much like *nahi* in this sentence; the complement of this verb would have no tense morpheme and a \emptyset - third person agreement prefix, and *b(e)-* in place of *ba-*, sometimes obligatorily deleted. Postulation of an abstract verb in this case does not greatly simplify Basque grammar, but the analysis does suggest that this construction is not as unrelated to all other constructions as it seems to be.

The *-(e)la* suffix is used with the complements of communication verbs and various other sorts of verbs. For example, *erran du joan ditela* «he has said that they should go» is one way to give an indirect discourse report of the imperative which serves as its complement. However, to analyze *-(e)la* imperatives simply as complements of an abstract communication verb does not explain the use of the subjunctive-forming auxiliary or the imperative force. Rather, it seems that the indirect discourse complement has a subjunctive-form-

ing auxiliary because the imperative does, and not vice versa. If these imperatives originate instead from sources in which they are complements of an abstract verb like *agindu* or *manatu*, the choice

agindu (manatu) dut egin dezazula «my orders are that you do it»

of auxiliary and the imperative force make sense. A problem is that these verbs may also take complements with an *-(e)n* suffix,

agindu dut egin dezan «my orders are that he do it»

but this sort of complement by itself cannot be understood as an imperative. This may have something to do with the fact that these verbs take *-(e)la* complements because they are communication verbs and *-(e)n* complements because they are verbs of volition. Another problem is that this source does not seem very good semantically for first person imperatives, maybe because these are formed on analogy with second person imperatives. We could have a transformation which optionally changes *-(e)n* to *-(e)la* in negative first person imperatives. Despite these difficulties, I am unable to suggest any other alternative source for *-(e)la* imperatives which comes close to being semantically satisfactory.

I have no explanation for the constraints on negation of imperatives.

There are some difficulties, but imperatives seem generally to be moderately susceptible to the strategy of analysis which we are considering in this paper.

3. In declarative sentences, as in questions and imperatives, the auxiliary can sometimes be dropped: *erranak erran* «what is said is said».

As noted above in the discussion of imperatives, the *-(e)la* suffix occurs with complements of communication verbs and various other sorts of verbs. This same suffix sometimes also occurs in declarative clauses which are not complements of any explicit verb.

gizon ona dela, bere haurrak segurik abereak bezala erabiltzen ditu «(it is said) that he is a good man; yet he treats his children like animals»

itxasora botako ninduela etorri zitzaidan «he came to me (saying) that he would throw me into the sea» (Guipúzcoan)

In these cases, a communication verb is understood.

Although the *-(e)n* suffix is used with subordinate clauses in various sorts of constructions, it is not used with independent declaratives, except as noted below in section 4 of this paper.

J. Ross (1970) has claimed that declarative sentences originate from underlying sources in which they are complements of abstract higher performative verbs, and Basque morphology seems to bear on at least two aspects of this claim. The *-(e)la* suffix (= *-(e)n* + *-la*), which is used with declarative complements of communication verbs, presumably including the abstract declarative performative, is the same suffix that is found in *hunela* «in this way» and other deictic adverbs derived from genitive forms of demonstrative pronouns. This suggests that complements of communication verbs are not arguments of these verbs but modify them adverbially (4). It has been held (G. Lakoff (1970) and elsewhere) that at least some adverbs are themselves higher verbs. If *-(e)la* adverbs are higher verbs, then they cannot be below the verbs which they modify, so, if Ross's abstract performative is like other communication verbs, it cannot be higher than its complement. Since it is not clear whether *-(e)la* adverbs are higher verbs, this feature of Ross's proposal cannot be evaluated at this point.

Putting aside for the present the question of whether an abstract performative verb could be a higher verb, we can look at whether there is any morphological indication that every declarative sentence has a performative verb associated with it in any way at all. As with questions (see section 1 above), there is no advantage in postulating an abstract verb of which ordinary declaratives are complements. An abstract declarative performative would not be like other communication verbs since its complement never has *-(e)la*. Moreover, this difference cannot be written off as a difference between explicit and implicit verbs, or between main clauses and others. However, if Ross's performatives could be justified on other grounds, it would be possible to write rules to accommodate them. A precedent for writing rules which apply only in the complements of some abstract verb was set in the discussion of imperatives above (section 2).

4. J. McCawley (1971) has argued that English tenses are higher verbs which take sentences as their arguments. Morphological evidence suggests that McCawley's proposal is only partly correct for

(4) A similar situation apparently obtains in English sentences like *dogs go 'bow-wow'* or *he argued thus: '...'*, where the quoted material seems to be functioning adverbially.

Basque: the *-(e)n* suffix is obligatory with the past tense of an auxiliary or other simply conjugated verb, but no suffix is

ikusi zuen «he had seen it»

ikusi du «he has seen it»

necessary with the present tense, so one might wish to propose that the past tense, but not the present tense, is a higher verb.

Although it is very difficult to get any sort of intuitive feeling for the difference between these two analyses, there is one way in which the revision seems slightly more attractive: the past tense expresses a relation of an event to the present, but the present tense does not seem to have this sort of content.

In English, present tense has no phonological shape, and there is no other morphological indication of its existence, so one might wonder why McCawley postulates its existence there. In McCawley's analysis, present is realized as \emptyset and past as *have* in environments where agreement has not applied (e.g. in infinitives, after modals, etc.). A *have*_{AUX} is dropped if it follows another *have*, so that the iteration of past in surface structure is restricted. Although McCawley gives elaborate arguments to show that past is a verb, present in his system apparently serves only two functions: i) to explain where *do*-support applies (p. 97): «Auxiliaries are exceptional by virtue of undergoing a transformation of «tense attraction» which combines them with an immediately preceding tense morpheme. All other transformations that might appear to treat auxiliaries in a special way (for example, subject-verb inversion) are simply transformations that follow «tense attraction» and have a structural description calling for the first verb.» The word *do* is inserted where one of these transformations results in a stranded tense. ii) to provide a means for constructing distinct structures which give rise to the past and present perfect tenses. The *have* that appears in the present perfect is a past tense under a present tense, and therefore not in a position to undergo agreement.

There are several ways to get a stranded affix requiring *do*-support if we assume that present tense is just the absence of a past tense. For example, the stranded affix could be an agreement affix which undergoes McCawley's «tense attraction» and counts as a verb for the same transformations that past does.

McCawley proposes not «that the present perfect is ultimately the present of a past but rather that through deletions it acquires

a derived constituent structure having a present as its highest verb and past as its next highest verb» (p. 104). It would be out of place to give a detailed reanalysis of McCawley's proposal here, but he needs to postulate structures which are deleted, and we could suggest that it is these structures, rather than a present tense, which block agreement and lead to the realization of past as *have* in present perfects.

At the end of his article, McCawley notes two things which his analysis does not explain: why there are iterated past tenses but no iterated present tenses in English, and why tense is an obligatory category in English. Our proposed reanalysis offers answers to both questions.

5. Superficial comparison of the morphological features of sentences and sentential complements of verbs in Basque suggests that in many but not all cases it is reasonable to analyze the former as being derived from sentences in which they function as verb complements. A deeper analysis of Basque grammar is necessary before any of the tentative conclusions set forth here can be taken as definitely established.

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