

The system of the causative verbs in basque

The verb in Basque may express causation in two ways: grammatically and lexically. The first is not specialized and serves to express the more general meaning of transitivity; the causative meaning of the Basque verb is only a special instance of its transitive meaning. The second, lexical means of expressing causality is highly specialized and is not used to express any other verbal meanings.

Causative verbs /CV/ expressing causality by grammatical means will be termed unmarked /CV—/; CV expressing causality by lexical means will be termed marked /CV+ /.

UNMARKED CV / CV — /

As stated above, CV— in Basque form a subclass of the class of transitive verbs. Basque, as compared with the Indo-European languages, is characterized by a wider scope of the category of transitivity/intransitivity, determined here not by the lexical type of the verbal base, but by the conjugation of the verb. «Practically the vast majority of the Basque verbs have two conjugations, a transitive and an intransitive one, and correspondingly have complementary meanings»¹. We shall distinguish between the transitive use V(t) and the intransitive use V(i) of the Basque verb. V(t) is characterized by its conjugation with the auxiliary *ukhan* have, V(i) — with the auxiliary *izan be*. «The Basque language has only one verb. This verb has two voices... The intransitive voice does not admit a direct object... The transitive voice demands the use of a direct object... These two voices supplement each other and may be viewed only as two aspects of one and the same verb... «he offered it» is rendered by «eskentu *du*» in the transitive voice; to express «he offered himself» «eskentu *da*» is used in the intransitive voice»².

A major role in determining CV— as a subclass of V(t) is played by the direction of the grammatical derivation, for V(t) may be the initial or a derivated function of each verb in question.

1 P. LAFITTE. *Grammaire Basque*. (Navarro-Labourdin littéraire). Bayonne, 1962, § 410.

2 L'Abbé INCHAUSPE. *Le verbe Basque*. Paris, 1858, p. I. See likewise W. J. VAN EYS. *Essai de grammaire de la langue Basque*. Amsterdam, 1867.

1.—Verbs where V(i) is the initial and V(t) the derivated function (such verbs will be designated Vit) and verbs with an indefinite direction of grammatical derivation are characterized by a greater regularity of the semantical opposition between their causative and non-causative meanings: V(i) expresses here the non-causative, V(t) — the causative meaning; the second meaning is more complex and includes the first as its component: V(i) *ixildu naiz* I am silent —> V(t) *ixildu det* I made him be silent; V(i) *sartu naiz* I came in —> V(t) *sartu det* I made him come in. The meaning of V(t) is equal to the sum of the meaning of V(i) and the causal meaning.

This regularity of the semantical opposition between the transitive and intransitive meanings of the verb is determined by the fact that in Basque «a verb is termed intransitive if it denotes a situation, state or action which is not directed toward an object»³. When such a verb is nevertheless used in a transitive function, its grammatical direct object must denote the referential object of *some* action, but this by definition cannot be the action of the initial V(i). Thus V(t) acquires the additional meaning of causation directed toward the referential object expressed by the direct object of the verb while the action of the initial V(i) loses its connection with the referential subject and is transferred to the referential object as its resultative state. This is why «verbs with an initial intransitive meaning easily acquire in Basque a factitive meaning»⁴.

2.—Verbs with an initial V(t) and a derivated V(i) (designated Vti) are characterized by a lower regularity of the opposition between their transitive and intransitive meanings: the primary meaning of V(t) does not always consist here of the meaning of V(i) and some other invariable semantical component. «Verbs with an initial transitive meaning, when used in the intransitive conjugation, acquire a passive function or the meaning of French reflexive verbs»⁵.

A complicating factor here is that some Vti already have a causative meaning in their initial transitive function (*erre burn*, *galdu lose*), while others do not (*ikhusi see*). Vti of the first type are characterized in the intransitive conjugation by a regular semantical opposition between the meanings of V(i) and V(t): the first meaning is equal to the second minus the causative meaning (V(t) *erre det* I burnt him —> V(i) *erre naiz* I burnt). V(i) of this type may likewise have a reflexive meaning: V(t) *galdu duke* he will lose it —> V(i) *galdu date* he will lose

3 P. LAFITTE, Op. cit., § 410.

4 P. LAFITTE, Op. cit., § 410.

5 P. LAFITTE, Op. cit., § 410.

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himself (= perish). Vti of the second type are noncausative in meaning in both functions.

MARKED CV / CV + /

There are two causative affixes in Basque: the causative infix -ra- and the causative suffix -erazi (-arazi). Their role in the language is different.

a) *The causative infix.*

The causative infix is the more ancient affix. Thus, the majority of the causative verbs met with in the Basque literature of the XVI century have a causative infix⁶. In modern Basque the causative infix is used only with the more frequent verbs⁷. Infixal CV are formed mainly from verbal bases: ezarri place (v) - irazarri cause to place; ikasi learn - irakasi teach; jauzi jump - erauzi cause to jump. The infixal formation of CV from non-verbal bases is not characteristic of Basque.

In modern Basque the infix -ra- has to a substantial degree lost its causative meaning and is no longer a determining factor in the contraposition of causative and non-causative verbal meanings. The semantical derivation attending infixal verb-formation is as a rule irregular. Thus there are etymological grounds for regarding the two transitive verbs eraiki raise and iraki boil as independent infixal derivatives of one and the same intransitive verb jaiki rise. The first derivational line is attended by a regular, the second — by an irregular semantical opposition between the intransitive and transitive verbal meanings. In some cases there is hardly any trace left of the semantical connection between the meanings of the primary and the derived verbs: jazarri attack — erazarri scold.

This semantical neutralization of the causative infix may be illustrated by the following pair of examples:

eztezagula atzar^a, bego bera iratzar dadin^b
let us not wake^a him, let him wake up^b himself;
iratzar^c nezazue bihar goizik
wake^c me up tomorrow early.

The verbal root atzar wake is used here thrice. In the first case the verb is used without a causative infix, in the transitive conjugation and

6 R. LAFON, *Le système du verbe basque au XVI^e siècle*. Vol. I. Bordeaux, 1943, p. 269-272.

7 L'Abbé INCHAUSPE, *Op. cit.*, p. 443.

in a causative meaning. In the second case the verb is used with a causative infix, in the intransitive conjugation and in a non-causative meaning. In the third case the verb is used with a causative infix, in the transitive conjugation and in a causative meaning:

	Causative infix	Conjugation	Causative meaning
a	—	trans.	+
b	+	intrans.	—
c	+	trans.	+

The table shows that the causative meaning is determined by the conjugation of the verb and not by the causative infix: the transitive form expresses a causative meaning while the intransitive form does not, irrespective of the presence or absence of the causative infix. Thus the type of verbal meaning is here determined by grammatical but not lexical factors.

This may be further illustrated by the following two pairs of examples:

- 1.—a) arnoak *e=ra=kartzen* ohi *dituen* kalteak
the harm which wine usually *produces*;
- b) *ekbar beza* lurak *zuhaitz eta belhar orotarik*
let the earth *produce* plants and grasses of all kinds;
- 2.—a) *e=ra=untz exozu* aldagarria
take off his raiment;
- b) *tresna ederrak jauntzi xiozten*
in beautiful raiment they *dressed* him.

The verb is used with the causative infix in the first example of each pair and without it in the second, but in all four cases the verb has a causative meaning because it is everywhere used in the transitive conjugation. The second pair of verbs is characterized by an irregular semantical derivation, but the fact remains that both verbs are causative in meaning.

We may draw the inference that in those cases when correlated pairs of verbs form a clear-cut opposition in all three features mentioned above, i.e. when a verb with a causative meaning has a causative infix and is conjugated with *ukhan* while a verb with a non-causative meaning has no causative infix and is conjugated with *izan*, the meaning of the verb is likewise

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determined by its conjugation and not by the presence or absence of the causative infix:

- 1.—a) *athe eta gondeak bortxaz e=ra=uzi zituen*
he violently *tore out* the doors and shutters
- b) *horiek entzutearekin jauzi zen*
on hearing these things he *jumped up*;
- 2.—a) *e=ra=ikitzen dute ihizia*
they *raised* the wild animals (made them run)
- b) *erbia jaikia da*
the hare *ran*.

In each pair of examples the verb in the first sentence is used in the transitive conjugation and in a causative meaning while the verb in the second sentence is used in the intransitive conjugation and in a non-causative meaning; the causative infix in the first example of each pair may be regarded as an irrelevant factor.

To summarize, the infixal causative verbs are in many cases characterized by an irregular semantical derivation and the main factor differentiating between the causative and non-causative verbal meanings lies not in the lexical (causative infix) but in the grammatical (type of conjugation) field. The causative infix may thus be regarded as the weak member in the system of the morphological means of expressing causation in Basque. The general conclusion follows that verbs with the causative infix in no manner relevant to our study differ functionally from primary verbs classed under the unmarked type (CV—).

b) *The causative suffix.*

The morphological status of the causative morpheme *-erazi* (variants: *-arazi*, *-razi*, occidental *-erazo*, *-arazo*) in modern Basque is not quite clear. There are some grounds for treating it as an analogue of the auxiliary causative verbs in the Indo-European languages (make, faire, lassen) — cf. the noun *arazo* affair, occupation in Biscayan and Guipuzcoan. On the other hand *erazi* cannot be separated from the verbal root by any other element. In Lhande's dictionary⁸ *-erazi* features only as a causative suffix but not as an autonomous word and has no complementary non-causative meanings characteristic of auxiliary causative verbs of the make-faire-lassen type. We shall follow P. Lafitte, Inchauspe, W. J. Van Eys and others in regarding *-erazi* as a causative suffix.

This suffix is the main lexical means of expressing causation in Basque. «*Erazi* is added to the base of verbal nouns and to all the words in general

⁸ P. LHANDÉ. *Dictionnaire Basque-Français*. Vol. I. Paris, 1926.

to give them a verbal causative meaning. Thus we have jar-erazi cause to sit, jan-erazi cause to eat, har-erazi cause to take, handi-erazi cause to increase, gizont-erazi cause to become a man, haurt-erazi cause to become a child»⁹.

Unlike the causative infix, the suffix -erazi never loses its causative meaning. An irregular semantical derivation is a very rare occurrence here (e.g. gal-erazi 'hinder' instead of the etymologically motivated 'cause to lose'; but even here the main semantical opposition 'causative / non-causative verbal meaning' is retained, for the derived verb has a causative meaning, though the latter is not directly connected with the meaning of the primary verb). In the vast majority of the cases the suffixal CV are characterized by a regular semantical derivation: the meaning of the derived verb is equal to the sum of the meaning of the primary verb and that of causation:

- 1.—a) *zelhaiak ikhusiren dituzte* odolez gorrituak
they *will see* the plains red with blood;
- b) *Ikhus arazi diot* bere hutsa
I *made* him *see* his mistake;
- 2.—a) *ikhusi behar zinduzkeen* nola liskartzen ziren!
you *should have seen* (experienced) how they argued!
- b) *zerbait ikhus-arazia dauku*
he *made* us *see* (experience) many things.

The fact that the causative suffix may be added to a verbal base leads to an abundance in Basque of pairs of verbs of the same root where one is a primary and the other a suffixal verb. A primary verb of the Vit type in the transitive conjugation has, as shown above, a causative meaning and is as a rule synonymous to the corresponding suffixal causative verb; cp. *ixildu du* — *ixil-erazi du* he made him be quiet. The initial function /V(i)/ of the primary verb is here non-causative in meaning and the addition of the causative suffix changes it into a verb expressing «single» causation and synonymous to V(t). The case is different for primary verbs of the Vti type expressing causation in their initial function /V(t)/; the addition of the causative suffix changes these into verbs expressing «double» causation: *etxea erre du* he burnt the house (=he made the house burn) — *etxea erre-erazi du* he made him burn the house (=he made him make the house burn).

A further peculiarity of the suffixal causative verbs is that they can hardly be used in the intransitive conjugation, thus constituting the main exception to P. Lafitte's definition (p. I); thus *saldu da* he has been sold, *erosi da* he has been bought, but hardly *salerazi da*, *eroserazi da*. The

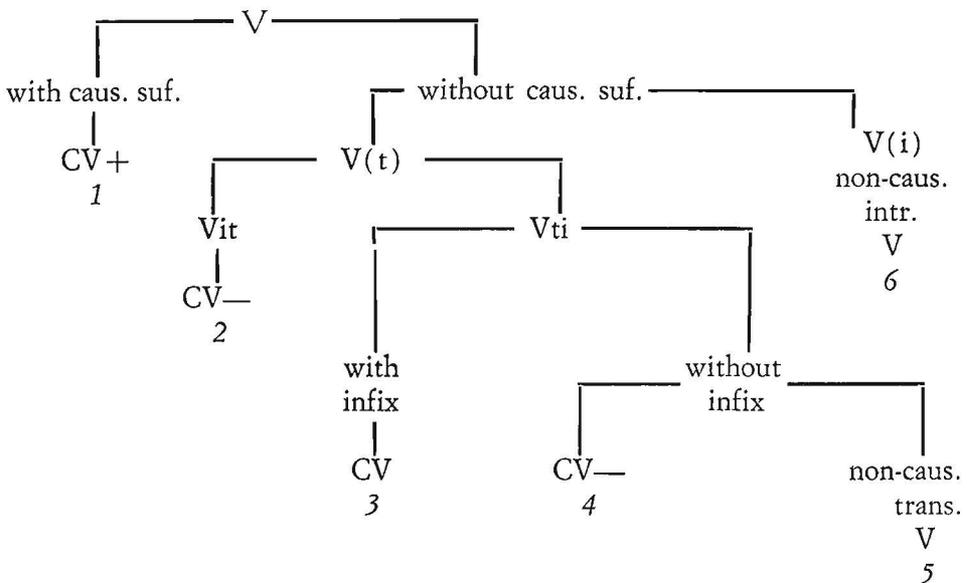
⁹ INCHAUSPE. Op. cit., p. 443.

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causative suffix in Basque is incompatible with the passive function of the verb.

To conclude: The suffixal causative verbs are characterized (as a rule) by a regular semantical derivation. The semantical opposition between the meanings of the primary and the derived verbs is never neutralized. The causative suffix determines the conjugation (transitive) of the verb, while with the infixal verbs it is the other way round (see p. 52-53). We are drawn to the conclusion that the causative suffix constitutes the strong member of the system of the morphological means of expressing causation in Basque. It is to be noted that the strong member of the binary opposition has in this instance a wider distribution in the field of word-formation than the weak member (the causative infix). We may further conclude that it is the subclass of suffixal CV that constitutes the core of the type of marked CV /CV+/. The main opposition is between the suffixal CV and the unmarked (primary) CV; the infixal CV occupy an intermediate position, tending towards the suffixal CV from the morphological and towards the unmarked CV from the functional point of view.

We may now draw up the following tree representing the verbal system in Basque (including the non-causative verbs):



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Thus the Basque verb may be subdivided into six subclasses:

- 1) marked (suffixal) CV /CV+/, used only in V(t);
- 2) unmarked CV of the Vit type;
- 3) infixal CV, all belonging to the Vti type;
- 4) unmarked CV of the Vti type;
- 5) non-causative verbs of the Vti type; transitive function;
- 6) verbs of all types (excepting suffixal) in their intransitive function, all with a non-causative meaning.

Of the six subclasses of the Basque verb, the first four express a causative meaning. This leads to the general conclusion that the grammatical and semantical characteristics of the verbal system in Basque do not coincide: from the grammatical point of view the main opposition is that between the transitive and intransitive conjugation, from the semantical point of view — that between causative and non-causative verbs. In this latter perspective the suffixal CV may be regarded as the strong member of the whole system of the Basque verb, as illustrated by the tree given above.

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10-X-1969

The author wishes to make grateful acknowledgment to Professor Luis Michelena for promoting the publication of this article and for his many helpful suggestions.

El artículo se propone comparar, dentro del sistema verbal vasco, la posición respectiva de los dos tipos de expresión abierta de la causatividad: la gramatical, con el infijo -ra-, y la léxica, por medio de -erazi, sufijado. A pesar de su distribución más amplia, es el causativo con sufijo el que constituye el término marcado en esta oposición morfológica binaria. En cuanto a la función, la oposición principal es la que opone este causativo en -erazi, de una parte, a los causativos primarios, sin marca formal, de la otra. El causativo infijado ocupa una posición intermedia: está más cerca morfológicamente del causativo sufijado, pero desde el punto de vista funcional, por el contrario, se aparenta a los verbos causativos sin marca formal.