

On the so-called passive in basque*

ANDOLIN EGUZKITZA

1. *Introduction.*

I shall attempt to demonstrate in this paper that there is no passive construction in Basque. In other words, some grammarians have asserted that sentences such as the following demonstrate the presence of a passive transformation in the grammar of Basque:

1 *umea* *gizonak* *barrapatua* *da:*
(child+det+abs) (man+det+erg) (caught+det+abs) (is)
'the child has been caught by the man'

The most recent example is 'Bollenbacher 1977'. I assert quite the contrary. The structure of this sentence has been misinterpreted. The notion 'passive' is unnecessary for an adequate descriptive or explanatory Basque grammar. I shall demonstrate that this identification is mistaken. Passive interpretation of certain sentences is due to false interpretation on the part of the grammarian. There are, however, certain sentences that may be interpreted as cases of syntactic contamination from the grammars of the Romance dialects that surround The Basque Country on the map. I shall attempt to demonstrate this point of view by applying a transformational analysis to that class of sentences alleged to be 'passive' ¹.

2. *The Basque verb.*

2.1. In Basque the usual node V 'verb' has to be reinterpreted as VC 'verb complex' ², being this node rewritten as:

*Euskal aldizkari bateran euskaraz idaztea izanen litzateke bide zuzena. Honako lantxo hau, baina, Los Angeles-ko unibertsitatean aurkeztu lana izateagatik, barkatua izan naitekeelakoan, ingelesez ematen dut argitara.

I would like to express my thanks to professors Koutsoudas and Kirsner for the insightful criticisms they made on earlier drafts of this paper; I would especially like to thank professor Terence Wilbur for his comments, both linguistic and stylistic, and continuous help, and last but not least, for his humanity.

1. Those interested in the history of the polemic about Basque passivity should read Ibon Sarasola's 'Sobre la bipartición inicial en el análisis en constituyentes' and 'Jonathan Seeley 1977'.

2. See 'Wilbur (1979a: 38)'

$$2 \quad VC \dashrightarrow \left[\begin{array}{l} V \text{ synthetic} \\ (V \text{ compound}) \text{ Aux} \end{array} \right]$$

where the node V, which under some conditions can be zero, stands for the main verb of the sentence, and *Aux* 'auxiliary' for the different forms of the extremely rich auxiliary verb in Basque. This is due to the fact that with the exception of the very few verbs, about 20, that accumulate all the elements in a single form and are therefore called 'synthetic', the realized verbs in this language are formed by those two elements. The aspects markers are added in form of suffixes to the node V³. For example:

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VC		
V	Aux	
<i>etorriko+ko</i>	<i>da</i>	'(he/she/it) will come'
<i>etor+tzen</i>	<i>da</i>	'(he/she/it) comes'
<i>etorri+Ø</i>	<i>da</i>	'(he/she/it) has come'
<i>etor</i>	<i>bedi</i>	'let come (he/she/it)'

2.2. The two principal auxiliary verbs⁴ are 'to have' = *ukan* and 'to be' = *izan*. If one wants to conjugate those verbs, then the VC has to be rewritten like this:

4

$$VC \dashrightarrow \left[\begin{array}{l} izan \\ ukan \end{array} \right] \text{ participial-inflection Aux (tense-mood-person)}$$

The 'nude auxiliary verb' functions then as a main verb in the absence of a main verb in front of it; those nude auxiliary forms are truly what 'Fillmore (1968: 41-7)' calls empty verbs. They carry tense, mood and person and represent semantically any relation that may exist between the NP's of that particular S;

5

<i>Gizona</i> (man+det+abs)	<i>irakaslea</i> (teacher+det+abs)	<i>da</i> (is)	'the man is a teacher'
<i>Gizonak</i> (man+det+erg)	<i>liburua</i> (book+det+abs)	<i>du</i> (has)	'the man has the book'
or <i>Badu</i> (affirmative particle+has)			
<i>gizonak</i> (man+det+erg)	<i>liburua</i> (book+det+abs)		'the man does have the book'.

where the affirmative *ba* serves as a filler for a main verb, or in other words, as a focus marker.

2.3. The Basque auxiliary verb may be diagrammed in the following manner:

3. I will not deal with the morphophonological details of these forms.

4. 'Inchauspe (1885: 2)' says: 'Ces deux voix sont le complement l'une de l'autre et ne doivent être considérés que comme composant un seule verb.'

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auxiliary

- NOR-forms
- NOR-NORI forms
- NOR-NORK forms
- NOR-NORI-NORK forms

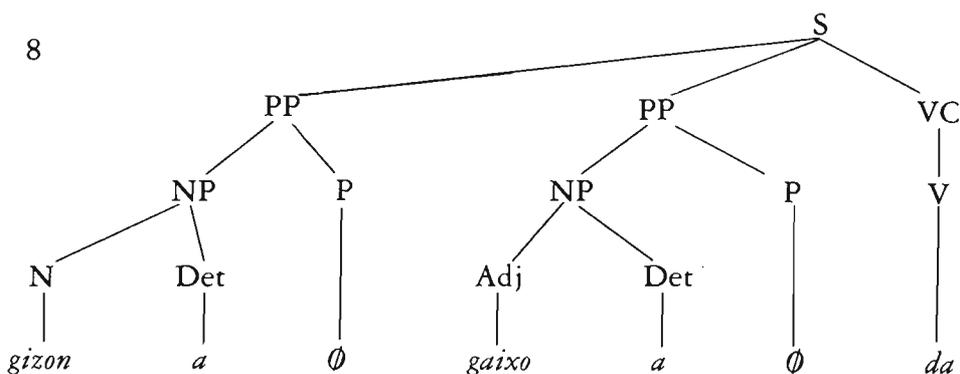
It shows reflexes of absolutive, dative and ergative NP's in the sentence that contains them ⁵. The morphology of the Basque auxiliary is very complex and cannot be explained in a few words. See 'Altuna 1971', 'Inchauspe 1858', 'Lafitte 1962' and 'Euskal aditz batua 1979' among others.

3. The Basque noun and adjective.

3.1.

7 *Gizona gaixoa da* 'the man is sick'
 (man+det+abs) (sick+det+abs) (is)

Gizona zoroa da 'the man is crazy'
 (man+det+abs) (crazy+det+abs) (is)



5. *Edurne etorri da* 'Edurne has come'
 (Edurne+abs) (come) (is)

Edurne Kepari etorri zaio
 (Edurne+abs) (Kepa+dat) (come) (she+to him is)
 'Edurne has come to Kepa'

gizonak umea harrapatu du
 (man+det+erg) (child+det+abs) (caught) (has)
 'the man has caught the child'.

Edurnek Kepari liburua irakurri dio
 (Edurne+erg) (Kepa+dat) (book+det+abs) (read) (she+it+to him has)
 'Edurne has read the book to Kepa'

6. *-a* the definite form of the Basque adjective does not always correspond to the 'the' form in English. Therefore we do not speak about definite articles, but about definite forms of the NP's whose functions can be quite different in English. The opposition *zorolzoroa* makes a difference between a temporary and a permanent state.

7. I write PP for 'postpositional phrase' following the proposals of 'Wilbur 1979a',

The reasons for the characterization as adjectives of the lexemes *gaixo* and *zoro* are the following:

a) The words in discussion can only be located in an NP after a noun⁸, since this is the only position where adjectives can appear in Basque:

9 *gizon zoroa* 'the sick man'⁹.
(man) (crazy+det+abs)

but

**zoro gizona*
(crazy) (man+det+abs)

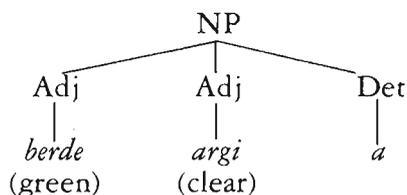
b) Therefore no noun can be added under the NP which dominates these lexical entries in a position immediately after them:

10 **zoro* + N + Det

c) Any other adjective, taking into account the appropriate semantic restrictions 'Wilbur (1979: 70-3)', can be attached to them under the same NP node:

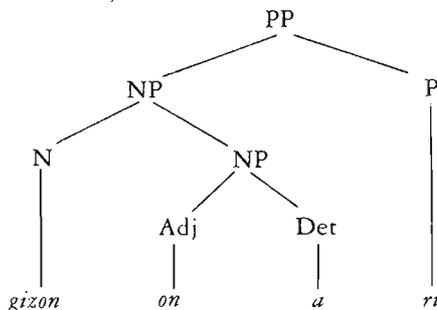
11 *zoro* + (Adj) + Det

or *berde argia* 'clear green'.
(green) (clear+det+abs)



since in Basque every single NP has some kind of postposition in addition to the determination suffixes:

gizon onari 'to the good man'.
(man) (good+det+dat)



8. There exist very few exceptions. They do not represent any serious counterexample to the universality of this rule in the Basque grammar. In addition their status is far from being known with accuracy.

9. In Basque, as can be seen in the footnote number 7, the determination is only attached to the last element of the NP.

d) Any noun, however, can be proposed to these words under the same NP node:

12 *hura gizon zoroa da* 'that is a crazy man'
 (that) (man) (crazy+det+abs) (is)

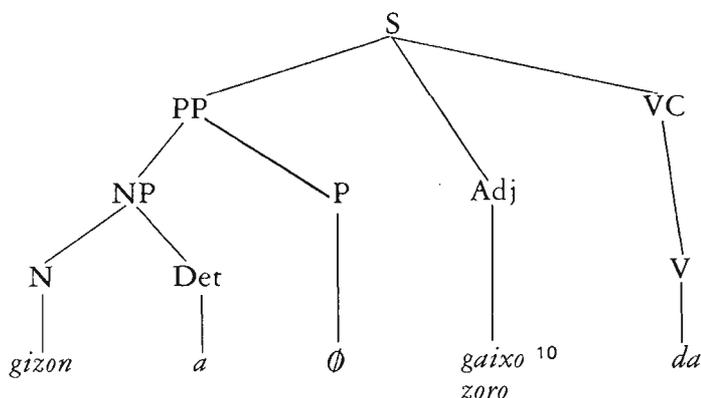
3.2.

13 *gizona gaixo da* 'the man is sick'
 (man+det+abs) (sick) (is)

gizona zoro da 'the man is crazy'
 (man+det+abs) (crazy) (is)

The structure in this case changes slightly:

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And so does the meaning, for the difference could be best expressed through the Spanish and Portuguese translations of both types of structures, namely, 8 (*gizona gaixoa da*) as 'el hombre es un enfermo/o hombre é um doente' and 14 (*gizona gaixo da*) as 'el hombre está enfermo/o homem está doente'. See 'Lafitte (1962: 123-27)'.

In Basque there exists a verb, *egon*, that in addition to *izan* can also serve as a copula, which is very much used in a similar way to the Portuguese and Spanish *estar*, especially, as far as I know, in Bizkaian Basque, although the verb appears in all the dialects of the language. At any rate *egon* is used in Bizkaian Basque with this type of sentences in order to emphasize the momentaneity of the adjectives in discussion.

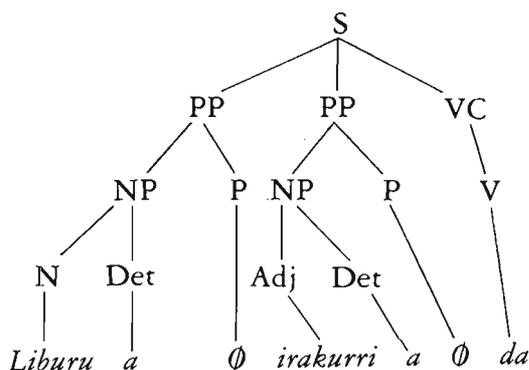
3.3.

15 *liburua irakurria da* 'the book is read'.
 (book+det+abs) (read+det+abs) (is)

10. In the Basque composition, at any rate, it is possible to find compound nouns like the following:

zorotetxe *zoro + etxe* 'insane asylum'.
gaixozain *gaixo + zain* 'nurse'.

but this is, as it can be readily be seen, another different story. At any rate, let us point out



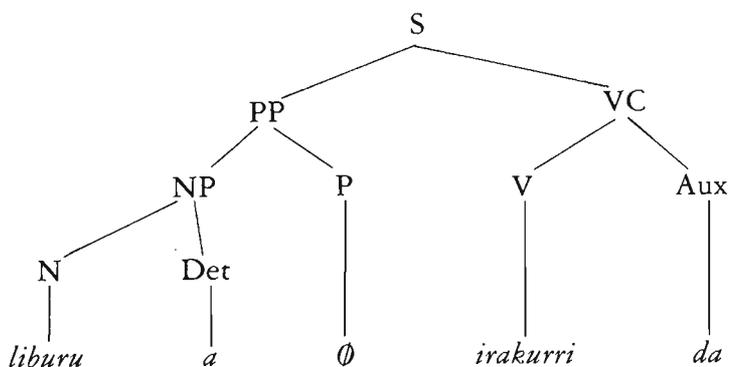
As we can see this is exactly the same structure of the sentences in 3.1.

On the other hand, we have in Basque structures like the following:

16 *Liburua irakurri da* 'the book has been read'.
 (book+det+abs) (read) (is)

whose tree looks like this:

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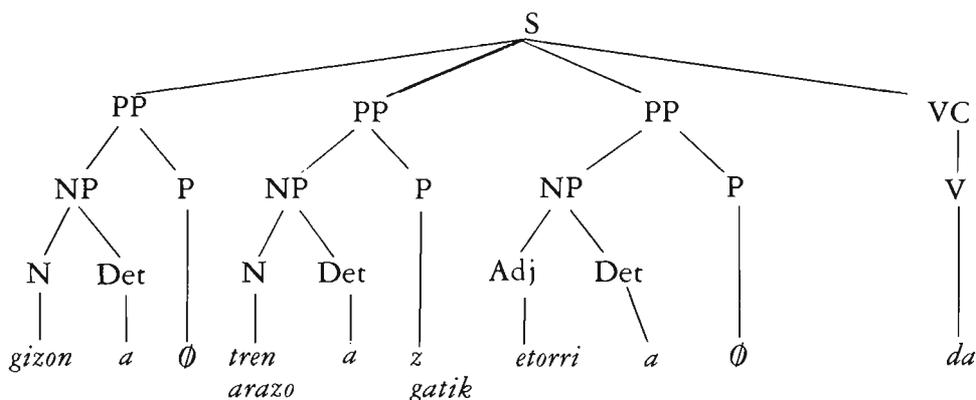


3.4.

18 *gizona trenaz etorria da*
 (man+det+abs) (train+det+inst) (come+det+abs) (is)
 'the man has come by train'.

gizona arazoagatik etorria da
 (man+det+abs) (problem+det+caus) (come+det+abs) (is)
 'the man has come because of the problem'.

the striking situation in the grammar of Basque, in which NP structure and noun morphology seem to be at odds, as Wilbur formulated it.

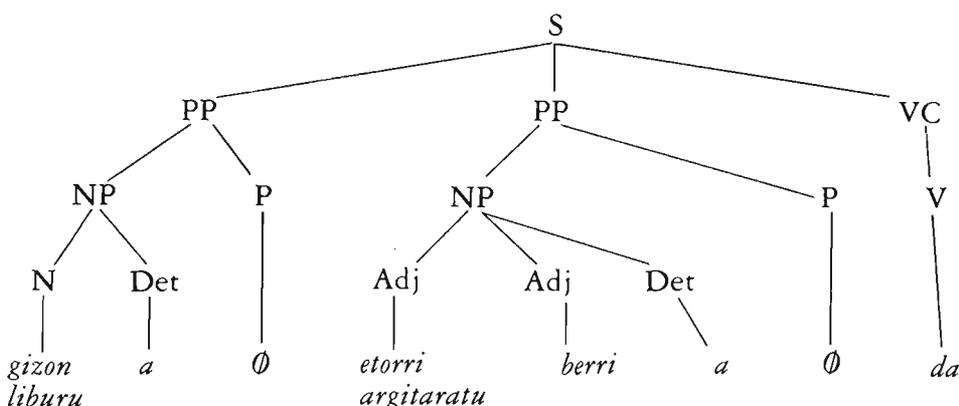


In these affirmative sentences the only apparent restriction to free scrambling seems to be that the verb cannot stay in initial position, unless it has the affirmative particle *ba* in front of it. See 'Donzeaud 1972', 'De Rijk 1978' and 'Wilbur 1980'.

By means of these examples here I have attempted to show the possibility of appearance for any PP in these sentences traditionally called 'nominal predicate sentences'.

3.5.

- 20 *gizona etorri berria da* 'the man is new-
 (man+det+abs) (come) (new+det+abs) (is) ly come/arrived'
librurua argitaratu berria da
 (book+det+abs) (published) (new+det+abs) (is)
 'the book is newly published'.

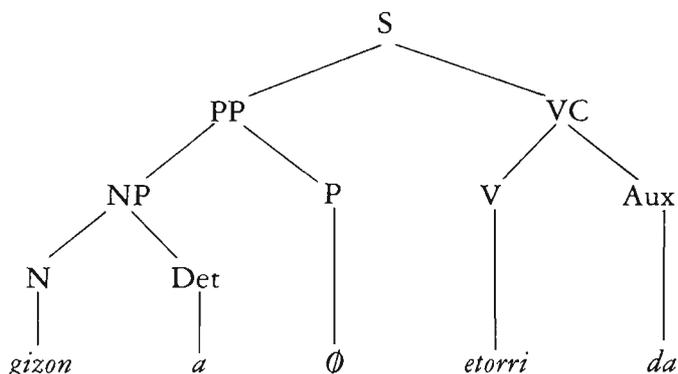


The scrambling of the PP's is here also only limited by the impossibility of putting the verb in initial position unless it is preceded by the affirmative particle *ba* or the negative word *ez*. In these two cases one can find sentences like the following ones:

- 21 *ez da gizona etorri berria* 'the man is not newly arrived'
bada gizona etorri berria 'the man is (effectively) newly come'.

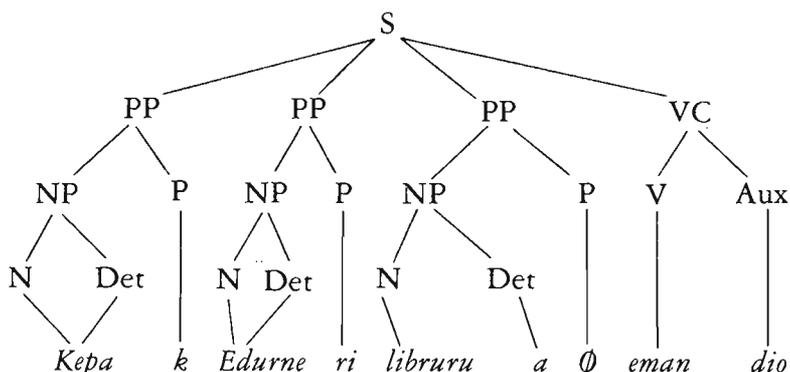
3.6. We now can see some normal active sentences:

- 22 *gizona etorri da* 'the man has come'
 (man+det+abs) (come) (is)



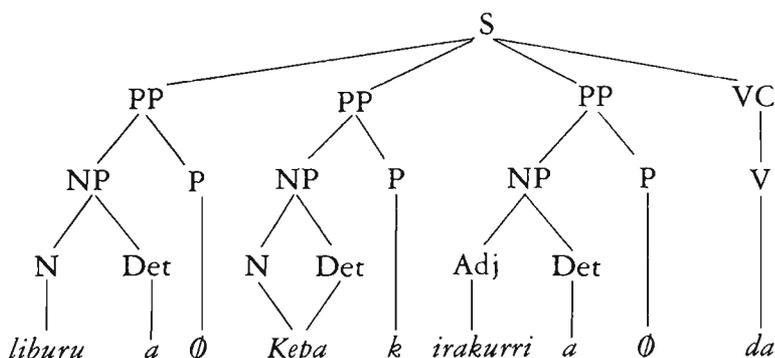
- 23 *Kepak Edurneri liburua eman dio*
 (Kepa+erg) (Edurne+dat) (book+det+abs) (given) (he/she/it
 has him/
 her/it to
 him/her/
 it)

'Kepa has given Edurne the book'.



3.7. This is the kind of sentence that looks on the surface like a passive construction. 'Bollenbacher 1977' has erroneously assumed that it is a passive construction.

- 24 *liburua Kepak irakurria da*
 (book+det+abs) (Kepa+erg) (read+det+abs) (is)



But in fact, because the scrambling is stopped with respect to *Kepak irakurria*, that is, the unity formed by those two elements cannot be broken, we can suspect that the proposed structure is not correct.

On the other hand, this type of sentence does not have a main verb in the VC, and therefore does not have any overt marker of aspect, which as we already said have to be attached to the main verb. Then we can say that this sentence does not have an active counterpart, since in the case in which such an active sentence would exist its aspect would need to be reflected in its corresponding 'passive'. As Wilbur points out speaking about Bollenbacher's work, 'all the sentences presented here as passive are nothing but stative predicate adjective constructions, which may seem to translate apparent passives in English.'¹¹

However, if at the same time we insert the main verb *izan* into these sentences, the similarity to the passive construction is even more apparent:

However, if at the same time we insert the main verb *izan* into these sentences, the similarity to the passive construction is even more apparent:

- 25 *liburu* *irakurria* *da* 'the book is read'.¹²
 (book+det+abs) (read+det+abs) (is)

11. 'Wilbur (1979a: 8)'. 'De Rijk (1978: 84-85)' on his part says: 'Bollenbacher (1977) criticizes Anderson's views. This criticism, however, is marred by faulty data and must be discarded in toto. To mention just one important point, contrary to Bollenbacher's claims, there is no passive rule in Basque and hence no passive marker *k*. There is a resultative 'passive' *umea gizonak arrapatua da* 'The child has been caught by the man', not *was*, derived from a bi-clausal source by means of Relative Clause Reduction, as Bouda (1973, 27) and no doubt, many others have recognized.'

12. The translation in this case does not really show what the Basque sentence means, since in Basque it has a rather stative connotation unlike the more active one of the English form.

I would like to copy here a very interesting remark that Wilbur made me in a personal written communication: 'The fact that this type of sentences could be interpreted as «passive» in any sense comes from looking at the world through English or Spanish eyes, i.e. a beautiful case of grammatical contamination of interpretation. In this case, the otherwise admirable search for universals in grammar has gone astray. Note how Lafitte very carefully translates the following sentences (1962, 69), *Jainkoak eginak dira iguzkia, ilbargia, eta izarrak. Dieu a créé le soleil, la lune et les étoiles*. Whether Lafitte did this out of theoretical considerations or out of embarrassment, we do not know. Indo-European eyes would be eager to translate this as 'The sun, the moon, and the stars are (have been) created by God'. And then walk away with the comfortable notion of having found a

liburua irakurria izan da
 (book+det+abs) (read+det+abs) (been) (is)
 'the book has been read'

liburua Kepak irakurria izan da
 (book+det+abs) (Kepa+erg) (read+det+abs) (been) (is)
 'the book has been read by Kepa'.

At any rate there are some strange restrictions that would need further and careful investigation:

26 *?ogia jana da* 'the bread is eaten'.
 (bread+det+abs) (eaten+det+abs) (is)

??ogia jana izan da
 (bread+det+abs) (eaten+det+abs) (been) (is)

?ura edana da 'the water is drunk'.
 (water+det+abs) (drunk+det+abs) (is)

??ura edana izan da
 (water+det+abs) (drunk+det+abs) (been) (is)

3.8. Pierre Lafitte says the following in his 'Grammaire Basque' ¹³:

'On ne se sert pas beaucoup du passif en basque; il vaut mieux tourner par la conjugaison active: «aitak maite nu = mon père m'aime» au lieu de «je suis aimé par mon père».'

and René Lafon adds ¹⁴:

'Le basque n'aime pas d'employer le passif quand l'auteur de l'acte doit être exprimé; en d'autres termes, on n'aime pas, en basque, inverser des phrases comme «le médecin l'a guéri» et les transporter au passif.'

3.9. Apart from the fact that if the ergative phrase is deleted there is no trace at all of the passivity of these sentences, another point has to be made, namely, that what in Basque corresponds to impersonal passives and truncated passives of other languages is not expressed by means of the sentences under investigation, but throughout the NOR-forms conjugation of the corresponding NOR-(NORI)-NORK verbs:

passive in Basque. Wouldn't a more accurate translation be: 'The sun, the moon and the stars are (things) that God created.'? One of the problems of these passive-seekers is the fact that they do not really have a command of the semantics of passives in English or whatever the language might be that they think in. I ran across this contrast in class the other day:

Kirche und Staat wurden getrennt.
Kirche und Staat waren getrennt.

Whithout context both sentences may adequately be translated as 'Church and State were separated.' Yet they mean something quite different. Superficial similarity leads to semantic identification. Two different semantic structures underlie an identical realization. For the want of better explanation we sometimes try to point out that «Church and State were being separated». This sometimes satisfies students, but I have not the vaguest notion where we might find such a sentence in an English text where we might find such a sentence in an English text where it expresses unambiguously the passive.' (1-3-80).

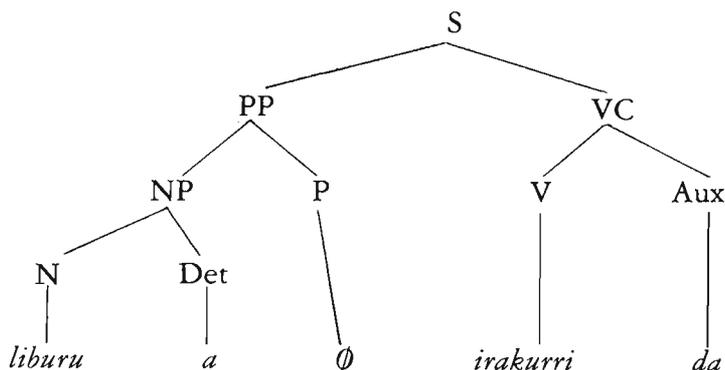
13. 'Lafitte (1962: 344)'.

14. 'Lafon (1971: 336)'.

27 *liburua irakurri da* 'the book has been read'
 (book+det+abs) (read) (is)

whose tree has been already drawn in 17 and I repeat here for ease of reference:

28



4. About 'Bollenbacher 1977'

He tries to demonstrate that there are sentences in Basque that can be called 'passive', that is, sentences in which, according to Postal and Perlmutter, the former objects of an active sentence are the subjects in the passive construction. For getting it, as he states in 2.0., he shows that the sentences that he calls passive are constructions with intransitive verbs and that the objects of the active sentences are the subjects of the passive ones.¹⁵

Bollenbacher gives three arguments to demonstrate the subjecthood of the former objects, that is, of the objects of the active sentence, 1) showing how the predicates of intransitive verbs function, he demonstrates that the former objects are not members of the predicates anymore (2.21.); 2) by means of the application of Equi (2.22.) he concludes the same, and finally 3) he gets the same conclusion through the analysis of a Basque construction which consists of a matrix sentence with a sentential complement (2.23.). To finish his argumentation he shows that in the Basque 'passive' constructions under discussion, an agent, an 'ergative phrase' we could call it, appears (2.3.). Up to that point his argumentation is correct, specially if we do not forget that all his proofs are proofs in the surface structure and that what he shows is that in:

29 *liburua Edurnek erosia izan da*
 (book+det+abs) (Edurne+erg) (bought+det+abs) (been) (is)
 'the book has been bought by Edurne'.

liburua is the subject of *izan da*.

However, huge problems appear for among the examples exhibited by

15. It has to be taken in account the well-known fact that the objects of an active sentence with transitive verb (NOR-NORI-NORK or NOR-NORK we have called them) in Basque are marked, as in the majority of the languages with ergative phrases, exactly as the subjects of actives sentences with intransitive (NOR or NOR-NORI) verbs.

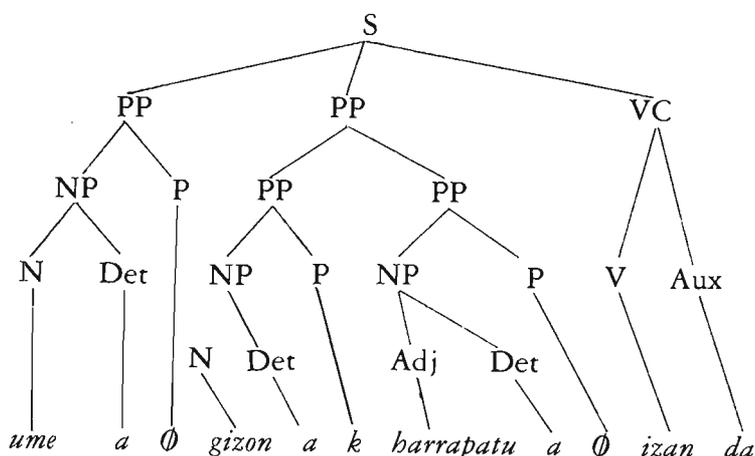
him no sentence has the *agent* in front of the verbal adjective and verb, something that for me is a clear and absolute mark of ungrammaticality. I even suspect that, because of the language used in the examples, the data somehow have been largely falsified.¹⁶

On the other hand, we have to recall the paragraph 3.7. of this paper and say that none of the sentences provided by Bollenbacher is the translation of which he wanted. For example, the translation into Basque of

30 'the child has been caught by the man'

is the following:

31 *umea gizonak harrapatua izan da*
 (child+det+abs) (man+det+erg) (caught+det+abs) (been) (is)



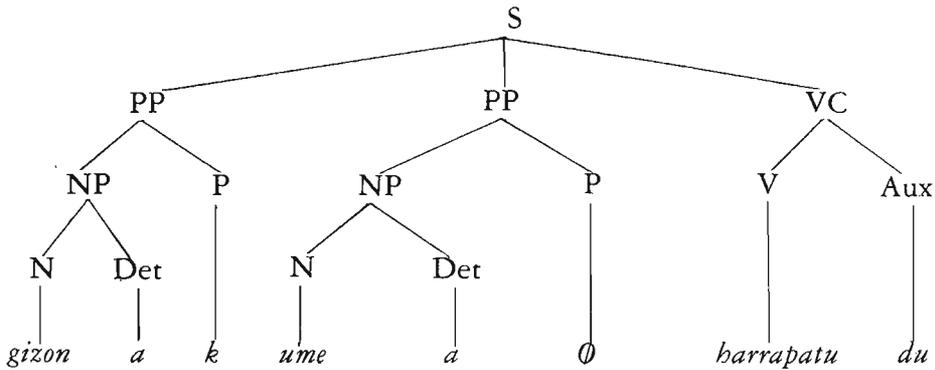
where *gizonak harrapatua* appear under the same node since we know that both lexical items cannot be separated. Nevertheless the most common translation of the proposed sentence is not the one given in 31 but an active sentence that looks the following way:

32 *gizonak umea harrapatu du*
 (man+det+erg) (child+det+abs) (caught) (has)

16. Thus, for example, the informant seems to be rather purist and somehow, unless the mistake is by Bollenbacher, trying to become more Gipuzkoan than what he actually was, since according to the author of the paper he was a 'native of Marquina, Guipúzcoa' (sic). On the other hand, sometimes seems as if the dictionary had been used for translating some of the sentences, for he uses very strange words, i.e., *mailuskatu* that to the best of my knowledge means 'to chew', 'to squeeze', 'to press' but not 'to beat'.

Now I will list the ungrammatical sentences that in the paper at hand are considered to be grammatical:

- 14 **gizonak txakurra mailuskatua da.*
- 18 **gizonak umia arrapatua da.*
- 20 **zuk umia arrapatua da.*
- 43 **gizonak umia arrapatua da.*
- 92 **gizonak pelota arrapatua da.*
- 105 **tximistiak arbola erdibitua da.*



and not the ungrammatical string:

33 *gizonak umea barrapatua da

5. Now we have to ask ourselves if there is any systematic relation between these two structures, that is, 1 and 32:

34 gizonak umea barrapatu du
nd umea gizonak barrapatua da

in other words, whether a transformational rule connects both sentences, or in the contrary, we can assert, as we want to propose, that the second type of sentences is generated by the base and they are not but normal nominal predicate sentences to which an ergative phrase has been added; a phrase which because of the oddity of its position in a sentence with a NOR-verb as well as of the influence of the surrounding languages cannot be moved around like the rest of the postpositional phrases.

5.1. A possible 'passive transformation' could look like this:

35	X	PP _{erg}	Y	PP _{abs}	Z	Verb	Aux	W
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	1	∅	3	4	5	2+6+/-a(k)/+izan	7	8

(where X, Y, Z and W are variables)

Now our argumentation has to show either that by means of this rule we capture some generalizations that otherwise would be lost or that we cannot accept it because the sentences under discussion are not passive.

By means of the transformation in 35, it is true, we can derive from:

36 gizonak umea barrapatu du
(man+det+erg) (child+det+abs) (caught) (has)
'the man has caught the child'.

the sentence

37 umea gizonak barrapatua izan da
(child+det+abs) (man+det+erg) (caught+det+abs) (been) (is)
'the child has been caught by the man'.

This approach, however, does not explain the following problems:

a) 'Truncated passives'. If we accept that the proposed transformation has to be used, the deep structure of a sentence like:

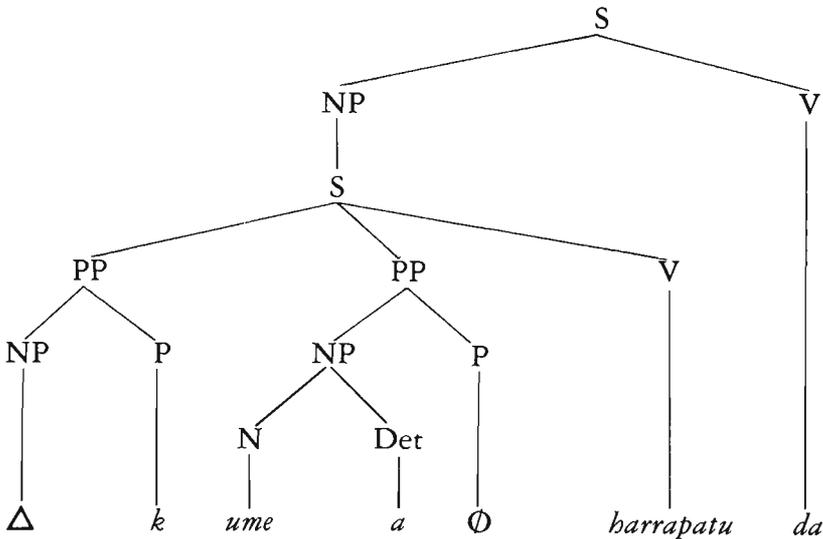
- 38 *umea barrapatua izan da*
 (child+det+abs) (caught+det+abs) (been) (is)
 'the child has been caught'.

where there is no ergative phrase, would be:

- 39 Δ *erg umea barrapatu du*
 (child+det+abs) (caught) (has)
 ' Δ has caught the child'.

But we know, as stated in 3.9., that any time that a transitive verb a NOR-(NORI)-NORK verb appears in Basque without an explicit ergative phrase, this verb comes to the surface conjugated intransitively (with NOR- or NOR-NORI-forms),¹⁷ so that the object in absolutive case functions, as hoped, as subject of the resulting intransitive sentence. Following the proposals of Langacker and Munro the situation could be drawn in this way¹⁸:

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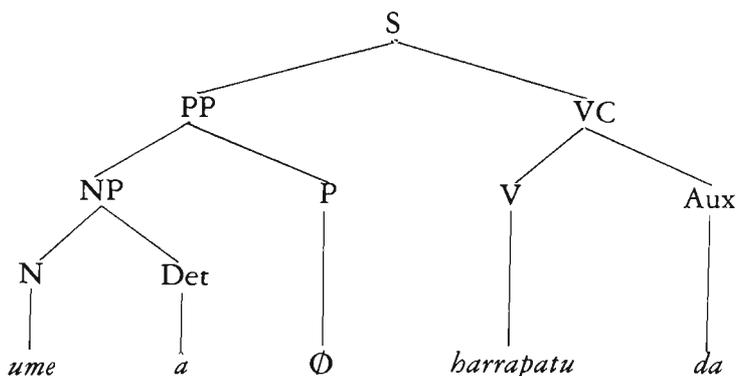


being the surface structure:

- 41 *umea barrapatu da* 'the child has been caught'.
 (child+det+abs) (caught) (is)

17. For exceptions look at 'Wilbur 1970 and 1976b'.

18. 'Langacker and Munro 1975'.



Langacker and Munro call this obligatory transformation passive, because the object in absolutive in the deep structure becomes subject in the same case in the surface. If we would accept this proposal, therefore, we would need to add another obligatory transformation to our grammar that could be the following way:

42	X	Δ_{erg}	Y	PP _{abs}	Z	Verb	Verb	W	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	1	\emptyset	3	4	5	6	7	8	(where X, Y and Z are variables)

by means of which Δ_{erg} is deleted.

Concerning this type of constructions we can mention very briefly some ideas of Zytsar's¹⁹ published in *Euskera*. After having stated that the 'passive' constructions that we are analyzing have an external cause, that is, the influence of other languages, he tries to characterize the so-called medio-passive structures in order to defend his contention that this construction is not a passive one, but something else, which he calls 'autotive construction'. He makes the following statements:

1. This construction has no residue of the agent either morphologically or semantically.

2. As can be observed in the following examples, this construction corresponds not only to impersonal ones, but also to many of the passive constructions and the reflexive sentences of some Romance languages:

- 43 *atea* *itxi* *da* 'the door has been closed'.
 (door+det+abs) (closed) (is)
- jantzia* *zikindu* *da* 'the dress has been stained'.
 (dress+det+abs) (stained) (is)
- hozkaile* *guztiak* *saldu dira* 'all the refrigerators

19. 'Zytsar 1978'.

(refrigerator) (all+det+abs) (sold) (are)
 have been sold' ²⁰.

3. He calls these constructions 'autotive constructions', for according to him, there is an emphasis of the action.

But coming back to the rules under discussion, we can say that it seems rather undesirable to have two different rules for producing passive sentences, 35 and 42. Besides, we do not yet have a way to generate the so-called truncated passives, since the sentences that we get through the rule 42 never have a specified ergative phrase. Therefore, if we keep going on this track, we still need to posit an ergative phrase deletion rule:

44	X	PP _{abs}	Y	PP _{erg}	V+/-a(k)/	VC	Z	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	1	2	3	∅	5	6	7	(where X, Y and Z are variables and 'V+/-a(k)/a verbal adjective with the marker determiner)

The most striking point, however, is that any time we delete the ergative phrase, we do not have any trace at all that could tell us that the corresponding 'truncated S' is a passive one. But, in fact, it is a truncated sentence that looks disturbingly like a IE passive.

b) Another problem to the passive approach is represented by the apparently passive sentences without active counterpart, namely, the sentences in which the VC is only occupied by the auxiliary.
 For example:

45 *liburua* *Kepak* *irakurria* *da*
 (book+det+abs) (Kepa+erg) (read+det+abs) (is)

a rather good proof, I think, that they are not passive.

c) This approach, on the other hand, does not explain the loss of scrambling freedom of the ergative phrase, one of the crucial facts in the whole discussion as we saw before. It tells us where to put the ergative phrase, but not why we cannot move it around.

d) We also have a minor problem with the dative phrases that cannot be passivized for they always have the dative markers and therefore they cannot become subjects, in other words absolute phrases of those sentences:

20. The normal Basque reflexive is constructed like in some other languages, Georgian and a number of African languages for instance, by means of the word *burua* 'head':

Kepak *bere burua* *hil* *du*
 (Kepa+erg) (his) (head+det+abs) (killed) (has)
 'Kepa has committed suicide'.

46 *Edurnek Kepari liburua eman dio*
 (Edurne+erg) (Kepa+dat) (book+det+abs) (given)
 (she+it+to)
 him+ha)

'Edurne has given the book to Kepa'.

**liburua Kepari Edurnek emana*
 (book+det+abs) (Kepa+dat) (Edurne+erg) (given+det+abs)
izan zaio 'the book has been given to Kepa by Edurne'
 (been) (it+to him is) 'Kepa has been given the book by Edurne'

e) Finally I would like to add an idea of 'Langacker and Munro 1975' that could also be used as argument against the existence of passive sentences in Basque. They say ²¹:

'It is often observed that passive sentences are used when the speaker wants to say something about the logical object of the predicate.'

This affirmation is in direct contradiction with the fact that in the Basque sentences under discussion the ergative phrase is the one which occupies the focus position, namely, the position in front of the verb.

5.2. Because it creates more problems than it solves we can discard as absolutely unsuitable the passive approach to the problem. I propose that we attempt to generate the sentences of 3. by means of a phrase structure grammar that looks like this:

47 S -----> (PP) (PP) ... (Adv) VC
 PP -----> NP P
 VC -----> (V) Aux
 NP -----> N (Adj) Det
 Adj (Det)

By means of this grammar we can derive the sentences mentioned above:

- 7 *gizona gaixoa da* 'the man is sick'.
gizona zoroa da 'the man is crazy'.
 13 *gizona gaixo da* 'the man is sick'.
gizona zoro da 'the man is crazy'.
 15 *liburua irakurria da* 'the book is read'.
 16 *liburua irakurri da* 'the book has been read'.
 18 *gizona trenaz etorria da* 'the man has come by train'.
 20 *gizona etorri berria da* 'the man is newly arrived/come'.
 22 *gizona etorri da* 'the man has come'.
 24 *liburua Kepak irakurria da*

But apart from the obvious necessity for greater accuracy in the proposed phrase structure grammar (a problem that we are not going to worry about now), we still need to account for the fact of the loss of freedom of movement by the ergative phrase and the participial adjective that appears with it. The tree presented in 3.7. yields no explanation for this phenomenon. Therefore it seems reasonable to generate those phrases (*Kepak*

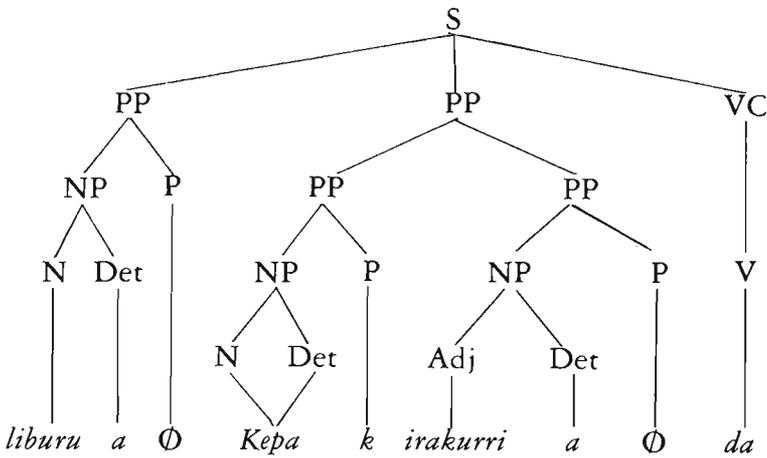
21. 'Langacker and Munro (1975: 820)'.

irakurria) by means of a small reform of our phrase structure grammar, namely:

$$48 \quad PP \dashrightarrow \left[\begin{array}{l} NP \ P \\ NP \ P_{erg} \end{array} \quad (Adj \ Det) \quad \left[\begin{array}{l} +Verb \\ +NORK \\ +NOR \end{array} \right] \right]$$

where the features NORK and NOR, as explained above, refer to the possibility and necessity for that verb to have a subject marked with ergative and an object with absolutive. The tree would look then like the one in 31:

49



where automatically by means of the 'Complex NP Constraint' defined by 'Ross (1968: 66-68) or the subadjacency principle of 'Chomsky (1973: 138) the problem disappears, for there is no way to move either *Kepak* or *irakurria* without producing a violation of either one.

Why, then, such a strange PP? The explanation could be the following:

50 *liburu* S [*Kepak irakurri duen liburu*] *da*
where Kepak irakurri duen liburu
 (Kepa+erg) (read) (has+relative marker) (book+det+abs)
 'the book that Kepa has read'.

has been embedded in the main sentence:

51 *liburu* *da*
 (book+det+abs) (is)

thereafter we can delete *liburu* out of the relative clause and attach the determiner to the *auxiliary+relative marker*, as it occurs every moment in the language:

52 $\left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{liburua} \\ \left[\textit{Kepak irakurri duena} \right] \\ \textit{da} \end{array} \right]$

that can also be expressed in the two following ways:

53 $\left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{liburua} \\ \left[\textit{Kepak irakurritakoa} \right] \\ \textit{da} \end{array} \right]$
 or $\left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{liburua} \\ \left[\textit{Kepak irakurririkoa} \right] \\ \textit{da} \end{array} \right]$

if now we delete the relative marker and the auxiliary as it is normal at least in the Eastern dialects we get:

54 $\left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{liburua} \\ \left[\textit{Kepak irakurria} \right] \\ \textit{da} \end{array} \right]$

where of course the determiner has been attached to the participial adjective, and where we already have the desired phrase with the corresponding explanation for the impossibility of breaking it, namely, that both NP's of the set (*Kepak* and *irakurria*) are attached to the same node, to the same NP.²²

It is interesting to point out that if one speaker would say such a sentence as the following one:

55 *artikulu hori nik idatzia da*
 (article+det+abs) (that) (I+erg) (written+det+abs) (is)
 'that article has been written by me'.

the most normal intuitive paraphrase of it would be:

56 *artikulu hori nik idatzi*
 (article) (that) (I+erg) (written)
dudan artikulua da 'that article is
 (have+relative marker) (article+det+abs) (is) the one/article
 that I have written'.

It goes without saying that we do not need the rule 48. If in addition to this explanation we take into consideration that this type of sentences are much less used than the straightforward active ones, that all the surrounding languages have passive constructions and the strange situation caused by the appearance of an ergative phrase in a sentence where it cannot be reflected in the verb, as it is normal in Basque, we can see the ambiguities of the discussed constructions and understand the tendency to explain them as mere passive transforms.²³

Now, I think, we can say that there are no passive sentences in Basque, that there are only normal nominal predicate sentences in which under the influence of the surrounding Romance languages, an ergative phrase has been generated.²⁴

22. 'Bouda (1973: 27)'.

23. I should also point out, that in the type of sentences discussed in this paper, there is an intonation break precisely where the embedded 'ergative phrase' begins that can represent a nice confirmation of the proposed analysis.

24. See 'Weinreich 196'.

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LABURPENA

Lan honen bidez euskaraz egitura pasiborik ez dagoela erakusten saiatu naiz. Bestela esateko, zenbait gramatikalarik eta linguistak hau bezalako esakuntzak lekuko hartuta:

umea gizonak harrapatua da

zera baieztatu dute, euskal gramatikan transformazio pasibo bat dagoela. Adibiderik berriena 'Bollenbacher 1977' dugu. Ene aburuz hori ez da egia. Esakuntza horren egitura ez da ongi ulertu eta euskal gramatikan, hala deskribaketarekiko egokia den gramatikan, nola azalpenaren aldetik egokia denean, 'pasibotasuna'ren kontzeptua ez da beharrezkoa. Interpretazio pasiboak hizkuntzalariak berak eginiko azterketa faltsua dugu. Haatik, ba daude esakuntza batzu Euskal Herriaren inguruan mintzatzen diren dialektu erromanikoen eragipen sintaktikoen ondorio jo daitezkeenak. Azterketa transformazional baten bidez hori agerian uzten ahalegindu naiz.

RESUMEN

Por medio de este trabajo he intentado demostrar que no existen construcciones pasivas en vasco. Es decir, que la afirmación hecha por algunos lingüistas de que existe una transformación pasiva en la gramática de esta lengua basados en frases del tipo:

umea *gizonak* *barrapatua* *da*
 (niño+det+abs) (hombre+det+abs) (cogido+det+abs) (is)

me parece incorrecta. El ejemplo más reciente lo constituye 'Bollenbacher 1977'. En mi opinión la estructura de esas frases ha sido mal interpretada, por lo que la noción de una transformación pasiva parece innecesaria para una gramática vasca adecuada tanto descriptivamente como desde el punto de vista de la explicación. Sin embargo existen determinadas estructuras que sí pueden ser interpretadas como casos de contaminación sintáctica por parte de los dialectos románicos que rodean el territorio de habla vasca. Para demostrar todo ello me he valido de una análisis dentro del modelo de la gramática generacional.

