

Change in root-sensitivity of Basque allocutive marking

This paper focuses on change in syntax of Basque allocutivity—morphological marking of non-thematic addressees. We illustrate this phenomenon in (1a), where morphemes *-n/-k* mark gender agreement with a familiar addressee that is not a participant in the state/event described in the utterance.

- (1) a. Retegik irabazi di-**n/k**.
Retegi.ERG won AUX-2.SG.FEM/2.SG.MASC
'Retegi has won.'
- b. %Entzun di(n)at [Retegik irabazi di-**n/k**-ela].
hear AUX Retegi.ERG won AUX-**2.SG.FEM/2.SG.MASC-C**
'I've heard Retegi has won.'

Basque allocutivity has featured prominently in recent literature on the syntactic representation of speech act roles (Miyagawa, 2013, 2017; Alok and Baker, 2018; Portner et al., 2019). Much of this literature has made reference to Oyharçabal's (1993) seminal analysis of a Northern Basque variety, Souletin Basque, where allocutive marking is restricted to root declaratives. Less frequently discussed outside the Basque specialist literature is that other (southern and western) dialects freely permit allocutive marking in embedded domains, as in (1b). Embedded allocutivity is sometimes taken to be an innovation undergoing expansion, but to date, no controlled diachronic evidence has addressed this claim (Hualde et al., 2003; Azkue Ibarbia, 1998). At issue, then, is whether embedded allocutivity is indeed diffusing and what properties of the learning input might condition this change. Based on informal consultations with native speakers, Haddican and Etxeberria (to appear) report that acceptance of embedded allocutivity correlates with acceptance of embedded vocative expressions as in (2). Moreover, familiar vocative pronouns and allocutive morphemes are the only two contexts in Basque in which grammatical gender is expressed, and, in common parlance, allocutive use is referred to in terms of these vocative markers. Following Slocum (2016) and Portner et al. (2019), Haddican and Etxeberria (to appear) take allocutive morphemes and vocatives to be introduced in the same projection—a left-peripheral AddresseeP—and propose that the variable presence of this head in embedded domains is the locus of variation governing availability of both embedded allocutivity and embedded vocatives.

- (2) Esan dute ea bihar **matte** plaza-n egon-go diren?
say AUX whether tomorrow **love** plaza-in be-textscfut AUX
'Love, did they say whether they will be in the plaza tomorrow?'

Importantly, no literature to date, as far as we know, has addressed how/whether embedded allocutivity is conditioned by embedding type. Haddican and Etxeberria (to appear) report that the availability of embedded allocutive morphemes is insensitive to embedding context, but these facts have not been elsewhere examined.

This paper reports on a recent survey designed to address these issues. Participants were 392 self-reported Basque allocutive users from Western dialects, aged 18-71, from a range of self-reported genders. Data were gathered in 2020 and 2021 through an online instrument. The survey involved two linguistic tasks—a controlled judgment portion, and a Spanish-to-Basque translation task. The judgment subdesign was a simple experiment with vocative morphemes in root or embedded contexts, in matched lexicalizations. Participants were assigned to one of two counterbalanced lists with each participant judging two unique

lexicalization per condition. The translation task, based on Azkue Ibarbia (1998), included nine items with unmatched lexical material—two items each for embeddings under ‘say’, temporal clauses and embedded questions, and one each with a relative clause, ‘if’-clause, and factive embedding. Participants were asked to translate each sentence into their local dialect using allocutive register. Translation task items were coded for whether allocutive marking appeared in the root clause only or both root and embedded domains. Participants also completed a battery of demographic questions addressing participants’ age, gender, dialect region and contexts of acquisition of allocutivity.

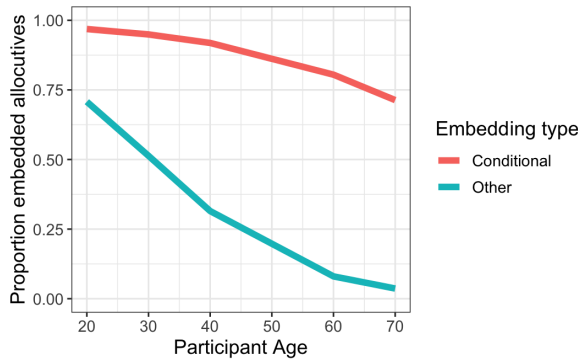


Figure 1: Model estimates of Age:Embedding type

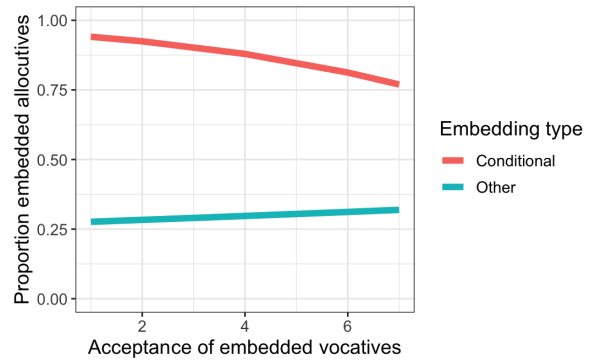


Figure 2: Model estimates of Embedded voc. acceptance:Embedding type

Mixed effects regression modeling of root vs. embedded responses on the translation task reveals two interactions for embedding type suggesting somewhat exceptional behavior of ‘if’-clauses. Figure 1 shows a steeper slope for participant age in the non-‘if’-clauses, suggesting partially distinct processes of change for ‘if’-clauses and other embedding types. Additional evidence to this effect comes from the interaction between embedding type and by-participant judgments of embedded vocatives. In particular, Figure 2 suggests that acceptance of embedded vocatives is positively correlated with embedded allocutivity only for non-‘if’-embeddings, contra Haddican and Etxeberria (to appear). Moreover, the higher aggregate use of allocutive marking in ‘if’-clauses appears to reflect an implicational relationship at the level of individual grammars, in that participants used allocutive marking in embedded non-‘if’-clauses if they used marking in ‘if’-clauses, but not vice-versa. The analysis revealed no effects for other features of participants’ acquisition history including whether they were exposed to allocutive forms through parent input or through peer networks.

These results therefore provide partial support to Haddican and Etxeberria’s (to appear) suggestion that innovative embedded allocutivity is related to embedded vocative expressions. In particular, a possible diachrony consistent with these results is that in conservative southern grammars, ‘if’-clauses were embedded root structures licensing AddresseeP (cf. Emonds (1969); Miyagawa (2017)). Younger speakers, we suggest, have generalized the pattern to all finite domains, in light of corroborating evidence from the distribution of embedded vocatives. The results, more generally, lend support to recent work suggesting that the syntax of allocutive marking is related to the syntax of other phenomena taken to reflect person features in the C-domain including vocatives and indexical shift (Alok and Baker, 2018; Portner et al., 2019; McFadden, 2020).