

Focus on Basque Movements

by

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Abstract

This thesis can be summarized in the following two objectives: (i) to develop a new version of the Nuclear Stress Rule (NSR) which overcomes certain problems found with previous versions, and (ii) to explain the so-called preverbal focus position in Basque in terms of the new NSR and prosodic principles imposed on focused phrases.

With respect to the NSR, I argue that certain generalizations about stress above the word level can be reduced to two basic syntactic properties of phrases: headedness and branchingness. The proposal is based on certain crucial insights found in previous work on the topic (Chomsky, Halle, and Lukoff 1956, Chomsky and Halle 1968, Liberman and Prince 1977, Halle and Vergnaud 1987, Cinque 1993, Zubizarreta 1998). The work reported in this thesis puts these insights together, resulting in a new version of the NSR, within the formalism of the metrical grid, which makes explicit reference to syntactic structure.

With respect to the preverbal focus position in Basque, I argue, contra much previous work on the topic, that it is not a syntactically defined position. Rather, it is to be explained in terms of certain prosodic conditions imposed on focused phrases. More specifically, focused phrases need to have primary stress in the sentence. The analysis is based on insights about the relation between syntax and discourse found in Cinque 1993, Zubizarreta 1998 and Reinhart 1995. The basic idea is that, given certain independently motivated hypotheses about Basque syntax, the NSR proposed in this thesis predicts that, in many cases, sentence stress is on the preverbal constituent. Since focused phrases need to have sentence stress, it follows that they must be in the preverbal position. However, in certain cases, the analysis correctly predicts that the focused phrase is not the one preceding the verb, but one containing the verb. I argue that this provides further evidence in favor of this analysis, and against analyses in which the preverbal focus position is defined syntactically.

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Abbreviations

A, ABS	Absolutive
ABL	Ablative
ALL	Allative
BEN	Benefactive
COM	Comitative
D, DAT	Dative
DET	Determiner
E, ERG	Ergative
FUT	Future
G, GEN	Genitive
IMP	Imperfective
IN	Inesive
LGEN	Locative genitive
PL	Plural
PR	Present
PRF	Perfective
PST	Past
SG	Singular
SUP	Superlative

Basque Orthography

All the Basque examples in this thesis are given in standard Basque orthography, except where phonetic detail is necessary. Basque orthography is straightforward in most cases, except in the following letters, listed with the corresponding IPA symbol:

- s apico-alveolar voiceless fricative, [s].
- tz dorso-alveolar voiceless affricate, [ts].
- x prepalatal voiceless fricative, [ç].
- tx prepalatal voiceless affricate, [tʃ].
- j velar voiceless fricative, [x], in Ondarroa;
in other dialects, it corresponds to other phonemes.
- ll palatal lateral, [λ]; for some speakers, palatal voiced fricative [j].
- ñ palatal nasal, [ɲ].
- rr rhotic trill, [r] (used only between vowels.)
- r rhotic flap, [ɾ], between vowels;
elsewhere, the trill/flap distinction is lost, and only 'r' is used.
- dd voiced palatal stop, [dʒ].