

On marginal TAM: ‘delayed’ imperatives and jussives in Basque

Manuel Padilla-Moyano (University of the Basque Country & HSE University)

Paper presented at the 50th Poznań Linguistic Meeting

From a typological perspective, the existence of imperative in the future in a TAM system can be considered a rarity, likely to occur in perhaps 10% of world languages [cf. Gusev 2013: 65]. The imperative necessarily points to a situation posterior to the speech act, but here we specifically refer to «delayed imperatives» [Plungian 2011: 270; Aikhenvald 2014: 207], documented in languages such as Latin, Nishnaabemwin (Algonquian), Koasati (Muskogean), Evenki (Tungusic), and some East Tucanoan or Papuan languages. In comparison to immediate imperatives, delayed imperatives tend to be marked, and their use is optional.

The TAM system of historical Basque includes morphologically distinct imperative (1a) and jussive forms (1c) — the latter show the dedicated prefix *b(e)-* [see Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 282-4]. However, in most varieties, proper jussive forms were substituted by a structure based on the subjunctive and provided with the completive suffix *-(e)la* (2); similar constructions upon the subjunctive express hortative and promissive values too. Additionally, Archaic and Old Basque texts (until ca. 1750) attest to another set of forms that convey a range of imperative, hortative, and optative values projected into the future. These «formes de prescriptif» [Lafon 1944: 491], possible with all persons, exhibited the prefix *albait-* (1b).

- (1a) *Orduan enplega e-za-zu zeure indar guzti-a,*
then employ A3SG(IMP)-ROOT-E2SG your strength all-DET
‘Then employ all your strength,
- (1b) *eta eraman albait-nen-za-zu zeure konpañian zeru-ko loria-ra.*
and carry PRESCR-A1SG.NPRS-ROOT-E2SG your company.INE heaven-REL glory-ALL
and you will take me into the glory of Heaven in your company.
- (1c) *Biz hala.* [Labourdin dialect, 1623]
JUSS.be that_way
‘Amen.’
- (2) *Arrats-en erran dezela hirur Pater Noster.* [Souletin dialect, 1860]
evening-INE say A3SG.PRS(SUBJ).E3PL.COMP three Pater Noster
‘In the evening, let them say three Pater Noster.’

Scholars have by and large neglected the existence of imperative (3) and jussive (4) forms marked through the modal morpheme *-ke*. A nineteenth-century Basque author, Añibarro, justifies his using the somewhat unusual forms of imperative with the morpheme *-ke* by arguing that «our Biscayan peasants speak this way, better than well»; furthermore, he explains that such forms point that something «must be done later» [1821: 6], to wit, they correspond to our understanding of *delayed imperatives*. Mounole supports this interpretation and terms the equivalent jussive with the morpheme *-ke-* as «orienté vers le future» [2011: 99].

- (3) *Eroan e-i-ke-zu gaur kurutze astun bat.* [Biscayan dialect, 1820]
carry A3SG(IMP)-ROOT-FUT-E2SG tonight cross heavy one
‘Tonight you will carry [IMP] a heavy cross.’
- (4) *Bere platike-etan esan ze be-i-ke burla-ko berba-rik.* [Biscayan, 1656]
POSS.3SG chat-PL.INE say NEG JUSS-ROOT-FUT mockery-REL word-PART
‘In their conversations s/he will not say mocking words.’
Sp. source: *En sus conversaciones no diga palabras burlando.*
in POSS.3SG chats NEG say.PRS.SUBJ.3SG words mock.GER

After a thorough study of Basque texts, we quantified the occurrences of delayed imperatives and delayed jussives, and detected alternative constructions involved in the expression of the injunction in the future. Our research confirms that delayed imperatives and jussives were common to all Basque dialects, and later they remained in the westernmost area. As for the nature of this TAM category, both the type of attestations and their chronology bespeak a natural development — however, other factors may explain the persistence of delayed imperatives and jussives in some nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors.

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