

Question 15 Basqing in the Sun Solution

- D1.** (a) Emakumea etorri da
(b) Gizonak emakumea ikusi du
(c) Liburua ez etorri da
(d) Kalea liburuan agertu da
(e) Who has seen the man?
(f) The frog has appeared in the street

D2. *Erori* can't be separated from *da*. More generally, the word order restriction is that a MAIN VERB and its following associated AUXILIARY VERB have to appear adjacent to each other and in that order.

- D3.** (a) The woman has made the child come
(b) Umeak emakumeari igela eman dio

Explanation

Basque nouns carry endings showing their function (what linguists call “case”) in the sentence. But unlike more familiar (Indo-European) languages, the cases are not exactly subject/object. Basque is a so-called “ergative” language, which means that the case corresponding to subject in a transitive sentence (where there is also an object) is not used for what would be the subject of an intransitive sentence (with no object): in that case the marking is the same as the object. The best way to understand it is to think of sentences like *John opens the door* and *the door opens*: in familiar languages (that show case marking like German, Latin, Greek and so on) – door would be object in the first, subject in the second. But in an ergative language it is the same case in both sentences, which has some logic when you think that the door plays the same role in both sentences (it gets opened). Linguists call this role “absolute”, while the “doer” or agent is called “ergative”. And quite simply, the nouns in the ergative case add a *-k*. There is also another case-marker in the first set of example sentences, which we can call locative *-n*. The endings occur on pronouns (*zuk, nork, non*) as well as nouns.

The verbs in the data mostly end in *-i*, but there is another word that needs explaining: *da, du, duzu*. This is an auxiliary verb (like *do* in English negatives, questions and past tenses) and takes the form *du* when there is an ergative (ending in *-k*), *da* when there is not, and *duzu* when ‘you’ is the ergative.

Word order is more or less free, so you could present the answers to D1 in any order, with the exception of *erori* which can't be separated from *da*.

