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Remarks on Basque Verbal Morphology

by

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1. GENERAL

Important contributions to the study of Basque verbal morphology were made by the early pioneers: Bonaparte, Schuchardt, etc. However, their analytical work has been superseded by René Lafon's *Le système du verbe basque au XVIe siècle,* and numerous follow-up articles by Lafon (hereafter: L) in the *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris.* Concentrating on early (sixteenth century) texts, L develops a comprehensive analysis of the formal structure of Basque inflected verbs.

Although L's work is the point of departure for future research, his analysis is incomplete or questionable on some points, and I wish to address myself chiefly to these. I will review his distinction between racine and radical, the parallel distinction between reel and non-reel, the "inversion" of pronominal prefixes and suffixes, the status of the morpheme(s) -en-, and plural prefixes.

The minimal finite verb complex in Basque is a single inflected verb consisting of a root plus affixes marking tense (past/nonpast), mood (indicative, subjunctive, potential, conditionals of various types, imperative), and the pronominal category of from one to four NP's (maximally nominative, ergative, dative, and "allocutive," the latter specifying addressee's status).

Only a few verbs can be directly influenced in this fashion, and their number has progressively dwindled. Most verbs now occur only in nonfinite forms. The verb complex thus consists of an inflected auxiliary juxtaposed to a nonfinite verb form, which is marked for one of three aspect categories (perfective, continuous, anticipative), and has a special fourth form which I call presubjunctive preceding a subjunctive auxiliary. In the southern dialects this presubjunctive form is absent; the perfective is used in its place.

An example of a directly inflected verb is *d-akusa-t 'I see him'; an example of an auxiliary construction is *ikhus-ten d-u-t 'I see him.' In this paper we are concerned with the formal analysis of inflected verbs, whether main verbs like *d-akusa-t* or auxiliary verbs like *d-u-t.* There is no sharp distinction anyway since auxiliaries can generally be used as main verbs as well (hence *d-u-t 'I have him').

2. RACINE AND RADICAL

Let us begin by considering the transitive inflectable verb *eduki* 'to hold.' The nonfinite forms are perfective *eduki-∅* (used as the citation form), continuous *eduki-ten,* anticipative *eduki-ren,* and presubjunctive *eduki.* For this verb the perfective suffix is -∅, so the perfective happens to be homophonous with the always suffixless presubjunctive.

Consider now some indicative inflected forms from the sixteenth century: *d-a-duka-t 'I hold it,' z-a-duka-n 'he held it,' n-e-n-duka-te-n 'they held me.' The constant root is -duka-, which along with -duki- in the nonfinite forms can be represented as -dukV-. The initial prefixes *d-, z-, and n-* are pronominals indicating the category of the nominative (here direct object) NP. The medial prefix -n- in *n-e-n-duka-te-n is functionally bound with the initial prefix (n-)}
and specifies its case value; a more detailed discussion will be given below. In the same form -te- indicates plurality of the subject (ergative). Final -n in two of the three forms is a suffix marking past tense. Final -t is 1sg ergative.

The remaining elements are -a- and -e- in the initial syllables of the three forms; the present section will focus on them. Let us call them provisionally vocalic prefixes. We want to determine whether they are independent morphemes, part of the preceding prefix, or part of the following morpheme (root or second-order prefix). Note that there is a possible correlation with initial e in the nonfinite forms like eduki-~/ (this could be rewritten e-duki-~/).

The heart of L's analytical system is his analysis of these vocalic prefixes. He suggests that all verb forms, finite or nonfinite, are based on either the racine (the bare root, here -duk~/) or on the radical (the racine plus a preceding vocalic prefix, here -V-dukV~/).

Let us look for the moment only at the major finite paradigms: indicative, subjunctive, and potential. Each has a nonpast and a past subparadigm, so that we can speak of a nonpast system and a past system, each containing forms from all three moods. L suggests that the nonpast system is based entirely on the racine; the past system is based on the radical, except that forms with medial -n- like n-en-duka-te-n are (with some hesitation) assigned to the racine.

Of the two forms without -n- given above, d-a-duka-t 'I hold it' is nonpast and z-a-duka-n 'he held it' past. L fits such forms into his analysis by suggesting that the -a- in d-a-duka-t is epenthetic and secondary; hence the form is based on the racine -dukV~/, not the radical -V-dukV~. On the other hand, -a- in z-a-duka-n is considered to be a genuine morpheme, namely the marker -V- of the radical -V-dukV~. It can be seen immediately that L is on shaky ground, arbitrarily analysing the same sequence -a-duka- in two different ways to suit his theory.

At other points, L argues that even if -a- in d-a-duka-t is no longer synchronically epenthetic, the vocalic prefixes are still crucial in marking the nonpast/past opposition, since we frequently find -a- in the nonpast contrasting with -e- in the past (d-a-go 'he stays,' z-e-go-en 'he stayed'). He suggests that in Pre-Basque this -a-/-e- opposition was rigorous.

However, it seems to me that L has exaggerated the significance of the -a/-e- opposition for early Basque and Pre-Basque. It is true that the opposition is fairly well established in the Bizkayan dialect since the sixteenth century. However, for the more typical and central Labourdian dialect, the earliest texts show that for a given verb we usually find either -a- in both past and nonpast, or -e- in both past and nonpast. In later texts, such as Axular's Gero (seventeenth century) the -a/-e- opposition has become established as in Bizkayan, and remains established in the modern dialect. It seems, then, that the -a/-e- opposition with temporal value is largely of recent origin.

Perhaps the development of this opposition can be accounted for by noting that the medial morpheme -n- (as in n-en-duka-te-n) occurs only in the past system, and is regularly preceded by -e- (or -i-); there are many e-i alternations in Basque.) Many verbs originally showed -a- as the vocalic prefix in all nonpast forms, and in past forms other than those with -n-. Hence for the nonpast we had invariable -a-; while for the past we had -e- before -n- and -a- elsewhere. We can easily see how -e- could have been reinterpreted as a marker of the past system, and hence generalized to all past system forms, creating a new -a/-e- opposition (nonpast/past) L's position that the opposition is ancient, and that exceptions to it reflect recent skewing, seems questionable.

The analysis which L suggests for the earliest Labourdian texts is simply to take the "vocalic prefix" as the initial segment of the following morpheme. That is, instead of d-a-duka-t, z-a-duka-n, and n-en-duka-te-n we write d-a-duka-t, z-a-duka-n, and n-en-duka-te-n. The base form is /edukV~/, seen most clearly in the nonfinite forms such as eduki-~/ and in some second-person-subject imperative forms not discussed here. In all finite forms of the past and nonpast systems (indicative, subjunctive, potential) there is a regular morphophonemic change by which underlying root-initial /e/ is lowered to a. This is an exception that forms with medial -en- undergo initial truncation of the root, so the initial vowel of /edukV~/ is lost, giving -en-dukV~.

Let us go over the other inflectable verbs as they appear in the analysis suggested here. There are quite a few stems similarly beginning with underlying /e/, which becomes a in finite forms of the past and nonpast systems except when initial truncation occurs following -en-.

In some cases, instead of a morphophonemic -a-/-e- alternation we now find -a-/-i-; since initial e in the nonfinite forms (and other prefixless forms such as second-person-subject imperatives) has shifted recently to i. Thus ebi/-i/ "to walk" is now pronounced ibil/-i/ in many dialects, with initial i now contrasting with a in inflected forms like d-abil/-i/ 'he walks.'

Some roots begin with true original i, which does not change in finite forms. For example, irudi/-i/ 'to seem' has finite forms like d-irudi/-it/ 'it seems' (not *d-arudi/-it/ or the like).

There are some roots beginning with (true underlying) a. In nonfinite forms an initial i (now often j) is added, as in iakin-~/ 'to know.' The simple form occurs in finite forms such as d-aki-t/-i 'I know it.' Note that the difference between underlying /e/ (becoming a in finite forms) and underlying /a/ is seen clearly only in the nonfinite and other prefixless forms; the former appears as e, the latter as ia (a).

Initial o occurs in the verb 'to go' and the morphophonemic behavior is identical to that of underlying /a/, hence nonfinite ioan-~/ (ioan-~/) and finite forms like n-o- 'I go.'

Although underlying /ei/ is usually truncated after -en-, underlying /ai/ and /o/ usually avoid truncation, so we get sequences like -en-a or -ind-o (e.g., n-ind-o-an 'I went'), with various forms of -en- (such as -in-, -ind-, -en-, -end-) followed by an untruncated root.

There are a few second- or third-order prefixes, interposed between the first pronominal prefix and the verb root, which deserve mention. We have already seen examples of -en- (and its allomorphs), a morpheme which helps indicate the case of the preceding pronominal element (cf. section 5 below for more details). There are nominative plural prefixes with a few roots, notably an element -iC- or -eC-. (C has a particular effect on the
following consonant). Both -er- and -ic- require truncation of the underlying initial vowel of the root, at least in most combinations. (See section 6 below for a discussion of -ic- and its allomorphs.)

The remaining prefix is causative -er-, now rather frozen and restricted. It is followed by the untruncated root, but if this begins with underlying /ei/, it undergoes the morphophonemic shift to a. For example, ebil-i 'to walk' (now often abil-i) forms er-abil-i 'to transport.' As expected, in nonpast and past system forms the e → a rule applies to the prefix vowel, so we get forms like d-ar-abil 'he transports it.'

L takes the prefix as -re-, which is technically possible since most of the roots in question begin (in my analysis) with /ei/, becoming a by morphophonemic rule. Thus he segments er-abil-i as e-re-bil-i, with causative -re- and e- the marker of the radical. However, this does not work for all forms and appears to me to be a segmentation.

It seems to me that for sixteenth century Labourdin, before the -a/-e- opposition indicating tense distinctions became established, the "vocalic prefixes" were in most cases simply the initial segment of the root (or of a noninitial prefix). In those dialects where the -a/-e- opposition has become established, a revised analysis is obviously necessary. Even in the older Labourdin material there are some exceptions to the analysis presented here.

For one thing, there are forms like na-iz 'I am' (cf. perfective izan-θ), where we seem to have a CV- nominal prefix preceding the initial vowel of the root.

Third-person-subject imperatives (i.e., hortatives) always begin with be- (or bi-), whether or not the initial vowel of the following root has been truncated. The e (i) is therefore clearly part of the prefix.

Because of examples like these, even in sixteenth century Labourdin we must recognize that initial-syllable vowels are sometimes best considered part of the first prefix. Still, in the majority of cases such vowels should be considered the initial segment of the second morpheme.

### 3. RÉEL AND NON-RÉEL

There is certainly a sharp distinction between the past and nonpast systems (each with indicative, subjunctive, and potential paradigms). It is, however, not based primarily on the -a/-e- opposition of "vocalic prefixes," as L suggests, but rather is expressed mainly by variation in the forms of pronominal prefixes, and by the use of the suffix -n (-en, -an) in the past system (but also in the nonpast subjunctive).

L envisages an even more abstract bifurcation into a group of forms which are semantically réel and another group which are semantically non-réel. The former includes the present system as defined above, but also second-person-subject imperatives. The non-réel group includes the past system as defined above, but also conditionals, third-person-subject imperatives, and all nonfinite forms.

Aside from the formal evidence, the alleged semantic basis for the bifurcation seems very weak. One would think that modal distinctions such as that between indicative and subjunctive would be crucial in a réel/non-réel opposition, but in fact they are irrelevant while tense (past/nonpast) is decisive. L's explanation that the past system is non-réel on the grounds of being ex-réel is unsatisfactory; one would expect the nonpast, which includes future as well as present, to be less réel than the past. The division of imperatives into a réel and a non-réel type seems puzzling.

There also seems to be no particular reason why nonfinite forms should be specifically non-réel. All that we are left with, then, is the formal association of conditionals with the past system—a correlation which is not unusual in the world's languages, though it is rather stronger in Basque than, say, in English. 7

Despite these problems, L constantly emphasizes the réel/non-réel split as the foundation of the Basque verbal system:

Selon le système basque, les procès sont rapportés à deux plans de pensée différents. . . . La distinction des deux groupes de formes est relative à l'indice de réalité que l'esprit du sujet parlant confère aux procès. 8

What, then, is the formal evidence for such a grand bifurcation? Essentially, it boils down to the fact that the forms of the réel group generally have a (epenthetic or not) in the initial syllable, while forms of the non-réel group typically have e or i. As I have already suggested, however, the -a/-e- opposition distinguishing the nonpast and past systems was largely a late development and was not yet established in sixteenth century Labourdin. This pulls the rug out from under L's analysis, which assumes that the -a/-e- opposition was rigorous in reconstructed Pre-Basque, and that exceptions to it are due to later skewing and levelling.

I have suggested earlier that third-person-subject imperatives begin with a prefix be- (not b-). Thus in a form like be-go 'may he stay!' the occurrence of e in the initial syllable is to be interpreted in quite a different fashion from the occurrence of e in past forms like z-ego-en 'he stayed.'

In general, then, the formal evidence for the réel/non-réel is very weak. Nonfinite forms have little in common with inflected (finite) forms. Third-person-subject imperatives are quite specialized formally. Second-person-subject imperatives are sometimes identical to corresponding nonpast indicative forms, but also show specializations which make it best to treat them as a separate system. The only correlation which really holds up is between conditionals and the past system, since these two show strong affinities in the forms of pronominal prefixes, the only difference being the use of l- as third person prefix in conditionals vs. θ (Bizkayan) or z- (other dialects) as the third person prefix in the past system.
Aside from some imperative forms, Basque inflected verbs begin with a pronominal prefix which normally cross-references the nominative (intransitive subject or transitive object) NP. Dative, allocutive, and (in most cases) ergative pronominals are suffixed. The basic forms of the nominative prefixes used in the nonpast and past systems are shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nonpast:</th>
<th>Past:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1Sg n-</td>
<td>1Sg n-en-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2FaSg h-</td>
<td>2FaSg h-en-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2FaSg 2P1</td>
<td>2FaSg 2P1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2FaSg prefix in the northern dialects is h- or Φ depending on various factors; the southern dialects do not have h/ as a phoneme and so have only Φ.

In some nonpast forms including a dative suffix we unexpectedly get z- instead of d- as the third person prefix: z-a-i-o (3Sg nominative, 3Sg dative nonpast auxiliary). One explanation for this is that a-e-o represents initial-syllable truncation of older *d-i-a-i-o with root shape *-iza- instead of *a- (cf. nonfinite iz-an-0), with later reinterpretation of z- as the third person prefix and some analogical extensions to other paradigms. Another explanation is that z-a-i-o represents *d-i-a-i-o (actually *d-i-a-k-o, with later loss of the *k and the introduction of a semi-epenthetic *i- to replace it). Here the first *-i- was a morpheme signalling the occurrence of a dative suffix later in the verb form; such a morpheme *i- is in fact well attested. The idea is that somehow *d-i- before another vowel contracted to z-. The corresponding Bizkayan form is j-a-k-o, which may be a different reflex of the same proto-form.

With such minor exceptions, the third person prefix is d- in the nonpast, and z- or Φ in the past (and in conditionals). The distinction between 1Sg n- in the nonpast and 1Sg n-en- in the past is rigorous, and similarly for other first and second person prefixes. Therefore we can see that the forms of the prefixes provide a much more solid basis for opposing the nonpast and past systems than do the "vocalic prefixes" discussed in an earlier section.

There are various plural suffixes which can be used in combination with a nominative prefix. This permits distinctions between 3Sg and 3P1, and also between 2FoSg and 2P1 (2FoSg may require a plural suffix, but in this event 2P1 often shows two plural suffixes and thus remains distinct).

The forms in Table 1 which show -en- (e.g., 1Sg n-en-) frequently have variants with -in- (also extended forms -end-, -ind-). I will generally use -en- as the citation form for the morpheme but this should be understood as also encompassing the variants.

By examining Table 1 we can see that there are two possible instances of ambiguity. Firstly, the 2FaSg nonpast variant Φ might be confused with third person past Φ in the Bizkayan dialect. In practice, such ambiguity is normally avoided since the past tense suffix -n cooccurs with 3rd Φ but not with 2FaSg Φ (it does cooccur with 2FaSg Φ-en-), but this is quite distinct from Φ. In the subjunctive this does not work, since -n is added to both the nonpast and past subjunctive, but since Bizkayan has a fairly well established association of "vocalic prefix" -a- with the nonpast and of -e- with the past, even in the subjunctive, the two are distinct (2FaSg Φ is followed by -a-, 3rd Φ by -e-).

In the non-Bizkayan dialects, the possible ambiguity is between 2FoSg/2P1 nonpast z- and 3rd past z-. Again, since one prefix occurs only in the nonpast system and the other only in the past system, the presence or absence of final suffix -n is generally decisive. This does not work in the subjunctive, and there are some examples where true ambiguity might have been possible, but these instances are resolved by taking advantage of allomorphic variation. Recall from an earlier section that pronominal prefixes of the form C- have occasional variants with the vowels CV-(usually C-a-), as in na-iz 'I am.' Such allomorphic variation is used to distinguish z-ii-za-n (3Sg→3P1 past subjunctive auxiliary) from za-ii-za-n (3Sg→2FoSg nonpast subjunctive auxiliary). Therefore all potential ambiguities within Table 1 are normally resolved by one means or another.

However, the prefixes shown in Table 1 are only the true nominative prefixes, representing (underlying) intransitive subject or transitive object. There is also a process which produces pronominal prefixes representing the (underlying) transitive subject. I will refer to these as derived nominative prefixes (for reasons to be indicated below), though they might also be called ergative prefixes (distinct from the usual ergative suffixes). The forms of the derived nominative prefixes are shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Sg n-</td>
<td>2FaSg h-</td>
<td>2FaSg Φ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1P1 g-en-</td>
<td>2FoSg z-en-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2P1</td>
<td>2P1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These prefixes are used only in the past system (including conditionals), in certain restructured combinations. These combinations are of the type 1st/2nd→3rd (ergative shown to left of arrow, nominative to right). Therefore only transitive combinations can be restructured and can show the prefixes of Table 2.

Consider, for example, the nonpast form d-u-‘i have it.’ This contains nonpast 3rd nominative d- (cf. 1st), root -u- (from *-uda-), and 1Sg ergative suffix -t (nonfinal form -da-, cf. relativized d-u-da-n ‘which I have’). We would expect the corresponding past form “I had it” to be
*z-u-da-n, with d- replaced by z- in the past tense (cf. Table 1), and with past suffix -n being added. Instead, we get n-u-en 'I had it,' where there is no overt third person affix, and where the 1Sg affix is a prefix n- (cf. h-u-en 'you had it,' etc.). Thus the term ‘restructured’ is applied to such forms as n-u-en, and the prefix is called ‘derived nominative.’

The restructured forms like n-u-en have sometimes been described as ‘inverted,’ with ergative prefix and third person nominative suffix Φ (hence n-u-Φ-en, etc.) instead of third person nominative prefix and an ergative suffix. However, there is no need to assume that a third person Φ-suffix is present in n-u-en, and it seems preferable to think that the third person nominative prefix has been deleted, with the ergative suffix then becoming a derived nominative prefix in order to fill the initial prefix slot (which is obligatory except in some imperatives).

Such restructuring does not apply to the 3rd→1st/2nd or 1st/2nd→3rd combinations (e.g., ‘he had me,’ ‘I had you,’ ‘you had me’). There has been some debate as to whether the 3rd→3rd forms are restructured. Comparing nonpast d-‘he has it’ with past z-u-en ‘he had it,’ the problem is to determine whether z- represents the (underlying) nominative (‘it’), and is thus the z- shown in Table 1, or is a derived nominative prefix representing the underlying ergative (‘he’), in which case we should add third person z- to Table 2. I prefer the former analysis, since there is no overt indication of restructuring and thus no need to posit it. At any rate, the question is of no functional importance since ambiguity is not involved; z-u-en is clearly 3Sg→3Sg.

The Basque restructuring of past 1st/2nd→3rd combinations seems at first to be an uninteresting idiosyncrasy which cannot be meaningfully related to phenomena in other languages. This is not entirely correct. Although the details are unique, the Basque system has some features which recur in quite a few other languages.

To begin with, note that only asymmetrical 1st/2nd→3rd forms are overtly restructured. This is reminiscent of a whole series of morphological phenomena, perhaps most salient in Amerindian and Australian languages, involving the relative hierarchical rank of subjects and objects. For example, in some languages first and second person pronouns have a nominative-accusative case system, while third person pronouns and all nouns have a nominative-ergative system. This reflects the fact that high-ranking substantives such as first and second person pronouns are natural subjects, while low-ranking ones are natural objects. In this light, the restructured combinations in the Basque past system are the most natural transitive combinations; the more uncommon, more highly marked combinations resist restructuring.

So far as the formal mechanics of the restructuring is concerned, it may be compared with the antipassivization transformation found in many languages. This process deletes or demotes the underlying object, while the underlying transitive subject becomes surface intransitive subject. The result is similar to the English objectless sentence-type He eats, but in many languages the transformation is more elaborate and syntactically significant.

It is because antipassivized clauses are normally surface intransitives that I have referred to the prefixes of Table 2 as ‘derived nominative’ instead of ‘ergative’ prefixes. In ergative languages with such a process, the underlying ergative NP shows up on the surface as nominative, acting as intransitive subject.

However, the connection between the Basque restructuring and antipassivization rules in other languages is only partial. The form and function of such rules vary from one language to another, but the Basque rule is particularly aberrant. In the other languages, antipassivization is generally triggered by a real semantic demotion of the underlying object, or else is manipulated in order to get the underlying transitive subject into a position where it can undergo some later transformation which cannot apply directly to transitive subjects. In Basque, however, the rule applies automatically to 1st/2nd→3rd combinations in the past system, and cannot apply elsewhere, so the actual cognitive status of the underlying object is not a triggering factor.

In addition, the Basque rule is purely a reshaping of the verb form, and is not a true clause-level case-changing transformation like other antipassivization (or passivization) rules. Consider these examples:

a. n-i-k gizon-a-Φ hil-Ø d-u-t 1Sg-Erg man-Def-Nom kill-Perf 3Nom-root-1SgErg ‘I have killed the man.’

b. n-i-k gizon-a-Φ hil-Ø n-u-en 1SgNom-root-Past ‘I killed the man.’

In (a), the verb d-u-t belongs to the nonpast system (the perfective sense is due to the use of the perfective form of the nonfinite verb hil-). Since nonpast forms cannot be antipassivized, we get a true nominative prefix d- (direct object) and an ergative suffix -t. The corresponding independent substantives agree with these pronominals in case; gizon-a- ‘the man’ takes nominative -Φ, while ni- ‘I’ takes ergative -k.

Example (b) is the same clause in the past tense. The past system verb n-u-en (1Sg→3Sg) has been morphologically antipassivized because it is of the 1st/2nd→3rd type. We therefore get a 1Sg derived nominative prefix n-, and no overt third person affix. However, this restructuring does not affect the case-marking of the independent substantives, which appear in the same forms as in (a). In a true clause-level antipassivization, the pronoun ni- would show up with nominative -Φ and the direct object noun gizon-a- would either be deleted or would occur in some ‘nonsyntactic’ case such as instrumental.

It is also important to note that although “antipassivized” forms like n-u-en have what looks like an intransitive case-frame so far as the pronominal affixes are concerned, the root is still the transitive auxiliary -u- (‘-ada-’). This form is thus easily distinguishable from a true intransitive form like n-in-tza-n ‘I was’ (the usual intransitive indicative auxiliary). This form shows past 1Sg true nominative prefix n-en- (Table 1) instead of derived nominative n- (Table 2).

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5. THE MORPHEME(S) -en-

We have still not adequately characterized the functions of the morpheme -en- (and its allomorphic variants -in-, -end-, -ind-), which occurs in both Table 1 and Table 2. It is convenient to begin by notionally distinguishing -en-, used with true nominative prefixes (Table 1) from -en-, used with derived nominative prefixes (Table 2). While -en- is found after all first and second prefixes, -en- occurs only after plural first and second prefixes (2FoSg is formally plural). There has been some debate as to whether -en- and -en- are etymologically identical, and if so whether -en- represents a recent extension of -en- into new morphological combinations.

I will be concerned here primarily with the functional analysis of the two morphemes, since I consider this to be a prerequisite to any useful historical speculations. The functional analysis is complex, and must be sensitive to differences in the morphological environment.

Firstly, we should note that -en-, occurs only in the past system, and the same is true of -en-, since the prefixes of Table 2 occur only in antipassivized forms, which are possible only in the past system. Therefore -en- (subsuming the two temporality is of possible value as a tense marker, distinguishing past from nonpast forms. This temporal function is often redundant, but can be of value in distinguishing the nonpast subjunctive and past subjunctive, both of which take suffix -n (-en-, -an). For example, consider these 15q intransitive auxiliaries: nonpast subjunctive n-edi-n, past subjunctive n-en-di-n. This temporal function of -en-, though of marginal importance, is valid for both intransitive and transitive examples.

The other major function of -en-, in this case -en-, is to distinguish (within the past system) between true nominative prefixes (Table 1) and derived nominative prefixes (Table 2). Because of the occurrence of -en-, in part of Table 2, it would seem as though this function were valid only for the 15g and 2FoSg prefixes, which clearly distinguish Table 1 forms (C-en-) from Table 2 forms (C-). It would seem that for the plurals, Table 1 forms (C-en-) and Table 2 forms (C-en-) would be indistinguishable. In fact, as we will see below, there has been some tendency to overtly differentiate -en- and -en-, by taking advantage of allomorphic variation, for example specializing -end- and -ind- as realizations of -en-, and -en- and -in- as realizations of -en-.

Although this differentiation was only in embryonic form in sixteenth century Labourdoin (it has since become well-established), it should be kept in mind.

At any rate, for the first and second singular prefixes -en-, was clearly sufficient to distinguish true nominatives (C-en-) from derived nominatives (C-). This was functionally significant, of course, for transitive only. Restricting our attention to transitives, we should note that -en-, occurred (with singular prefixes) in the 1st2nd + 1st2nd and 3rd + 1st2nd combinations, and in no others.

Although the correct synchronic description of -en- is simply that it occurs with true nominative prefixes of the first and second persons in the past system, I want to suggest that -en- has some functional affinities to inverse morphemes used in direct-inverse case systems for bound pronominal complexes in some Amerindian and Australian languages (Algonquian in eastern North America, Nunggubuyu and Ngandi in northern Australia). Such systems are based on a hierarchical partition of pronominals (four categories in most Algonquian languages, six in Ngandi, etc.). If X, is the highest-ranking category (e.g., first and second person pronouns) and X, is the lowest-ranking (e.g., inanimate third person), then such combinations as X, + X, + X, and X, + X, are called "direct," while the opposite combinations like X, + X, are called "inverse." The relative ordering of the pronominals is usually determined by the hierarchy (e.g., X, leastmost, X, rightmost) regardless of case category, so the way direct and inverse combinations are distinguished is by adding an "inverse" morpheme to the inverse combinations. Thus X, saw X, might be realized as X, X,-saw, while X, saw X, might be X,-Y,-X,-saw, where -Y- is the inverse morpheme.

There are also equipollent combinations of the type X, + X, and X, + X,. The treatment of such combinations is variable. In most Algonquian languages the lowest-ranking equipollent combination X, + X, is formally inverse (X,-Y,-X,-saw), the highest-ranking type X, + X, is formally direct (X,-X,-saw), while middle-range equipollent combinations are avoided because of the peculiar "proximate/obviative" system. In Ngandi, some of the lowest-ranking equipollent combinations are formally inverse, while others are either irregular (hence unanalysable) or resemble direct forms. In Nunggubuyu, equipollent forms are never formally inverse, and are generally irregular or similar to direct forms.

Let us look now at Basque transitive in the past system. If X, represents first and second persons and X, the third person, we find -en- in the X, + X, (inverse) and X, + X, (equipollent) combinations, and we do not find it in the X, + X, (direct) or X, + X, (equipollent) types. Note that -en- occurs in all inverse combinations, but in no direct ones, while only some equipollent combinations show it. We can therefore see that -en- is functionally rather similar to the inverse morpheme -Y- found in Algonquian, Nunggubuyu, and Ngandi, the only difference being that semantically equipollent combinations are treated variously in the different languages.

It would be misleading, though, to speak of -en-, simply as the "inverse" morpheme of Basque. Unlike -Y- in the other languages, Basque -en-, also has a temporal function, and in this function can occur with intransitives (-Y- in the other languages is strictly transitive). Moreover, if -en- and -en- are treated as the same morpheme, the combined morpheme -en- can be said to be an inverse morpheme only for the 15g and 2FoSg prefixes.

The possible ambiguity between -en- and -en- would seem to be a serious problem. If -en- and -en- were homophonous, there would be a number of instances where, for example, 1P1 g-en- could be taken as either a true nominative or a derived nominative (underlying ergative). In the earliest texts, in fact, there appear to have been some cases of real ambiguity between 1P1 + 3Sg and 3Sg + 1P1 combinations and the like. However, there has
been a tendency to overtly distinguish -en-, from -en-, by means of specializing originally free allomorphic variants. One way this has been done has been to specialize -en- as the form of -en2 and -en- as the form of -en1. Oppositions of the type ikus ba z-en-eza (z-en-) ‘if you see him’ vs. ikus ba z-in-eza (z-en-) ‘if he sees you’ have been reported. Another way, going back to the sixteenth century, is to selectively omit truncation of the following root, with -en-, requiring truncation while -en- does not: past subjunctive auxiliaries g-en-za-n (35g = 1P1, with -en-, vs. g-en-eza-n (1P1 = 35g, with -en-).

Yet another way is to use -en-, but not -en-, in the extended form -end- or -ind-. The usual explanation of the origin of the extended form, which originally was as common with -en2 as with -en1, is that the transitive indicative auxiliary *-adu (also ‘to have’) lost its *d in most forms (hence d-u ‘he has it’ from *d-adu) but retained it after -en-, hence n-in-du-en ‘he had me.’ The d was then reintepreted as part of the -en- (n-ind-u-en). The verb iuan-Ø ‘go’ adopted the forms with d at an early period (prior to our texts), hence g-end-oa-z-en ‘we went’ (cf. z-oa-n ‘he went’). The forms with d have been further extended in the modern dialects, so that older forms like n-en-go-an (n-en-go-en) ‘you have kept’ to have been replaced by forms like n-ind-ago-an (n-ind-ago-en). Initial truncation of the following root does not generally occur with the d-variants. There has been a tendency for the d-variants to be associated with -en1, rather than -en2. Possibly part of the reason for this is the similarity between -end- (ind-) and the combination -en-t- (ind-) consisting of -en- plus the truncated form of plural (true) nominative prefix -it-, shown here in its modern (reinterpreted) base form (cf. section 6 below). For the important auxiliary stems which have this prefix -it-, it is obligatory with 1P1 g-en-1, and 2FoSg/2P1 z-en-2, since these are (true) nominative plural. On the other hand, with derived nominative 1P1 g-en2, and 2FoSg/2P1 z-en2, -it- is used only when the direct object is 3P1. Examples: g-en-t-u-en ‘he had us’ (en1), g-end-u-en ‘we had him’ (en2, without -it), g-en-t-u-en or g-in-t-u-en ‘we had them’ (en-2, with -it). It seems possible that the particular association of -it- (in truncated form -t-) with -en-, rather than with -en2, might have favored the later increasing association of the allomorphic -end- (ind-) with -en1, instead of -en2. In some dialects, indeed, -en-t- (ind-t) and -end- (ind-t) have fallen together and are now indistinguishable.

Be this as it may, we still have to explain why -en2, originated (or was retained) in the first place. In the sixteenth century -en1, and -en2, were not reliably distinguishable (many of the allomorphic distinctions which differentiate them now are of later origin), and some ambiguities occurred (cf. the two senses of g-en-t-u-en just described). One would think that the development (or retention) of -en2, was functionally harmful, and one would have expected that the language would never have developed -en2, or at any rate would have eliminated it as soon as possible.

I would suggest, on the contrary, that -en2, carried out (and continues to carry out) useful functions. Were it not for -en2, the plural forms in Table 2 would be 1P1 g- and 2FoSg/2P1 z-. Recall that Table 2 forms occur only in the past system. Without -en2, g- would be unambiguous. However, z- would now be homophonous with the past 3rd true nominative prefix z- in Table 1. In other words, -en2, is used to distinguish 2FoSg/2P1 z-en-2, in Table 2 from past 3rd z- in Table 1. This applies to all dialects except Bizkayan, which has Ø instead of z- for past 3rd prefix in Table 1.

Consider, for example, the form z-in-u-en ‘you (FoSg) had it.’ Were it not for -en2, (here -in-), we would have *z-u-en. However, this would be identical to z-u-en ‘he had it.’

I suggest, then, that -en2, was originally an extension of -en1. Some morpheme was necessary to distinguish 2FoSg/2P1 z- in Table 2 from past 3rd z-. By analogy to z-en2, in Table 1, the form z-en-2, in Table 2 was created. Since the 1P1 and 2FoSg/2P1 categories are closely affiliated in Basque morphology, -en-2, spread analogically to the 1P1, producing g-en-2, in Table 2. Here, however, -en2, is of no functional value. It has not spread into the 15g and 2FaSg, since these categories are less closely bound to the 2FoSg/2P1 category in terms of analogical dependence.

I have emphasized the functional interaction between -en2, and the threatened homophony between the two prefixes z-. This connection is essential in understanding a dialectological problem in which Bizkayan is contrasted with all other dialects. Bizkayan is the only dialect which has Ø instead of z- as the past 3rd prefix. I suggest that in this light it is no accident that Bizkayan is also the dialect where -en2, is the least firmly established. Thus, whereas ‘we knew it’ is g-in-aki-en with -en1, in Labourdin, in Bizkayan we get g-eki-an without -en2. On the other hand, ‘to have’ (also the transitive indicative auxiliary) does show -en2, in Bizkayan, hence g-end-u-an ‘we had it.’ There is one subdialect, that of Salinas, which lacks -en2, even here: g-ebe-n ‘we had it.’

L. (and before him Schuchardt and Bonaparte) have generally considered -en2, to have been of recent origin, and that Bizkayan is archaic in lacking it. The Salinas subdialect is regarded as especially conservative, so that g-end-u-an in the other Bizkayan subdialects is regarded as a diffusional innovation replacing older g-ebe-n.

To me this seems far from clear. I would guess that Bizkayan is probably not archaic at all, but rather has progressively eliminated -en2, in view of the fact that it serves no useful function in this dialect. Salinas forms like g-ebe-n, far from being fossils preserved by miracle, are probably just a further development in the direction of eliminating -en2, in this case directly stimulated by analogy from singular forms like n-ebe-n ‘I had it.’ It is difficult for me to accept (at least without documentary proof) that general (non-Salinas) Bizkayan forms with -en2, like g-end-u-an are due to recent diffusion from other dialects; I incline to regard them as inherited from Pre-Basque. If this is correct, then the Pre-Basque distribution of -en2, was roughly as it is in attested Labourdin and other non-Bizkayan dialects.

This is only a suggestion, and more work is surely needed on this problem. It is closely linked to the unresolved question whether Ø as in Bizkayan or z as in other dialects represents the original Pre-Basque past 3rd prefix. It has usually been claimed that Ø is more archaic, but this has not been satisfactorily established.
6. PLURAL PREFIXES

There are a number of plural suffixes specifying the number of nominative, ergative, dative, or other pronominals. For example, in z-in-e-te-n ‘you’ (P1) were,’ there is a plural suffix -te- following the root -e-, further specifying the number of the nominative prefix z-en-, (which without -te- here would be 2FoSg, but with -te- is 2P1). These suffixes (-te-, -de-, -z-, etc) are easily segmentable and identifiable. There are, however, some more problematic plural morphemes which directly precede the root. These prefixes always mark plurality of the true nominative pronominal (intransitive subject or transitive object), and occur with only a handful of verbs. The most important are the four major auxiliaries, subcategorized as intransitive/transitive and as indicative/subjunctive. The singular and plural forms are shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>intransitive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>indicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>izan,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg: -a-, -iza-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl: -ira-, -era-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>subjunctive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg: -edi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl: -ite-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would be nice if we could identify a common plural prefix for all four, at least in historical terms, but this is difficult. It would appear that there is a shared prefix -iC- or -eC- (recall many other i/e alternations, but it is difficult to pin down the consonant. Like -en-, and -en-, this -iC- or -eC- requires initial truncation of the root, so that -etz- gives *eC-za-, for example. The base form -it- (<et-) has frequently been proposed for ukan and izan, however, since -itu- seems to be based on an older singular *-adu-, the occurrence of a dental stop in -itu- does not mean that this has to be part of the prefix. We could easily have *-iC-du-, where *C was some consonant which had the effect of “hardening” the following *d to t. The same is true of -etz- which can reflect *eC-za- with some *C which combined with *z to give tz.

In the case of edin, we have an interpretive problem. The obvious analysis of -ite- would be *iC-de-, where -de- is a variant of expected "-di" (cf. other i/e alternations). However, it has also been suggested that -ite- represents contraction of earlier *ede-te- with plural suffix *-te-, so that there was no plural prefix at all. I am not sure this is correct, but it certainly deserves consideration.

We also have a problem with izan, since it is not clear whether -ira- and -era- are based formally on -a- or on -iza-, the two major singular allomorphs. If they are based on -a-, we should segment -ira- (<era-), where the r is part of the plural prefix. However, since -iza- is probably the older singular form, it is more likely that -ira- and -era- are based on it, so we should think of prototypes like *eC-za-, where *C combined to produce r. This is phonologically unusual regardless of what specific *C we posit, but we can think of the phonological aberration as motivated partly by the necessity of keeping forms of izan, distinct from those of izan, (which has plural -etza-).

Although a specific reconstruction (with the *C of *-ic- identified) is thus difficult, it would appear that the plural prefixes of ukan, izan, and izan, are historically identical, and there is some possibility of this also being true of edin. Synchronically the situation is complicated; we should probably take the prefix as -it- (<er-) with izan, as -it- with ukan and edin, and -it- with izan. These segmentations represent considerable reinterpretation and are unreliable for purposes of more distant etymology.

There is one other problematic verb which takes a plural prefix: ezan (etzin, etzun, etc.) ‘to be asleep.’ The root is usually -ata- or less often -ata- in inflected forms with singular nominative pronominal. With a plural nominative, however, the stem shows up as -a-un-za- (or -a-un-tza-; z and tz are indistinguishable in this position). L analyses this as -a-un-za-. He regards -n- as a specialized form of what I have called -en-, however, this -n- has no real similarities to -en-, since -n- but not -en-, is used with 3P1 forms and since -n- occurs in nonpast and past forms while -en-, is restricted to the past system. The correlation therefore seems extremely weak.

L suggests that the -u- in -a-un-za- reflects paradigm mixture involving etzan and the verb egon ‘to stay.’ The latter appears as -ago- in inflected forms, and this contracts to -au- before plural suffix -de (d-ago ‘he stays,’ d-au-de ‘they stay’). Taking -a-un-tza- as a mixture of this -au- and of -ata- would explain the form, except for the nasal. It is difficult to conceive of the nasal having anything to do with the final nasal of the perfective nonfinite form egon-θ since such final nasals seem otherwise never to appear in finite forms (cf. izan-θ ‘to go,’ finite root -oa-, etc.).

Although the origin of -a-un-tza- is frankly quite puzzling, perhaps part of the problem can be explained if we note that the truncated stem -tza- (or -za-) might have been confused with the past suffix -tza- or -za- found with a few roots, notably izan-θ ‘to go.’ Examples: d-oa ‘he goes,’ d-oa-tza or d-oa-za ‘they go.’ If forms of etzan were reinterpreted as ending in this plural suffix, this might have favored reshaping the preceding morphemes in such a way that a new nonzero root was created; -a-un- may have fulfilled this function. However, details of the development remain rather obscure.

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NOTES

1. It is a pleasure to participate in a volume honoring Jon Bilbao, whom I met in 1972 at the University of Nevada's Basque Studies Program in Europe. For comments on an earlier draft I thank William H. Jacobsen, Jr. I have an earlier debt to Rudolf de Rijk, who introduced me to Basque in 1971.

2. Lafon, 1943.


4. For an excellent study of allocutives see Lafon, 1959.

5. In a paper of limited scope we cannot cover all dialectal variants, such as Guipuzcoan ikus-ten d-e-s 'I see him'. The forms given in the text are generally Labourdian (especially sixteenth century Labourdian) unless otherwise indicated.

6. L goes so far as to compare this -er (-i-) with initial i or e in such nouns as ibar 'valley' and ezer 'bone'; cf. Lafon 1954, p. 195.

7. It is interesting to note that Susan Steele (1975), unaware of L's work, has made a very similar claim concerning the affinity between past and irrealis categories. However, the major evidence presented is a speculative and shaky reconstruction for a distant Amerindian proto-language. The other parallels mentioned briefly at the beginning of her paper are simply cases where conditionals are associated with the past tense.

8. Lafon, 1943, p. 507. This distinction is still retained in Lafon, 1972, 1770, sec. 4b, and pp. 1771-2, sec. 8.


11. Ormaechea, 1947, p. 169, in his review of Lafon, 1943, notes that such contrasts have been found in some subdialects, but laments that they are "confused" by most Basque writers and speakers.

12. Robert L. Trask suggests tentatively in his paper in this volume that -n (i.e., what I call -en-i, and -en-y) originated as a passive prefix. A claim of this nature does not easily admit proof or disproof, but I find the evidence insufficient to be convincing.

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