

# A NOTE ON THE TYPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF BASQUE, SPLIT-INTRANSITIVITY AND THE UNACCUSATIVE HYPOTHESIS<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Basque language has been traditionally classified as ergative in the typological literature (Comrie 1981, Dixon 1994, Primus 1999). For ergative languages with a nominal case system, this classification predicts case syncretism between the subject of intransitives and the object of transitives. However, this prediction does not agree with Basque data. There is more than one class of intransitives in Basque. These classes are distinguished on the basis of the case their subject bears, among several other morphosyntactic differences. In one class the prediction is borne out: the subject of intransitives is marked with the same case as the object of transitives. In the other, the same prediction is proven false: the subject of intransitives is marked as the subject of transitives.

This split pattern observed in Basque is captured by a different label in the typological literature, namely, split-intransitive language. Guarani (Primus 1999), Italian (Burzio 1986) and Slave (Rice 1991) are examples of this type. The morphosyntax of these languages distinguishes two classes of intransitives in language-particular ways. The verbs that make up the intransitive classes are not the same across languages or within the same language.

Split-intransitivity deserves a place in the research related to the Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978, Burzio 1986). This hypothesis claims that intransitives differ in the syntactic origin of their argument: internal (unaccusatives) or external (unergatives). In view of the cross-linguistic data, I assume a moderate view of this theory in which the terms unaccusative and unergative are shorthand for syntactic configurations. Split-intransitivity possibly signals two syntactically distinct classes of intransitives. However, determining the way intransitives align themselves in universally valid semantic classes of predicates across split-intransitive languages is, at this point, a probabilistic prediction (see Primus 1999). Recent research points to telicity as one of the possible factors that may cause the split (*e.g.*, Sorace 2000 on Western European languages). Other conditioning factors noted in the typological literature also invite further research, such as person, tense and main/subordinate clause distinctions.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 offers an overview of the typological classification of languages with attention to the traditional classification of Basque as an ergative language. Patterns of split-intransitivity in Basque, which challenge this traditional classification, are shown in Section 3. This section is divided in three subsections. The first subsection introduces split-intransitivity in the context of the typological classification of languages. The second shows that split-intransitivity in Basque is not conditioned by specific categories like person, tense, aspect, or mood. The third subsection illustrates the morphosyntactic differences between one class of intransitives and the other in Basque. Section 4 introduces the Unaccusative Hypothesis and evaluates it in the light of split-intransitive languages. The paper finishes with some concluding remarks.

## 2. THE TYPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF BASQUE

This section introduces the typological classification of languages based on morphological and/or syntactic patterns in the realization of verbal arguments. In this classification Basque figures as an ergative type of language. Yet Basque has a class of intransitives that questions the adequacy of this classification.

The typological literature provides a classification of languages based on the morphologically marked argument of transitive verbs and/or patterns in the syntactic behavior of verbal arguments (Comrie 1976, 1981,

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Hawkins 1983, Dixon 1994, Primus 1999, among many). This classification assumes three primitives: *subject of intransitives*, *subject of transitives*, and *object of transitives*. In a few cases each primitive is morphologically distinct from the other two. More often two primitives share the same morphological expression and distinguish themselves from a third. For example, in **accusative languages** (e.g., English, German, Korean, Spanish) subjects share the same marking irrespective of the transitivity of the predicate, and the object is marked differently (1). In a different setup, **ergative languages** (e.g., Chukchi, Dyirbal, Eskimo, Ket) mark the subject of intransitives and the object of transitives in the same way, while the subject of transitives bears a different marking (2). On the other hand, **neutral languages** follow a third pattern where all three primitives share the same marking. The following two sets of examples illustrate accusative and ergative languages, respectively (a: transitive, b: intransitive; I spare the examples for neutral languages in the interest of space).

- (1) a. She saw her      b. She danced
- (2) a. Balan dygumbil   bangul yarangu   balgan  
       woman-Abs        man-Erg            hit  
       'The man hit the woman'
- b. bayi yara   baninyu  
           man-Abs   came-here  
           'The man came here'      (Dyirbal, Comrie 1981: 112; ex. 12-13, see discussion of case markers)

This paper brings attention to a data set from Basque that questions the traditional classification this language has received. Basque is a language isolate spoken in both sides of the Pyrenees and its grammar may be unfamiliar to most readers. To ease the processing of the examples, some general remarks about Basque grammar may be helpful. The basic word order is SOV. The example sentences are pragmatically unmarked and thus conform to this pattern. Note that, unlike English, the adjectives follow the noun. The verb agrees for number and person with the subject and object. Similarly, datives also bear case marks and are cross-referenced by the verb. The transitive sentence below (3) illustrates the grammatical information indicated in the glossed examples of this paper. A key to the glosses is given in an appendix before the reference section. For further details on Basque grammar see Laka (1993b), Zubiri (2000).

- (3) [Sujetu iragankorr-ek]                      [kasu    ergatibo-a]                      daramate  
       Subject   transitive-Erg.PI            case    ergative.Abs.Sg            carry.3Pl.3Sg  
       'Subjects of transitives carry ergative case'

In the typological classification described above, Basque is claimed to be a language of type ergative:

- (4) a. '*Basque*, the language isolate spoken in the Pyrenees, is fully ergative at the morphological level'  
       (Dixon 1994: 2, and references therein)
- b. '*Some language isolates are also ergative, such as Basque [...]*' (Primus 1999: 89)

If Basque is indeed an ergative language, we expect the subject of intransitives to bear the same marking as the object of transitives in (3). However, intransitives do not constitute a uniform class in Basque. Some intransitives mark their argument like the object of transitives (5a), as the traditional typological classification of Basque predicts, and some like the subject of transitives (5b), contrary to this classification. The transitive sentence in (6) is given for ease of comparison.

- (5) a. Liburu-a        hel-du        da                      b. Mikel-ek        dei-tu        du  
       Book-Abs.Sg   arrive-Per   be.3Sg                      Mikel-Erg.Sg   call-Per   have.3Sg.3Sg  
       'The book has arrived'                                      'Mike has called'
- (6) Mikel-ek        liburu-a        irakurr-i        du  
       Mikel-Erg.Sg   book.Abs.Sg   read-Per   have.3Sg.3Sg  
       'Mike has read the book'

Since the paper is concerned with split-intransitivity, I will be referring to the above two types of intransitives repeatedly in different sections of the paper. It seems then convenient to coin two terms as shorthand. I propose the term **A-intransitives** to indicate the group of intransitive verbs that require their subject to bear absolutive case (e.g., 5a). And the term **E-intransitives** for intransitive verbs that take a subject case-marked ergative (e.g., 5b). The following two lists provide examples of verbs that belong in the A class (7a) or the E class (7b). More examples of A and E-intransitives are offered in Section 3.3.4 and Section 3.3.5, respectively.

- (7) a. A-intransitives: *apurtu* 'break', *heldu* 'arrive', *izan* 'be', *joan* 'go' ...  
 b. E-intransitives: *amestu* 'dream', *dantzatu* 'dance', *deitu* 'call', *iraun* 'last' ...

E-intransitives challenge the classification of Basque as an ergative language. This gives rise to the question of where Basque figures in the typological classification. Fortunately, there is no need to coin a new label in this classification for Basque. The typological literature notes that in some languages the subject of transitives patterns in morphological marking with either the subject or the object of transitives. This type is called **split-intransitive**. Then, Basque has been misplaced in the typological literature. Split-intransitivity is discussed next.

### 3. SPLIT-INTRANSITIVITY IN BASQUE

This section illustrates split-intransitivity in Basque. The opening subsection places split-intransitive languages in the context of the typological classification of languages. The second shows that split-intransitivity in Basque is not sensitive to particular categories, as it is in other split-intransitive languages (e.g., the examples from Guarani discussed in Section 3.1). The third and last subsection exemplifies the morphosyntactic differences between the two classes of intransitives in Basque. In this same section, additional subsections compare these differences with the way other languages encode split-intransitivity.

#### 3.1. Split-Intransitivity: A Subtype of Split-Ergativity

Split-intransitive languages are a subtype of **split-ergative languages**. Split-ergative languages behave in part like accusative languages and in part like ergative languages. One pattern seems to dominate over the other on a language particular basis<sup>2</sup>. The split is usually domain specific. Typical splits take place across person, tense, aspect, and mood. Clearly syntactic splits are also attested. For example, across main/subordinate clauses. Some examples of split-ergative languages are Burushaski, Georgian, Hindi, and Yucatec. The following examples show the split found in Hindi. In sentences with imperfective aspect, the language is accusative (8a). In contrast, in sentences with perfective aspect, the language is ergative (8b).

- (8) a. Laarka            kitaab            parh-taa            hai  
 Boy.Masc,nom   book.Fem   read-Imp,Masc,3Sg   aux.3Sg  
 'The boy reads the book'
- b. Larke ne        kitaab            parh-ii  
 Boy.Merg<sup>3</sup>   book.Fem,nom   read. Per,Fem,3Sg  
 'The boy read the book'
- (Hindi, Gair and Wali 1989:49  
 cfr. Primus 1999: 79, ex 18)

Split-intransitive languages are split-ergative languages with the split located in the intransitive class. Guarani, Laz, Slave and Tupinamba are languages that show this type of split. The set of four examples below illustrates a split in the intransitive class found in Guarani. Transitives agree with either the subject (9c) or the object (9d) based on a person hierarchy (where first person is the highest and the highest person determines agreement). Intransitives in Guarani are of two classes: one class (A in Primus 1999) takes the verbal agreement marker for the subject (9a); the other class (B in Primus 1999) takes the verbal agreement marker for the object (9b).

<sup>2</sup> Some Basque scholars temporarily debated whether a phenomenon known as Ergative Displacement signifies an embedded accusative pattern (see Artiagoitia 2000: 371-5 for a summary and references). ED was eventually disregarded as neutralization of morphological distinctions (Fernández 1997 cfr. Artiagoitia 2000: 372). This paper means to reestablish a link between Basque and split-ergative languages from the avenue of split-intransitivity.

<sup>3</sup> The reader is referred to the cited work for a discussion of case marking in Hindi and precise definition of terms.



- (15) a. Liburu-a hel-du da                      b. Mikel-ek dei-tu du  
Book-Abs.Sg arrive-Per be.3Sg                      Mikel-Erg.Sg call-Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
'The book has arrived'                      'Mike has called'

- (16) Mikel-ek liburu-a irakurr-i du  
Mikel-Erg.Sg book.Abs.Sg read-Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
'Mike has read the book'

The expression of split-intransitivity in Basque resembles morphosyntactic differences observed in other split-intransitive languages, namely Guarani, Italian and Slave. A discussion of these follows in subsections.

### 3.3.1. Subject Case

The first characteristic of split-intransitivity in Basque is similar to the distribution of certain pronominal elements in Slave, a language spoken in the northeast of British Columbia (Canada). In this language, transitives may take the elements *be-* and *ye-*. *be-* is considered either a pronoun or an agreement marker (17a). *ye-* seems to impose a disjoint anaphor reading (17b, Rice 1991, following Saxon 1986; see the former for full reference).

- (17) a. *be-k'e ʔé-de-ʔq*                      b. *ye-k'e ʔé-dé-ʔq*  
it-on DO\_1\_(handle 3D object on X)                      it-on DO\_3\_(handle 3D object on X)  
'I ironed it'                      'She ironed it'

(Rice 1991: 65; ex. 18ab)

In intransitives, *be-* is used with third person non-agentive subjects (18). In contrast, *ye-* is used with third person agentive subjects (19).

- (18) a. *bi-tl'a-dawe*                      b. *tse be-k'e yiló*  
Obj.3-from-fell.3                      dirtObj.3-on much exists  
'It fell from his/her hand'                      'There is lots of dirt on it'
- (19) a. *ʔamá ye-k'é ʔajá*                      b. *ye-ká dukodeda*  
mother DisjAn-after went.3                      DisjAn-for walk around in a roundabout way.3  
'Mother went after him/her'                      'She is looking for him'

(Rice 1991: 66; ex. 20ab and 19ab, respectively)

As elicited from the earlier lists in (7), A-intransitives tend to be less agentive while E-intransitives are often more agentive. This may suggest that the classes of intransitives instantiating split-intransitivity could be consistent across languages. Accordingly, this thesis would predict that the Slave sentences in (19) require E-intransitives in Basque. However, in the case of these two examples in particular, Basque uses A-intransitives (20).

- (20) a. *Ama haren atzetik joa-n zen*  
Mom.Abs.Sg his back.from go-Per be.3Sg  
'Mother went after him'
- b. *Bera haren bila dabil*  
3Sg.Abs his search go.3Sg  
'She is looking for him'

### 3.3.2. Auxiliary Selection

The second characteristic of split-intransitivity in Basque concerns auxiliary selection. This is a relatively frequent phenomenon in the languages spoken in Europe (Basque: Laka 1993b, 1995; French and Italian: Burzio 1986; Western Indo-European languages: Sorace 2000 and references therein). The Italian examples below (21) and

(22) are a translation of the Basque examples in (15) and (16). The distribution of the auxiliaries in these particular examples from Basque and Italian is an exact match.

- (21) a. Il libro è arriv-ato                      b. Gianni **ha** chiam-ato (al telefono)  
           The book **is** arrive-Per                Gianni **has** call-Per  
           ‘The book has arrived’                ‘Gianni has called’
- (22) Gianni **ha** let-to il libro  
       Gianni **has** read-Per the book  
       ‘Gianni has read the book’

Sorace (2000) observes alternations in auxiliary selection for certain verbs in Western European languages. Some of these predicates are *continuation of state verbs* (e.g., stay, remain, last, survive), and *existence of state verbs* (e.g., exist, belong). This kind of variability can also be observed in Basque for the verb *existitu* ‘exist’ and weather verbs more generally (see Zubiri 2000).

### 3.3.3. Verbal Agreement

Guarani is a language spoken in some areas of Latin America that resembles Basque verbal agreement to some extent, notwithstanding two differences. First, the verb agrees with at most one argument in Guarani (9). In contrast, the verb agrees with at most three arguments in Basque (23). Second, verbal agreement in Guarani is determined by a person hierarchy, while in comparison verbal agreement in Basque is unconstrained.

- (23) a. Maria            etxe-an            sar-tu            **da**  
           Maria.Abs.Sg house-Loc.Sg introduce-Per be.3Sg  
           ‘Maria has entered the house’
- b. Maria-k            etxe-an            katu-a            sar-tu            **du**  
           Maria-Erg.Sg house-Loc.Sg cat-Abs.Sg introduce-Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
           ‘Maria has brought the cat into the house’
- c. Maria-k            Mikel-i            katua            etxe-an            sar-tu            **dio**  
           Maria-Erg.Sg Mike-To cat-Abs.Sg house-Loc.Sg introduce-Per have.3Sg.3Sg.3Sg  
           ‘Maria has brought the cat into the house for Mike’

On the other hand, participial agreement for number and gender in Italian may be considered a similar phenomenon. If we replaced Gianni in the examples (21-22) with Maria, the participle in (21a) would agree with the subject (*i.e.*, *arriv-at-a*), while (21b) and (22) would remain the same.

### 3.3.4. Transitive Counterparts

A subset of A-intransitives has transitive counterparts (E-intransitives do not have them). The intransitive verbs that have transitive counterparts are often referred to as *inchoatives* or *anticausatives* in the literature (see Levin and Rapaport 1995 and references therein; Sorace 2000). This group of verbs is different across languages. For example, the predicate *break* in English is expressed as the same verb regardless of transitivity (24ab). In contrast, *die* and *kill* surface as different verbs (24c-d’).

- (24) a. The window broke                      b. John broke the window  
       c. Maria died                                d. \*Mike died Maria  
   d’. Mike killed Maria

In Basque *break* (25), and *die/kill* (26) are both expressed in a transitivity alternation.

- (25) a. Lehio-a            apur-tu            **da**  
           Window-Abs.Sg break-Per be.3Sg  
           ‘The window has broken’

- b. Mikel-ek lehio-a apur-tu du  
 Mikel-Erg.Sg window-Abs.Sg break-Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
 'Mike has broken the window'
- (26) a. Maria hil da  
 Maria.Abs.Sg die.Per be.3Sg  
 'Maria died'
- b. Mikel-ek Maria hil du  
 Mikel-Erg.Sg Maria.Abs.Sg die.Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
 'Mike killed Maria'

This expression of split-intransitivity can also be observed in Italian (27, Burzio 1986), where the intransitive verb takes *si-passivante*, in addition to the already mentioned difference in auxiliary selection and participial agreement. Similarly, only one class of intransitives can take causative morphemes in Slave (see Rice 1991 for discussion).

- (27) a. La finestra si è rot-t-a  
 The window si is break-Per-Fem.Sg  
 'The window is broken'
- b. Gianni ha rot-to la finestra  
 John has break-Per the window  
 'John has broken the window'

A few more of these verbs in Basque is offered in (28). All of them are A-intransitives.

- (28) *Transitive counterparts*: *itxi* 'X close/Y close X', *sartu* 'X enter/Y put into X',  
*zabald* 'X open/Y open X', ...

### 3.3.5. Do-Support

A subset of E-intransitives has *do*-support counterparts (A-intransitives do not have them). The structure of these constructions involves a noun without case inflection and the light verb *do* (29). According to Zabala (2002), over one hundred light verbs of this type exist in Basque (and more than half this number are frequently used, Zubiri 2000). Some E-intransitives exist as light verbs only (e.g., *lan egin* [work do] 'work', *landu* 'work on/improve sth').

- (29) Mikel-ek korrika egi-n du  
 Mikel-Erg.Sg run do-Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
 'Mike has run'

Although dummy object agreement remains (3Sg), case marking on the noun is ungrammatical or fairly restricted (Ortiz de Urbina 1989). Case marks on the noun are possible with main verb *do* (compare 30 to 31).

- (30) Mikel-ek lan egi-n du light verb *do*  
 Mikel-Erg.Sg work do-Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
 'Mike has worked'
- (31) a. Mikel-ek lan-a egi-n du main verb *do*  
 Mikel-Erg.Sg work-Abs.Sg do-Per have.3Sg.3Sg  
 'Mike has done the assignment'
- b. Mikel-ek lan-ak egi-n d-it-u main verb *do*  
 Mikel-Erg.Sg work-Abs.Pl do-Per have.3Sg.3Pl  
 'Mike has done the assignments'

The light verb does not determine the auxiliary, but rather the noun. Some nouns require ditransitive agreement on the auxiliary, as in example (23c) above (see Zabala 2002). (32) lists a few more of these light verbs in Basque.

- (32) *Light verb counterparts*: *agur egin* 'greet', *dantza egin* 'dance', *dei egin* 'call', *men egin* 'yield', ...

Section 3 has shown that Basque has a place with split-intransitive languages. Split-intransitivity in Basque is not conditioned by particular categories like person or tense, among other possible splits. The split is determined by the verb alone. This suggests an analysis of split-intransitivity that focuses on verbal properties. An analysis along these lines is found in Burzio (1986) for Italian. Burzio identifies one class of intransitives with unaccusative predicates and the other class with unergative predicates. We explore this idea for Basque in the next section.

#### 4. THE UNACCUSATIVE HYPOTHESIS IN THE LIGHT OF SPLIT INTRANSITIVITY

This last section before the conclusion discusses the Unaccusative Hypothesis (henceforth UH for short) as a means to predict split-intransitivity in Basque and split-intransitive languages more generally. This section relies on the preceding sections where parallelisms are drawn between Basque and other split-intransitive languages. The UH seems compatible with Basque (Laka 1993a, 1995). However, cross linguistic data suggest a moderate view of the UH if the same analysis is to be duplicated with split-intransitive languages.

##### 4.1. Overview of the UH

In the framework of Relational Grammar, Perlmutter (1978) proposes that intransitives do not constitute a natural class. Intransitives split in the syntactic origin of their argument, which may be external or internal. Perlmutter coins the terms *unaccusative* for verbs with an internal argument (33a) and *unergative* for verbs with an external argument (33b).

- (33) a. Unaccusatives: intransitive verbs with an internal argument  
(e.g., arrive, break, drop, fall, move, open, shake, sink, split ...)
- b. Unergatives: intransitive verbs with an external argument  
(e.g., crawl, dance, dive, float, fly, talk, shout, walk, work ...)

Burzio (1986) casts this idea in Generative Linguistics. Burzio argues that the internal argument of unaccusatives becomes a subject marked nominative due to the inability of the verb to case-mark its argument (34).

- (34) a. Unaccusative: [Sue [t arrived t late]]  
                          NP/DP generated in object position
- b. Unergative: [Sue [t dances beautifully]]  
                          NP/DP generated in subject position

According to Burzio, unaccusatives and unergatives have distinct syntactic derivations: unaccusatives have *deep objects*; unergatives *deep subjects*. The subject of unaccusatives starts as a sister to V in Deep-Structure. Unaccusatives cannot assign accusative case. To avoid a violation of the Case Filter, the object moves up cyclically to the next case position—INFL—to receive nominative case. The subject of unergatives, in contrast, originates as a specifier to V in Deep-structure. Then it moves to INFL to receive nominative case in Surface-structure.

##### 4.2. Split-Intransitivity and the UH: Two Terms, Same Idea?

Morphosyntactic tests that validate the UH are not readily available in all languages. Italian initially provided the bulk of empirical support for the UH (see Burzio 1986 for details):

- (36) a. Auxiliary selection (unaccusatives: *be*; unergatives: *have*)
- b. Participial agreement (unaccusatives only)
- c. Post-verbal subjects (more easily with unaccusatives)
- d. Ne-cliticization (unaccusatives only)
- e. Absolute participial constructions (better with unaccusatives)
- f. Modal constructions (auxiliary selection determined by embedded verb)

Similarly, Rice (1991) for Slave and Laka (1993a, 1995) for Basque argue that these languages have a class of unaccusatives and a class of unergatives. Rice describes five morphosyntactic differences in the intransitive split observed for Slave, namely, (i) subject/object incorporation, (ii) causativization, (iii) passivization, (iv) pronominals (see 17-19), and (v) classificatory verbs (see Rice 1991 for details). Laka focuses on Case Theory and argues that



transitivity alternations like middles and impersonals in Basque, which take absolutive case like unaccusatives, provide independent evidence for distinguishing unaccusatives from unergatives on the basis of syntactic configuration.

If one collects the above works on unrelated languages, then split-intransitivity may be understood as a reflection of the UH. Pursuing this idea requires addressing questions of a general nature as well as language-particular concerns. First, we need to determine what it is that makes a verb unaccusative or unergative, namely syntactic configuration, semantic import or a combination of the two (see Sorace 2000 for a review of the literature). Then, we need to substantiate our predictions by looking at languages with split-intransitive patterns.

While the UH approach for Basque seems correct, outstanding questions remain. Some relate to syntactic configuration and others to the alignment of predicates with one class or the other. Regarding issues of configurationality, Albizu (1998, 2001) notes an alternation in transitivity—reflexives—where the external argument bears absolutive case. Similarly, in the progressive *ari* construction the external argument is marked with absolutive case (see Izagirre 2001). And Alcázar (2002b) examines corollaries of Laka's case system with respect to simple verbal forms. On the other hand, Basque attests to language-internal inconsistencies in the expression of identical concepts or actions. For example, the verb *speak* can be rendered as either an A or an E-intransitive. As an A-intransitive, *mintzatu* 'speak' can also surface as a light verb (*mintzo izan* [voice be] 'speak') with *izan* 'be' (individual level be: e.g., *essere* (It.), *ser* (Sp.)). This light verb configuration is also A-intransitive. As an E-intransitive, the predicate *speak* is expressed in a light verb configuration (*berba egin* [word do] 'speak') or virtually as a verb (*hitze gin* [worddo] 'speak').

Applying the UH approach to the pool of split-intransitive languages faces greater challenges. As noted in Section 3.3.1, verbs that belong in the unergative class in Slave may take the form of unaccusatives in Basque. Compared to the account of Western Indo-European languages provided in Sorace (2000), Basque would be consistent with the UH but Slave would not. Still, Basque exhibits language-internal inconsistencies by providing a variety of syntactic configurations to clear-cut concepts like *speak*. While split-intransitivity in Basque and Western Indo-European languages is unrestricted by particular categories, variability in morphosyntactic differences like auxiliary selection are largely attested in both (Sorace 2000, Zubiri 2000). And Dutch attests to a local split driven by telicity. More generally, a theory that articulated the split conditioned by the UH with the splits observed in split-ergative/split-intransitive languages needs to be developed.

If further research surmounted the above difficulties somehow, split-intransitivity and the UH could still be equated. This could be implemented on a moderate view of the UH, where the terms unaccusative and unergative refer to syntactic configuration and not syntacticosemantic classes of verbs. Then, split-intransitivity would be synonymous with the UH as the attestation of these two types of verbs in ways determined by the morphology of the language. However, if split-intransitivity and the UH cannot be gradually reduced to the same notion, the question remains why languages show splits in the intransitive class. This question is very much related to general questions of case assignment and the typological classification of languages based on morphological and/or syntactic patterns in the expression of verbal arguments.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper meant to cast doubts on the traditional typological classification of Basque as an ergative language. Basque intransitives split in at least two classes. Such split concerns differences in case assignment to the subject among other morphosyntactic differences. These differences bear a resemblance to other morphosyntactic ways in which split-intransitive languages distinguish two classes of intransitives. We also explored the possibility to employ the Unaccusative Hypothesis to account for split-intransitivity, two concepts that necessarily enter some kind of relation. I endorsed a moderate, syntactic view of the Unaccusative Hypothesis in this regard.

## APPENDIX: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abs absolutive	Fem feminine	Loc locative	Per perfective	Sg singular
Erg ergative	Imp imperfective	Masc masculine	Pl plural	- morpheme boundary

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