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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Contents

Abstract 3

Acknowledgments 5

Contents 9

Abbreviations 13

Basque Orthography 14

1 Introduction 15
   1.1 Overview 15
   1.2 A Note on the Data 16
   1.3 The Metrical Grid 17
   1.4 Chapter 2: Stress in Ondarroa Basque 21
   1.5 Chapter 3: The Nuclear Stress Rule 24
   1.6 Chapter 4: The NSR in Basque 29
   1.7 Chapter 5: Basque Movements and Focus 32

2 Stress in Ondarroa Basque 37
   2.1 Introduction 37
   2.2 The Basic Facts: Accented and Unaccented Words 38
   2.3 Word Level Stress 43
   2.4 Phrase Level Stress 46
   2.5 Conclusion 55
Appendices to Chapter 2

A  Monosyllabic Words and Underlying Tones .......................... 56
    A.1  Stress in Monosyllabic Words ................................. 56
    A.2  Hualde 1991a ................................................. 61
B  Stress, Vowel Deletion and Cyclicity ................................. 64

3  The Nuclear Stress Rule .................................................. 73
   3.1  Introduction ....................................................... 73
   3.2  Halle and Vergnaud 1987 ......................................... 74
   3.3  Cinque 1993 ....................................................... 79
       3.3.1  The NSR in Phrases ...................................... 80
       3.3.2  Stress in Compounds ...................................... 87
       3.3.3  The NSR and Syntactic Structure ......................... 91
   3.4  A Structure-Based Definition of the NSR ....................... 100
       3.4.1  Stress in Phrases ...................................... 101
       3.4.2  Stress in Compounds ...................................... 112
   3.5  Conclusion ....................................................... 116

4  The NSR in Ondarroa Basque ............................................. 119
   4.1  Introduction ....................................................... 119
   4.2  Basic Clause Structure ......................................... 120
       4.2.1  The Syntax of Verbs .................................... 120
       4.2.2  The Syntax of Arguments ................................ 124
   4.3  Sentence Stress .................................................. 126
   4.4  Adverbials and the NSR ......................................... 135
   4.5  The NSR and Movement ........................................... 137
       4.5.1  Left Dislocation ........................................ 138
       4.5.2  Right Dislocation ........................................ 142
       4.5.3  Sentence Stress on Verbs ................................ 144
       4.5.4  Interim Conclusion ....................................... 146
   4.6  Right Dislocation, Stress, and Verb Movement ................. 146
4.6.1 The NSR and Linear Order .................................. 147
4.6.2 The Morphosyntax of Compound Tenses ..................... 148
4.7 The Domain of Application of the NSR ......................... 158
4.8 Sentence Stress and Depth of Embedding ...................... 164
4.9 Conclusion .......................................................... 167

5 Basque Movements and Focus ...................................... 169
  5.1 Introduction ...................................................... 169
  5.2 The Semantics of Focus ......................................... 171
  5.3 The Preverbal Position in Basque .............................. 173
  5.4 The Preverbal Position and the NSR ........................... 176
  5.5 Focus and the Domain of Application of the NSR .......... 180
  5.6 On Focus Movement ............................................... 183
  5.7 Focus Projection .................................................. 187
  5.8 Basque Movements and Economy .............................. 197
    5.8.1 The Problem ................................................ 197
    5.8.2 The Semantics of Topic ................................... 200
    5.8.3 Left Dislocation .......................................... 202
    5.8.4 Right Dislocation ......................................... 204
  5.9 Long Distance Dependencies .................................. 207
    5.9.1 Long Distance Movement .................................. 208
    5.9.2 Wh/F in situ ............................................... 213
  5.10 Basque Movements and Reconstruction ....................... 218
  5.11 Conclusion ...................................................... 224

6 Conclusion .......................................................... 227

Bibliography .......................................................... 229

**DRAFT** March 13, 2003
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A, ABS</td>
<td>Absolutive</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABL</td>
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<td>Allative</td>
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<td>Locative genitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUP</td>
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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, [ʃ].
- **tx** prepalatal voiceless affricate, [tʃ].
- **j** velar voiceless fricative, [x], in Ondarroa; in other dialects, it corresponds to other phonemes.
- **ll** palatal lateral, [ʎ]; 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, [j].