

MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

Basque has no grammatical gender, though a gender distinction is made in the second person singular of the synthetic conjugation: cf. *hik daukak* 'you (fam. masc.) have', *hik daukan* 'you (fam. fem.) have'.

ARTICLES

The definite article is affixed: *-a* (sing.), *-ak* (pl.): e.g. *mendi* 'mountain', *mendia* 'the mountain', *mendiak* 'the mountains'. As indefinite article, the numeral *bat* 'one' may be used: e.g. *gizon bat* 'a man'. *Bat* may take the case endings: e.g. *mendi bat.en igaera* 'the ascent of a mountain'.

Noun

DECLENSION

Nine cases may be distinguished, but several additional endings occur. Basic cases of *gizon* 'man':

nominative	<i>gizon</i>	comitative	<i>gizonarekin</i>
ergative	<i>gizonak</i>	inessive	<i>gizonan</i>
dative	<i>gizonari</i>	aditive	<i>gizonara</i>
genitive	<i>gizonako</i> (of origin) <i>gizonaren</i> (of possession)	ablative	<i>gizonatik</i>

The plural endings may be illustrated with *etxe* /etʃe/, 'house':

nominative	<i>etxeak</i>	comitative	<i>etxeekin</i>
ergative	<i>etxeek</i>	inessive	<i>etxeetan</i>
dative	<i>etxeei</i>	aditive	<i>etxeetara</i>
genitive	<i>etxeen/etxeetako</i>	ablative	<i>etxeetatik</i>

The distinction between the two genitive forms is seen in a phrase such as *Bilboko arte ederren museoa* 'the museum of (poss.) fine art of (origin) Bilbao' (*eder* 'beautiful, fine'; *-(r)en* = gen. ending) Cf. *Manuren semea* 'Manu's son'; *nere aitarekin* 'with my father'; *etxean* 'in the house'; *menditik* 'from the mountain'.

Adjective

As attribute, adjective follows noun, e.g. *asto txuri bat* 'a white donkey', and takes the definite article: e.g. *etxe**Ø** ederra* 'the beautiful house'; *gure ahuntz politak* 'our pretty goats' (*polit* 'pretty'). Case endings are also transferred to the adjective: e.g. *ardo berria za(ha)gi berrietan* 'new wine in(to) old bottles' (*ardo* 'wine'; *berri* 'new'; *za(ha)gi* 'bottle').

Pronoun

The personal forms with the present tense of *izan* 'to be' are:

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
1 ni naiz	gu gara
2 hi haiz	zu zara; zuek zarete
3 hura da	haiek dira

The resumed characteristic (*n-* in first person singular, *g-* in first person plural, *z-* in second person plural) is found throughout the verbal system (*d-* is characteristic of third person).

The ergative forms are: *nik, hik, hark; guk, zuk/zuek, haiek*.

The personal pronouns may take other cases: cf. *zuek Nigan, eta Ni zuengan* 'ye in me, I in you' (St John's Gospel 14.20), but see note on verbal system, below.

The possessive forms are: *nire, zure, bere; gure, zuen, beren*.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

Three degrees of relative distance: *hau* 'this' – *hori* 'that' – *hura* 'that (yonder)'; these are postpositional: *gizon hori /oril/* 'that man'.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN

nor 'who?' – with ergative, *nork; zer* 'what?'

Verb

As in Georgian, a relatively simple nominal system is accompanied by a very complicated verbal system. But, whereas in Georgian the complication lies in the proliferation of permutations and combinations to which the sense-verb is subjected, in Basque the sense-verb itself usually appears in simple stem or participial form, accompanied by an enormously rich network of auxiliary forms which are deictically coded for person and regimen, and which are quasi-bound in the sense that they only acquire full meaning when associated with a sense-verb stem. For example, by itself *diot* indicates action by first person singular directed in some way at third person singular, i.e. it specifies a deictic relationship. Following the stem *eman* 'to give', plus a noun, e.g. *liburu* 'book', *liburu eman diot, diot* generates the meaning 'I give

COMPENDIUM
OF THE
WORLD'S
LANGUAGES

SECOND EDITION
GEORGE L. CAMPBELL
ISBN 0-415-20298-1 (Set)

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

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him a book'. If the deixis code is changed by substituting *dizut* for *diot*, the meaning becomes 'I give **you** a book'. A quantitative change can also be introduced by changing *dizut* to *dizkizut*: this indicates that 'I gave **you** more than one object – books'.

With this sort of deictic relational network at its disposal, Basque makes very sparing use of personal pronouns. Nouns continue to be marked: e.g. *Gizonari liburua eman diot* 'I give the book **to the** man.'

All Basque verbs can be conjugated thus, analytically or periphrastically, but half a dozen crucially important auxiliaries and a few other verbs – e.g. *joan* 'to go', *etorri* 'to come', *eduki* 'to have', *jakin* 'to know', *esan* 'to say', *ikusi* 'to see' – retain a synthetic form of conjugation, which seems to have been formerly more widespread. As an example of a synthetic conjugation, here are the present and past tenses of *etorri* 'to come':

<i>Present</i>		<i>Past</i>	
<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
1 ni nator	gu gator	ni nentorren	gu gentozen
2 hi hator	zu zatoz	hi hentorren	zu zentozen
3 hura dator	haiek datoz	hura zetorren	haiek zetozen

THE ANALYTICAL CONJUGATION

The most important auxiliaries are (present and past forms):

- da – zen*: used to conjugate intransitive verbs;
- du – zuen*: used to conjugate transitive verbs;
- zaio – zitzaion*: with indirect object; subject in possessive case;
- dio – zion*: polypersonal (direct and indirect objects).

Altogether, these four auxiliaries produce about a thousand forms, which are:

1. Coded for person and deixis: e.g. *diot* – *dizut*, as shown above.
2. Coded for number:
 - (a) of subject: *du* – *dizut*, as shown above;
 - (b) of object: *diot* indicates singular object; *dizkiot* indicates plural object.

3. Tense: from *du*, *nauzu* indicates second person/first person singular in present; *ninduzun* in past.
4. Mood: e.g. *niezaioke* indicates potential action of first person singular on third person singular, involving singular object; *niezazkioke* indicates the same deixis but involving plurality of object; *zeniezazkigukeen* indicates potential action in past by second person plural on first person plural involving a plurality of objects.

SOME NOTES ON THE MAIN AUXILIARIES

Izan 'to be'; the present tense is given above (see **Pronoun**); the past tense is *ni nintzen*, *hi hintzen*, *hura zen*; *gu ginen*, *zu zinen/zuek zineten*, *haiek ziren*.

The general negating particle is *ez*: e.g. *ni euskalduna naiz* 'I am a Basque'; *ni euskalduna ez naiz* 'I am not . . .'. In the negative, *ez* plus auxiliary precede the sense-verb: e.g. *ni etorri naiz* 'I have come', *ni ez naiz etorri* 'I haven't . . .'. Future: participle in *-ko* + auxiliary: e.g. *ni etorri.ko naiz* 'I'll come'.

Du – zuen: this auxiliary is used in the conjugation of transitive verbs; the nominal/pronominal subject is in the ergative with *-k*: e.g. with *ikusi* 'see': (*zuk*) *ikusi nauzu* 'you have seen me'; (*guk*) *ikusi zaitugu* 'we have seen you', where *nauzu* encodes second person action on first person and *zaitugu* encodes first person plural action on second person. In *ekarriko zituen* 'he was going to bring them', *zituen* encodes third person singular action on third person plural. A further example: *Maite zintudan*, *baina zuk ez ninduzun maite* 'I loved you, but you did not love me'.

Zaio – zitaion: this auxiliary is used with stative verbs, intransitive verbs with ethic dative, and verbs whose subject is in possessive case, and is usually translated in English as transitive verb + direct object: e.g. (*niri*) *jausi zait* 'to-me it has fallen' = 'I've dropped it'; (*niri*) *jausi zaizkit* 'to-me they have fallen' = 'I've dropped them'; *gozo zaio* 'pleasant to him' = 'he likes it'; *haurrak joan zaizkio* 'the children have gone off on-him' = 'his children have left him' (where *zaizkio* indicates indirect action on third person singular by third person plural); *liburua galdu zait* 'the book has gone lost on me' = 'I've lost my book'.

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Altogether, the *zaio* – *zitzaion* paradigm, including present, past, conditional, resultative, potential, subjunctive, and imperative forms for all persons and both numbers, has a total of about 280 forms, not all of them in everyday use.

Dio – *zion*: this auxiliary is used in polypersonal verbs with direct and indirect objects, of the type ‘I gave it to him’, *eman nion*: cf. *eman dizkiot* ‘I give him things’; *eman nizkion* ‘I gave him things’; *gutun bat idatzi zion* ‘he wrote him a letter’.

The *dio* – *zion* paradigm has a total of about 700 forms.

RELATIVE FORMS

-(*e*)*n* is added to the relevant auxiliary form: *da* → *den*; *gizonari eman dioten ogia* ‘the man to whom I gave the bread’ (*ogi*); *ogia eman ditzen gizona* ‘the man who gave me the bread’.

As mentioned above, in connection with *zaio* – *zitzaion*, the deictic grid has full conditional, subjunctive, potential, resultative, and imperative versions. Cf. *ekar ziezagun* ‘so that he might bring us (a singular object)’; *ekar ziezazkigun* ‘so that he might bring us (a plurality)’.

Ba- is a characteristic prefix for auxiliaries in the conditional mood: e.g. *erosi nai ba.dituzu* ‘if you want (*nai*) to buy (*erosi*) . . .’.