

Word Order and Focus in Basque

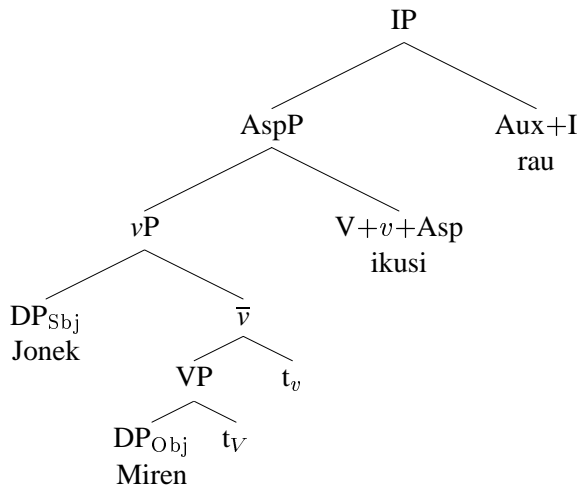
1. Introduction. As in other discourse-configurational languages, focused and *wh*/f-constituents (*wh*/f-phrases) must be left-adjacent to the verb in Basque (cf. 1). Previous analyses of this phenomenon (e.g. Ortiz de Urbina 1989, 1995) have proposed that there is a specific syntactic position at the left edge of the clause (typically, [Spec,CP]), which is adjacent to the verb and to which *wh*/f-phrases must move. I argue that in fact, Basque does not have a syntactically defined position for *wh*/f-phrases. What is special about the preverbal position in Basque is not that it hosts *wh*/f-phrases, but that it is the most embedded position in the sentence, which makes it the position where sentence stress is assigned (see Cinque 1993). Given this fact, we can derive the adjacency between the verb and *wh*/f-phrase from the independent requirement that a *wh*/f-phrase must bear main sentence stress. As in recent work on the syntax of focus in other languages (see Zubizarreta 1998, Reinhart 1995), this analysis derives the syntactic properties of *wh*/f-phrases from independently motivated prosodic requirements.

2. Sentence Stress and Focus. I propose that the requirement that a *wh*/f-phrase be adjacent to the verb derives from the two general conditions in (2, 3). These two conditions are independently motivated, and must be assumed under any analysis of focus in Basque. (1a) has the neutral SOV order, and its structure is as shown in (4), where the verb has moved outside VP (see Laka 1990). Thus, the most embedded constituent is the object *Miren*. As predicted by (2), it bears main sentence stress. Accordingly, the sentence can be interpreted with focus on the object, as determined by (3). In (1b), the object is to the left of the subject. I argue that this structure involves clitic left-dislocation (CLLD, Cinque 1990) of the object, which adjoins it to IP (5). Like CLLD in Romance, movement of the object over the subject can violate Weak Cross Over (6a), and the dislocated phrase is interpreted as a topic, and, accordingly, cannot be a QP like *seoser* ‘something’ (6b). The result of CLLD of the object is that the subject is now the most embedded (overt) constituent in the sentence. By (2), it receives sentence stress, and by (3), the sentence can be interpreted with focus on the subject. As will be shown, the analysis also correctly predicts that there are other possible interpretations for both sentences (such as VP focus in 1a), and in fact provides a more natural explanation for these facts than analyses in which focused phrases must move to [Spec,CP]. Another crucial difference between the present analysis and the standard one (where *wh*/f-phrases are in [Spec,CP]) has to do with the position of phrases appearing to the left of the *wh*/f-phrase. In the present analysis, when the *wh*/f-phrase is the object (e.g. 1a), the preceding subject is in subject position, as in (4). In the standard analysis, the subject must be left-dislocated (adjoined to CP), since the object *wh*/f-phrase is in [Spec,CP] (7). Thus, it predicts that in an SOV sentence where the object is focused, the subject is interpreted as a topic, and that it cannot be a QP like *seosein* ‘someone’. This prediction is not borne out, as shown in (8). This provides support for the present analysis, in which the subject in this case is not necessarily left-dislocated.

3. Long Distance Dependencies. Embedded *wh*/f-phrases undergo long distance movement to the clause where they take scope (cf. 9). In the present analysis, this means that these sentences involve the structure in (10): (i) the *wh*/f-phrase moves to the specifier of the matrix *v*P, and (ii) the CP containing the trace of the *wh*/f-phrase is extraposed. Step (ii) is necessary, so that the moved *wh*/f-phrase is the most embedded phrase in the matrix IP and receives sentence stress, as desired. Evidence that the moved *wh*/f-phrase is attached at the *v*P level (as opposed to the CP level, as in the standard analysis) is provided by the behavior of matrix subjects appearing to the left of the moved *wh*/f-phrase. A different strategy for long distance dependencies, clausal pied-piping (see Ortiz de Urbina 1993), will also be discussed, arguing that its main properties can also be derived from the principles assumed here.

4. Conclusion. The analysis proposed here derives adjacency effects on *wh*/f-phrases and verbs from independently motivated prosodic conditions. Furthermore, it also explains the fact that not all phrases appearing to the left of focused phrases need to be topics. Finally, this account of Basque focus suggests investigation of similar analyses for focus phenomena in other languages (e.g. Somali) which have been previously analyzed in terms of movement to syntactically designated focus positions (e.g. Kiss 1995).

- (1) a. Jonek **Míren** ikusi rau. b. Miren **Jónek** ikusi rau.
 Jon.Erg Miren.Abs seen has Miren.Abs Jon.Erg seen has
 ‘Jon saw MIREN.’ ‘JON saw Miren.’
 c. Jonek **séin** ikusi rau? d. Miren **séñek** ikusi rau?
 Jon.Erg who.Abs seen has Miren.Abs who.Erg seen has
 ‘Who did Jon see?’ ‘Who saw Miren?’
- (2) Main sentence stress in IP falls on the most embedded phrase in IP (Cinque 1993).
- (3) A wh/f-phrase must bear main sentence stress (Jackendoff 1972).
- (4)



- (5) $[_{IP} \text{Miren}_1 [_{IP} [_{vP} \text{Jónek } t_1 t_v] \text{ ikusi rau}]]$
- (6) a. Mutil bako_{txe}₁ **beran**₁ **ámak** ekarri rau.
 boy each.Abs his mother.Erg brought has
 ‘His₁ mother brought each boy₁.’
 b. *Seoser **Jónek** irakurri ban.
 something.Abs Jon.Erg read had
 ‘Jon read something.’
- (7) $[_{CP} \text{Subject} [_{CP} \text{Object V Aux} [_{IP} t_{Sbj} t_{Obj}]]]$
- (8) Seoseñek **au libúru** irakurri ban.
 someone.Erg this book.Abs read had
 ‘Someone read this BOOK.’
- (9) a. **Séin** pentzate su Jonek ikusi rabela?
 who.Abs you-think Jon.Erg seen has
 ‘Who do you think Jon saw?’
 b. **Míren** pentzaten dot Jonek ikusi rabela.
 Miren.Abs I-think Jon.Erg seen has
 ‘I think Jon saw MIREN.’
- (10) $[_{IP} [_{IP} \dots [_{vP} \text{wh/f-phrase}_1 t_2] \text{ V}] [_{CP} \dots t_1 \dots]_2]$
- (11) Seoseñek **Jón** pentzaten dau Mirenek ikusi rabela.
 someone.Erg Jon.Abs thinks Miren.Erg seen has
 ‘Someone₁ thinks that Miren saw JON.’