

Modification is not (always) predication: evidence from Basque

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Introduction: there are two type of elements that have traditionally been considered *adverbs* in Basque grammar (Euskaltzaindia 2021; Hualde 2003). The type represented in (1) modifies an argument, in this case, the subject of the sentence. These elements are associated to adverbs because they can occur in secondary predication, as is actually the case in (1), although they can also appear in primary predication. The adverbial elements in (2), on the other hand, modify the event, and are considered manner-modifiers.

- (1) Mikel **urduri-Ø** / **gaixo-rik** / **nekatu-ta** etorri da.
 Mikel nervous / sick-RIK / tired-TA come AUX
 ‘Mikel has come (while) nervous / sick / tired.’
- (2) Mikel **azkar-Ø** / **azkar-ki** etorri da.
 Mikel fast / fast-KI come AUX
 ‘Mikel has come fast(ly).’

Proposal: In this work, I argue that these two types of modifiers constitute different syntactic and semantic structures that I will refer to as *predicatives* (1) and *adverbials* (2). As the examples show, (1) and (2) take different suffixes, which are in complementary distribution. Predicatives can occur without any added morphemes with adjectives such as *urduri* ‘nervous’, but also with the suffix *-(r)ik* (for adjectives and participles) as in *gaixo-rik* ‘sick’ or the suffix *-ta* (only with participles) as in *nekatu-ta* ‘tired’ (de Rijk 2008) as in (1). On the contrary, adverbials can only be formed by the suffix *-ki*¹ and, in the case of many adjectives, they can also occur without any morpheme (Hualde 2003; de Rijk 2008) as shown in (2).

I assume predicatives are merged through a specific functional head *Pred* (Bowers 1993; Baker 2003 a.o.) as expressed in (3). *Pred* enables a property to become the argument of predication. Hence, in line with Baker (2003), I take it that Nouns and Adjectives need this functional head to constitute a (syntactic) predicate in the terms defined by Den Dikken (2006), i.e. to be “the syntactic constituent that expresses a property ascribed to the subject”. *PredP* is later merged with a copula in primary predication or as an adjunct in secondary predication (Adger & Ramchand 2003; Roy 2013).

- (3)
- $$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{PredP}_{\langle \text{st} \rangle} \\
 \swarrow \quad \searrow \\
 \text{DP}_{\langle \text{e} \rangle} \quad \text{Pred}'_{\langle \text{e}, \text{st} \rangle} \\
 \text{Mikel} \quad \swarrow \quad \searrow \\
 \text{AP}_{\langle \text{et} \rangle} \quad \text{Pred}_{\langle \text{et}, \langle \text{e}, \text{st} \rangle \rangle} \\
 \text{gaixo} \quad \text{-rik} \\
 \text{nekatu} \quad \text{-ta} \\
 \text{urduri} \quad \text{-Ø}
 \end{array}$$

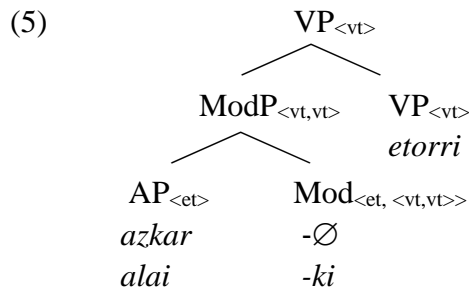
Actually, the distribution of suffixes *-rik* and *-ta* is nicely explained if they are taken to be lexical instantiations of the functional head *Pred*, as I argue here. In terms of its semantics, *Pred*

¹ *-ki* is the only productive suffix in current Basque, although there have been other suffixes (*-to*, *-ro*, *-kiro*, *-roki*) with the same function that are preserved in some lexicalised elements (De Rijk 1998 [1996], 2008: 233-239; Fernández-Altonaga 2022).

introduces a state and a relation R between states and individuals (4), which explains why predicatives formed by these suffixes are all interpreted as stage-level predicates.

- (4) $[-rik/-ta]: \lambda P.\lambda x.\lambda e_s.\exists e_s[R(e_s, x) \ \& \ P(e_s)]$
 where R is a relation meaning ‘e realizes a state of x’. (Carlson 1980: 76)

Adverbials, on the other hand, project through a different functional head, the head Mod (Rubin 1994, 2003; Scontras & Nicolae 2014). This head enables a type-shift that transforms a property into a predicate modifier. These modifiers merge into the structure via adjunction, as expressed in (5).



The suffix *-ki*, I argue, is a lexical instantiation of the functional head Mod. In this case, *-ki* does not add any semantic content; it merely allows adjectives to become modifiers of a non-nominal domain by transforming them into predicate modifier of events. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that the suffix *-ki* combines with categories other than the adjective, such as nouns, participles and PPs to create manner modifiers (De Rijk 2008). This view of modification accurately represents what the function of a modifier is deemed to be with regard to its formal semantics, i.e. “an expression which combines with another expression to produce a result with the same semantic type” (McNally 2016). By posing a functional head that produces this result, an assumption of strict compositionality can be preserved and no special operation is needed (as in Heim & Kratzer 1998 or Chung & Ladusaw 2004). The syntactic projection is justified by the fact that overt morphology corresponds to that projection.

Conclusions: In sum, in this analysis I posit a distinction between two syntactic objects related to modification: (i) modifiers of arguments and, (ii) modifiers of events. I argue that these two types hold different semantic and syntactic relations which are best represented through two different functional heads. Evidence of the distinction is based on data from the distribution of Basque morphemes and differences in their semantic contribution.

References

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