

## Economy governed change: A view from Basque auxiliaries

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**Ricardo Etxepare**

IKER UMR 5478 CNRS

r.etxepare@iker.cnrs.fr

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All Basque dialects of the Archaic Period (XV-XVIth century) seem to have shared a number of properties regarding the form and distribution of auxiliaries which are kept (in a somewhat reduced way) in eastern dialects today. These properties can be summarized as follows: (i) Optional object and dative agreement; (ii) main predicate status for *be* and *have*; (iii) independent lexical forms for those same auxiliaries; (iv) sequences of the type *wh-phrase/focus Aux*; (v) *be* auxiliaries with transitive predicates; and (vi) sequences in which the aspectual complement and the auxiliary in Basque periphrases are separated by something else, either negation or an additive marker of the *also/even* sort. Those properties can be captured in a unified way on the basis of a single morphosyntactic parameter, consisting in the fact that Archaic Basque copulas were “synthetic verbs” (De Rijk 2008), not auxiliaries (understood as the mere lexicalization of T/Agr, as in Arregi and Nevins 2012). Synthetic verbs are finite verbs which, unlike auxiliaries, possess a lexical root. In the period known as Archaic Basque it can be shown that this class included the transitive and intransitive auxiliary forms. Basque auxiliaries have followed a general grammaticalization process in the context of verbal periphrases, from full verbal elements to exponents of T/Mood, a process that is more advanced in western and central dialects than in eastern ones. Interestingly, the grammaticalization process did not affect in the same way the finite copulas merged in the context of non-verbal predication, a relatively rich class in Basque that includes equivalents of stative verbs in other languages. In those contexts, finite *be* and *have* continue to show properties of lexical verbs. The paper explores the grammaticalization process in the three dialectal areas mentioned and provides an explanation for the asymmetry between verbal and non-verbal predication by invoking principles of representational economy grounded in the acquisition device (such as Roussou and Roberts’s Representational Economy 2003 or Van Gelderen’s Late Merge, 2011).

**References:** De Rijk, R. (2008). *Standard Basque*. MIT Press. Arregi, K. and A. Nevins (2012). *Morphotactics. Basque Auxiliaries and the Structure of Spell Out*. Springer. Roussou, A. and I. Roberts (2003). *Syntactic Change. A Minimalist Approach to Grammaticalization*. Cambridge University Press. Van Gelderen, E. (2011). *The Linguistic Cycle*. Oxford University Press.