

# SUPPLETION IN THE OLD BASQUE VERB "TO GIVE": A TYPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Bernard Comrie

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig

Gontzal Aldai

Department of Linguistics, University of Southern California

One feature of the Old Basque verb system that differs from its modern counterpart and that has given rise to a fair amount of discussion in the specialist literature is the range of roots that are used to express the notion "give", in comparison with the single verb *eman* (Biscayan *emon*) in Modern Basque. The apparent suppletion in the Old Basque verb "give" was noted by Schuchardt (1900: lxxiii-lxxiv), and the forms were collected by Lafon (1943: 228-55; see also 429-430). The basic facts can be stated as follows. The synthetic forms of the Old Basque verb "give" show four distinct roots, as in (1)-(4).

- (1) *-ngu-*: This root is found in only a handful of forms in the earliest texts; we will have nothing further to say about it here.
- (2) *-rau-*: This seems quite transparently to be etymologically the causative of the verb *edun* (to cite the modern, albeit abstract form) "have"; we will likewise have nothing further to say about this root here. We will only call attention to the fact that the causative of *edun*, i.e. *eradun* (root *-rau-*), is also used as stative auxiliary for ditransitive agreement in eastern dialects: e.g. *erran d(e)rau-ta-zu* "you have told me" (where *erran* is the past participle "told" in eastern dialects).
- (3) *-i-/in-*: This root never occurs with third person singular indirect object agreement, but only with agreement for an indirect object of the first person (singular or plural), or the second person (singular or plural), or of the third person plural; this is the root that will be at the center of our interest below. Notice here too that most of the attested finite forms pertaining to this root are formally identical to the corresponding forms of the most common auxiliary of ditransitive agreement; that is, they are identical to the counterpart of *edun* "have" in ditransitive periphrases: e.g. *di-zu-n* "so that s/he gives [it] to you" (where *-n* indicates purposive meaning) vs. *esan di-zu* "s/he has told [it] to you" (where *esan* is the past participle "told" in western dialects).
- (4) *-ma-*: This is the etymon of the Modern Basque verb *eman* (*emon*), the only root for "give" in the modern language; in the oldest texts it is found predominantly with third person singular indirect object agreement, though indirect object agreement for other person-numbers is also attested. More

specifically, the analytic or periphrastic forms of *eman* were used in Old Basque for any person recipients. However, we have not come across any synthetic forms of *eman* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century used for recipients other than third person singular. There are some attested synthetic forms of *eman* with non-third person singular dative agreement in the following centuries; but these seem to be an innovation, which occurred mostly in imperatives.<sup>1</sup> The relation of this root to *-i/-in-* will also fall within our interest in this article.

While the above roots have been discussed reasonably extensively in the literature on the historical development of the Basque language and on the synchronic description of earlier stages of the language, the main center of attention in this earlier literature has been the etymological interpretation of the various roots. In this article, we want to suggest another approach that can throw light on the Old Basque phenomenon, namely typological comparison with other languages of the world. In this way, we hope to show how the Basque facts fit in with the range of possibilities that is found across the languages of the world. This does not, of course, contradict any of the work that has been done on the etymology of the roots in question, although we will suggest at the end of the article that the typological perspective may provide some evidence in favor of de Rijk's 1985 interpretation of the relation of this particular root to the verb *jin* "come".

The crucial feature of the distribution of the Old Basque roots that we wish to address is the near-complementary distribution of the roots *-i/-in-* and *-ma-*, which suggests grouping them into a single paradigm distinguished by the person-number of the indirect object: *-i/-in-* would be used with an indirect object of the first or second person, or of the third person plural, while *-ma-* would be used, at least predominantly, with an indirect object of the third person singular. In other words, the paradigm of the Old Basque verb "give" would be suppletive with respect to the person-number of the indirect object. This might seem surprising both from the perspective of European languages in general, which do not show any such suppletion, and also from the viewpoint of general morphological theory, since, as noted by Bybee (1985: 23, 93), suppletion for person is the rarest kind of suppletion to be found in verb conjugation.

However, it turns out that suppletion in the verb "give" with respect to its indirect object is found, if not frequently, then sporadically across the languages of the world, as has been documented in a preliminary way by one of us (Comrie, in press). It should be noted that the cross-linguistic survey presented in this work is very much a "convenience sample", mainly because grammars of many languages that have such suppletion do not mention it (no doubt on the grounds that this belongs in the lexicon rather than in the grammar), while comparative lexical materials are not so readily available for a wide range of languages. But nonetheless, attestations of such suppletion have been found from most parts of the world, and informal data that are still under investigation suggest that parallel data may well be forthcoming from parts of the

<sup>1</sup> As for forms of *eman* with the morpheme *-i-* (e.g. *emaiok*) vs. forms without this morpheme (e.g. *emak* / *emok*), it is certainly the latter forms that are more common in the earliest texts, whereas the former type of form has become general in Modern Basque.

world that are not yet covered, such as South America. In the following, we will give a brief overview of the results from Comrie (in press).

Suppletion involving different roots, or occasionally different derivatives of the same (synchronic or diachronic) root, distinguishing between one root used with a third person recipient and another used with a first or second person recipient, is found in: some (but not all) of the Tsezic languages, belonging to the Nakh-Daghestanian or North-East Caucasian family; some (but not all) Dravidian languages of southern India, e.g. Malayalam; Yukaghir, a language perhaps distantly related to the Uralic family and spoken in north-eastern Siberia; Lepcha, a Tibeto-Burman language of Sikkim, India; several Papuan languages (i.e. non-Austronesian languages of the New Guinea area), including Enga and Kewa in the Highlands, Manambu in East Sepik Province, and Yele spoken on isolated Rossel Island; Saliba, an Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea; Nandi, a Kalenjin language of the Nilotic family spoken in western Kenya; in several (though not all) Zapotecan and Otomi languages belonging to the Oto-Manguean family and spoken in Mexico; and in Miskitu, a Misumalpan language of Nicaragua.

A rarer but nonetheless well attested pattern is for suppletion between one root used with first person recipients, and another used with second and third person recipients, as found in Kenuzi-Dongola, a Nubian language spoken in Sudan and Egypt; in Maori, the Polynesian language of New Zealand; and, though with some complications that might militate against inclusion here, Japanese.

For completeness, we should note that there are also a few languages known to us, all from the same part of the world (around Madang on the north coast of Papua New Guinea) that have much richer systems of suppletion: for instance, Amele seems to have seven distinct roots corresponding to distinct person-number combinations, and Waskia four. However, comparative evidence suggests that these represent a local phenomenon whereby the verb "give" originally had a zero root and what are now (or at least seem to be) the suppletive roots were originally indirect object agreement affixes attached to this zero root. While such a basis for the suppletion in Old Basque may merit investigation, we believe that there is a more plausible source, as detailed below.

Against the background of these data from other languages, the Old Basque suppletion starts to make typological sense. Old Basque fits in most closely with those languages that use suppletion to distinguish between, on the one hand, first and second person recipients and, on the other hand, third person recipients —Basque shows no evidence of ever having made a distinction in verb root corresponding to the difference between first and second person recipients. The only way in which Old Basque differs from the relevant set of other languages is that *-i/-in-*, the root used with first and second person indirect objects is also used with third person plural indirect objects (but not with third person singular indirect objects). In addition, the root *-ma-*, even if used preferentially with third person singular indirect objects, is also found with indirect objects of other person-number combinations, though mostly in periphrastic forms. This particular distinction —third person singular versus all other person-number combinations— is not known to us from any other language as the basis of suppletion relating to the recipient of the verb "give".

The typologically unusual behavior of *-ma-* actually provides us with an approach to a possible explanation for the typologically unusual behavior of *-i/-in-* as well.

Although Old Basque *-ma-* shows clear signs of having once been restricted with regard to the person-number of its indirect object, this restriction is clearly already in a state of decay from the earliest texts. More generally, the system of suppletion as a whole is in a state of decay from the first attestations, with *-ma-* extending its range eventually, in the modern language, to be the only verb used irrespective of person-number of the indirect object. Thus we should not be surprised to find fluctuations in the precise distribution of the two roots.

We may therefore reconstruct the following development, starting from an unattested initial stage that is nonetheless plausible. Initially, in a stage of Basque where synthetic forms were predominant in the verbal system, *-i/-in-* was used for first and second person indirect objects, *-ma-* for third person indirect objects. We may also speculate on the possibility that at this stage there was no number distinction for third person indirect objects, either generally for all Basque verbs or at least for the verb *eman* (along the lines of similar suggestions for a late incorporation of number markers in the Basque verbal complex made by Lafon 1943: 416 and Gómez and Sainz 1995: 257). At this period, *-i/-in-* was still a productive root and indeed extended its range to take in third person plural indirect objects (perhaps when these were eventually distinguished from third person singular indirect objects). However, subsequently there was a markedness shift, with *-ma-* taking over as the unmarked root, gradually ousting *-i/-in-*. It was noted above that closely related languages can differ in whether they have such suppletion in the verb "give" or not (e.g. different Dravidian or Nakh-Daghestanian languages differ on just this parameter), so it is not surprising that a language, in this case Basque, should shift historically in the direction of losing an original suppletion of this kind. We will repeat below in more detail this putative development. Before that, we turn to introducing the hypotheses proposed in the literature on the etymologies of the roots *-i/-in-* and *-ma/-mo-*.

The traditional explanation in Basque historical linguistics for the origin of *-i/-in-* has been that this root is a contraction of the verb *egin* "do", an etymology apparently first proposed by Vinson 1896. Schuchardt (1900: lxxiii), in turn, proposed deriving *-i/-in-* from the verb *edun* "have". De Rijk 1985 departed from these hypotheses (especially from the former) and suggested rather relating the root *-i/-in-* to the same root as Modern Basque *jin* "come". While we feel very sympathetic to de Rijk's hypothesis, his reasons for proposing the relationship between *-i/-in-* and *jin*, and for rejecting the *egin* hypothesis are quite independent of our considerations here. As a matter of fact, we wonder whether de Rijk's hypothesis need necessarily be incompatible with these traditional etymologies (including the *egin* hypothesis).

Concretely, the above-mentioned formal identity between most *-i/-in-* forms and the stative auxiliary of ditransitive periphrases seems to be a piece of evidence in favor of Schuchardt's hypothesis of the origin of *-i/-in-* in a contraction of ditransitive forms of *edun* "have". On the other hand, examples such as the following appear as evidence for deriving *-i/-in-* from (or at least relating it to) *egin* "do": *deik buztanaz bizarrean* (Refranes y Sentencias 116: "darte ha en la barba con el rabo") "(the donkey) will beat you on the beard with its tail", lit. "it will do/give you on the beard with the tail"; or *idazu grazia* and *egidazu grazia* (Etxepare I,64; I,408) "give/do me your grace". One of de Rijk's major objections to the hypothesis deriving *-i/-in-* from *egin* is the existence in some of the forms pertaining to *-i/-in-* of an *-n-* (e.g. *indazu*) which does not appear in

the *egin* forms (e.g. *egidazu*). However, one does not clearly see why relating *-i/-in-* to *jin* can solve the problem of *-n-* better than relating *-i/-in-* to *egin*. If the *-n* in *egin* is the participial ending rather than part of the root, why should the *-n* in *jin* be part of the root? Our conclusion regarding the hypotheses on the origin of the root *-i/-in-* that have been proposed in the literature based on morphophonological tools of internal reconstruction is therefore rather neutral. Thus, we will not propose here any etymology for the origin of *-i/-in-*. On the other hand, we will consider the possible secondary origin of *jin* "come" from the root *-i/-in-*, as proposed by de Rijk 1985.

As for the origin of the root *-ma/-mo-* (i.e. *eman /emon*), the *-a/-o-* alternation in this root might suggest that the participle and the other nonfinite forms of this verb originated in already existing finite forms of another root with third person indirect object agreement. Note that the third person singular dative agreement marker is generally *-o* in Basque, but has a variant *-a* (cf. Lafon 1943: 393), as in Biscayan *deutsot /deutsat* "I have it to him/her". Moreover, many verbal forms showing this *a/o* alternation can be proved to have had an origin in third person singular dative agreement forms (cf. *daukat /daukot* "I have it", from something like "I seize to it": see Lafon 1943: 215-216).<sup>2</sup> The third person plural dative agreement marker *-e*, in turn, can be assumed to derive from the contraction of the singular marker *-o* plus the pluralizer *-el/-el-te* (cf. Upper Navarrese, Labourdin *-o-te*: see Gómez and Sainz 1995: 251 for details). The fact that *-e* ultimately derives from a plural marker might be taken as a small piece of evidence in favor of the hypothesis proposing a stage of Pre-Basque with no number distinction in third person indirect objects.

Now, in the above discussion of the typological data concerning suppletion of the root of the verb "give" with respect to the person of the indirect object, attention was paid only to the fact of such suppletion. Comrie (in press), however, also considers the possible reason for this kind of suppletion —especially given Bybee's observation that person suppletion is the rarest kind of suppletion in verb conjugation— and concludes that a relevant factor is deixis. In some languages, the two forms of the verb "give" are related either synchronically or diachronically by means of deictic affixes. Of the languages cited above, this is the case in Tsez, in Maori, and in Kenuzi-Dongola (in the last mentioned, only in the form used with non-first person recipients); in Saliba, the root used for non-third person recipients obligatorily includes a deictic affix, although there is also a root distinct from that used with third person recipients. But even in languages that do not have such suppletion, there is clear evidence for a relation between the recipient of the verb "give" and deixis. In colloquial English, for instance, a first person recipient can be replaced by the deictic adverb *here*, as in *give it here*, equivalent to *give it to me/us*. This relationship is not surprising on conceptual grounds. The essential semantics of the verb "give" is transmission of an object from one individual to another, in other words motion (perhaps metaphorical) towards this other individual, and deictic particles or adverbs are a prime means of expressing such motion in language.

<sup>2</sup> Also, the phoneme /m/ is assumed to be secondary in Pre-Basque (cf. Michelena 1977: 270 ff). Therefore, one could hypothesize that the root *-ma-* originated in third person dative agreement forms of a root such as, for instance, *\*-u-* (cf. *hemen* "here" < *heben* < *\*hauen*). (This root may perhaps be related to *edun* "have").

Is there any evidence that the Basque system involves or involved explicit deixis? Perhaps there is. If we accept de Rijk's hypothesis that the verb *jin* "come" derived from an intransitive, i.e. reflexive, use of *-i/-in-* (1985: 931-33), then there is a clear etymological link in Basque between the deictic verb *jin* expressing motion towards the speaker or addressee and the root used for "give" with speaker or addressee as indirect object. These uses are illustrated in the following examples (notice that for *-i/-in-* only synthetic forms are attested, while for *jin* only analytic forms are documented):

- (5) *jin* towards speaker: *azti bi jin dira gure okolura* (Oihenart: pro. 548) "two fortune-tellers have come to our house".
- (6) *-i/-in-* towards speaker: *didan parabizua* (Etxepare: I, 444) "so that he gives me the paradise".
- (7) *jin* towards addressee: (*dakidan*) *noiz jin nakidina* (Oihenart: poes. III, 45-46) "(so that I know) when I can come to you (fem.)".
- (8) *-i/-in-* towards addressee: *diada neskea gaxpaga* (Refranes y Sentencias: 174) "I will give you a girl with no sin".

Note moreover that if the above relationship is correct, then we have another motivation for saying that the extension to third person plural indirect objects reflects an innovation rather than the original state of affairs. At this point, we can summarize the whole evolution we hypothesize for the roots of "give" in Pre-Basque.

We do not propose (or reject) any specific origin for the root *-i/-in-*. Our reconstruction starts with a stage showing a complementary distribution between two roots: *-i/-in-* and *-ma/-mo-*. The former was used for first and second person recipients, the latter for third person recipients. Regardless of the exact mechanisms by which the differentiation of these roots had occurred, the motivation underlying this suppletion seems clear to us: it was deictic factors that ultimately triggered it. At this stage, both *-i/-in-* and *-ma/-mo-* had predominantly synthetic forms. Also, *-ma/-mo-* did not distinguish number of (third person) recipients, perhaps following a general feature of the language. At this stage too, *-i/-in-* gave rise to an intransitive verb *jin* "come", also used for motion towards speaker and addressee. Then in a second stage, the root *-i/-in-*, the productive one at this stage, was extended to third person plural indirect objects (perhaps when the number distinction for third person recipients was introduced in the language). In a third stage, after the participle *eman/emon* was created, there occurred a markedness shift in favor of the root *-ma/-mo-*. This shift was privileged in the general shift towards an analytic verbal system. In other words, the root *-ma/-mo-* (past participle *eman/emon*) turned out to be the only one used in the periphrastic forms of Old and Modern Basque.

To conclude, we note that the suppletion between the roots *-i/-in-* and *-ma-* for "give" found in Old Basque, sensitive to the person-number of the recipient, need not be regarded as a radical idiosyncrasy of this language but rather has close typological parallels in a small but widely scattered number of languages across the world. Moreover, the suppletion might have its origin in a deictic distinction, which would favor the etymology proposed by de Rijk 1985 that the root *-i/-in-* is related to the verb *jin* "come".

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