

A Distributed Morphology-based analysis for Ergative Displacement in Basque

Pablo Albizu, USC

The Basque inflectional system displays a phenomenon called 'Ergative Displacement' (Laka 1993) in which the relative order of the ergative person marker with respect to the verb-stem and the other agreement markers is modified under very specific morphological conditions (namely, when a third person absolutive agreement marker and a non-third person ergative agreement morpheme meet in a [+Past] inflected form). The relevant examples are illustrated in (1):

(1)	<u>Present Tense</u>	<u>Past Tense ([+Past])</u>	<u>Irrealis Tense ([+Past])</u>
a.	D-U-T 3Abs-have-1Erg	N-U-eN 1Erg-have-Tense	ba-N-U if-1Erg-have
b.	Z-aitU-T 2Abs-have-1Erg	Z-intU-DA-N 2Abs-have-1Erg-Tense	ba-Z-intU-T if-2Abs-have-1Erg

In the last few years, several linguists (Laka 1993, Mascaró 1992) have emphasized the relevance of this phenomenon of 'Ergative Displacement' (ED) in the current debate on the relation between Syntax and Inflectional Morphology. In this paper I present an analysis for ED in Basque that follows and eventually supports the Distributed Morphology theory proposed by Halle & Marantz (1994).

To begin with, in this paper I will propose that the four agreement terminal elements (AGR_x) that can project in Syntax in Basque (that is, absolutive, dative, ergative, and allocutive or addressee) are morphosyntactically specified with the set of features listed in (2) when they enter the level of the Morphological Structure (MS):

(2)	a. AGR-Allocutive	----	[-Arg(umental)]
	b. AGR-Absolutive	----	[+Arg, -Marked]
	c. AGR-Ergative	----	[+Arg, +Marked, -Internal]
	d. AGR-Dative	----	[+Arg, +Marked, +Internal]

Given these feature specifications, I will claim that the phenomenon of ED in Basque is the result of a morphological rule of 'impoverishment' that applies to (2c) and deletes some of its features in the context specified above. Such a rule is formulated in (3), where the feature [-Part(icipant)] stands for 'third person':

(3)	[+Arg, +Marked, -Internal] ---> [+Arg] / [+Arg, -Marked, -Part] + ... + _____ + [+Past]
-----	---

Therefore, my analysis reduces the allomorphic variation displayed by ergative markers in Basque to (2) and (3), plus a short list of Vocabulary items that will contend for assigning a phonological realization to the AGR_{ERG} terminal element. The diversity and distribution of the first person ergative morphemes in (1) will thus follow from the existence in this language of the three Vocabulary entries listed in (4):

- (4)
- | | | | |
|----|--------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| a. | /n/ | --- | [+Part, +1, +Arg] |
| b. | /-t/ | --- | [+Part, +1, +Arg, +Marked] / _____ # |
| c. | /-da-/ | --- | [+Part, +1, +Arg, +Marked] |

Besides the phenomenon of ED, in this paper I will also consider a closely related morphological process that I call 'Allocutive Displacement' (AD). The discussion of such a phenomenon, first, will show the diversity of rules applying in the Inflectional Morphology of Basque and, second, will provide evidence for rule-ordering.

Allocutive agreement is marked in Basque either by resorting to ergative morphemes or, in the neighboring presence of an ergative agreement clitic, by using dative morphemes. In the Distributed Morphology framework, this phenomenon of AD can be captured by positing that the AGR_{ALLO} terminal string (which is morphosyntactically specified as in (2a)) undergoes one of the two re-adjustment rules illustrated in (5): (5a) for ergative realizations, and (5b) for dative markings:

- (5)
- | | | | |
|----|-------------|-----|---|
| a. | [-Argument] | --- | [+Arg, +Marked, -Internal] |
| b. | [-Argument] | --- | [+Arg, +Marked, +Internal] / _____ + ... + [+Arg, +Marked, -Internal] |

To conclude, I will take the fact that the output of rule (5a) is subject to the phenomenon of ED, (3), as clear evidence showing that the application of these two displacement-rules must be ordered.

Pablo Albizu
 Department of Linguistics
 University of Southern California
 GFS, 301
 Los Angeles, California 90089-1693

albizu@aludra.usc.edu