

Question 15: Basquing in the sun

Author: Aleka Blackwell

Basque is a language spoken by around 700,000 people in an area straddling France and Spain, in the western Pyrenees. Linguistically, Basque is unrelated to the other languages of Europe and indeed, is a “language isolate”, unrelated to any other known language.

Study the following sentences, shown in Basque together with their translations in English.

<i>Emakumeak gizona ikusi du.</i>	The woman has seen the man.
<i>Zuk umea ikusi duzu kalean.</i>	You have seen the child in the street.
<i>Non ikusi duzu umea?</i>	Where have you seen the child?
<i>Nork ikusi du umea kalean?</i>	Who has seen the child in the street?
<i>Umeak ez du gizona ikusi.</i>	The child has not seen the man.
<i>Emakumeak liburua irakurri du.</i>	The woman has read the book.
<i>Umea etorri da.</i>	The child has come/arrived.
<i>Umea kalean erori da.</i>	The child has fallen in the street.
<i>Igela agertu da.</i>	The frog has appeared.

D1. In your answerbook, translate (a)-(d) into Basque and (e)-(f) into English: [16 points]

- (a) The woman has come.
- (b) The man has seen the woman.
- (c) The book has not arrived.
- (d) The street has appeared in the book.
- (e) *Nork ikusi du gizona?*
- (f) *Igela kalean agertu da.*

Basque is a free word-order language. This means that all the phrases shown in Set A below translate into English as ‘The child has fallen in the street.’ (In English different word order would change the meaning, compare ‘The man bit the dog’ and ‘The dog bit the man’, but not so in Basque.)

SET A

Kalean umea erori da.
Umea erori da kalean.
Kalean erori da umea.
Erori da umea kalean.
Erori da kalean umea.

By contrast, all the phrases in Set B below are considered ungrammatical. That is, a native speaker of Basque would consider these structures unacceptable. Following convention, we mark ungrammatical sentences with an asterisk *.

SET B

* *Erori umea da kolean.*

* *Erori kolean da umea.*

* *Erori umea kolean da.*

D2. In your answerbook, explain briefly the restriction which applies to the word order options available in Basque. [3 points]

Now consider the following additional data.

Gizonak umeari liburua eman dio.

The man has given the book to the child.

Irakasleak umeari liburua irakurrarazi dio.

The teacher has made the child read the book.

D3. Translate (a) into English, and (b) into Basque. [6 points]

(a) *Emakumeak umeari etorrarazi dio.*

(b) The child has given the frog to the woman.