

# On *Egin*: *Do*-Support And Verb Focalization In Central And Western Basque

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## 1 Introduction

Central and Western Basque (CWB) dialects have a verb focalization construction involving the dummy verb *egin*, which as a lexical verb is akin to English ‘make’ or ‘do.’ (Rebuschi 1984, Ortiz de Urbina 1989, Zuazo 1998, Etxepare and Ortiz de Urbina 2003). An example of this construction is given in (1), which Ortiz de Urbina (1989) gives as a felicitous answer to the question, “What happened to your father?”

- (1) Hil *egin* da gure aita.  
die *do* AUX our father  
‘Our father has DIED.’

The goal of this paper is to explain how *do*-support comes about in sentences of this kind. In particular, this paper argues that Central and Western Basque dialects, along with Korean, form a class of *do*-support languages whose dummy verb insertion mechanism differs slightly from that in English (Chomsky 1995, Pollock 1989) and Monnese (Benincà and Poletto 2004). In all four of these languages, the dummy verb is merged as a last resort strategy to check a strong feature in a position that is, in marked environments, inaccessible to the verb. However, in Korean and CWB, unlike in English and Monnese, the verb’s inability to raise is not due to its theta-marking properties or to its inflectional poverty, but rather because the VP must be nominalized—i.e. appear with nominal infinitival morphology—

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for independent reasons; this nominal infinitive may not bear verbal aspectual features, and a dummy verb is merged to do so instead.

Part 1 of this paper discusses some key properties of focalized verbs that will be crucial to the analysis of *do*-support developed here. Specifically, I argue that focalized verbs in Basque are infinitives that raise as XPs to the same left-peripheral focus position as non-verbal foci. Part 2 presents an analysis of the dummy verb *egin*.

## 2 Some Properties of the Focalized Verb

### 2.1 Focalized Verbs Raise as XPs to FocP

In the following discussion, I argue that the main verb in verb focalization constructions with *egin* raises to the same left-peripheral focus position targeted by other kinds of foci. This analysis was first proposed by Rebuschi (1984), in a shorter discussion of this phenomenon. Evidence supporting this claim will come from word-order, extraction of foci from complement clauses and clausal pied-piping.

#### 2.1.1 Word Order

The positioning of arguments in Basque is discourse-sensitive. Foci and *wh*-phrases canonically must appear left adjacent to the main (aspect-bearing) verb in affirmative sentences and left-adjacent to the negative morpheme *ez* in negatives as shown in (2) and (3).

- (2) Nork/JONEK (\*Miren) ikus-i du (√Miren).  
 who.ERG/Jon-ERG (Miren) see-PERF AUX (Miren)  
 ‘Who/JOHN saw Mary.’
- (3) Nork/JONEK (\*Miren) ez du (√Miren) ikus-i (√Miren).  
 who.ERG/Jon.ERG (Miren) NEG AUX (Miren) see-PERF (Miren)  
 ‘Who/JOHN didn’t see Mary.’

(4) and (5) below show that focalized verbs behave like other kinds of foci in requiring left-adjacency to the main (aspect-bearing) verb in affirmatives, and left-adjacency to *ez* in negatives.

- (4) Hil (\*aurten/\*gure aita) egin-Ø da aurten gure aita.  
 die egin-PERF AUX this.year our father  
 ‘Our father has DIED this year.’

- (5) Etorri (\*Jon) ez da egin (Jon).<sup>1</sup>  
 come NEG AUX egin (Jon).  
 'Jon didn't COME.'

A more marked and less-well studied focalization strategy is also available for some speakers in which focalized constituents appear right-peripherally,<sup>2</sup> as in (6).

- (6) Ardoa ekarri diot (#) ANDONI-RI  
 wine brought AUX Andoni-to  
 'I brought the wine to ANDONI.' (Elordieta 2001)

There appears to be significant cross-dialectal variation in the availability of this phenomenon (Etxepare and Ortiz de Urbina 2003). In some dialects this construction is marginal and requires a heavy intonational break between the right-peripheral focalized constituent and the rest of the sentence. Hualde, Elordieta, and Elordieta (1994) and Elordieta (2001), for example, report that in the Bizkaian dialect of Lekeitio, right-peripheral focalization is extremely marked except with copulative verbs, and requires a significant intonational break. In Oiartzun Basque, and in neighboring central dialects, however, this phenomenon seems to be more robust. It is not restricted to copulative environments and does not require a heavy intonational break.

Example (7) shows that in Oiartzun Basque and neighboring dialects, main verbs in *egin*-constructions may also appear right-peripherally.

- (7) Horrek egi-ten du ZUZENDU.  
 that egin-IMPERF AUX correct  
 'The latter CORRECTS it.'

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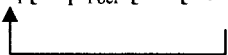
<sup>1</sup>In affirmative contexts, focalized verbs are interpretable as both contrastive/corrective foci and information foci (i.e. as an answer to a wh-question, questioning the focalized element). For foci in negative sentences, however, a contrastive/corrective interpretation is preferred.

<sup>2</sup>In fact, for some speakers, right-peripheral foci need not be strictly right peripheral (cf. Ortiz de Urbina 2001). In particular the "right-peripheral" focalized constituent can be followed by a topic if it is set off by a pause, as in (i) below.

- (i) Jonek eman dio BIZIKLETA BAT # Miren-i.  
 jon give AUX bicycle one Miren-to.  
 'Jon has given a BICYCLE to Miren.'

Crucially, this strategy seems to be most marked precisely in those dialects in which other kinds of right-peripheral foci are marked. In the dialect of Lekeitio, for example, which is otherwise conservative with respect to post-verbal foci, right-peripheral verb focalizations such as that in (7) are also marginal (A. Elordieta, p.c.).

The most thorough generative treatment of postverbal foci in Basque is by Ortiz de Urbina (2002), who argues that in both preverbal and postverbal focus constructions, the focalized constituent moves to the same position—spec, FocP.<sup>3,4</sup> The two constructions differ minimally in that postverbal focalization constructions involve an additional movement step in which the remnant constituent below FocP raises to the left of FocP, leaving the focalized constituent as the most deeply embedded material in the tree. This movement step is illustrated in (8). (See also Uribe-Etxebarria 2003.)

- (8) (Ortiz de Urbina, 2002)  
 $\text{TopP}[\text{CP}_i [\text{Top}_{\text{FocP}} [\text{XP} [\text{Foc } t_i]]]]$
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The proposal that the verb in verb focalization constructions moves as an XP to spec, FocP predicts that other VP material should be able to raise with the verb. From the perspective of Ortiz de Urbina's remnant movement proposal, this predicts the availability of such VP material in right-peripheral focalized VPs (in those dialects with the *egin*-construction, and which are tolerant of right-peripheral focalization). Indeed, the following examples in which verbal complements may appear to the right of *egin* (but to the left of the main verb) as in (9)-(10) seem to bear out this prediction. In these examples, the most natural reading is one in which the entire VP (in brackets) or a verbal complement receives focus interpretation.

- (9) Monjak egin zigun [barruan utzi.]  
 nuns do AUX inside leave  
 'The nuns LEFT US INSIDE.'
- (10) Egin behar duzu hurrengo egun-ean [dena enboteilatu.]  
 do need AUX next day-on all bottle  
 'The next day you have to BOTTLE IT ALL.'

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<sup>3</sup>Ortiz de Urbina limits his proposal to "corrective" focalization. Here, I will extend Ortiz de Urbina's proposal to focus in the sense of "answer to a *wh*-question."

<sup>4</sup>Ortiz de Urbina does not discuss verb focalization in this paper.

### 2.1.2 Extraction from Complement Clauses and Clausal Pied-Piping

Another well-documented property of *wh*-phrases and foci in Basque is that they may extract from complement clauses, especially under verbs of saying, as shown in (11) (Ortiz de Urbina 1989, Uriagereka 1999).

- (11) HORRELA uste dut [egin beharko litzatekeela aukerarena.]  
 this.way think AUX make need.FUT AUX.COMP choice  
 ‘IN THIS WAY do I think the choice should be made.’  
 (Etxepare and Ortiz de Urbina 2003)

Example (12) shows that, at least for some speakers, focalized verbs behave like other kinds of foci in their ability to extract from complement clauses. (Why sentences of this kind are only marginal for many speakers is not clear to me.) The availability of extraction in such cases is further evidence that verb raising in these constructions is A'-movement.

- (12) ?ETORRI<sub>i</sub> esan didate [t<sub>i</sub> egin zinela.]  
 come say AUX do AUX.COMP  
 ‘They have told me that you CAME.’

Foci may also pied-pipe entire clauses to the front of the matrix clause as in (13) (Ortiz de Urbina 1993). Again, as expected from the standpoint of the present proposal, clausal pied-piping is also available in verb focalizations with *egin*, as shown in (14).

- (13) [JON etorriko dela bihar] esan diot Miren-i.  
 Jon come.FUT AUX.COMP tomorrow say AUX Miren-DAT  
 ‘That it is Jon that will come tomorrow I have told Mary.’  
 (Ortiz de Urbina 1993)

- (14) [Etorri egin zinela] esan didate.  
 come do AUX.COMP say AUX  
 ‘They say you CAME.’

## 2.2 Focalized VPs Bear an Infinitival Affix

Main verbs in verb focalization constructions appear in the citation form with one of three affixes, *-tu/-i/-n/-Ø*, depending on the verb class. These affixes are traditionally taken to be perfective markers (Laka 1990, Zabala and Odriozola 1996), and in some environments behave as such

unambiguously. Nevertheless, as argued in Haddican (2005), verb focalizations with *egin* as in (15) are problematic for this analysis.

- (15) Eror-i (egin-go/egi-ten) da etxea.  
 fall.i do.FUT/do.IMPERF AUX house  
 ‘The house is going to FALL.’/‘The house FALLS.’

In (15), *-tu/-i/-n/-∅* is realized on the focalized main verb, while aspectual markers such as the imperfective affix *-t(z)en* and future *-ko* are realized on the dummy verb, *egin*. From the standpoint of an analysis of *-tu/-i/-n/-∅* as always and everywhere perfective markers, the data in (15) are perplexing since they seem to require the realization of morphemes with conflicting aspectual values in a single clause. (See Haddican 2005 for evidence that these constructions are in fact monoclausal). In sentences such as (15), the aspectual interpretation is invariably determined by the aspectual morpheme on the dummy verb, *egin*, as reflected in the glosses.

In view of these facts, Haddican (2005) proposes that in verb focalization constructions and on verbs under modals, *-tu/-i/-n/-∅* are infinitival markers merged VP-internally (Wurmbrand 2001, Cinque 2000). Independent evidence in favor of an approach to *-tu/-i/-n/-∅* as infinitival markers comes from the three kinds of facts. First, the verb+*-tu/-i/-n/-∅* is the citation form. While infinitives are commonplace as citation forms, an aspectually marked verb as a citation form is less expected. Second, verbs+*-tu/-i/-n/-∅* participate in certain restructuring phenomena (Haddican 2005). Third, and finally, these forms participate in short *wh*-movement as in (16).

- (16) Ez dakit zer abes-tu.  
 not know what sing-tu.  
 ‘I don’t know what to sing.’

In light of these facts, I will assume that the verb+*-tu/-i/-n/-∅* in verb focalizations are infinitives.

### 3 *Egin*-Insertion as Last Resort

Three sets of facts suggest that *egin* in verb-focalization constructions is a dummy verb, i.e. occupies a position normally occupied by the main verb, when the latter has other obligations. First, *egin* in this semantically empty guise *only* and *always* appears in verb-focalization environments, in which

the main verb raises to the left periphery.<sup>5</sup> Second, *egin* shows the same word-order properties of main verbs in negative/affirmative word order alternations (as discussed in 1.1): in affirmative sentences, *egin* appears immediately left-adjacent to the auxiliary, and in negative sentences, it appears to the right of the auxiliary, and may be separated by arguments and other material, as shown in (4) and (5), above. Third, *egin* bears one of three aspectual markers, perfect  $-\emptyset$ , imperfect  $-t(z)en$  or future  $-ko$ , normally realized on the main verb. In focalization environments, the main verb appears without aspectual marking, in the infinitival citation form. These facts, then, suggest that *egin* is only merged when the main verb cannot occupy its canonical position.

(17) Verb focalization

Erori (*egin-go/egi-ten*) da etxea.  
 fall do.FUT/do-IMPERF AUX house  
 'The house is going to FALL.'/'The house FALLS.'

(18) Argument/adjunct focalization

Etxea (*erori-ko/eror-tzen*) da.  
 house fall-FUT/fall-IMPERF AUX  
 'The house is going to fall.'/'The house falls.'

From the standpoint of the traditional understanding of *do*-support as motivated by the need to provide lexical support for inflectional morphology, the examples in (17) and (18) suggest that *do*-support in Basque is motivated by the need to host aspectual morphology. The remainder of this discussion will develop this intuition.

In the received approach to Basque verb syntax, analytic main verbs pick up their aspectual morphology via head-adjunction (Ortiz de Urbina 1989, Laka 1990, Elordieta 2001). (20) below is Laka's (1990) IP structure for (19) showing raising of the main verb to Asp<sup>0</sup>.

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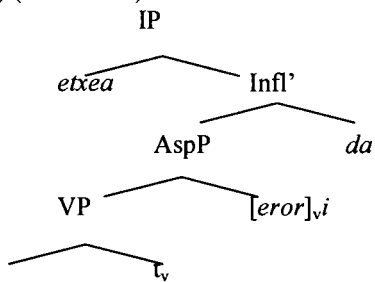
<sup>5</sup>Ettxepare and Ortiz de Urbina (2003) however, describe a topicalization strategy with the dummy verb *egin* as in (i).

(ii) Saiatu, behintzat, egingo gara.  
 try at.least do.FUT AUX  
 'Try, at least, we will.' (Ettxepare and Ortiz de Urbina 2003)

Constructions of this type are marginal and restricted to certain predicates, and will be set aside for the purposes of the present discussion.

- (19) Etxea eror-i da.  
 house.the fall.PERF AUX  
 ‘The house has fallen down.’ (Laka 1990)

- (20) (Laka 1990)



An appealing account of *egin*-insertion from the perspective of this proposal is that *egin* is merged just in order to bear these aspectual morphemes, because the main verb is unable to. If, as argued above, the entire VP raises in verb focalization constructions, then under standard assumptions, the main verb should be unable to head-adjoin to these morphemes. The dummy verb, *egin*, then, appears to be merged as a last resort strategy in  $\text{Asp}^0$  to check a strong feature, because the verb cannot raise to that position. In non-verb focalization contexts, in which the main verb *can* raise to pick up aspectual morphology, no dummy-verb insertion is required. From this standpoint, then, *egin*-insertion appears to be fundamentally the same phenomenon as *do*-support in English (Pollock 1989, Chomsky 1995) and the Northern Italian Dialect of Monnese (Benincà and Poletto 2004): dummy-verb insertion applies as a last resort to check a strong feature in a position that is inaccessible to the main verb.

Something more, however, needs to be said to explain why the main verb cannot head-adjoin to Asp and then pied-pipe AspP to spec, FocP. Indeed, the inability of the verb to raise along with the aspectual head in this case is especially curious in view of the fact that foci in Basque are notorious pied-pipers in other contexts (see above).

Evidence from similar phenomena in Korean suggests a solution to this problem. In neutral declarative sentences in Korean, tense and inflectional morphology appear as affixes on the main verb, as in (21).

- (21) Chelswu-ka chayk-ul ilk-ess-ta.  
 Chelsu-NOM book-ACC read-PAST-DECL  
 ‘Chelswu read the book.’ (Hagstrom 1996)



However, in verb focalizations in which the main verb appears to raise above its normal position, the canonical position of the main verb is occupied by a dummy verb *ha* (which as a lexical verb is akin to English *do*).

- (22) Chelswu-ka chayk-ul ilk-ki-nun ha-ess-ta.  
 Chelswu-NOM book-ACC read-*ki*-TOPIC do-PAST-DECL  
 ‘Read the book, Chelswu does.’ (Hagstrom 1995)

In the verb focalization construction in (22), the verb—with certain morphology to be discussed below—appears to the left of its canonical position. Here, tense morphology is borne by *ha*. Evidence that movement of the main verb is XP movement (as in Basque) comes principally from the interpretation of examples like these: the preferred reading of examples such as (22) is with focus on the object, but the entire VP may also be focused (Hagstrom 1995).

Crucially, the main verb in examples such as (22) obligatorily bears the affix *-ki*, a nominalizing affix. The presence of this nominalizing affix in Korean suggests an explanation of the strikingly similar Basque data. Recall that Basque focalized verbs obligatorily appear with the infinitival affix *-tu/-i/-n/-Ø*. In view of the Korean data in (22), I propose that Basque focalized infinitives also bear the feature [+noun], and further that it is this property that is central to understanding *do*-support in Basque and Korean. In particular, in both Basque and Korean, the inability of the VP to pied-pipe inflectional material is plausibly a consequence of a requirement that verbs in spec, FocP be [+noun]. This constraint is given in (23).

- (23) Basque/Korean: Verbs that move to FocP must be [+noun] (cf. Manfredi 1993)

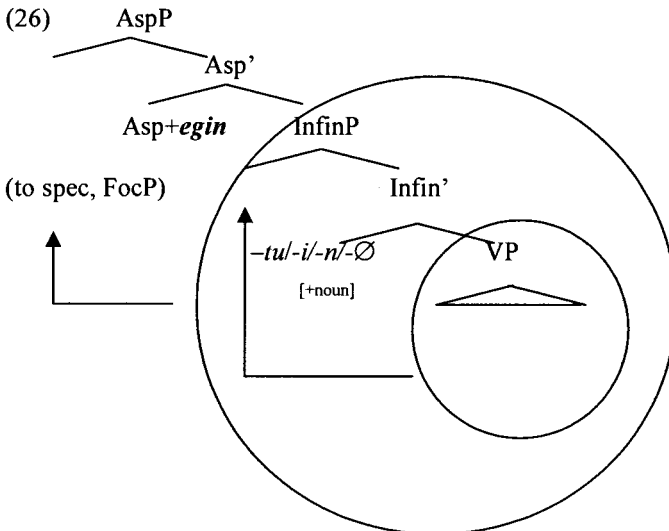
The constraint in (23) calls for explanation and none can be offered at this time. It bears observing, however, that the constraint in (23) appears to be more general. In particular, in work on verb focus in West African languages and Haitian, Manfredi (1993) argues that in all cases in which a verb moves overtly to a focus position, the verb is nominalized. Examples of verb nominalizations in verb focus constructions in Èdó and Yoruba are provided in (24) and (25).

- (24) Èdó (Stewart 2001)  
 a. Òzó dé.  
 Ozo fell.

- b. ù-dé-mwèn òré Òzó \*(dé).  
 NOM-fall-NOM FOC Ozo fall  
 ‘It is falling that Ozo did (not, say, rolling).’

- (25) Yoruba (adapted from Manfredi 1993)  
 Rí.rà ni Ajé ra iwé.  
 NOM-buy COMP Ajé buy paper  
 ‘It is buying that Aje is doing (not stealing them).’

I propose, then, that *do*-support in Basque is derived as in (26). Following Cinque (2000) and in the spirit of Kayne’s (1993) participle phrase proposal, I will assume that infinitival  $-tu/-i/-n/-\emptyset$  is merged in a nominalizing infinitival phrase (InfinP), above the main verb. I further assume that movement of VP to InfinP is motivated by the verb’s need to be nominalized so that it may raise to FocP, as in Korean (see Hagstrom, 1995). The VP, in the specifier of InfinP, then, raises to spec, FocP, where it receives focus interpretation. *Egin* is inserted in Asp to host aspectual morphology.



I further assume that InfinP cannot be merged above AspP. If it could, the verb could presumably raise to Asp, and then to InfinP, pied-piping both of these heads to spec, FocP and yielding the unattested morpheme sequence \*V+Asp+ $-tu/-i/-n/-\emptyset$ .

This account of *do*-support in Basque depends crucially on the claim that infinitives are nominal in nature, as is often claimed for infinitives in Germanic in Romance. Two independent kinds of evidence support this claim. The first is that Basque infinitives may take a D head, as in (27).

- (27) Sentitzen dut [Miren berandu etorri izan-a.]  
 regret AUX Miren late come have-**the**  
 'I regret Mary having come late.'  
 (Zabala and Odriozola 1996:239, fn. 3)

In this respect, Basque infinitives with *-tu/-i/-n/-Ø* are similar to infinitives in Spanish and Italian, as in (28).

- (28) Italian (adapted from Kayne 2000:284)  
 Il mangiare la carne il venerdì.  
 the eat.INF the meat the Friday  
 'The eating of the meat on Friday'

In addition, a closed class can cooccur with adjectives as in (29) and (30) (Artiagoitia 1995).

- (29) Guk irabaz-i handiak atera ditugu.  
 we gain-*i* big.PL take.out AUX  
 'We've had big gains.' (Artiagoitia 1995; cf. *irabaz-i* 'to gain')
- (30) Aitonaren esa-n zaharra-k.  
 grandpa's say-*n* old-PL  
 'Grandpa's old sayings' (Artiagoitia 1995; cf. *esa-n* 'to say')

The behavior of infinitives with determiners and adjectives, then, provides some independent evidence of the nominal nature of Basque infinitives with *-tu/-i/-n/-Ø*.

#### 4 Conclusions

This paper offers an analysis of *do*-support in Basque. In particular I argue that *do*-support in Central and Western Basque and Korean is of a slightly different nature than *do*-support in English (Chomsky 1995, Pollock 1989) and Monnese (Benincà and Poletto 2004). In all four cases, a dummy verb is merged to check strong features in a functional projection that is, in marked environments, inaccessible to the verb. However, in Korean and Basque,

unlike in English and Monnese, the verb's inability to raise to a functional verbal position is not a consequence of its theta-marking properties or its inflectional poverty, but is rather because the VP must be nominalized in order to raise to FocP. This nominalized verb may not bear verbal aspectual features, and a dummy verb is merged to do so instead. The foregoing analysis supports current understanding of *do*-support as a last resort strategy triggered by a conspiracy of a strong feature together with some independent constraint on verb raising.

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