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Mood in Basque

Martin Haase
Bamberg

1. Different degrees of grammaticalization

Linguistic typology is fundamentally an onomasiological approach to languages, since it compares how different possibly grammatical concepts are expressed and grammaticalized in different languages. The basis of comparison is therefore conceptual. When it comes to mood and modality, the first question is how modality is expressed in a language. If modality plays a role in grammar and is not purely lexically encoded, we may have to do with a grammatical category usually called mood. Mood can therefore be regarded as strongly grammaticalized modality. Such a definition of mood is based on an examination of the forms, and therefore semasiological, i.e. starting from the forms and explaining their function or the concepts they encode in particular.

In Basque the situation gets more complicated, because there are several strongly grammaticalized forms that can be subsumed under the term mood and other less grammaticalized forms, so called modal operators, that participate in the expression of modality. I will start with the strongly grammaticalized categories of mood and treat the modal operators of Basque separately.

Only very few synthetic verbs do not follow the bipartite verbal construction that consists of a non-finite content verb form and an auxiliary that contains the personal inflection and information on tense and mood (cf. Haase 1994). The synthetic verbs are of no interest here, because in non-indicative moods, all verbs are analytically inflected. Here are some typical verbal complexes – in the indicative, to begin with:

- (1) Lore-a ikus-te-n dut.
 flower-IDV see-VN-IN have.PRS.3SG<1SG
 ‘I see the flower.’

The verbal complex contains a full verb *ikusten* in a form which denotes imperfective aspect (*-te-n* is a nominalizer and (an old form of) the inessive, meaning literally: ‘in seeing’), The auxiliary means literally ‘I have it’, so a literal translation of the whole sentence would be: ‘I have (it) in seeing the flower.’

- (2) Lore-a ikus-i dut.
 flower-IDV see-PTCP have.PRS.3SG<1SG
 ‘I have seen the flower.’

In (2), the verbal complex consists of a full verb in the (past) participle form (sometimes also called infinitive, although it is clearly a participle), so the literal translation is in fact: ‘I have seen the flower.’

The category of mood can be expressed by adding a case form to the participle (Future & Conditional) and by reducing the non-finite verb form to its stem, while changing the form of the auxiliary or adding a special potential suffix to the auxiliary. These formations and their functions will be discussed in Section 2. Moreover, the sentence can be modalized by adding modal operators to the verb complex (usually, between the non-finite full verb and the auxiliary). This modality issue will be discussed in Section 3.

The fact that there are no special modal forms for synthetic verbs indicates that mood and modality are relatively recent grammaticalizations. This is in keeping with what we know about other languages (cf. this volume) where mood and modality are strongly subjected to grammaticalization processes, i.e. they are constantly renewed.

2. Mood as a grammatical category

On both formal and functional grounds mood can be subdivided into the following categories: Subjunctive, Future & Conditional, Potential, Subjunctive Potential.

2.1 Subjunctive

2.1.1 Stem alternation

In Basque the indicative intransitive auxiliary that serves to inflect verbs is *izan*, the transitive is *ukan* (this non-finite form is replaced by *izan* in the Southern dialects of Basque and even in Standard Basque this is possible, but this substitution is confined to the non-finite form, the finite paradigms being rather distinct). In the Subjunctives the *izan* paradigm is replaced by another paradigm of which the non-existent infinitive is **edin*, and the *ukan* paradigm is replaced by forms of **ezan*. Note that the non-finite forms given here are constructed forms used by grammarians as labels for the paradigms. As in many Indo-European languages, a subjunctive infinitive or participle does not exist. Without reference to a reconstructed subjunctive infinitive or participle form, we can say that there are two subjunctive stems: *-(e)di-* for intransitives and *-(e)za-* for transitives.

Here are some examples of how the paradigms look like. In (3a) and (4a) the indicative form is given, in (3b) and (4b) the subjunctive; note that the non-finite form is reduced to the verb stem and that in these examples the verb form ends in *-n* which is a subordinator; we will see that the subordinator is missing when the subjunctive is used as an imperative.

- (3) a. Euskara-z mintza-tze-n da.
 Basque-INS speak-VN-IN be.PRS.3SG
 ‘(S)He speaks Basque.’

- b. Euskara-z mintza bedin.
Basque-INS speak be.PRS.SBJV.3SG
'(S)He is to speak Basque.'
- (4) a. Euskara ikas-te-n du.
Basque learn-VN-IN have.PRS.3SG
'(S)He learns Basque.'
- b. Euskara ikas bezan.
Basque learn have.PRS.SBJV.3SG
'(S)He is to learn Basque.'

The Basque subjunctive is somewhat difficult to translate. I shall explain its functions in the following paragraph.

If the matrix verb is in the past, the subjunctive is used in the past tense as well; that is to say: there is a present and a past subjunctive:

- (5) Zer nahi zenuen egin nezan?
what want have.PRET.2SG>3SG make have.PRET.SBJV.1SG>3SG
'What did you want me to do?'
lit.: 'What did you want that I should have done?'

Like the present subjunctive the past subjunctive is formed by replacing the stem of the finite auxiliary by *-(e)di-* in the intransitive or *-(e)za-* in the transitive.

2.1.2 Functions

The Basque subjunctive form can be used as an imperative, if used in the second person; in this case it is used without the subordinating ending *-n*:

- (6) Euskara-z mintza zaitetz!
Basque-INS speak be.PRS.SBJV.2SG
'Speak (in) Basque!'

This is not the only way to express the imperative. Very often the simple participle form is used:

- (7) Etorri hona!
come.PTCP hither
'Come here!'
- (8) Lasai egon!
calm.PTCP stay
'Keep calm!'

The frequent verbs *etorri* 'come', *joan* 'go', and *egon* 'be (in a place)' can also make use of the simple synthetic verb form to express an imperative. In that case, the synthetic verb comes at the beginning of a clause (without a prefix):

- (9) Zoaz etxe-ra!
go.PRS.2SG house-DIR
'Go home!'

This is actually an indicative form, meaning literally: ‘You go home’. Normally, a clause cannot begin with an inflected verb without a prefix. So, the imperative meaning comes up with the peculiar clause-initial position of the verb. This usage is restricted to the second person (singular, plural, and a special familiar form). It is not surprising that second person indicatives develop an imperative meaning, because factual statements about what the addressee is doing are less frequent than about the first or third person.

Alternatively, it is possible to use the participle or the analytic subjunctive form to express an order:

- (10) Joan etxe-ra! / Joan zaitez etxe-ra!
 go house-DIR go be.PRS.SBJV.2SG house-DIR
 ‘Go home!’

The most frequent trivalent verbs (i.e. verbs inflected with an ergative, dative and absolutive person marker) are inflected synthetically with the person markers directly grafted to the stem:

- (11) Ema-i-da-zu!
 give-DAT-1SG-2SG
 ‘Give it to me!’

It is believed that this is a short form for the analytic subjunctive construction (Patrick & Zubiri 2001: 209); thus the above example is explained by the following less common, but possible construction:

- (12) Ema i-eza-da-zu!
 give DAT-have.PRS.SBJV-1SG-2SG
 ‘Give it to me!’ (ib.)

There is no clear historic or dialectal evidence that supports the idea that forms like *emaid-azu!* are contracted subjunctives. It is equally possible to explain them by a simple addition of person markers to a verb stem (not unusual with imperatives in other languages). The latter explanation is very tempting in view of Schuchardt’s (1893) reconstruction of the target marker **ki-*: The target (e.g. the first person singular) is attached to the verb stem and thus allows for the addition of an ergative personal suffix:

- (13) *ema + ki + da + zu

In the first person plural the Basque subjunctive form is a hortative, i.e. an imperative for the first person plural (again without the subordinating ending *-n*):

- (14) Euskara-z mintza gaitez!
 Basque-INS speak be.PRS.SBJV.1PL
 ‘Let’s speak (in) Basque!’

In the third person the subjunctive expresses an order to a referent (non-speaker, non-addressee); here the subordinating ending *-n* is obligatory. Such a form – traditionally called jussive – is, of course, difficult to translate into a language that lacks imperatives in the third person:

- (15) Euskara-z mintza bedin.
 Basque-INS speak be.PRS.SBJV.3SG
 ‘(S)He is to speak (in) Basque.’

The subjunctive is usually used in subordinate sentences after verbs expressing a wish or an order:

- (16) Opa diogu zeru-an goza dadi-la.
 wish have.DAT.3SG.3SG<1PL sky-IN thrive be.PRS.SBJV.3SG-SUB
 ‘We wish him that he may thrive in heaven.’ (de Rijk 2008: 553)

The matrix verb (*opa diogu* ‘we wish him’) can be dropped elliptically, leaving: *Zeruan goza dadila* ‘That he may thrive in heaven.’ Such elliptical wish-clauses are typical of Basque (as they are of Romance languages):

- (17) Garazi-ko herri-a benedika dadila.
 Garazi-DEL land-IDV bless be.PRS.SBJV.3SG-SUB
 ‘That the Garazi land/village (St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port) be blessed.’

The subordinator *-la* is used instead of *-n* when the matrix clause (even if elliptically dropped) is an affirmative assertion containing a full verb such as *opa(tu) diogu*. Very often, however, the subordinator *-n* is preferred if the verb in the main clause is a verb of wishing or commanding:

- (18) Alferrik agin-du-ko diezu isil daitez-en.
 in_vain order-PTCP-DEL have.DAT.3PL.3SG<2SG silent be.PRS.SBJV.3PL-SUB
 ‘You will tell them in vain to be silent.’ (de Rijk 2008: 553)

2.2 Potential

The potential marker *-ke-* can be added to the subjunctive to form the potential mood:

- (19) Non eros ditzakegu patata-k?
 where buy have.SBJV.POT.3PL<1PL potato-PL
 ‘Where can we buy potatoes?’ (de Rijk 2008: 643)

This construction expresses a potential event which can be paraphrased as ‘Where will it be possible for us to buy potatoes?’ It expresses a possibility and not an ability (capacity), which is expressed with modal operators (cf. below). The potential mood is similar to the future. Especially, in older texts it is used as a future.

2.3 Future and Conditional

In the modern language, the future is formed analytically by adding the case suffix *-ko* (local genitive or delimitative) to the participle, whereas the finite verb is in the present (for alternative formations of the future in Northern Basque dialects, cf. Haase 1994, 281):

- (20) Ikus-i-ko dugu.
 see-PTCP-DEL have.3SG<1PL
 ‘We will see.’

The conditional which expresses unreal events (irrealis), esp. in conditional clauses is formed the same way with the finite verb in the past and *-ke* added to the finite verb form (in the indicative):

- (21) Ikus-i-ko genuke.
 see-PTCP-DEL have.COND.3SG<1PL
 ‘We would see.’

The past conditional is formed by adding *-en* to the finite auxiliary; this preterite suffix is etymologically probably a subordinating suffix:

- (22) Ikus-i-ko genuke-en.
 see-PTCP-DEL have.COND.3SG<1PL-PRET
 ‘We would have seen.’

The future and the conditional are mainly used in the apodosis of conditional clauses; they are avoided in the protasis (*if*-clause), where the present or a special truncated form of the past tense is used, the so called suppositive:

- (23) Zu-re larru-an ba-nengo, ez nuke ezetzik esan-go.
 2SG-POSS skin-IN ENC-stay.SUP.1SG NEG have.COND.1SG>3SG no say-DEL
 ‘If I were in your skin, I wouldn’t say no.’ (de Rijk 2008: 423)

The past indicative would have been *nengoen*, the prefix *ba-* (re-enforceable by *bal(d)in*) is the conditional subordinator (‘if’). In the third person the suppositive slightly differs from the past tense:

- (24) a. Ikus-i zuen.
 see-PTCP have.PRET.3SG>3SG
 ‘(S)He saw/had seen.’

vs.

- (24) b. Ikus-i ba-lu.
 see-PTCP ENC-have.SUP.3SG>3SG
 ‘If s/he had seen.’

In addition to the truncation the conjugated form begins with an *l* instead of a *z*. The same happens in the conditional:

- (25) Ikus-i-ko luke.
 see-PTCP-DEL have.COND.3SG>3SG
 ‘(S)He would see.’

The past conditional does not show this *l*-form.

- (26) Ikus-i-ko zuke-en.
 see-PTCP-DEL have.COND.3SG>3SG-PRET
 ‘(S)He would have seen.’

3. Modal operators

Modal operators are free morphemes that are usually inserted between the non-finite form of the main verb and the finite tense auxiliary. Outside of such constructions they may function as nouns, adjectives or verbs. As they cannot be uniformly attributed to one of the major word classes, they have to be considered a word class of their own. Moreover, their grammatical behaviour differs from operator to operator, as will be shown below. I will list all operators, even those who are more aspectual than modal, viz. *ari* (progressive) and *ohi* (habitual). From a formal point of view they belong into the same word class, and even functionally it can be argued that they have a modal component: The event is seen as factual, because it is now going on (and therefore visible) or because it is taking place habitually.

As free morphemes with rather special functions, they exhibit a lesser degree of grammaticalization than the formatives of mood in Section 2.

3.1 *ezin* (inhibitive)

The modal operator *ezin* marks inability:

- (27) Ezin dut eraman futbola.
cannot have.PRS.3SG<1SG bring soccer
'I cannot stand soccer.' (de Rijk 2008: 655)

It should be noted that the inversion of the finite auxiliary and the main verb is due to the negation. In fact, *ezin* behaves like the negation marker *ez* 'not' which causes inversion. Etymologically, it seems to have derived from *ez* + *egin* 'do'. Also note that the full verb *eraman* is used in the participle form with *ezin*.

3.2 *behar* (obligative)

The operator *behar* expresses an obligation:

- (28) Euskara-z mintza-tu behar duzu.
Basque-INS speak-PTCP must have.PRS.3SG<2PL
'You must speak (in) Basque.'

Although *mintzatu* is intransitive, the finite auxiliary is put into the (bivalent) transitive form with *behar*. Only *behar* and *nahi* show this behaviour, whereas the other verbal operators do not select the transitive or intransitive conjugation; it depends on the main verb whether a transitive or intransitive auxiliary is needed. Moreover, *behar* and *nahi* (just like *ezin*) have to be used with the participle of the main verb. Without the verbal operator the sentence would be as follows:

- (29) Euskara-z mintza-tze-n zara.
Basque-INS speak-VN-IN have.PRS.3SG<2PL
'You speak (in) Basque.'

It is possible to derive a verb *behartu* from *behar*, meaning ‘to obligate’. In Northern Basque dialects this verb is used to imitate a Romance modal construction:

- (30) Biharmon-ian behar-tze-n bit-zen urdi-a h[a]uts-i.
 next_day-IN obligate-VN-IN SUB-be.PRET.3SG pig-IDV break-PTCP
 ‘The next day the pig had to be split.’ (from Bastida, Lower Navarra)

3.3 *nahi* (volitive)

The operator *nahi* expresses a wish:

- (31) Euskara-z mintza-tu nahi duzu.
 Basque-INS speak-PTCP want have.PRS.3SG<2PL
 ‘You want to speak (in) Basque.’

With respect to its selectional restrictions, *nahi* behaves just like *behar*; *nahi* can also be used as a noun meaning ‘wish’. Possibly (as in *bide*) the noun is the etymological basis for this operator.

3.4 *ahal* (potentative)

This modal operator is used to express a possibility that is due to favourable circumstances:

- (32) Ikastola-n euskara-z mintza-tze-n ahal dira.
 school-IN Basque-INS speak-VN-IN can be.PRS.3PL
 ‘They can speak Basque at school.’

(32) does not mean that “they” have the knowledge of speaking Basque, but that the circumstances make it possible that they can speak Basque.

Such constructions often express a possibility that the speaker is hoping for, especially if the main verb is a participle:

- (33) Garaiz etorr-i ahal gara!
 on_time come-PTCP can be.PRS.1PL
 ‘We may hopefully have arrived on time.’ (de Rijk 2008: 163)

That is why de Rijk (2008: 163) calls it an optative. Etymologically, *ahal* can be interpreted as a noun meaning ‘power’.

3.5 *al* (interrogative)

This modal operator, possibly a contraction of *ahal* is used to mark questions:

- (34) Laster etorr-i-ko al da?
 soon come-PTCP-DEL INT be.PRS.3SG
 ‘Will (s)he come soon.’ (de Rijk 2008: 163)

It has no effect for the transitiveness of the finite verb and can be combined with all forms of the non-finite main verb (as with the future in the above example).

3.6 *ote* (speculative)

The modal operator *ote* adds a speculative notion to questions, much like German *wohl*, *denn*, *etwa*, *bloß* in questions:

- (35) Nora joan-go ote naiz?
 whither go-DEL SPC be.PRS.1SG
 ‘Where shall I go, I wonder!’ (de Rijk 2008: 165)

De Rijk (2008: 164) calls this particle dubitative, although *speculative* seems to be the better term.

3.7 *bide* (inferential)

This modal operator expresses an inference from (possibly untold) facts known to the speaker (‘surely must’):

- (36) Ijito-a-k gaur Donostia-ra joan bide dira.
 gypsy-IDV-PL today Donosti-DIR go INFER be.PRS.3SG
 ‘The gypsies must have gone to Donosti today.’ (de Rijk 2008: 162)

Without *bide* the sentence would just state the fact that the gypsies have gone to Donosti (San Sebastián). The modal operator comes from the still identical noun *bide* ‘(right) way’.

3.8 *omen* (reportative)

The verbal operator *omen* (possibly coming from the Latin noun *omen*, not otherwise used in Basque) indicates hearsay:

- (37) Gure ama eta bere ahizpa Sarako leize-ra
 1PL.POSS mother and 3SG.POSS sister Sara-DEL cavern-DIR
 joan omen ziren ongarriketa-ra.
 go hearsay be.PRET.3PL manure-DIR
 ‘(It is said that) My mother and her sister had gone to the cavern at Sara,
 looking for manure.’ (de Rijk 2008: 162)

It can be used elliptically and then looks like an adverb:

- (38) Nor etorr-i da? – Apezpiku-a, omen.
 who come-PTCP be.PRS.3SG bishop-IDV hearsay
 ‘Who has come? – The bishop, it seems.’ (de Rijk 2008: 162)

3.9 *ari* (progressive)

The operator *ari* is a progressive marker:

- (39) Idaz-te-n ari naiz.
 write-VN-IN PROG be.PRS.1SG
 ‘I am writing.’

The progressive always combines with the intransitive finite auxiliary, even if the main verb (as in the example above) is a transitive.

3.10 *ohi* (habitual)

The operator *ohi* expresses habituality:

- (40) Egunero egin ohi dut kirola.
 daily make HAB have.PRS.3SG<1SG sport
 ‘Everyday I’m in the habit of doing a sport.’ (Patrick & Zubiri 2001: 233)

Note that *ohi* is combined with the participle, although without the operator, the non-finite verb would appear as a verbal noun with an inessive (imperfective form), as with *ari* above:

- (41) Egunero egi-te-n dut kirola.
 daily make-VN-IN have.PRS.3SG<1SG sport
 ‘Everyday I do a sport.’

The different grammatical behaviour of the modal operators can be tentatively explained on functional grounds. The operators that express deontic modality (*behar*, *nahi*) have the strongest selectional restrictions (participle, transitive verb), the operators that express epistemic modality have no impact on the construction (*ahal*, *al*, *ote*, *omen*, *bide*), those in between show restrictions on the form of the non-finite verb (*ezin*, *ohi*); the factual progressive *ari* is somewhat an exception; its selectional restrictions can be semantically explained (progressive: ‘being [involved] in an action’).

4. Summary

In Basque we find fully grammaticalized modal categories (“mood”):

- subjunctive (including imperative, (ad-) hortative, jussive)
- potential
- future
- conditional

All these forms are analytically constructed, which hints at a comparatively late grammaticalization. Since in the older literature (and some spoken dialects), the potential is used

instead of the future, the latter seems to be another innovation. It comes as no surprise that this functional domain is prone to grammatical innovation.

More specific modal concepts are expressed with the help of modal operators that are less grammaticalized than modal categories and again restricted to analytical constructions.

The modal operator construction strongly deviates from the Romance contact languages Spanish, French, and Gascon. Although it is possible to imitate the Romance construction, this is carefully avoided.

Abbreviations

DEL	delimitative
DIR	directive
ENC	enunciative
IDV	individualizer
IN	inessive
INFER	inferential
SPC	speculative
SUP	suppositive
VN	verbal noun
>, <	affects

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