

TWO COPULAS AND A DEFINITE DETERMINER: COPULAR PREDICATION IN BASQUE

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GOAL: In this work, I examine the interpretation of the complement of the copula in different types of nominal copular sentences in Basque. Given that Basque has two copulas, I propose a different denotation for each, and argue that only the Stage-Level (SL) copula, *egon* ‘be(SL)’, is genuinely predicative (i.e. expressing attribution of a property to the subject). As for the Individual-Level (IL) copula *izan* ‘be (IL)’, I propose that its complements denote kinds, which accounts for the obligatory presence of the definite determiner in this context. I further show that the denotation associated with the IL copula is realizational (Carlson 1977; Krifka 1995).

BASQUE: Non-verbal predicates in Basque combine with a subject via a copular verb in primary predication. It is usually reported that the relevant distinction to predict the choice of copula is between IL (1) and SL (2) predicates (Zabala 1993; Artiagoitia 1997; Eguren 2012) (cf. Spanish, see Fábregas 2012):

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|-----|---|-----------------|---|----------------|------------|-----------|
| (1) | Amets | irakasle-a | / | urduri-a | da. | |
| | Amets | teacher- DET.SG | / | nervous-DET.SG | BE(IL).3SG | |
| | ‘Amets is a teacher / a nervous one.’ | | | | | |
| (2) | Amets | irakasle | / | urduri | dago | aurten. |
| | Amets | teacher | / | nervous | BE(SL).3SG | this.year |
| | ‘Amets is a teacher / nervous this year.’ | | | | | |

Both NPs and APs can combine with both types of copula, thus, the category of the complement is not a good predictor for the type of copula that will be used. NPs are more usually found with the IL-copula (1), but nouns expressing social functions, professions, titles or roles can be used with the copula *egon* ‘be(SL)’ to mean that the position is temporary (2). Likewise, APs are found with both types of copula (1-2). The choice of the copula is predicted by the IL/SL contrast, although this distinction needs not be taken as an unmovable property of the predicate. In fact, the same element can combine with both copulas obtaining different interpretations regarding its stable vs. temporary nature (compare 1 with 2).

Crucially, though, nouns as well as adjectives that combine with the IL copula need to take the definite article (with the form *-a* in the singular and *-ak* in the plural), an unexpected fact if they are interpreted as denoting properties ($\langle e, t \rangle$) (1). To the contrary, predicates combining with the SL copula cannot take any determiners (definite or otherwise) (2).

PROPOSAL: The goal of this work is to offer an analysis that explains (i) the occurrence of the definite determiner in (seemingly) predicative complements; (ii) the distribution of the two copulas; (iii) the interpretation of the copula in each of the clause types.

I argue that the role of the definite determiner in the so-called predicative context (1) has to do with the fact that, in Basque, the complement DP denotes a kind (Carlson 1977; Chierchia 1998) rather than a predicate. Following Etxeberria (2014), I assume that Basque nouns can only denote properties, so a determiner is needed for them to act as arguments. The definite determiner in Basque can denote uniqueness both extensionally (3) and intensionally (4) and is ambiguous between the two readings (Etxeberria 2005, 2010, 2014):

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|------------------|---|---------------|----|---|------------------|
| (3) | [[-a/- ak]]: $\lambda P. \iota x [P(x)]$ | | | | | | |
| (4) | [[-a/-ak]]: $\lambda P. \lambda s. \iota x [P(x, s)]$ | | | | | | |
| (5) | <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 5%;">a.</td> <td style="width: 60%;">Definite reading: [[irakasle-a]]: $\iota x [\text{irakasle}(x)]$</td> <td style="width: 35%;">‘the teacher’</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b.</td> <td>Kind reading: [[irakasle-a]]: $\lambda s. \iota x [\text{irakasle}(x, s)]$</td> <td>‘teacher (kind)’</td> </tr> </table> | a. | Definite reading: [[irakasle-a]]: $\iota x [\text{irakasle}(x)]$ | ‘the teacher’ | b. | Kind reading: [[irakasle-a]]: $\lambda s. \iota x [\text{irakasle}(x, s)]$ | ‘teacher (kind)’ |
| a. | Definite reading: [[irakasle-a]]: $\iota x [\text{irakasle}(x)]$ | ‘the teacher’ | | | | | |
| b. | Kind reading: [[irakasle-a]]: $\lambda s. \iota x [\text{irakasle}(x, s)]$ | ‘teacher (kind)’ | | | | | |

In its extensional reading, it conveys a definite interpretation, and the DP denotes a particular object (5a). In its intensional reading, the DP denotes an abstract object that remains across

situations, i.e., a kind (5b). I claim that, in Basque, one interpretation of IL copular clauses involves precisely the latter reading. Thus, the postcopular element of these clauses denotes not a property, but an individual. The copula then relates the object expressed by the subject with a kind, denoting that the subject is the realization of the kind (Carlson 1977; Krifka 1995) (6):

(6) $[[\text{izan}]]: \lambda x.\lambda y.\text{Rel}(x, y)$ where $\text{Rel}(\alpha, \beta)$ corresponds to ‘ β realizes α ’.

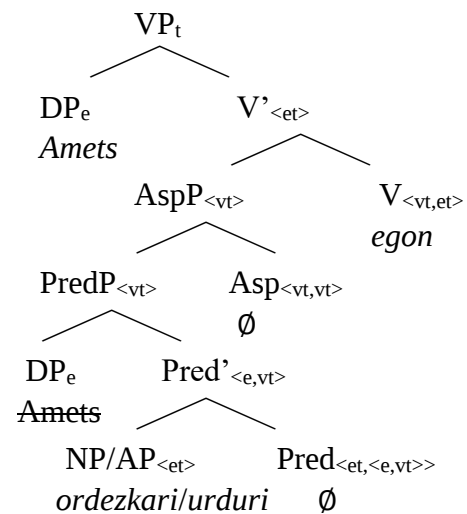
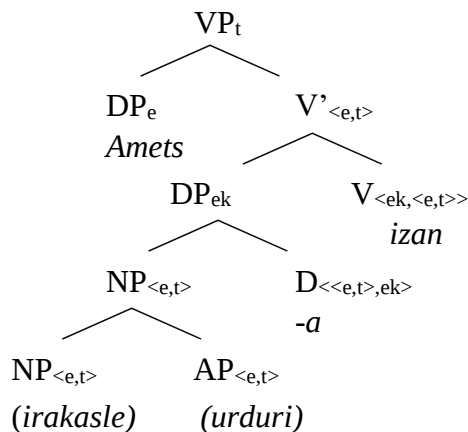
(7) $[[\text{Amets irakaslea izan}]]: \text{Rel}(\text{Amets}, \text{irakasle})$

An accurate paraphrase for (7) would thus be ‘Amets is a realization of the kind *teacher*’. I will argue that adjectives in Basque are, actually, always adjoined to overt or empty nouns (8), also denoting kinds, so that, a paraphrase for (1) could be ‘Amets is of the nervous kind’ (cf. Roy 2013 for a similar proposal in Spanish). This explains the otherwise surprising fact that adjectives too need to take a determiner to combine with the IL copula.

The predicative reading, on the other hand, is conveyed through the SL copula, which takes as its complement a state, i.e. a property related to a spatiotemporal location (Kratzer 1995). I assume that there is a Predicate Phrase (PredP) that characterizes non-verbal predication, and that is responsible for establishing the predicative relation both syntactically and semantically (Bowers 1993, Heycock 1994, Baker 2003 a.o.), The SL copula selects an AspP that introduces the spatiotemporal argument to the denotation of the property predicated by PredP (Rapoport 1991, Zabala 1993, Fábregas 2012). This structure accounts for the fact that no determiner is found in SL copulative structures (2), since —as opposed to *izan* ‘be(IL)’— *egon* ‘be(SL)’ does not select for kinds, but for predicates, and thus, does not require a DP.

(8) Amets irakaslea / urduria da.

(9) Amets irakasle / urduri dago.



CONCLUSIONS: (i) the definite determiner that appears in postcopular IL nominal clauses in Basque denotes a kind, (ii) the copula establishes a relation of realization of a kind by the individual denoted by the NP, and (iii) the SL copula takes states as its complement, i.e. properties related to a spatiotemporal location and predicated of a subject.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Bowers, J. 1993. The syntax of predication. *LI* 24(4). 591–656. Carlson, G. 1977. *Reference to Kinds in English*. Indiana University Linguistics Club. Eguren, L. 2012. Predication markers in Basque. In Etxeberria, Ettxepare & Uribe-Etxebarria (eds.), *Noun phrases and nominalisation in basque*, 243–266. Etxeberria, U. 2005. *Quantification and Domain Restriction in Basque*. UPV/EHU PhD dissertation. 2010. Making a definite be interpreted as an indefinite. *Journal of Portuguese Linguistics* 9(1). Fábregas, A. 2012. A guide to IL and SL in Spanish: Properties, problems and proposals. *Borealis* 1(2). Heycock, C. 1994. *Layers of predication: the non-lexical syntax of clauses*. Kratzer, A. 1995. Stage level and Individual level predicates. In Carlson & Pelletier (eds.), *The Generic Book*. Krifka, M. 1995. Focus and the interpretation of generic sentences, in Carlson & Pelletier (eds.). Roy, I. 2013. *Nonverbal Predication: Copular Sentences at the Syntax-Semantics Interface*.