

# CASE ASSIGNMENT IN BASQUE

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## ABSTRACT

This study undertakes an analysis of how ergative/absolute Case marking takes place in Basque, in a structure which appears to be similar to that of an accusative language. Case marking of argument NP's is argued to occur under government by independent AGR elements which surface as agreement affixes on the auxiliary and which may occupy different structural positions in different sentences, resulting in the disparity between syntactic structure and Case marking which Basque presents. This analysis is shown to have important consequences for the analysis of impersonal and reflexive constructions, where an argument position is left unmarked for Case. Impersonal or reflexive interpretations are obtained depending on whether the subject or the object position is Caseless. The analysis also extends naturally to certain sentences which do not contain Case assigners and where the Case filter is shown to force restructuring.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, two assumptions have been used successfully to account for the distribution of NP's at different levels of representation in a number of languages. The first is that Case is relational, establishing a relation between a Case assigner and a Case assignee, in a certain configuration; the second is the Case Filter, which posits that lexical NP's must receive Case (cf. Chomsky 1981).

In languages with an impoverished Case morphology such as English, Chinese (cf. Li 1985) or the Kru languages (cf. Koopman 1984), Case must necessarily be considered an abstract feature, the assignment of which is detectable only from its effects on the distribution of constituents. Case assigners can also be purely abstract entities, as with AGR in INFL, which assigns nominative case to the subject of tensed clauses in languages like English or Chinese, even though this element is morphologically null in most instances in English and generally in Chinese.

Basque is, in contrast, a language with very rich and consistent Case morphology. The direct arguments of the verb are overtly marked in the verb or auxiliary as agreement affixes and the Case of every NP is also morphologically visible. It is my position that in such a language, Case morphology and syntactic Case assignment must be reconciled. This approach is, however, not problem-free, given the discrepancy between morphology and syntactic behavior that Basque presents. Basque morphology is consistently ergative both in the marking of NP's and in agreement markers in the verb or auxiliary. Agents in transitive clauses receive one Case, ergative, and both objects of transitive verbs and the single argument of intransitive verbs receive another Case, absolutive.

On the other hand, however, Basque does not behave syntactically like an ergative language. Syntactic tests of ergativity/accusativity give similar results for Basque and for languages like English (cf. Eguzkitza 1986, Levin 1983, Ortiz de Urbina in prep., Rotaetxe 1978). If, in accordance with the results of these studies, we propose a configuration for Basque similar to the generally assumed configuration for an accusative language such as English (abstracting from word order), the problem arises of how ergative Case assignment takes place in such a structure.

In languages such as English and the Romance languages, which are accusative in both their syntax and their morphology, it is assumed that the subject of the sentence receives nominative Case from a Case assigner in its governing category: AGR in INFL (Chomsky 1981:259). In these languages, the object of the verb receives Case from the verb, which governs it. If the structure of Basque is similar to that of these other languages, we obtain the unexpected result that certain subjects show ergative Case, while other subjects show absolutive Case, the same Case that objects receive.

In view of these facts, a possible position would be to disregard the morphological data, and argue that abstract Case must be assigned in Basque in a way similar to Case assignment in English, since we are assuming parallel structures for both languages. AGR in INFL would then assign Case to the subject NP, which it governs, and the verb to the object NP. Morphological Case would only be the result of a late PF rule and would not take into account structural factors.

A second position would be to argue that those subjects which in the surface receive absolutive Case are d-structure objects, following the unaccusative hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978, Burzio 1981, Levin 1983). Then we would have to conclude that Case morphology

in Basque reflects the d-structure position of the NP's. But this would require us to consider Basque as highly marked with respect to basic principles of Universal Grammar, since it is generally assumed that the assignment of Case to certain structural positions determines the distribution of NP's at s-structure, NP-movement taking place from non-Case-marked to Case-marked positions.

The line that I will follow in this paper is to establish a close relationship between morphology and syntax. I intend to show that ergative/absolute Case assignment can indeed take place in Basque under government at s-structure, even if we assume a syntactic configuration for this language similar to that of languages with nominative/accusative Case marking.

I will propose an analysis whereby certain agreement elements which accompany the verb in tensed clauses assign the required Case to the different argument NP's under government. These elements are cliticized to the verb or auxiliary at PF and surface as affixes. I will postulate that agreement elements (Case assigners) may appear in more than one structural position and that there is a movement rule affecting these Case-assigning elements. This analysis will be shown to shed light in an important way on the interpretation of impersonal and reflexive constructions in Basque, which on the surface are identical to intransitive sentences. Our analysis will also lead us to propose the existence of a restructuring rule in certain sentences where a verb is used without an auxiliary carrying agreement. The arguments of these verbs must receive Case from the agreement features in the main clause in order to satisfy the Case filter. Our analysis thus forces restructuring in these cases. I will show that independent evidence exists which confirms the restructuring analysis in these sentences.

## 2. Morphological Ergativity and Syntactic Accusativity

### 2.1. Morphological ergativity of Basque

The claim that Basque is ergative in its morphology would seem difficult to counter. In neutral sentences, the patient of a transitive verb and the single argument of an intransitive verb are marked with one Case, absolute (phonologically unmarked). Agents of transitive verbs receive a different Case, ergative. Thus in both (1) and (2) below mutil-a 'the boy' receives absolute Case. Neska 'the girl' is the experiencer of the transitive verb ikusi 'to see' in (2) and is marked for ergative Case:

- (1) mutil-a-∅ etorri da eskola-ra  
 boy-Det-ABS come AUX school-to  
 'the boy came to school'
- (2) neska-k mutil-a-∅ ikusi du  
 girl-ERG boy-Det-ABS see AUX  
 'the girl saw the boy'

This Case marking affects all NP's. Basque does not show any of the splits in Case marking of NP's that affect other ergative languages. In Dyirbal, for instance, even though Case marking is done generally in an ergative fashion, pronominal NP's are Case marked following accusative principles. Other languages illustrate different types of splits among NP's in Case marking (see Comrie 1981). As has often been pointed out, Basque would seem to be rather exceptional in not presenting any of these splits and being consistently ergative in this respect (Bossong 1984, Rebuschi 1984).

Basque is also ergative in the way agreement with different arguments is marked in the verb or auxiliary in tensed clauses.

- (3) n-a-tor  
 'I come'

n- : 1s  
 -a- : - past  
 -tor : verbal root 'to come'

- (4) n-a-rama-te  
 'they are taking me'

n- : 1s  
 -a- : - past  
 -rama- : verbal root 'to take'  
 -te- : 3p

- (5) d-a-rama-t  
 'I am taking it/him/her'

d- : 3s  
 -a- : - past  
 -rama- : verbal root 'to take'  
 -t : 1s

In (3) and (4) the first person singular agreement of 'I come' and 'they are taking me' is marked in exactly the same fashion, by means of a prefix n-. In contrast, this same first person singular is marked by means of a suffix -t in (5) 'I am taking it'. NP-verb agreement, thus, also works in an ergative manner.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2. Syntactic ergativity

In spite of the exemplarity of the ergative morphology of Basque, several authors working mainly within the framework of generative grammar have shown, rather convincingly in my opinion, that the formal ergativity of Basque does not extend to its syntax.

Heath (1974) has argued that Basque has a syntactic notion of subject identical to that of morphologically accusative languages and that there is no evidence that the morphological ergativity of Basque has any repercussions in its syntax. Heath shows that rules such as Equi-NP deletion (control), which work under identity of subjects, single out the same arguments in Basque and in English, regardless of whether the deleted subject would have been marked ergative or absolutive in Basque.

Rotaetxe (1978:657-671) applied to Basque the main criteria of subjecthood identified in Keenan (1976) and Li and Thompson (1976), concluding that these criteria define as subjects the ergative argument in transitive clauses and the absolutive argument in intransitive clauses.

Levin (1983) examines Basque in the light of Marantz's Ergativity Hypothesis. Marantz postulates that the association between semantic roles and grammatical relations is different in ergative and accusative languages. Levin shows these associations by means of the following table:

(A)-Accusative	(E)-Ergative
agent-subject	agent-object
patient-object	patient-subject

Levin, who examines Warlpiri, Dyirbal and Basque at length, concludes that Basque is an accusative language as defined by the Ergativity Hypothesis.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I will not review all the arguments for the syntactic accusativity of Basque offered by these authors above. Here I will only briefly sketch two arguments which in my view clearly show that in Basque ergative arguments of transitive clauses and absolutive arguments of intransitive clauses are grouped together as subjects of their clauses, in spite of different Case marking. The first argument is from Binding Theory. The second argument, the test of subject deletion in coordinate structures, has repeatedly been used as a test of subjecthood and ergativity outside of the Generative tradition (Keenan 1976, Comrie 1978, 1981, 1984). I refer the reader to the above cited works for further arguments.

### 2.2.1. Distribution of lexical anaphors

It follows from Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981) that anaphors cannot occur in subject position of tensed clauses, since they would be necessarily A-free in that position, violating principle A. In an accusative language with accusative Case marking, such as English, this means that an anaphor cannot appear in contexts of nominative Case assignment.

In Basque, anaphors cannot appear either as ergative arguments of transitive clauses or as absolutive arguments of intransitive clauses, suggesting that both these are in subject position of their respective sentences, in spite of different Case marking. This can be illustrated with the reciprocal anaphor elkar 'each other':

- (6) a. \*elkar        etorri    dira  
           e.o. ABS    come        AGRabs-3p  
           'each other came'
- b.    elkarr-ekin etorri dira  
           '(they) came with e.o.' (= 'they came together')
- (7) a. \*elkarr-ek    mutil-ak    ikusi    ditu(zte)  
           e.o. ERG    boys-ABS    see        AGRabs-3p AGRerg3s/p  
           'each other saw the boys'
- b.    mutil-ek    elkar    ikusi    dute  
           ERG        ABS                    AGRabs-3s, AGRerg-sp  
           'the boys saw each other'

### 2.2.2. Subject deletion in coordinate structures

There is an interesting difference between an accusative language like English and an ergative language such as Dyirbal with respect to conjunction reduction (see Comrie 1978, 1981, 1984).

If you coordinate a transitive clause and an intransitive clause in that order, leaving the single argument of the second clause unexpressed, in English this argument is unequivocally understood as coreferential with the nominative argument of the first clause:

(8) The man hit the woman and came here

The reverse situation obtains in Dyirbal. In (9) the deleted argument is understood as coreferential with the absolutive argument (patient) (example from Comrie 1981:109):

(9) Balan d<sup>y</sup>ugumbil bangul yarangu balgan, banin<sup>y</sup>u  
       woman-ABS                      man-ERG hit            came  
       'The man hit the woman and she/\*he came here'

In Basque, the interpretation is analogous to the one that obtains in English. The deleted, absolutive, subject of the intransitive clause is understood as coreferential with the ergative (agent) argument of the transitive clause:

(10) Gizonak emakumea jo du eta etorri da hona  
       man-ERG woman-ABS hit    and came            here  
       'The man hit the woman and he/\*she came here'

In the absence of a context, the interpretation of a sentence like (10) in Basque is unambiguous.<sup>3</sup>

We can, thus, conclude that both the distribution of anaphors and the test of conjunction reduction clearly show the syntactic accusativity of Basque.

### 3. Case Assignment in Transitive and Intransitive Clauses

I will, then, assume that Basque is a language whose syntax is accusative, but whose morphology is ergative.<sup>4</sup> What needs to be explained is how Case assignment takes place under those circumstances; that is, how subjects get different Cases in different

tensed sentences and how objects receive the same Case as certain subjects. I will make Case assignment in Basque follow from the government of argument NP's by agreement features in the verb or auxiliary.

In Basque, the presence of subjects, objects, and indirect objects is marked in the verb or auxiliary by affixes that agree with those arguments in person and number.<sup>5</sup> If an NP bearing one of those grammatical functions is not marked in the verb, the result is an ungrammatical sentence. This can be seen in (11) where the auxiliary shows agreement with the absolutive object NP, but not with the ergative subject:

- (11) \*Jon-(ek) sagarr-a-k           jan dira  
       ERG    apple-Det-pl-ABS eat AGRabs 3p  
       'Jon ate the apples'

Subject, object, and indirect object pronouns can be dropped, since their features can be retrieved from the agreement features in the auxiliary:

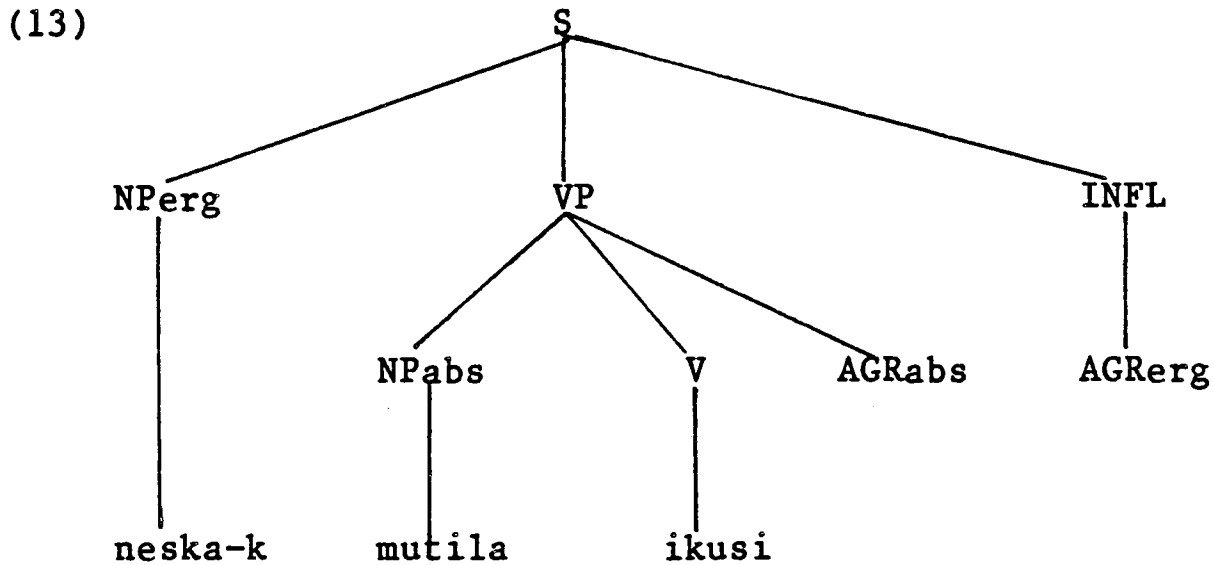
- (12) a. gu-k   hai-ei   haiek    eman dizkiegu  
       we-ERG they-DAT they-ABS give AUX  
       b. pro pro pro eman dizkiegu  
           give AGRabs 3p+AGRerg 1p+AGRdat 3p  
       'we gave them to them'

The empty arguments in (12b), represented as pro, have the same definite referential interpretation as the lexical pronouns in (12a). I will assume that the agreement elements are Case assigners and that they assign Case under government to the different arguments of the verb, being collapsed at PF in the auxiliary (which also carries tense and mood features) or in the verb, in the case of a few verbs that have synthetic conjugation in some tenses.<sup>6</sup> If a Case-assigned position is left empty, the EC receives a pronominal interpretation.

This hypothesis entails that the ergative agreement element (AGRerg) must appear in INFL, directly under the S node in order for it to assign Case to the subject of a transitive verb. In transitive sentences, another agreement element, AGRabs, must assign Case to the object of the verb. For AGRabs to be able to govern the object, it must be the case that there is a position under the VP where it can and must appear in these sentences. The

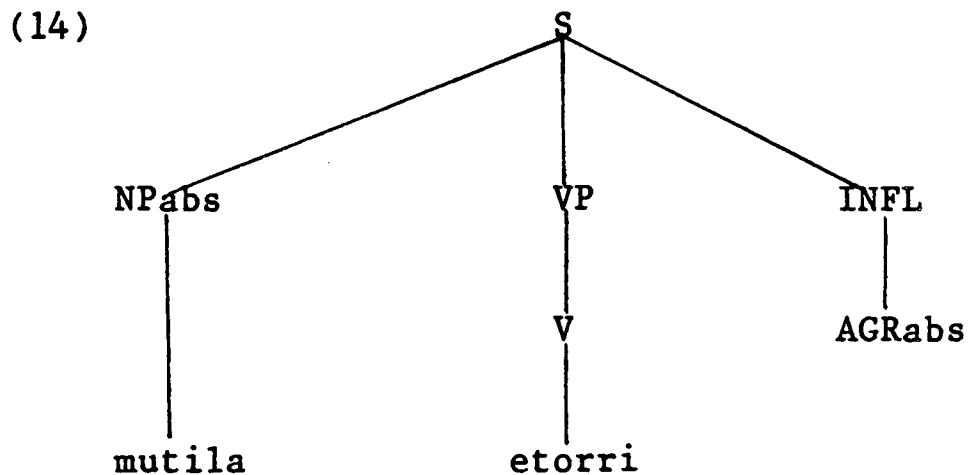


structure of a transitive sentence such as (2) above is, thus, as follows:



In this structure each NP receives the correct Case under government.

In an intransitive sentence such as (1) above there is no AGRerg in INFL and AGRabs can therefore appear in this position and assign Case to an NP in subject position:



With an intransitive verb, the subject can thus receive absolutive Case under government. We will see in the next section that it is reasonable to assume that AGR abs is always base generated under the VP and can optionally move to INFL, if no AGRerg is in this position. This optional movement rule must be postulated to account for constructions affecting both transitive and intransitive verbs.

4. Case Assignment in Reflexive and Impersonal Constructions

Reflexive and impersonal constructions have in common that an argument which is assigned a theta-role is not assigned Case. Here I will be concerned with sentences such as (15), which have the two interpretations indicated in the English glosses: impersonal and reflexive. In (15) we have a verb ikusi 'to see' which assigns two theta-roles. In (15), however, the morphology of the auxiliary corresponds to an intransitive sentence; only one argument, absolutive, is marked in the auxiliary. In both interpretations in (15) there is an experiencer (argument with the external theta-role) and a theme (internal theta role), but only one argument can be expressed lexically, since only one Case is assigned. The two interpretations of (15) result from the two possible structural positions of the lexical argument:

(15) Reagan ikusi da  
       ABS see    AGRabs-3s

- a. 'one saw Reagan'
- b. 'Reagan saw himself'

I will maintain that these two interpretations correspond respectively to the structures in (16):

(16) a. PROarb Reagan ikusi da  
       b. Reagan<sub>i</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> ikusi da

PRO will appear in either subject or object position, depending on which position is not assigned Case. The interpretation of PRO as arbitrary or coindexed with another NP in its clause will depend on its structural position. I will assume that a rule of Basque grammar allows the suppression of the Case-assigner which in the most basic sentence would assign Case to the subject, in the same way that the Case that the object would receive is assumed not to be assigned in the passive in languages such as English.

## 4.1. Impersonal constructions

In this section I analyze sentences like (16a) above (and repeated below) and (17) below. In these sentences there is an implied arbitrary human actor. I will claim that in impersonal sentences an empty category which receives arbitrary interpretation



agreement element, is also a default form which can signal a non-referential EC in argument position. The difference in the Case assigned to different object NP's in impersonal constructions (third vs. first and second persons) is due to a morphological rule affecting Case-assigning affixes in the auxiliary. The auxiliary can contain only one marker for each Case. The possibility of an AGRabs affix marking the non-referential subject and another AGRabs marking an object is, therefore, ruled out for morphological reasons. If the auxiliary contains a default third person singular AGRabs and also must contain another third person AGRabs to identify and assign Case to a third person object, both third person AGRabs elements collapse at PF. The result is a phonetic form of the auxiliary which is identical to one containing only one AGRabs and whose number is that needed to agree with the object. The monovalent forms da and dira, which overtly mark only AGRabs-3s and AGRabs-3p respectively, are thus ambiguous. They can contain one or two third person AGRabs (a Case-assigner and a non-Case-assigner default marker. I mark the non-Case-assigner as AGR-3s (NA)):

AGRabs-3s: da  
 AGRabs-3s (NA) + AGRabs-3s: da  
 AGRabs-3p: dira  
 AGRabs-3s (NA) + AGRabs-3p: dira

These facts are captured by the following morphological rule:

(R1) AGRabs-3s (NA)+AGRabs-3 alpha s → AGRabs-3 alpha s

The ambiguity of these forms of the auxiliary can be seen in the following examples, illustrating an intransitive and an impersonal transitive sentence respectively:

(18) neskak etorri dira eskolara  
 girls-ABS come AGRabs 3p school-to  
 'the girls came to school'

(19) PROabs neskak ikusi dira  
 girls-ABS see AGRabs 3s, AGRabs 3p  
 'PROabs saw the girls'

When the sentence must contain two AGRabs elements of different number, one, NA, to identify an arbitrary subject and another one to assign Case to a first or second person object, a different morphological rule applies. The AGRabs which assigns Case to the

object is phonetically realized as a dative marker, as in the following example:

AGRabs-3s + AGRabs-1p → AGRabs-3s + AGRdat-1p: zaigu

On the surface an object of the verb receives dative Case in this instance. There is, thus, a second rule:

(R2) AGRabs-3s(NA) + AGRabs-non3 alpha s → AGR abs-3s +  
AGRdat-non3 alpha s

A form like zaigu which overtly contains a third person singular absolutive affix z- and a first person plural dative affix -igu, will be predictably three ways ambiguous, representing the collapsing of different AGR elements:

a. AGRabs-3s + AGRdat-1p

example:

(20) neska gu-ri etorri zaigu  
girl-ABS we-DAT come  
'the girl came to us'

b. AGRabs-3s (NA) + AGRabs-1p

example:

(21) PROarb gu-ri ikusi zaigu  
we-DAT see  
'PROarb saw us' (= 'One saw us/we were seen')

c. AGRabs-3s(NA) + AGRabs-3s + AGRdat-1p

example:

(22) PROarb dirua gu-ri eman zaigu  
money-ABS we-DAT give  
'PROarb gave us the money' (= 'We were given the money')

In zaigu the dative suffix -igu can thus reflect a real underlying AGRdat as in Cases a and c, illustrated in sentences (20) and (22), or an underlying AGRabs as in Case b, illustrated in sentence (21), which surfaces as dative as a consequence of the application of rule (R2) above. The z- absolutive prefix, for its part, may

reflect one underlying AGRabs as in case a, illustrated in sentence (20), or two underlying AGRabs which merge in the phonology as predicted by rule (R1), as in case c.

Further evidence that AGRabs-3s is a default marker which indicates a non-referential argument can be gathered from other constructions.

If this is the case, we would expect intransitive sentences with a phonologically empty subject to be ambiguous between a reading in which the third person singular agreement marker in the auxiliary identifies a referential EC, *pro*, and another reading in which this is a default marker which identifies an arbitrary subject (impersonal reading). This is indeed the situation. In (23), the subject EC is ambiguous between a referential pronominal interpretation (*pro*) and an arbitrary interpretation (PRO):

(23) EC etorri da            poliki  
      come    AGRabs-3s slowly

- a. *pro* etorri da poliki  
   ‘he/she came slowly’  
   cf. Spanish ‘vino despacio’
- b. PROarb etorri da poliki  
   ‘PROarb (One/"we"/"they") came slowly’  
   cf. Spanish ‘se vino despacio’

The use of AGRabs-3s as a default marker can also be observed in transitive sentences where the verb does not take an object. A transitive sentence whose auxiliary shows an ergative suffix and an absolutive third person singular prefix, and where the object is not expressed, has two interpretations. In one interpretation there is an object *pro*; in the other interpretation there is no object:

(24) neskek    edan    dute  
      girls-ERG drink AGRabs-3s, AGRerg-3p

- a. neskek *pro* edan dute  
   ‘the girls drank it’
- b. neskek  $\emptyset$  edan dute  
   ‘the girls drank’

To sum up: in this section I have shown that in Basque impersonal sentences there is a default element in INFL which impedes the assignment of Case to the subject. Only PRO is possible, therefore, in subject position in these sentences. This element in INFL is identical in surface shape to a third person singular Case assigning AGRabs. If there is an object in an impersonal sentence, it is assigned Case by AGRabs under the VP, as in any other transitive sentence. This Case assigner may surface as a dative affix, affecting the surface Case assigned to the direct object, or may merge with the default marker, depending on certain morphological rules.

#### 4.2. Reflexive constructions

In Basque there are two reflexive/reciprocal constructions. The first one simply involves the appearance of a lexical anaphor as object of a transitive verb. Case assignment and theta-role assignment take place in these sentences in the same way as in any other transitive sentence with a non-anaphorical object. The subject NP receives ergative Case from AGRerg in INFL and the external theta-role. The lexical anaphor in NP,VP receives the internal theta-role and Case from AGRabs under the VP. The reflexive anaphor is illustrated in (25). Morphologically it consists of a form of the possessive pronoun and the noun buru 'head'. The reciprocal anaphor is elkar 'each other' and its use is illustrated in (26). The reciprocal and reflexive anaphora are treated as third person singular NP's:<sup>7</sup>

(25) (ni-k) neu-re buru-a            ikusi dut  
 I-ERG I-GEN head-Det-ABS see    AGRabs-3s AGRerg-1s  
 'I saw myself'

(26) (gu-k) elkar ikusi dugu  
 we-ERG e.o. see    AGRabs-3s+AGRerg-1p  
 'we saw each other'

This construction has the same properties as a transitive sentence. There is, however, another reflexive/reciprocal construction which requires greater attention. This construction was illustrated in (16b) above and is characterized by the presence of a single absolutive argument and the absence of an ergative marker in the auxiliary accompanying a transitive verb. Unlike impersonal constructions, the expressed absolutive NP is interpreted as receiving the external theta-role. This NP appears in the absolutive Case, regardless of person.

I will assume that in these sentences AGRerg is not generated. AGRabs moves to INFL, as in an intransitive sentence, and assigns absolutive Case to an NP appearing in subject position. The object position will, thus, be left ungoverned. An EC in the non-Case-marked object position is necessarily understood as coreferential with the subject, which c-commands it. The absolutive subject NP receives the external theta-role. The internal theta-role is assigned to the object EC:

- (27) (gu)i PRO<sub>i</sub> ikusi gara  
 we-ABS see AGRabs-ip  
 'we saw each other'

No lexical anaphor (or any other NP) can occur in object position in sentences of this type, since Case is not assigned to this position:

- (28) \*(gu) elkar ikusi gara  
 'we saw each other'

If a sentence contains a transitive verb (i.e. two theta roles are assigned), an animate third person argument marked for absolutive Case, and no ergative agreement marker, the sentence will be predictably ambiguous between an impersonal and a reflexive/reciprocal interpretation. This follows from our analysis. Consider for instance (29=15) and (30):

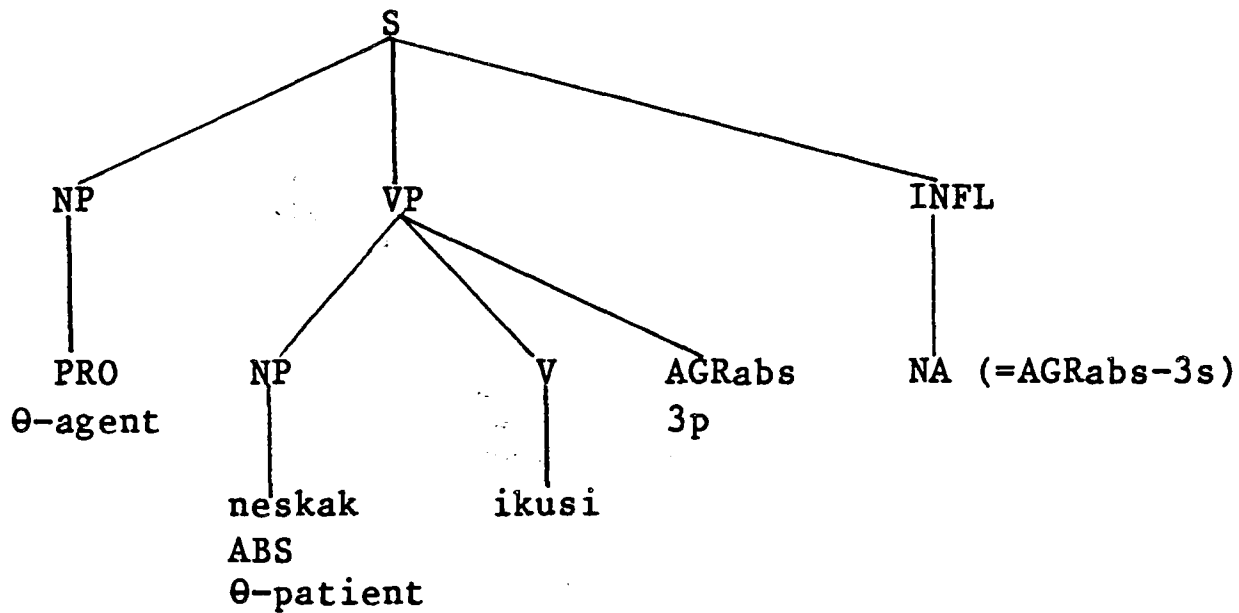
- (29) Reagan ikusi da  
 ABS saw AGRabs-3s  
 'One saw Reagan/Reagan saw himself'

- (30) neskak ikusi dira  
 ABS see AGRabs-3p  
 'One saw the girls/The girls saw themselves/each other'

For (30) the two interpretations correspond to the following two configurations:

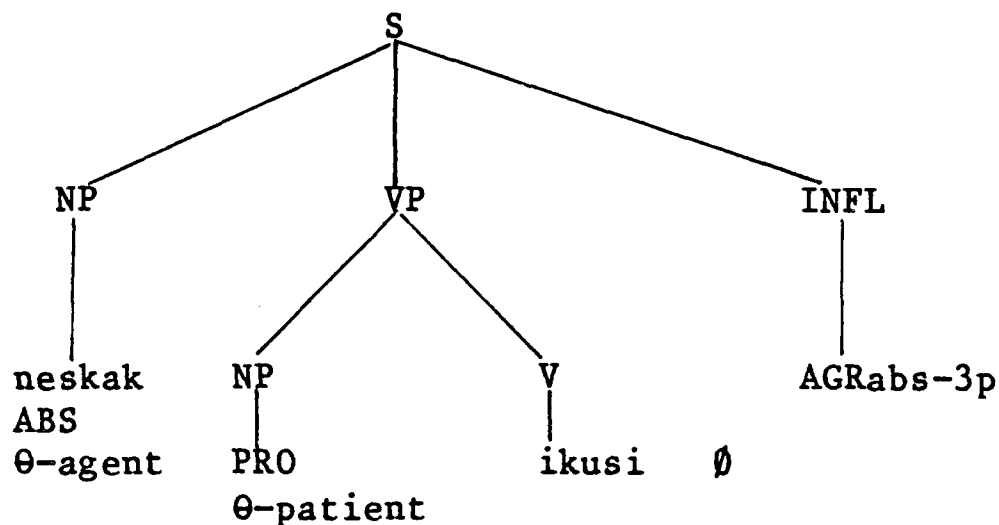
- (31) a. Impersonal: PRO<sub>arb</sub> neskak ikusi dira  
 'PRO saw the girls'





Morphological rule (R1): AGRabs-3s(NA) + AGRabs-3p = AGRabs-3p (dira)

- b. Reflexive/reciprocal: neskak<sub>i</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> ikusi dira  
 'the girls saw e.o./themselves'



Reflexive and impersonal constructions are different in the surface if they contain non-third person arguments (compare (17) with (27), due to the abs → dat rule (R2)). Rules (R1) and (R2) operate in impersonal sentences, but not in reflexive sentences, since in the latter there is a single AGRabs element at all levels.

To summarize, in both impersonal and reflexive sentences, the number of Cases assigned is one less than the number of theta-roles.

There is thus an argument position which does not receive Case. If the position which is not assigned Case is the subject position, any empty category in this slot, which necessarily will lack an antecedent within the clause, is interpreted as arbitrary and the sentence has an impersonal reading. If the Caseless position is the object position, the object EC has a c-commanding antecedent in the subject of the clause and must be coindexed with it. The result is a reflexive sentence.

This Caseless EC is interpreted as an arbitrary pronoun when it does not have an antecedent, but it behaves like an anaphor, obligatorily bound to a c-commanding antecedent when it does have one. Therefore I identify this EC as PRO.

A problem with this identification is that this EC cannot search for an antecedent outside of its clause. This EC always receives an arbitrary interpretation when in subject position and can never be controlled. But nothing crucial hinges on this point. This EC is reminiscent of PRO in that it is Caseless and has both pronominal and anaphoric properties. On the other hand, however, an argument can be made that it is governed both when in object position (by the verb) and when in subject position (by the tense). Let us call this element governed-PRO.

Now, we may define governing category as the minimal complete functional complex containing alpha and a governor of alpha, where a complete functional complex is the domain in which all grammatical functions compatible with its head are realized (Chomsky 1986:169). It follows that the minimal S containing governed-PRO will be the governing category for it. Having a governing category, this element cannot be controlled from outside of it. If it has a c-commanding antecedent within its governing category, governed-PRO behaves like an anaphor (as in reflexive sentences). If it does not have an antecedent within its governing category, governed-PRO behaves like an arbitrary pronoun (as in impersonal sentences).

## 5. Restructuring

I have claimed that for a lexical or pro NP argument of a verb to be licensed, it must be the case that there is an AGR element which governs and assigns Case to it. In this light, consider sentence (32):

- (32) Jon-ek joan nahi du  
 ERG go want AGRabs-3s+AGRerg-3s  
 'Jon wants to go'

In sentence (32) the embedded verb joan 'to go' is not accompanied by an auxiliary; the only auxiliary, carrying agreement affixes, is du, which accompanies the main verb nahi 'to want'. Verbs in the complement of nahi 'to want' and behar 'to need' appear in the perfective form without an auxiliary if the subjects of both clauses are coreferential.

Heath (1974) analyses sentences of the type illustrated in (32) as cases of Equi-NP deletion, and remarks that this structure is used independently of whether the embedded clause would have an absolutive or an ergative subject. Heath takes this fact as evidence for the syntactic accusativity of Basque.

The construction in (32) would not be used if the subjects of both clauses were not coreferential. Instead a subjunctive clause, as in (33a) or a nominalized (gerundival) clause, as in (33b) would be used, depending on the dialect:

- (33) a. Jon-ek [Mikel joan dadin] nahi du  
 ERG ABS go AUX-SUBJ want AUX  
 'Jon wants that Mikel go' (= 'Jon wants Mikel to go')
- b. Jon-ek [Mikel joate-a-∅] nahi du  
 ERG ABS go-Det-ABS want AUX  
 'Jon wants Mikel to go'

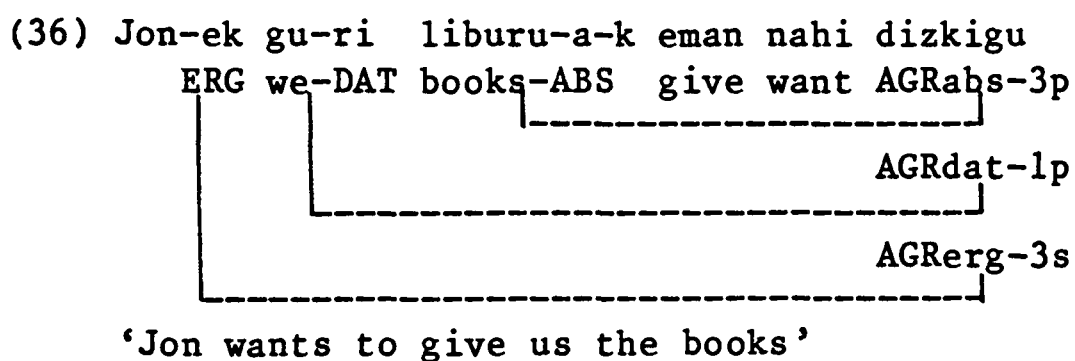
Going back to (32), accepting Heath's analysis as basically correct, we would have a structure:

- (34) Jon-ek [PRO joan] nahi du  
 ERG go want AUX  
 'Jon wants to go'

In this structure, arguments of the embedded clause would not be assigned Case within the clause, since the embedded verb does not have agreement features. Take a sentence where the embedded clause has an object:

- (35) Jon-ek liburu-a irakurri nahi du  
 ERG book-DET-ABS read want AUX  
 'Jon wants to read the book'

In (35) liburua 'the book' does not have a possible Case-assigner within the embedded clause. However, the sentence is grammatical. The object of the embedded clause could be assigned Case if restructuring took place and the absolutive agreement element in the main clause could function as a Case assigner for the object of the embedded verb. This is exactly what happens in this case. Restructuring is not immediately apparent in (32) or (35), but becomes obvious once we have a non-third person singular absolutive and/or a dative argument of the embedded verb. Consider the following example:



In (36) if the AUX of the main verb nahi 'want' were marked for agreement only with its own arguments, it would show 3s absolutive and 3s ergative agreement. However, it shows agreement with the arguments of the subordinate verb eman 'give', guri 'to us' and liburuak 'the books'. This indicates that there is only one verb eman-nahi and, therefore only one clause and one subject Jonek 'Jon'.

Sentence (36) can be compared with (37), which shows that the arguments of each clause must be encoded in the respective auxiliary. If there are two clauses, the arguments of the embedded clause are encoded in the embedded auxiliary:

- (37) a. Jon-ek [gu-k zu-ri liburuak eman diezazkizugun] nahi.du  
 ERG we-ERG you-Dat books-ABS give AUX-SUBJ want.AUX  
 AGRabs-3p AGRabs-3s  
 AGRdat-2s AGRerg-1s  
 AGRerg-1p

- b. \*Jon-ek [guk zu-ri liburuak eman dezagun] nahi dizkizu  
 AGRabs-3p  
 AGRdat-2s  
 AGRerg-3s  
 'Jon wants that we give you the books'

In (37b) arguments of the embedded clause are marked in the matrix auxiliary and the sentence is ungrammatical. Ungrammatical results are also produced when the embedded clause is a nominalized clause (with no AUX) if its arguments are marked in the matrix AUX:<sup>8</sup>

- (38) a. Jon-ek gu-k zu-ri liburuak ematea nahi du  
 ERG we-ERG you-DAT books-ABS give-DET-ABS want AGRabs-3s  
 AGRerg-3s

- b. \*Jon-ek gu-k zu-ri liburuak ematea nahi dizkizu  
 AGRabs-3p+AGRerg-3s  
 AGRdat-2s

'Jon wants that we give you the books' (= 'Jon wants us to give you the books')

The situation that we observe in (36) is strikingly similar to clitic raising in Spanish:

- (39) quiero dárselos ---> se los quiero dar  
 (I) want to give-him-them ---> him them (I) want to give  
 'I want to give them to him'

Here also, the arguments of the subordinate verb are encoded as arguments of the main verb.

Aissen and Perlmutter (1976) argue that clitic climbing in Spanish takes place as a consequence of clause union. In fact,

they go on further to postulate that clitic climbing, moving clitics from one clause to another, is not a possible rule of human language. Languages that show the phenomenon of clitic climbing, they claim, have a rule of clause union. The Basque phenomenon presented here falls well within the spirit of this proposal, if not within the letter since we are not dealing with clitics here, but rather with affixes fused in the auxiliary.

Nahi 'want' is a transitive verb. A verb in its complement, in restructuring contexts, can be either transitive or intransitive. If the embedded verb is transitive, the only auxiliary will show transitive agreement, the arguments of the embedded verb being marked on it, as shown in (36). If the embedded verb is intransitive, we find dialectal variation in agreement and Case marking. In the central dialects there is transitive agreement, the subject taking the ergative Case. In dialects both to the East and to the West (Souletin and Bizcayan) there is only absolutive marking. This variation is shown in (40a-b):

- (40) a. Jon-ek etorri nahi du  
           ERG come     want AGRabs-3s+AGRerg-3s
- b. Jon-∅ etorri nahi da  
           ABS come     want AGRabs-3s

'Jon wants to come'

If the subordinate verb is not an unequivocally intransitive verb, the result is ambiguous in the central dialects between a transitive and an intransitive reading:

- (41) Jon-ek sartu nahi du  
           ERG                    AGRabs-3s+AGRerg-3s  
       'Jon wants to get in/to put it in'

In Souletin and Bizcayan, Case marking would be different for each of the two readings.

The state of affairs observed in (40a-b) is reminiscent of a similar situation in Italian, discussed by Rizzi (1978):

- (42) a. Mario ha voluto tornare a casa  
       b. Mario è voluto tornare a casa  
       'Mario has/'is' wanted to come back home'

Rizzi argues that in (42b) a restructuring rule has applied. In this way he accounts for the fact that the modal verb in this sentence takes the auxiliary essere 'to be' instead of avere which modal verbs take in general in Italian.

In Basque, on the other hand, the fact that embedded arguments appear marked as arguments of the main clause (cf. 36) shows that restructuring applies also when the auxiliary is transitive, and not only when nahi appears with an intransitive auxiliary. In both (40a) and (40b) we would then have restructuring. The appearance of intransitive Case marking in (40b) indicates that in those dialects the embedded intransitive verb is reinterpreted as the main verb of the compound verb that results after restructuring; the modal verb becomes some sort of auxiliary. The appearance of transitive marking in (40a), on the other hand, shows that in the central dialects the resulting compound verb is analyzed as a transitive verb, whose head is nahi, analogous to lexical compounds with egin 'to do/make', which also take transitive marking, e.g. lo-egin 'to sleep' (lit. 'make sleep'), korrika-egin 'to run' (lit. 'make at running').<sup>9</sup>

We thus see that independent evidence confirms the existence of a restructuring rule, which would be forced by Case requirements, in these constructions with modal verbs.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that in Basque there are three Case-assigning AGR elements: AGRerg, AGRabs and AGRdat. The elements are organized hierarchically: AGRerg > AGRabs > AGRdat. If there is an AGRerg, it occupies the position in INFL under S and assigns ergative Case to the subject; the other Case-assigning elements would remain under the VP. If there is no AGRerg, AGRabs can move to the upper position (intransitive and reflexive sentences). There is in addition a non-Case-assigning element, which surfaces as a third person singular absolutive affix. This non-Case-assigner can appear in INFL impeding the presence of a lexical or pro subject (impersonal sentences). Case assignment and thematic roles determine the different reading of intransitive, reflexive and impersonal sentences, which often present identical phonological shapes. Finally, we have shown how in clauses with no Case assigning features, restructuring takes place to allow the embedded arguments to receive Case from the Case assigners in the matrix clause.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Bossong (1984) explains certain irregularities in the morphology of the auxiliary for some combinations of absolutive and ergative marking in the past tense. These irregularities do not affect the marking of the arguments.

<sup>2</sup>Levin (1983) actually goes further and claims that Basque is not ergative either in its syntax or in its morphology. With regard to the morphology, Levin identifies the ergative marking with nominative Case and absolutive with accusative. According to this hypothesis, Basque verbs such as etorri 'to come' which are usually considered intransitive, would actually be unaccusative; that is, verbs that take an object but not a subject in deep structure. This analysis is reminiscent of the analysis of sentences with intransitive verbs of the arrivare type that Burzio (1981) proposes for Italian. Levin's proposal for extending this treatment to Basque encounters the obstacle that, while the single argument of Italian arrivare-type verbs is marked for nominative Case, the argument of Basque etorri-type verbs would be marked for accusative Case. This is an important point, since Burzio makes crucial use of Case Theory in his analysis.

Burzio assumes that in Italian, verbs like arrivare do not assign either an external theta-role or Case to their object. An NP can thus appear in object position at d-structure and will receive a patient role. But this NP must move to subject position at s-structure, in order to receive Case from AGR in INFL and thus avoid a violation of the Case Filter.

In the case of Basque, Levin assumes that these verbs do not assign an external theta-role, but do assign Case (accusative) to their object. Movement of the single argument NP of these verbs to subject position will, therefore, not be forced by the Case Filter. The problem is then to account for the subject properties that the single argument of verbs like etorri display. As pointed out in the text (p. 46) to maintain this position we would also



need to consider Basque highly exceptional in that Case would be assigned at d-structure in this language. For these reasons I will not follow Levin's unaccusative hypothesis in this paper, although I believe that most of my analysis could be recast within it without great difficulty.

<sup>3</sup>Bossong (1984) argues against the force of the conjunction reduction facts, offering examples of long texts where a topic is established and deleted arguments are interpreted as coreferential with the topic, regardless of grammatical function. The facts adduced by Bossong, however, do not argue against the validity of the test of conjunction reduction, in my opinion. In Basque, as in other pro-drop languages, the coindexation of empty pronouns with a topic, a discourse-level phenomenon, may indeed blur the effects of subject-deletion in conjunction reduction. This, however, does not weaken the fact that sentence (10) in isolation has only one possible interpretation, which is opposite to the interpretation of the Dyirbal sentence (9).

<sup>4</sup>This position is, however, not completely general in the literature. That Basque is syntactically "neutral" or non-configurational has been argued for by Azkarate et al. (1983), Bossong (1984) and Rebuschi (1982, 1984).

To my knowledge, nobody has maintained that Basque is syntactically ergative in recent years, although this is the position of Schuchardt (1923), for instance (known as theory of the passivity of the Basque verb).

<sup>5</sup>In Eastern dialects (cf. Salaburu 1984:218) dative marking in the auxiliary is optional or impossible if there is a lexical dative argument in the sentence. I interpret these dialectal facts as showing that in these dialects the dative ending in the NP has become a postposition able to assign Case to the NP that it governs.

<sup>6</sup>In today's Basque only a handful of verbs present synthetic conjugation, and then only in some tenses; some examples are the forms given in (3-5). With the vast majority of verbs, an auxiliary must accompany the main verb, which is solely inflected for aspect. The auxiliary contains tense (past or non-past) and mood information, as well as agreement affixes. The forms of the auxiliary can also be used as main verbs with the meaning of 'to be/to have'.

<sup>7</sup>The reflexive anaphor can appear in plural form when the antecedent is plural, in some dialects (cf. Euskaltzaindia 1985:106).

<sup>8</sup>How Case is assigned in a nominalized clause, such as the embedded clause in (38), remains unclear. Notice that the embedded verb is a nominal; ematea is 'the giving-ABS'. In Northern dialects, absolutive arguments in nominalized clauses may appear in the genitive Case instead. Case assignment in nominals must make use of different mechanisms from the ones that operate in non-nominalized sentences.

<sup>9</sup>That the verbs nahi and behar form a sort of compound with the subordinate verb has been intuited by Alvarez Enparantza (1978:352), who observes that these modal verbs seem to act like affixes attached to the embedded verbs. Levin (1983:343, fn. 52) also points out the existence of a form of clause union in these instances. Ortiz de Urbina (in prep.) develops an analysis that presents some similarities with mine, although it is not presented in the context of Case-marking.

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