Some scholars agree that there is no passive in Basque, whereas others object to such a view. The passive-like construction displays the following properties: The finite verb agrees only with the absolutive argument. The participle shows agreement in number, case, and definiteness with the absolutive argument. The ergative and the participle are adjacent, the ergative NP preceding. The agent NP becomes optional. I propose that in this construction, the participle is nominal and projects a complex NP, selecting the ergative NP as a complement, and assigns case inherently. Verb movement of the auxiliary to T as well as movement of the absolutive NP to Spec,TP accounts for the displayed word order, the intransitive agreement and the fact that the auxiliary here functions as the sole predicate. The analysis shares properties with an analysis for Inuktitut proposed by Johns (1987), and is also supported by similarities in German passive-like possessor constructions.

1. Introduction – The Passive

The passive in ergative languages is a rather neglected topic. This is due to the fact that ergative languages usually have a detransitivizing process, the antipassive, which is taken to be the equivalent of the passive in accusative languages. However, verbal and case morphology indicates that both constructions may be present in some ergative languages, for instance in Inuktitut.

1. a. Piita-up Maali kunik-ta
   Piita-erg Maali-abs kiss -part,3sg/3sg
   Peter kisses Molly

b. Piita-mit Maali kunik-ta -u -vuq
   Piita-abl Maali-abs kiss -pass-be-ind,3sg
   Molly was kissed by Peter. (Bok-Bennema 1991:48)

The above examples show the properties usually ascribed to passive
constructions: passive morphology on the verb, demotion of the agent to an oblique case, raising of the patient argument to subject position. The agreement morphology on the verb further indicates that in the passive, the verb only agrees with the absolutive NP, the subject of the sentence, whereas we can see agreement with both arguments in the active voice.

Passive can generally be characterized as a derivation applying to an underlingly transitive sentence, where the complement of the verb becomes the subject of the sentence, receiving case from T. The underlying subject becomes non-obligatory and receives inherent (oblique) case. Passive morphology on the verb varies crosslinguistically. There can be extra morphology or lack of agreement morphology; the variations are vast (Siewierska 1984).

There are different kinds of passive to be observed. Some languages employ in addition to the ‘normal’ verbal passive the adjectival passive. Depending on the language, it may differ morphologically from the verbal passive; semantically it can be described as resultative, telic, or static in meaning. As in the verbal passive, the subject receives the theme role, whereas there is no agent, not even implicitly.

2. a. passive
Der Tisch wird von der Frau gedeckt.
the table becomes by the woman set
The table is set by the woman.

b. adjectival passive (static passive)
Der Tisch ist *von der Frau gedeckt.
the table is by the woman set
The table is set *by the woman.

The above examples from German illustrate the difference in meaning as well as that there is no overt agentive NP possible in the adjectival passive. Therefore, the adjectival passive is not the result of a derivation of a transitive sentence unless one assumes that the agentive NP has to be deleted in the process. Levin & Rappaport (1986) note that the derivation of adjectival passives includes the suppression of the external role of the base verb. In other words, the derived passive verb is unable to assign the agent role. Therefore, an overt agent NP, even in the guise of pro, is not possible for adjectival passives.

The standard GB view of the verbal passive derivation is that the passive morphology on the verb absorbs the object case, thus forcing the complement to move to subject position in order to receive case (Baker 1988; Baker, Johnson & Roberts 1989, Jaeggli 1986, among others). One result of the derivation is that the former active subject becomes demoted to an oblique case. However, other than in the adjectival passive, the verb is able to assign the agent theta-role to that NP.

This paper is concerned with the question of whether Basque has a syntactic passive operation. In this regard, it also searches for an appropriate description of the passive in Basque, i.e. whether it is adjectival or verbal, or both. Various scholars either claim that there is passive in Basque or vehemently oppose such a view. I will mainly
discuss one particular construction that might or might not be a passive. After a brief description of the relevant data, I will discuss the different arguments which have been put forward to support the view that there is or is no passive in Basque. I propose that the construction under discussion in this paper involves a complex NP in the specifier position of VP, which contains a complex NP that is headed by the nominalized main verb. The discussion will demonstrate that this analysis can account for the various peculiarities of the construction that some linguists simply assume to be passive whereas others absolutely disagree.

2. Passive in Basque – The Data

Basque is commonly seen as an ergative language of the morphological ergative type. Therefore, despite the morphological ergative case marking, it has all the syntactic properties of a nominative-accusative language, i.e. the subject of an intransitive sentence and the subject of a transitive sentence pattern together with respect to control, wh-movement, etc. (cf. Levin 1983, Ortiz de Urbina 1989, Marantz 1984, Oyharçabal 1992).

Basque has so-called free word order, although the basic surface order is SOV, where the main verb immediately precedes the auxiliary. Scholars agree that Basque phrase structure is right-headed. Modifications of the basic SOV order are due to the following factors:

1. Focus movement: Preceding the non-finite verb, there is probably a focus position. This position can be occupied by a DP or a wh-word. Only particles such as negative ez, interrogative al, or rhetoric ote may intervene.
2. Intervening elements between AUX and main verb: The negative particle has to precede the auxiliary. In addition, adverbs and modals can intervene.
3. Topicalization: Movement to a clause-initial topic position is optional and determined by discourse factors (old, new information).
4. Negation: The negative particle can be clause-initial, immediately followed by the auxiliary. In this case, more material can intervene between the auxiliary and the non-finite verb; in fact, the usual V AUX order is reversed.

Most verbs of Basque are periphrastic; i.e. they obligatorily require an auxiliary that shows case and number agreement. The participle is marked for tense, aspect, and mood. Only a few synthetic verbs are directly marked for agreement. Agreement is morphologically marked with the ergative, the absolutive, and the dative arguments. Transitive structures select the transitive auxiliary edun ‘to have’ and intransitive sentences employ the auxiliary izan ‘to be’.

The opinions about the form of the main verb differ. Bollenbacher (1977) takes the form of the main verb in the active sentence to be infinitival, whereas the main verb in the passive is claimed to be a past participle. Other authors analyze the three occurring

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1 This provides an interesting problem regarding verb movement. However, I will not go into detail here. See Ortiz de Urbina (1989) for a detailed discussion.
The construction under discussion in this paper has the following properties:

1. The intransitive auxiliary *izan* is selected and shows case/number agreement with the absolutive argument.
2. The agent NP shows ergative case marking.
3. The main verb shows a suffix –*a*; the category is yet to be determined.
4. The ergative NP and the main verb are adjacent, the ergative NP immediately preceding the verb.
5. Word order changes: active: ERG-ABS-V-AUX  
   passive: ABS-ERG-V-AUX

3. a. *etxe-a*  *haiek*  *eraiki-a*  *d-a*
   house-sA they(E) build(prf)-sA 3A-prs-(be)
   “The house is built by them.”

   b. *liburu-ak*  *atzo*  *zu-k*  *eros-i-ak*  *d-i-ra*
   “The books are bought by you (you-bought).” (Saltarelli 1988:218)

The suffix –*a* is attached to the main verb. This suffix is also added to predicative adjectives. Example (3a) shows that although Basque has pro-drop both for subject- and for object-pro, in this case, the ergative pronoun occurs overtly. Otherwise, the sentence would not be different from example (4).

4. *mutiko-a*  *bihurri-a*  *d-a*
   child-sA naughty-sA 3A-prs-(be)
   “The child is naughty.” (Saltarelli 1988:247)

The suffix at the main verb is, according to Saltarelli, a singular absolutive marker, whereas Levin (1983) and others suggest that it is a definite marker. A third view is put forward by Oyharçabal (1992), who claims the –*a* to be a resultative marker. I will return to this matter in section 3.1.2.

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2 Since aspect is not of concern for the topic of this paper, I will ignore the difference and call it participle.
3 Siewierska (1984) mentions another language that apparently does not change the case of the agent argument in the passive, Imbabura Quechua.
4 I am using Saltarelli’s gloss, which might require some clarification: sA: singular absolutive / pA: plural absolutive/ E: ergative / prs: present / prf: perfective
3. Properties of the Passive in Basque

3.1 The Suffix –a on the Participle

The suffix on the participle distinguishes the passive construction from another intransitive where two arguments can be overt, the impersonal.

5. zuri askatasun handi-a eman za-izu
   you-D freedom bis-sA give (3A-prs)-aux1-2sD
   “You have been given much freedom.”       (Saltarelli 1988:219)

   Although the translation seems to recall a passive, a more accurate translation would be ‘one has given you much freedom’. (see Eguzkitza 1987 for more examples of the impersonal).

   In the literature, various glosses have been suggested for the suffix on the participle in the examples in (3), and I will briefly describe them and their possible implications.

3.2 Definite Marker (Trask 1985, Saltarelli 1988, Levin 1983)

   Saltarelli (1988) shows that the singular absolutive marker for definite nouns is –a. Why is there a definite marker on the participle? If we assume that the participle in question is adjectival, this view appears to be conclusive. It could mean that the participle occupies the determiner position and serves as a determiner for one of the arguments. However, it should be noted that in cases where the ergative NP is absent, this assumption might not hold. On the other hand, it could also serve as a nominalizing suffix, rendering the verb nominal, which therefore might even project an NP. If we also assume that it indicates agreement with the absolutive NP, we would have to account for that.

3.3 Resultative Marker (Oyharçabal 1992)

   Supposing that the construction under question is indeed a passive, and, furthermore, a resultative marker on the participle denotes a resultative meaning, this appears to be a logical conclusion. We could assume that the construction under discussion is an adjectival passive, which is canonically resultative, static, or telic in meaning. However, one problem remains with this viewpoint. Cross-linguistically, adjectival passives do not allow an agent NP to be present, moreover, the agent NP mostly is not even implicit. If we assume the Basque passive to be adjectival, we would have to account for this peculiarity.
3.4 Properties of the Passive

Returning to the properties of the passive in general, we take it for granted that if we indeed find a passive process in Basque, it most probably does not show all the properties of the canonical passive in accusative languages. On the other hand, it might display them in a different manner, which might well have to do with the peculiarities of the Basque sentence structure.

6. | Passive in accusative languages and Inuktitut | Passive in Basque |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>passive morphology on the verb</td>
<td>suffix $-a$, intransitive AUX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agent role is suppressed in adjectival passives</td>
<td>agent is possible if we assume it to be an adjectival passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agent NP receives oblique case and becomes optional</td>
<td>agent NP remains in the ergative and becomes optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>former object (patient) moves to subject position</td>
<td>absolutive NP appears clause-initially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>former object receives subject case</td>
<td>undecided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table in (6) shows that under the assumption that there is passive in Basque, we have to explain:

1. whether it is adjectival and what role the ergative NP plays,
2. why the ergative argument is not demoted,
3. whether the clause-initial absolutive NP occupies the subject position instead of the ergative NP,
4. whether the absolutive NP is a derived object.

4. Passive in Basque?

4.1 No A-movement in Basque (Eguzkitza 1987)

Eguzkitza argues that Basque lacks A-movement in general. In his analysis, NP’s move to the focus position and adjoin to VP. Under this analysis, Basque cannot have a syntactic passive operation. His arguments are mostly based on word order. According to Eguzkitza, *gizonak harrapatu* form a constituent and cannot be separated by any means. He proposes that this string is a non-restrictive relative clause, where the head *umea* is represented by a specifier $-a$ attached to the main verb.

7. *umea* *gizonak* *harrapatua* da  
   *child-det/sg-obs man-det/sg-erg caught* is  
   ‘the child is caught by the man’
He gives different versions of the same sentence, which illustrate the relative clause form more clearly.

8. *umea gizonak harrapatu-rikoa/-takoa da*
   child-det/sg-abs man-det/erg caught-rel suf-det/sg-abs is
   ‘the child is the one caught by the man’ (Eguzkitza 1987:135)

   However, the argumentation runs in a circle. Eguzkitza argues in previous chapters of his book that Basque lacks A-movement and NPs move only for semantic reasons. Therefore, the patient NP cannot move to subject position to get case. He further argues that the presence of the ergative NP indicates that this is not a passive. Without the ergative NP the sentence *umea harrapatu da* would be translated as ‘one has caught the child’ (Eguzkitza 1987:135). However, in this sentence, the main verb lacks the –*a* as opposed to the sentences with the overt ergative NP. Therefore, this construction cannot be considered a passive for independent reasons. Clearly, although the impersonal absolutive marker on the participle rules it out for our discussion.

4.2 No Passive in Basque (Trask 1985)

Trask (1985) suggests a slightly different analysis, taking into account certain word order restrictions and the fact that the agent argument does not receive oblique case. He defends an analysis where the participle and the ergative NP form a constituent. Although Basque word order is relatively free, at least one constituent must precede the main verb. According to his analysis, the determiner –*a* is required for NPs as well as for adjective phrases, and the adjectival participle and the ergative NP agree in number.

   window-abs broke-det AUX-3sg
   The window is broken.

   b. *Piarresek egina da etxe hori.*
   Peter-erg do/make-det AUX-3sg house-abs that
   That house is Peter-built. (Trask, p.c.)

   He states that *Piarresek egina* cannot be separated in this construction, whereas this is possible in the ‘active’ variant. Therefore, it is a constituent where the ergative NP somehow modifies the main verb.

   Problematic with this analysis is that there is no morphological indication that *Piarresek* and *egina* agree with each other. Example (3b) demonstrates clearly that the main verb agrees in number with the absolutive NP, not the ergative NP. If the –*a* is indeed a definite marker then it seems odd that the participle agrees in definiteness with a name NP that is considered not to require a definite marker (Trask 1997). If we take the –*a* as a resultative marker, agreement seems even more mysterious.
4.3 The Impersonal

The impersonal construction differs from the above examples in that it disallows an overt agent NP and that the main verb appears without the absolutive (or definite) marker. Levin (1983) provides an analysis that shows clearly that what was formerly analyzed as some alternative form to the passive is only possible with unaccusative verbs.5

house-NOR make-PRES 3sNOR-IZAN
“The house is being built.”

b. *Nik etxea egiten da.
I-NORK house-NOR make-PRES 3sNOR-IZAN
“The house is being built by me.”6

Since this construction differs in decisive aspects from the construction under debate, I will not consider it for the remainder of this paper.

4.4 The Anticausative Construction

For completeness purposes, I mention another ‘detransitivizing’ operation in Basque, the anticausative construction. According to Eguzkitza (1987), it is only possible with a certain set of verbs. The difference to the impersonal is that in the anticausative construction a temporal adverbial is not possible, whereas the same verb allows modification by a temporal adverbial only in the impersonal use.

11. a. lantegi hartan leihoak apropos apurtu
factory that-over-there-in window-det/pl-abs on purpose broken
ziren gero langileak akusatzeko
they were later worker-det/pl-abs accuse-in order to

“In that factory the windows were broken on purpose in order to later accuse the workers.”

b. *lurrikaran leihoak apropos apurtu ziren
earthquake-det/sg-in window-det/pl-abs on purpose broken they were

“In the earthquake, the window broke on purpose.” (Eguzkitza 1987:136-137)

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5 However, example (10a) might rather be an unergative. (cf. section 4.2.3)
6 Levin’s gloss: NOR: absolutive / NORK: ergative. According to Saltarelli, the main verb here is marked with the habitual aspect –ten.
However, since the verb form does not show the suffix –\(a\), I also will not consider this construction any further.

5. Basque Phrase Structure

5.1 Word Order

Although Basque has relatively free word order, certain restrictions apply. For instance, the unmarked word order is usually SOV, where any other word order is semantically marked (Ortiz de Urbina 1989). Eguzkitza (1987) and Ortiz de Urbina (1989) argue for a focus position to the left of V, the participle in other words, based mainly on \(wh\)-movement. If we take the question in (12a), the answer can only be (12b) whereas (12c) is ungrammatical.

12. a. nori bidali dio gizonak liburua?
   who-dat sent has it to him man-det/sg-erg
   ‘who has the man sent the book to?’

   b. gizonak liburua Peruri bidali dio (noski)
      man-det/sg-erg book-det/sg-abs Peter-dat sent has it to him (of course)

   c. *gizonak liburua Peruri noski bidali dio
      man-det/sg-erg book-det/sg-abs Peter-dat of course sent has it to him

      ‘the man has sent the book to Peter, of course.’  (Eguzkitza 1987:93)

The focus \(Peruri\) is adjacent to the participle in (12b) whereas in (12c) the sentential adverbial intervenes between the focus and the verb. This is only possible in sentences without focus position as in (13). At the same time, the verb and the AUX cannot be separated except by a focus position in a negative sentence as illustrated in (14).

13. a. liburua bidali dio gizonak Peruri
    b. gizonak liburua bidali dio Peruri
    c. Peruri liburua bidali dio gizonak
    d. zer bidali dio gizonak Peruri?

14. a. ez dut liburua irakurri
     not I have it book-det/sg-abs read
     ‘I have not read the book.’
     (Eguzkitza 1987:96-97)
As the above examples show, the focused element is adjacent to the participle, whereas the participle and the AUX are adjacent unless separated by an adverbial. In addition, the negation has to be adjacent to the AUX, in which case the verb and the AUX are separated by the focus position since in this case, the negation appears clause-initially.

5.2 Subject/Object Asymmetries

5.2.1 Obligatory Control Structures: Embedded wh-questions

The gap in the complement can either be a transitive or an intransitive subject, but not a transitive object.

15. a. (Ni-k₁) ez dakit [PRO₁ nor-i ema-n]

I- neg know who-D give-prf

“I don’t know who to give it to.”

b. Zu-k₁ ez dakizu [PRO₁ no-ra joa-n]

you-E neg know wh-to go-prf

“You do not know where to go.” (Ortiz de Urbina 1989:17)

5.2.2 Genitive Objects

Absolutive objects of nominalized verbs (participles) can be marked genitive, which is not possible for any subject NP. I will discuss this phenomenon in detail in section 6.

5.2.3 Case and Agreement

Levin (1983) proposes that monadic verbs that select the intransitive auxiliary form a class of unaccusative verbs. However, Ortiz de Urbina (1989) demonstrates that Basque has a class of unergative verbs that assign ergative case (see also Laka 1993 for a discussion), only some of them belonging to the class of noun egin verbs. He shows that they select the transitive auxiliary like any other transitive verb and that the indefinite noun represented by the marker on the auxiliary behaves like any other overt absolutive NP.

16. Marked with partitive:

a. Haurr-ak negar egin zuen egun osoa

child-E cry do AUX day whole

“The child cried the whole day.”
b. Haurrak ez zuen negarr-ik egin
   child-E neg AUX cry-part do
   “The child did not cry.”

Focused constituents are placed immediately before the verb *egin*:
c. Nor-k egin zuen negar?
   Who-E do AUX cry
   “Who cried?”

(Ortiz de Urbina 1989:44-45)

In addition, there are other semantically unergative verbs that select the transitive auxiliary without the dummy *egin*. The auxiliary then contains a default third person singular absolutive marker that does not indicate agreement with any noun.

17. Makina hon-ek ondo funtzionatzen du
   machine this-E well function AUX(tr)
   “This machine works well.”

(Ortiz de Urbina 1989:45)

We can conclude that apparently intransitive verbs that indeed select the intransitive auxiliary are homogeneously unaccusative. The behavior of the partitive case, which optionally can replace absolutive case, demonstrates also that semantically unaccusative verbs show this property also in the syntax.

18. a. *gizon-ik ez zuen saio-a ikusi
       man-part neg AUX performance-A see
       “No man saw the performance.”

b. *Makina-rik ez du funtzionatzen
   machine-part neg AUX function
   “No machine works.”

c. Ez nuen gizon-ik ikusi herri-ko kale-etan
   neg AUX man-part see village-of street-in
   “I didn’t see any man in the streets of the village.”

d. Gizon-ik ez zen etorri
   man-part neg AUX come
   “No man came.”

(Ortiz de Urbina 1989:48)

The examples in (18) show that the distribution of the partitive is sensitive to absolutive case. This would rather point to syntactic ergativity in Basque. However, if we assume that intransitive subjects and transitive objects are both D-structure objects, this notion does not hold. More accurately, absolutive case is assigned to D-structure objects whereas ergative case is most probably assigned to D-structure subjects. In accordance with Levin (1983), Ortiz de Urbina concludes that verbs assign absolutive on D-structure, whether they assign a theta-role to their subjects or not. Therefore, only ergative NPs
would move to receive case.

On a theoretical level, this analysis runs into serious problems with Burzio’s generalization. On a descriptive level, this analysis is contradicted by negative sentences, where it can clearly be shown that subjects of unaccusative verbs do move to subject position. Recall that the negation particle *ez* usually follows the subject and precedes the auxiliary. If unaccusative D-structure objects remained with the VP, they should follow *ez* (recall also the right-headedness of the Basque phrase structure).\(^7\)

19. a. Jon-ek bere kotxe-a saldu du
    John-E his car-A sell AUX-tr
    “John has sold his car.”

   b. Jonek ez du bere kotxea saldu
      John-E neg AUX-tr his ar-A sell
      “John has not sold his car.”

20. a. Kotxe-ak ondo funtziotzen du
      car-E well function AUX-tr
      “The car works well.”

    b. Kotxe-ak ez du ondo funtziotzen
       car-E neg AUX-tr well function
       “The car does not work well.”

21. a. Jon heldu da
      John-A arrive AUX-itr
      “John has arrived.”

    b. Jon ez da heldu
       John-A neg AUX-itr arrive
       John has not arrived
       (Ortiz de Urbina 1989:54)

Example (19) and (20) show that the ergative NP, and (21) shows that the absolutive NP can move to subject position. In addition, supported by the fact that Basque verbal agreement includes markers for absolutive, ergative, and dative, Ortiz de Urbina proposes that AGR in INFL can be expanded to (22).

22. \[ \text{AGR} \rightarrow \text{A (E) (D)} \]
   i. Assign Absolutive to N” iff it is first object of V
   ii. Assign Dative to N” iff it is second object of V

\(^7\) Ortiz de Urbina 1989 assumes a rule that adjoins the *ez* particle to the VP, originating in INFL.
According to (22), subjects of transitive predicates can only be assigned ergative, since they are not objects. The same goes for unergative predicates. Assignment of absolutive would violate (22i) since there would be a dative complement. Unaccusative predicates are forced to assign absolutive, otherwise they would violate (22i).

Ortiz de Urbina (1989) presents an analysis for case assignment that is in accordance both with morphological facts and with word order phenomena in Basque. However, if we look again at our construction, one problem remains. Although we have an ergative and an absolutive NP, the auxiliary is intransitive and the agreement is with the absolutive, resembling (21). In this case, the ergative NP should remain inside the VP. That would also mean that the ergative NP originates in the Spec of VP. The question now is, is ergative case always assigned inherently by V?

5.3 Ergative is inherent, absolutive is structural

An answer to the above raised questions is provided by Oyharçabal (1992), who proposes that ergative case is assigned inherently, whereas absolutive case is assigned by two different functional heads, depending on whether it is assigned to the object or the subject of the sentence. Oyharçabal (1992) assumes that Basque, as a morphological ergative language, shows sensitivity to syntactic processes only at S-structure but not at D-structure. She discusses two processes to show the morphological ergativity of Basque: object incorporation in nominalized sentences and control structures. I will not further discuss this issue, since the discussion of Ortiz de Urbina (1989) has provided sufficient evidence.

Under the assumption that ergative case is assigned inherently by the verb, one would expect that the DP does not have to move in order to receive case. However, the ergative DP moves obligatorily in Basque. This becomes apparent, as there is agreement between the ergative DP and the finite verb. Oyharçabal (1992) therefore proposes a combinatorial solution for inherent case assignment, following Chomsky’s (1986) distinction between case assignment and case realization. The idea behind this proposal is that head movement of a case assigner corresponds to movement of the DP that is assigned inherent case. Both case assigner and assignee move to the same functional projection under the following condition:

23. Condition on inherent Case marking

Let $\alpha$ be an inherent Case assigner and $\beta$ the head of an F-projection of $\alpha$, $\alpha$
Case-marks inherently $\gamma$, iff:

i. $\alpha$ theta-marks $\gamma$;

ii. where $\alpha$ moves to $\beta$, $\alpha_{\beta}$ and the chain [$\gamma_{1},...,\gamma_{n}$] are coindexed]

(Oyharçabal 1992:322)

Oyharçabal (1992) assumes that agreement is always associated with verb movement and cites Ortiz de Urbina (1989) for evidence supporting the view that there is verb movement even with periphrastically inflected verbs. Firstly, the auxiliary and the main verb always move together to C in positive interrogatives and secondly, scrambled
arguments do not intervene between the two elements.

However, Uriagareka (1999) presents evidence that suggests that this analysis is not without problems. For instance, Basque complementizers appear clause-finally.

24. Mirenek [[Jon etorri de]]la esan du
    M.-E Jon-A arrived is-3-that said 3-have-3
    “Miren has said that Jon has arrived.” (Uriagareka 1999:408)

Another problem is the fact that negation as well as other elements intervene between the main verb and the auxiliary.

25. liburu + irakurtzen ahal dut
    book-det/sg-abs reading can I have it
    “I can read the book.” (Eguzkitza 1987:87-90)

Oyharçabal proposes that, although the ergative NP is assigned case inherently by V, the NP nevertheless moves to AGR in order to account for the agreement facts. On the other hand, he suggests that absolutive is assigned by two different AGR, depending on whether the argument is in object or subject position.

This analysis can also account for the word order facts in the passive since this is the only construction where the ergative NP remains in situ. One problem, however, remains: the agreement of the absolutive NP with the main verb is not taken into account. In my own proposal, I will assume something similar to Oyharçabal’s analysis, although trying to explain the fact that the absolutive NP agrees with the participle although it does not move to TP. Since adjunction to T (or I) does not seem to hold in every case, I will modify the analysis by assuming that there is only movement of the auxiliary to T.

6. The Passive in Basque — Towards an Analysis

6.1 The main verb in a passive sentence

As illustrated above, the suffix –a on the main verb in a so-called passive sentence is homophonous with the definite singular absolutive marker on a predicative adjective. It agrees in number, case, and definiteness with the absolutive NP. Despite this fact, the possible occurrence of the ergative NP rules out the possibility that the clause under discussion is an adjectival passive. Nevertheless, I propose that this suffix derives a nominal with the categorial feature [+N]. I also propose that the adjacency of the ergative NP with this nominal is a possessor-possessee relation, similar to an analysis proposed by Johns (1987) for Inuktitut transitive sentences. Johns proposes that in a transitive sentence in Inuktitut, a possessor-possessee AgrP relation within an IP is adjoined to IP.

26. 

\[
(\text{Miri-up}_j \quad \text{Jaani} \quad \text{IP})
\]

English: Jaani is Miri’s seen (one)

German: Jaani ist Miris Gesehener agreement in number, gender, case

The German translation of the above Inuktitut example shows that we have agreement in number with the subject NP (Jaani). Another similarity can be found if we compare passive constructions in German with possessor constructions. The demoted agent in German passive receives dative case, a case that in some dialects is also used to replace the genitive.

27. Vaters Hut b. der Hut vom Vater
father’s hat the hat of the father-dat

the man(NOM) become-3sg by bad luck(DAT) followed
“The man is followed by bad luck.”

I suggest that the ergative NP is a possessor and is assigned ergative case inherently by the nominalized verb, which selects the NP as a complement. They form an NP headed by the nominalized verb.

This analysis accounts for the number agreement with the absolutive NP as well as for the adjacency requirement of the ergative NP with the main verb (henceforth adjectival). Further support for this analysis is provided by possessor phrase facts. Consider (29).

29. a. zerri-aren hilketa
pig-s.gen killing
“The killing of the pig.”

b. Neska ilegorri-a
girl red-haired-A
“Red-haired girl” (Ortiz de Urbina 1989:68-69)

Most scholars agree that Basque phrase structures are right-headed. This is also true for NPs where the specifier appears to the left of the head, whereas a modifying adjective occurs to the right.
6.2 The Passive derivation in Basque

For the purpose of this investigation I assume that there is movement of the ergative NP to Spec,TP to account for the agreement facts for active transitive clauses. However, since there is no agreement with the ergative NP in the passive, I will assume that in this case, the NP is assigned case inherently by the nominalized verb (i.e. the participle). In accordance with McGinnis (1998), I will also assume that there is no v projection in this case.

Contrary to the active sentence, I assume that there is head movement solely of the auxiliary to T. This takes into account Bollenbacher’s notion that the auxiliary here “is not really an AUX but rather a main verb” (Bollenbacher 1977:182-183). Therefore, it heads the VP instead of being base-generated in T.

On the clause level, it seems clear that the TP is right-headed, since the auxiliary (I will keep to that notion since, whether it is an AUX or not, it occupies the same position on the surface) almost always appears clause-finally. The basic order in a sentence with supposedly two arguments is illustrated in (30).

30. passive:  ABS  ERG  V  AUX
active:  ERG  ABS  V  AUX

6.2.1 Mechanism

- The nominal participle harrapatua merges with an NP complement gizon and projects a complex NP
- harraputa assigns ergative case to gizon
- The verb izan (non-finite form of AUX) merges with its complement umea and projects a VP
- Subsequently, the complex NP merges with that VP
- izan moves to T to check φ, whereas umea has to move to Spec,TP to get absolutive case

The result of the derivation of example (7) is illustrated in (31).
7. Conclusion

The proposed structure accounts for the following phenomena in the construction that was the subject of this paper:
- strict adjacency of the ergative NP and the main verb
- no agreement between the AUX and the ergative NP
- agreement of the AUX with the absolutive NP
- agreement of the main verb in number with the absolutive NP

If we return to the questions we have asked, we can provide the following answers:

1. The participle is nominal and as such assigns ergative case. Ergative case here seems to function like genitive. From a morphological point of view, this seems a bit problematic, since — unlike in Inuktitut — genitive in Basque is very unlike the ergative.
2. The ergative argument is not demoted since it is not an argument of the finite verb but a complement of the nominal that is derived from the non-finite verb.
3. The clause-initial absolutive NP indeed occupies the subject position instead of the ergative NP.
4. The absolutive NP is a derived object as every absolutive NP in intransitive clauses in Basque.

To summarize:
1. What is commonly termed Passive cannot be accounted for in Basque.
2. The structure could be analyzed as intransitive structure with a complement of the “auxiliary” that moves to TP get case like other sole arguments in Basque. The ergative NP is assigned case inherently by a nominalized verb, not unlike a genitive construction without of-insertion.
3. Although the analysis resembles what Johns (1987) proposed for Inuktitut in general, it can only be maintained for this one construction in Basque.
7.1 Open Questions

This analysis should be tested for unergative and unaccusative verbs. Further research should also take into account Double Object Constructions. I have completely omitted negative sentences and the position of adverbials in the proposed structure and I have left out the structure of the active sentence. It might resemble the proposed structure for the passive, although we would have an additional vP where the absolutive gets assigned case. The ergative probably originates in Spec,VP position, contrary to unergative clauses. However, since it does not seem clear whether there is indeed a one-to-one relation between grammatical relations and structure in Basque, I subject this topic to further research.

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