

Historical development of modern Basque accentuation systems

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At least three accentuation types may be found among modern dialects, based either on stress or on pitch accent. In this work, we propose a historical development of the accentual system in Basque that may not only give an account of accentual changes across time but also of dialectal divergence.

I) The most widespread accentuation type is the central-western type, with peninitial stress (i.e. on the second syllable of the word). It is present in most of Gipuzkoa along with some areas in South-Eastern Biscay and Western Navarre, and it has also been proposed to be common to all varieties in older stages of the language by Michelena (1957-1958, 1961/77). In this system, there are also a number of marked words with initial stress, mostly consisting of borrowings and compounds (Hualde 1999, 2003).

II) The second system is also stress-based, but with unmarked stress on the penultimate syllable and marked stress on the final syllable. This system is found in the easternmost dialects (cf. Michelena 1961/77). It is only present in Souletin today, but the now extinct Roncalese had a similar system, and it was probably present in older stages of the Salazarese dialect as well.

III) Finally, the third type is based on pitch-accent instead of stress, Northern Biscayan Basque. In this system, stress is determined morphologically. There is a lexical distinction between accented and unaccented words, like in Tokyo Japanese. Unaccented words do not bear prosodic prominence on any syllable (they surface with final prominence in isolation or before the verb). In accented words, stress falls on the syllable preceding the lexically accented morpheme in most varieties of Northern Bizkaian Basque. Accent in Northern Bizkaian Basque is realized as a H*+L falling contour tone on the accented syllable. Additionally, there is a pitch rise on the second syllable of the utterance (Hualde 1989, 1999; Elordieta 1997, 1998; Gussenhoven 2004). The pitch rise and the accent delimit the boundaries of Accentual Phrases (Elordieta 1997, 1998; Jun & Elordieta 1997; Elordieta *et al.* 1999) or minimal ϕ -phrases (Selkirk & Elordieta 2010).

Michelena (1961/77) proposed that in Old Basque stress was located on the second syllable of the word, as in Type I. He based his argument on the association of word stress and the presence of aspiration in modern dialects. Since aspiration (a glottal fricative) and aspirated stops in modern dialects only occur on the first two syllables of a word, Michelena argued that that distribution was only compatible with word stress on the second syllable (cf. also Igartua 2001, 2002). However, aspiration is only present in eastern dialects, and thus Michelena's proposal is limited in scope. Moreover, it is very difficult to explain how a more complicated prosodic system with morphologically determined stress like type III may have developed from a system with word-level stress like Type II. The opposite diachronic order must be posited, one in which Type III is older. Hualde (1993, 1995, 2003, 2007) argues for this alternative route, but does not provide an analysis of how Type III may have arisen.

In this work, we will suggest a different chronology for the accentual patterns of the modern dialects. We will assume Elordieta's (2011) proposal that in Ancient Basque, when roots were monosyllabic and words were maximally bisyllabic (cf. Lakarra 2005 *et seq.*), stress was assigned on the final syllable. If stress was realized as a H* tone and initial syllables were lexically toneless, a process of H-tone spreading may have occurred giving rise to sequences of H-toned syllables across words. Then, in a sequence of words in a phrase, the rightmost H* could have been interpreted as phrasal stress, and the initial toneless syllable may be realized as a Low tone. This system is the one found in Northern Bizkaian Basque, which is recognized as the oldest system among modern dialects. It would derive into a system with stress on the second syllable in central and eastern dialects, if the pitch rise from the first to the second syllable was reinterpreted as stress on the second syllable (cf. Hualde 1993, 1995, 2003; Elordieta & Hualde 2003). That is, Type I was common to central and eastern varieties in Roman and early medieval times. Later, this system would be reinterpreted as the Souletin type (II) in the easternmost territories, after the speakers reanalyzed word-medial stress in trisyllabic words as paroxitonic instead of peninitial.

In short, the present proposal suggests a diachronic evolution of Basque stress which accounts for dialectal divergence, while respecting previous observations on the distribution of aspiration.

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