
THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODAL PARTICLES: THE CASE OF BASQUE *AHAL**

SERGIO MONFORTE
UNIVERSITY OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY
(UPV/EHU)

ABSTRACT The Basque language marks modality by means of functional elements traditionally termed ‘modal particles’. Two of those particles are the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al*; these two particles and the modal verb *ahal* (‘to be able to’) share the same phonetic form namely [al] in most varieties. Nevertheless, they are distinguishable since they have separate behaviour regarding some syntactic properties such as: a) cliticisation, b) distribution concerning negation and aspect, c) occurrence in contexts lacking illocutionary force, and d) degree of pragmaticalisation. Based on the aforementioned properties and on their geographical distribution and history, I argue that they are related diachronically as follows: the modal verb *ahal* gave rise to the modal particle *ahal* and the latter resulted into the question particle *al*. Such grammaticalisation patterns are found cross-linguistically (Wegener 2003; Hack 2014). Therefore, the reanalysis of those elements driven by the ambiguity in the interpretation brought a new distribution and a higher syntactic position for the grammaticalised elements and, ultimately, a simpler syntactic structure avoiding move operations.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Basque language conveys evidentiality (*bide* (‘apparently’), *ei* and *omen* (‘reportedly’)), epistemicity (*ahal* (‘surely’) and *ote* (‘probably’)) and marks polarity questions (*al*) by using so-called modal particles. Despite their different functions, linguists have considered those constituents a single group.

* I am grateful to Xabier Artiagoitia, Maitena Duhalde, Aitor Lizardi Ituarte, Mikel Martinez Areta and three anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments; I am also thankful to the audiences of the conference SOLE held in Berlin and of the Fontes Linguae Vasconum 50 years commemoration conference for their questions. This study has been made possible thanks to the research projects PGC2018-100686-B-I00 and PID2022-140336NB-100 from the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. All errors are mine.

This is based on the observation that they seem to be in complementary distribution, as only one particle can appear in a clause, regardless of the order used, [*ote al*] or [*al ote*], as shown in (1). This behaviour differs from similar particles in other languages such as Cantonese (2) or German (3):¹

(1) Basque

- a. *Lana lortu [ote] du Mikelek?*
 job.ABS get PART AUX Mikel.ERG
 ‘Did Mikel get the job? (I’m wondering)’
- b. **Lana lortu [ote] [al] du Mikelek?*
 job.ABS get PART PART AUX Mikel.ERG
 ‘Intended reading: ‘Did Mikel get the job? (I’m wondering and asking you directly)’
- c. **Lana lortu [ote] [al] du Mikelek?*
 job.ABS get PART PART AUX Mikel.ERG
 ‘Intended reading: ‘Did Mikel get the job? (I’m wondering and asking you directly)’

(2) Cantonese (Kuong 2008: 727)

Keoi5 maai5 lau2 laa3 me1?
 he buy flat PART PART
 ‘He bought a flat already?’

(3) German (Struckmeier 2014: 16)

Dieser Satz enthält ja doch wohl viele Partikel.
 this sentence contains PART PART PART many particles
 ‘This sentence contains many particles, doesn’t it?’

Modal particles in Basque have not received much attention in the literature until recently. In fact, wherever mentioned, modal particles were not the focus but a tool for other research topics such as long-distance movement in

¹ Examples will be my own unless stated otherwise. For the glosses used in this paper, I follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules. However, some cases not included in the Leipzig list are as follows: CL = clitic; DAT.FLAG = dative flag; EPIS = epistemic particle; FORCE = illocutionary force; PART = particle; PRV = PARTITIVE; PROSP = prospective; REAL = realis; ROOT = verbal root.

Albizu (1991) (other similar cases: Elordieta 1997; Elordieta 2001; Haddican 2001; Haddican 2008; Arregi & Nevins 2012). Nevertheless, some researchers have exclusively looked into modal particles over the last decade, as evidenced by publications on Basque modal particles from the semantic-pragmatic field (Zubeldia 2010; Garmendia 2015; Korta & Zubeldia 2014; Korta & Zubeldia 2022), the syntactic field (Etxepare 2010; Etxepare & Uria 2016; Monforte 2020b) and also the historical perspective (Monforte 2021a; Lakarra 2019).

A closer look to that list shows us that there is a case of syncretism regarding the question particle *al* and the epistemic particle *ahal*, since they are both pronounced [al], at least in those varieties which have lost the aspiration.² This leads to situations in which there is no syntactic and phonetic evidence to distinguish them. Only prosody marks that (4a) is an epistemic particle and (4b) a question particle. This context is ambiguous not only between the modal particle and the question particle, but it could also have a modal verb reading (4c):³

- (4) a. *Etxera joan [al] da.*
 home.ALL go EPIS AUX
 ‘I wish s/he had gone home.’
- b. *Etxera joan [al] da?*
 home.ALL go Q AUX
 ‘Did s/he go home?’
- c. *Etxera joan [al] da.*
 home.ALL go can AUX
 ‘S/he can go home.’

Although aspectual morphemes or word order in negative contexts mostly help differentiate modal particles from modal verbs, in a sentence like (4) it is difficult to conclude whether it behaves as a verb or as a particle.

This situation raises the following two questions: a) are we dealing with the same particle which has an interpretation sensitive to the clause type?;

² I use the terms ‘dialect’ and ‘variety’ to express two separate concepts. On the one side, there are five dialects in Basque following the classification by Zuazo (2014); namely, Western, Central, Navarrese, Navarrese-Lapuradian and Zuberoan. Those three last ones are usually grouped under the term *eastern dialects*. I refer to such division by using the term ‘dialect’. On the other side, dialects commonly have subdialects or varieties and I make use of the second denomination when I deal with phenomena not extended to a whole dialect.

³ Speakers from those dialects whose phonological inventory lacks the aspiration pronounce the modal verb, modal particle and questions particle as [al]. Nevertheless, I follow the spelling rules by Euskaltzaindia (1987) in this article and write *ahal* for the modal verb and the modal particle and *al* for the question particle.

and b) do we consider that they are two separate particles and, if so, do they occupy the same syntactic position? Note that the particles *ahal* and *al* share basically the same syntactic properties. Nevertheless, they do not agree on their geographical and chronological distribution: whereas *ahal* is found in all varieties of Basque since the 15-16th centuries (the date of the first long written texts), *al* is used only in the central dialect, judging from written sources, since the end of the 19th century. This situation suggests that they may be diachronically related. Along these lines, I will look into their properties and argue that the former is related to the modal verb *ahal* ('to be able to, can') in Subsection 5.2 and the latter to the modal particle *ahal* in Section 6.⁴ The fairly close interpretation of the modal particle *ahal* 'maybe, certainty' and the modal verb *ahal* 'to be able to, can' reinforces the proposal on the source of the modal particle *ahal*. Moreover, further studies have postulated verbs as the origin of the modal particles *ei*, *omen* and *ote* (Lakarra 2019). Additionally, the proposal on the source of the question particle *al* finds parallelism cross-linguistically in languages such as German (Bayer 2012) or Dolomitic Ladin (Hack 2014). Hence, returning to the questions posed at the beginning, I propose, first, that the modal particles *ahal* and *al* are separate particles, at least in current Basque and, second, that they occupy distinct syntactic positions based on Roberts' (2021) idea that grammaticalised constituents occupy separate positions from the source, as I will argue below (§7).

The article continues as follows: in Section 2 I review some hypotheses on the origin of question and modal particles cross-linguistically; afterwards, in Section 3 I provide a brief introduction to the aspects of the Basque language dealt with in this paper to help the reader gain a better understanding of the data presented throughout the article. Following this, modal particles and their syntax are presented in Section 4. Section 5 deals with the differences between the modal verb *ahal* and the epistemic particle *ahal*, while focusing on the analysis of the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al* in Sec-

⁴ An anonymous reviewer wonders whether the particle *ahal* has ever functioned as a question particle. The answer would be no if we consider question particles as grammatical means to mark syntactically questions or those related to the performance of interrogatives. Nevertheless, the particle *ahal* can occur in questions as rhetorical and biased ones, besides declarative contexts. In such uses the particle conveys the speaker's attitude towards the proposition, unlike the particle *al* in the central dialect which makes no semantic contribution to the proposition (Euskaltzaindia 1987; Monforte 2020a).

In addition to this, the same reviewer inquires whether both particles are in use nowadays in the central dialect. Indeed, the use of the question particle *al* is far higher than the one of the epistemic particle *ahal*; the latter only keeps its use in some idioms such as 'I wish...' (a case of paradigmaticity following Lehmann (1985) and rhetorical question (although this may just be the question particle *al*). If we compare the use of *ahal* in the central dialect to that in eastern dialects, we can notice that it is not productive anymore as expected for a grammaticalised constituent.

tion 6. I propose a new syntactic analysis in Section 7 based on the evidence provided previously. Finally, I present some conclusions in Section 8.

2 HYPOTHESES ON THE ORIGIN OF MODAL AND QUESTION PARTICLES

Question and modal particles have been examined in detail not only in Romance and Germanic languages (Munaro & Poletto 2002; Zimmermann 2004; Zimmermann 2011; Coniglio 2008; Bayer & Obenauer 2011; Cardinaletti 2011; Struckmeier 2014; Döring 2016), but also Japanese, Quechua or Salish, a.o. (Faller 2002; Littell & Peterson 2010; Kuwabara 2013; Endo 2018). Those who have analysed question particles have mainly focused on their syntactic position (Cheng 1997; Li 2006; Prieto & Rigau 2007; Cruschina 2012; Kuwabara 2013; Lusini 2013; Mensching 2015). Bailey (2013) approaches this topic from an interesting perspective distinguishing a) question particles derived from disjunctions and negative particles, and b) those which are truly particles. Bailey makes that claim based on the fact that some question particles do not agree with the head-directionality parameter. According to Bailey (2013), this poses a problem for the Final-Over-Final Constraint (Sheehan, Biberauer, Roberts & Holmberg 2017); however, the matter is solved by assuming that those which do not follow the basic word order of the language in question are not question particles but disjunctive or negative particles which appear at the edge of the clause after one of the two options is elided:

- (5) a. $A \text{ or } B > \acute{A} \text{ or } B >$ (reanalysis) $Or_{[QP]}B$
 b. $A \text{ or } B > A \text{ or } \acute{B} >$ (reanalysis) $A \text{ or }_{[QP]}$

As for those particles which match the head-directionality parameter, Bailey (2013) states that they are true particles. Nevertheless, this statement makes one wonder what the origin of those true question particles could be.⁵ Recent proposals have pointed out that some question particles derived from modal particles after their semantics had been bleached out, e.g., Ladin *pa* or *po* (Hack 2014):

⁵ At this point, the following question may arise: what makes a particle be considered a question particle? Although that topic is beyond the scope of this article, I would like to mention the work by Xiang (2012): he claims that few question particles are truly syntactic means to mark a proposition as a question, since most of those so-called question particles are optional as the Italian *chi* (Cruschina 2012: 183), the Japanese *ka* (Kuwabara 2013) or the mandarin *ma* (Li 2006). Considering the functions described in the literature for those particles, those so-called questions particles may be related to a group of modal particles distinguished by Zimmermann (2011) and Gutzmann (2008; 2017), namely to those which make an independent contribution to the use-conditions of the sentence (Gutzmann 2008: 159) in contrast to those which directly modify the sentence mood.

- (6) a. *Olà vas=to pa?* (*Fodom, Pieve di Livinallongo*)
 where go.2SG=CL PART
 ‘Where are you going now (given that x has happened)?’
 ([Hack 2014: 54](#))
- b. *Ul’a vas=te *(pa)?* (*Badiot*)
 where go.2SG=CL PART
 ‘Where are you going now?’ ([Hack 2014: 55](#))

Concerning the origin of modal particles, several categories have been identified as their hypothetical source. On the one hand, adverbs, adjectives and conjunctions have been identified as the source of modal particles in Germanic languages ([Thurmair 1989](#); [Abraham 1991](#); [Struckmeier 2014](#)); e.g. German adj. *schon* / modal particle *schon*, adv. *wohl* / modal particle *wohl*, adv. *ja* / modal particle *ja* and adv. & conj. *doch* / modal particle *doch*.⁶ [Abraham \(1991\)](#) suggests that the development of modal particles is related to the occurrence of the middle field in Germanic languages (except English); this change on the status of adverbs or adjectives into modal particles arose by impoverishing their syntactic features and bleaching their semantics, the outcome of which was a more restricted syntax and more illocutive related function ([Heine 2003: 591](#)).

On the other hand, verbs have also been proposed as the origin of modal particles, for instance, in Italian ([Cardinaletti 2015](#)) or Dutch ([Haegeman 2014](#); [Van Bogaert & Leuschner 2015](#)). An example of Italian is shown in (7):

- (7) *L'avrà comprata, sai, forse, la casa.* [*sai_V* > *sai_{MP}*]
 CL.AUX bought PART perhaps ART house know PART
 ‘He perhaps bought the house, you know’ ([Cardinaletti 2015: 76](#))

In addition, some modal particles have been identified in Japanese ([Endo 2018](#)), and at least some of them apparently derive from verbs. For example, the current modal particle *sira* seems to be the result of the grammaticalisation of the older verb *kasiran* (‘I don’t know whether’):⁷

- (8) *Ara, megane-o doko-ni iota ka-sira to*
 oh glasses-ACC where-at put PART-PART FORCE
touta/zimonsita.
 asked/asked.self

⁶ Contrary to that hypothesis, [Coniglio \(2022\)](#) defends that German modal particles developed exclusively out of adverbs.

⁷ I would like to thank Prof. Nasu for providing me a detailed analysis of the verbal form and its historical development into a question particle and modal particle.

'I asked (myself) where I put my glasses.' (Endo 2018)

It is difficult to determine whether we are dealing with similar verbal constructions (bare verb vs. inflected verb) since the verbal morphology is very different (agglutinative, analytic, synthetic...); also, the status of these as modal particles is not clear to all and the debate about whether they are modal particles or discourse markers is one of the current issues on this topic, as Degand, Cornillie & Pietrandrea (2013) suggest. However, putting these issues aside, I would like to highlight that modal particles cannot only derive from adverbs, adjectives and conjunctions, but also from verbs.

To sum up, after having reviewed the main hypotheses on the origin of question particles and modal particles in this section, several options have been brought forward: a) question particles derive from disjunctive, negative or modal particles; b) current modal particles have their origin in adverbs, adjectives, conjunction or verbs. This means that a question particle could derive from a modal particle and that one from an adverb, conjunction or verb, i.e. adverb > modal particle > question particle. We find evidence of this process in German: the OHG adverb *thanne* became the modal particle *denn* and this made a step forward on the grammaticalisation path resulting into *-n* in Bavarian German (Wegener 2003; Bayer 2012).

In what follows, I will look into the relation among the modal verb *ahal*, the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al*, while having these diachronic change patterns in mind. Nevertheless, first, I will briefly introduce some relevant aspects of Basque grammar which may help better understand the data presented in subsequent sections.

3 SOME REMARKS ON THE BASQUE GRAMMAR

Basque is an isolated non-Indo-European language spoken in Western Europe. It is mostly classified as a head-final language, i.e. a SOV language; however, information structure can change this canonical order giving rise to other orders as SVO, VSO, OVS, etc. (de Rijk 1969: 319-352; Villasante 1980; Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003). Finite verbs are for the most part periphrastic, i.e. composed of a morphologically independent lexical verb carrying aspectual information and an auxiliary form bearing tense, mood and agreement with the arguments and, in some cases, also the addressee (Lizardi-Ituarte & Munduate 2015; Haddican 2018, among others), as shown in (9):

- (9) *Egunero ogia ekartzen*
 day.every bread.ABS bring.IPFV
d-Ø-i-gu-zu.
 PRS.REAL-3SG.ABS-ROOT-1PL.DAT-2SG.ERG
 ‘You bring us the bread everyday.’

The lexical verb and the inflected verb are usually adjacent; for instance, adverbs cannot intervene between them:⁸

- (10) *Ogia ekartzen (*egunero) diguzu.*
 bread.ABS bring.IPFV day.every AUX
 ‘Intended reading: You bring us the bread everyday.’

Nevertheless, the adjacency between lexical verb and the inflected verb is broken in some contexts such as in negative (main) clauses:

- (11) *Ez_i diguzu_j egunero ogirik ekartzen t_i t_j.*
 NOT AUX day.every bread.PRTV bring.IPFV
 ‘You don’t bring us bread everyday.’

As can be noted in (11), the negative morpheme and the auxiliary appear fronted at the beginning of the clause (although other constituents such as *wh*-words, subjects, or topics may precede them).

In addition to contexts that trigger the movement of the finite verb, clauses containing modal particles also disrupt this adjacency. This is because the canonical position of modal particles in declarative sentences is between the lexical and auxiliary verbs:

- (12) *Ikasle guztiek liburua irakurri omen dute.*
 student all.ERG book.ABS read PART AUX
 ‘All students reportedly read the book’

Apart from periphrastic verbal forms, there are also other forms which provide the same information (aspect, tense, mood and agreement with the arguments and, in some cases, also the addressee) as periphrastic ones but realised in a single constituent, namely synthetic verbs. About 12 verbs can be synthetic in current Basque but only when the aspect is punctual and, in some cases, similar to a progressive construction (Laka 1996):

⁸ For the sake of simplicity, details related to the composition of auxiliary verbs are omitted throughout the article.

- (13) *Aitak hori da-Ø-kar-ki-gu-Ø.*
 father.ERG that.ABS PRS-3SG.ABS-BRING-DAT.FLAG-1PL.DAT.3SG.ERG
 ‘Dad is bringing us that.’

Having introduced those aspects of the Basque grammar relevant for the discussion ahead, I will proceed to analyse modal particles and their behaviour in the next section.

4 THE SYNTAX OF BASQUE MODAL PARTICLES

In the previous section I have shown that lexical and finite verbs are not always adjacent. This non-adjacency arises not only when the latter moves to the left periphery in certain contexts, as in negative main clauses, but also when some constituents traditionally labelled as modal particles occur. Based on their function, those elements have received the name of modal particles probably following the German tradition; also, they have been grouped together according to their similar syntactic behaviour. Below I give an example to illustrate the properties described so far:

- (14) *Xabierrek Areetan lan egiten ei du.*
 Xabier.ERG Areeta.LOC work do.IPFV PART AUX
 ‘Reportedly, Xabier works in Areeta.’

As can be observed in (14), the particle occurs between the lexical verb carrying the aspectual marker *-ten* (‘*lan egiten*’) and the finite verb (‘*du*’). Placing particles in any other position yields ungrammatical outputs:

- (15) *(*ei) Ikasleak (*ei) etxera (*ei) etorri ei dira (*ei).*
 PART students.ABS PART home.ALL PART COME PART AUX PART
 Intended reading: ‘The students reportedly came home.’

Apart from being classified under a single group, it has been suggested that these particles occupy the same syntactic position (Albizu 1991; Elordieta 1997; Elordieta 2001; Haddican 2008; Arregi & Nevins 2012; Monforte 2018) since they seem to be in complementary distribution, shown in (1).

Other syntactic-morphological properties of modal particles are: a) they do not appear in non-inflected contexts; and b) they attach to the finite verb. Moreover, modal particles move along with finite verbs in negative (main) sentences:⁹

⁹ Regardless of whether the sentence is a question, one can consistently see modal particles moving with the finite verb in negative (main) contexts

- (16) Ez_i al_j $duzu_k$ $egunkaria$ $erosi$ t_i t_j t_k ?
 not PART AUX newspaper.ABS buy
 ‘Didn’t you buy the newspaper?’

If the particle stayed *in situ* following the lexical verb, where it appears in neutral positive declarative contexts, the sentence in (17) would become ungrammatical:

- (17) * Ez_i $duzu_j$ $egunkaria$ $erosi$ t_i al t_j ?
 not AUX newspaper.ABS buy PART
 Intended reading: ‘Didn’t you buy the newspaper?’

Based on the behavior mentioned above and further described by previous literature (Euskaltzaindia 1987; Albizu 1991; Monforte 2020a; a.o.), it is suggested that modal particles and finite verbs form a morphological word, following Elordieta’s (1997) terminology. Furthermore, they are claimed to occupy a head position in a phrase located between TP and vP (Elordieta 1997; Elordieta 2001; Monforte 2018; 2020a).¹⁰ Note that these properties hold for all modal particles mentioned above, i.e. *ahal*, *al*, *bide*, *ei*, *omen* and *ote*.

The following sections will be focused only on two of those particles, the homophonic *ahal* and *al*. First, I take a look into the modal verb *ahal* and the relevant and homophonous modal particle, namely the epistemic *ahal* (§5) and, afterward, the two modal particles, i.e. the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al* will be examined in Section 6.

5 THE MODAL VERB AND THE EPISTEMIC PARTICLE

In this section, I compare the behaviour of modal particles to modal verbs. After remarking their separate behaviour regarding some general and specific properties (§5.1), I shall defend the idea that the epistemic particle *ahal* derives from the modal verb *ahal* (§5.2), based on its own particular behaviour.

5.1 Differences between modal verbs and modal particles

I will first introduce three properties of modal verbs that distinguish them from modal particles in general. There are three modal verbs in Basque: *ahal* (expressing possibility), *behar* (related to necessity) and *nahi/gura/gogo* (conveying volition). They behave differently compared to lexical verbs since, for instance, modal verbs do not have to take the morpheme *-t(z)en* to mark imperfectiveness; examples (18 and 19) illustrate the point:

¹⁰ See Monforte 2018; 2020a for a deeper analysis of their properties.

- (18) *Okindegi horretan ogia erosten dut.*
 bakery that.LOC bread.ABS buy.IPFV AUX
 'I buy bread in that bakery.'
- (19) a. *Okindegi horretan ogia erosi nahi dut.*
 bakery that.LOC bread.ABS buy want AUX
 'I want to buy bread in that bakery.'
- b. **Okindegi horretan ogia erosi nahitzen dut.*
 bakery that.LOC bread.ABS buy want.IPFV AUX

Modal verbs belong to a class of verbs referred to as 'compound verbs' which use the form 'noun + copula' to mark aspectual differences such as perfect or prospective (Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 200; Jendraschek 2014: 11):

- (20) a. *Okindegi horretan ogia erosi nahi izan dut/ nuen.*
 bakery that.LOC bread.ABS buy want have AUX AUX
 'I wanted to buy bread in that bakery.'
- b. *Okindegi horretan ogia erosi nahi izango dut.*
 bakery that.LOC bread.ABS buy want have.PROSP AUX
 'I'll want to buy bread in that bakery.'

However, in the case of the prospective morpheme *-ko*, this may appear attached directly to the modal verb more frequently, but not exclusively, in colloquial speech:

- (21) *Okindegi horretan ogia erosi nahiko dut.*
 bakery that.LOC bread.ABS buy want.PROSP AUX
 'I'll want to buy bread in that bakery.'

The modal verb *ahal* ('can, be able to') shows dialectal variation concerning this topic. In eastern dialects the lexical verb takes the imperfective morpheme *-t(z)en*, unlike western dialects where no morpheme is needed:

- (22) a. Eastern dialects:
- Dirua dudanez, ogia erosten ahal dut.*
 money.ABS have.COMP bread.ABS buy.IPFV can AUX

b. Western and central dialects:

Dirua dudanez, ogia erosi ahal dut.
 money.ABS have.COMP bread.ABS buy can AUX
 ‘Since I have money, I can buy bread.’

This aspectual morpheme is even present in Eastern Basque when the aspect is prospective and its corresponding morpheme *-ko* appears attached to the modal verb:

(23) a. Eastern dialects:

Dirua dudanez, kotxe bat erosten ahalko dut.
 money.ABS have.COMP car one buy.IPFV can.PROSP AUX

b. Western and central dialects:

Dirua dudanez, kotxe bat erosi ahalko dut.
 money.ABS have.COMP car one buy can.PROSP AUX
 ‘Since I have money, I’ll be able to buy a car.’

As can be seen in (23), the morpheme *-ko* can directly adjoin to the modal verb. If we observe the distribution of the aspectual marker *-t(z)en* and the prospective marker *-ko*, we notice that the pattern described above for modal verbs diverges from the behaviour modal particles have. Modal particles never receive the aspectual or prospective morphemes attached to them; in such cases, those markers must be always affixed to the main verb, as shown in (24):

(24) a. **Bihar heldu omengo da.*
 tomorrow arrive PART.PROSP AUX

b. *Bihar helduko omen da.*
 tomorrow arrive.PROSP PART AUX
 ‘Reportedly, s/he’ll arrive here tomorrow.’

Another important property concerns the combination of modal verbs and modal particles with synthetic verbs. Synthetic verbs do not occur when a modal verb is present; however, modal particles can attach to synthetic verbs just as they do with finite verbs, as illustrated in (25) and (26):

- (25) a. *Nik jakin ahal dut.*
 I.ERG know/find.out can AUX
 ‘I can find out.’
- b. **Nik ahal dakit. (ahal = modal verb)*
 I.ERG can KNOW
 Intended reading: ‘I can know it.’

- (26) *Nik ahal dakit. (ahal = modal particle)*
 I.ERG PART KNOW
 ‘What do I know!’

Finally, another characteristic to take into consideration has to do with the change of order found in some contexts such as negative (main) clauses described above in Section 3. In this case, modal verbs behave like lexical verbs since they stay *in situ* in those contexts where the inflected verb is fronted and, therefore, no longer adjacent to the main verb, shown in (27).

- (27) a. *Ez_i du_j egunkaria erosi nahi t_i t_j.*
 not AUX newspaper.ABS buy want
 ‘S/he doesn’t want to buy the newspaper.’
- b. * *Ez_i nahi_j du_k egunkaria erosi t_i t_j t_k.*
 not want AUX newspaper.ABS buy
 Intended reading: ‘S/he doesn’t want to buy the newspaper.’

This contrasts with the behavior of modal particles which move along with the finite verb (16) as explained in Section 4.

To sum up, in this section I have provided evidence to argue that modal verbs and modal particles do not behave in a similar way syntactically: a) the position of the prospective marker *-ko*; b) the combination with synthetic verbs; and c) the distribution in contexts where the inflected verb moves. Contrary to the idea claimed by Wilbur (1981) and Eguzkitza (1991), these data suggest that they do not form a single category but two separate categories, i.e. modal verbs and modal particles. Furthermore, their scope in questions or negated propositions differs but it agrees with what it is expected for both classes: whereas the scope of the interrogative operator or negation is over modal verbs, modal particles have scope over the interrogative operator and the negation, illustrated in (28):¹¹

11 In western dialects the modal verb *ahal* takes a different form in negative contexts: whereas in eastern dialects it behaves as the other modal verbs and *ahal* stays *in situ*, in western dialects *ahal* does not occur, instead of it the negative modal verb *ezin* (‘cannot’) is used:

- (28) a. *Ez gara doktoregaiak laster ateratzen ahalko.*
 not AUX PhD.student.ABS soon leave.IPFV can.PROSP
 ‘We, PhD students, cannot leave soon.’ (Reading: ‘It is not true that it is possible for the PhD students to leave soon’ but *‘It is possible that it is not true that PhD students leave soon’.)
- b. *Ez ahal gara doktoregaiak laster aterako.*
 not PART AUX PhD.student.ABS soon leave.PROSP
 ‘I wish PhD students won’t leave soon.’ (Reading: ‘I do hope that it is not true that PhD students will leave soon’ but *‘It is not true that I do hope that PhD students will leave soon’.)

Table 1 sums up the discussion so far.

Table 1: Differences between the modal verb and modal particle

| | Aspect (also prospective) | Synthetic verbs | Fronting with finite verb | Scope over negation & Q |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| ahal _{MV} | ✓ | X | X | X |
| ahal _{MP} | X | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

The distribution with respect to aspect and negation motivates two distinguished syntactic positions, since *ahal* preceding the prospective marker or the negation only allows the modal verb reading, while *ahal* following the prospective marker or the negation yields a modal particle interpretation:

- (29) i. **ahal** - prospective marker - negation - aux → modal verb
 ii. Prospective marker - negation - **ahal** - aux → modal particle

If we consider their interpretation too, they should be classified within separate categories. However, this is not an easy task in contexts such as:

- (30) a. *Etxera joan [al] da.*
 home.ALL go EPIS AUX
-
- (i) *Ez naiz joaten ahal.* (eastern dialects)
 not AUX go.IPFV can
 ‘I cannot go.’
- (ii) *Ezin naiz joan.* (western dialects)
 cannot AUX go
 ‘I cannot go.’

Nevertheless, the argument regarding the separate interpretations stands. Examples like (28) and (32) would belong to eastern dialects.

'I wish s/he had gone home.'

b. *Etxera joan [al] da?*
home.ALL go Q AUX
'Did s/he go home?'

c. *Etxera joan [al] da.*
home.ALL go can AUX
'S/he can go home.'

Syntactic properties do not lead the addressee to one of the three possible readings shown in (30). Setting aside a detailed semantic analysis, which is beyond the scope of this paper, I will present two arguments to consider modal verbs and modal particles as two separate categories in terms of their interpretation. On the one hand, modal particles are difficult to translate literally into other languages, unlike other categories (Cardinaletti 2011; Müller-Carstens 2014: 8; Gutzmann 2017; among others). We find a similar situation regarding *ahal*: when it behaves as a modal verb, the English modal verb 'can/ to be able to' seems a good counterpart, whereas the epistemic particle *ahal* should be paraphrased by using a more complex structure such as 'I do hope/ I wish/ hopefully to me', as shown in (31).¹²

- (31) a. *Oporretan joan ahal da.*
holidays.LOC go can AUX
'S/he can go on holidays (her/ his boss allowed it.)'
- b. *Oporretan joan ahal da.*
holidays.LOC go PART AUX
'I do hope s/he went on holidays (I really needed a break from her/ him, s/he's so annoying).' or 'Certainly s/he went on holidays (s/he is so noisy, I can tell when s/he's at home).'

On the other hand, modal verbs show consistent meaning across clause types, while the interpretation of modal particles varies depending on the clause type in which they occur, as illustrated in (32):

- (32) a. *Diruak ongi gordetzen ahal dituzu, bestela...*
money.ABS well keep.IPFV PART AUX otherwise
'You better keep the money well, otherwise...' (Goenaga 2002: 265)

¹² Henceforth, I will refer to the modal particle as the epistemic particle to facilitate comprehension.

- b. *Jauna, zu zunbait izpiritu gaixto ahal zira.*
 sir you.ABS some spirit bad PART be
 ‘Sir, without doubt, you’re a bad spirit!’ (Arocena 1961)
- c. *Hik, ba ahal dituk etsaiak?*
 YOU.ERG CL PART have enemiesABS
 ‘You really have enemies?’ (Etxamendi 1962: 104)

In fact, this property complicates their translation. As observed above, I have provided several paraphrases for the epistemic particle *ahal*. Its interpretation is usually similar to the English ‘I wish’ in predicates containing the prospective marker. However, it can also be closer to ‘hopefully’ or ‘certainly’ in contexts compounded by a synthetic verb. Additionally, it often receives a rhetorical or biased reading in questions.

After having identified the syntactic and interpretative differences between the modal verb *ahal* and the modal particle expressing epistemicity *ahal*, I will discuss their historical relation below.

5.2 The grammaticalisation process from *ahal*_{MV} to *ahal*_{MP}

Below, I propose that the epistemic particle *ahal* is historically related to the modal verb *ahal*. In this case, the modal verb *ahal* would have grammaticalised into the epistemic particle *ahal*. I have demonstrated above in Section 2 that such changes do arise cross-linguistically; as in the case of the Japanese verb *kasiran*, which has been reanalysed as the modal particle *sira*, and the question particle *ka* in present-day Japanese.

In addition to typological data, evidence from Basque itself leads us in the same direction. In the previous subsection I have argued that the modal verb *ahal* and the epistemic particle *ahal* do not share the same interpretation. Nevertheless, I have also stated that they may be ambiguous in some contexts, especially if the syntax does not help to distinguish them, as shown in (33).

- (33) *Etxera joan [al] da.* (= 30)
 home.ALL go EPIS AUX
 ‘I do hope s/he’s gone home. vs. S/he can go home.’

This reinforces the hypothesis that they are related. If we look at their historical use, we notice that the modal verb and the modal particle both appear from the first texts dating from the 15-16th centuries and, hence, it is impossible to corroborate that the modal verb *ahal* preceded the modal particle *ahal* due to the lack of data. Nevertheless, there are some indications

which suggest that this may have happened, given that the modal verb *ahal* has specialised more and more to mark the deontic and dynamic modality. Following Jendraschek (2003: 264), the change would have begun during the 16-17th centuries when the possibility was marked by the combination of the morpheme *-ke-* and *ahal*: the former conveyed a meaning of irrealis, futurity or a non-factive interpretation (Rebuschi 1984: 188; Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 212, 246) and the latter would have helped to disambiguate the interpretation of *-ke-* in favor of the dynamic possibility (and, not for instance, futurity). Mounole (2011) also claims that *ahal* and *-ke-* combined to mark possibility during the 15-16th centuries. Nevertheless, she provides evidence that *-ke-* did not occur in embedded contexts and *ahal* was the only means to express 'can, to be able to'. This may be related to the fact that epistemic readings are not available in all embedded contexts and, hence, no ambiguity could arise. Over time *ahal* ended up being enough to mark possibility and mainly deontic and dynamic meanings. In fact, as Mounole (2011: 130) and Balza (2018: 100-101) state, that modal verbs are polyfunctionals is not surprising and this polyfunctionality would lead to the grammaticalisation of certain uses (de Haan and Hansen apud Balza 2018: 101). It is not surprising that the split of the modal verb *ahal* and the epistemic particle *ahal* arose in those centuries since, as Mounole (2011) states, Basque underwent a complete restructuring of the TAM system during that time. Those changes caused the spread of the current system to mark possibility and, consequently, the rise of such system would have brought the increasing number of ambiguous contexts between the modal verb and the epistemic particle. Therefore, the two interpretations of the modal verb *ahal* (dynamic/deontic and epistemic) co-existed side by side until the epistemic interpretation conventionalised into a separate syntactic element (the modal particle *ahal*) and, thus, the modal verb *ahal* narrowed to the dynamic/deontic meanings (a case of divergence following Heine's (2003: 589) terminology).¹³ In fact, it seems pretty rare for the modal verb *ahal* to express epistemic possibility nowadays. Mounole (2011: 328) claims that the clitic *-ke-* is still used to mark the hypothetical potential as in the old system found in the 15-16th centuries. Thus, the clitic *-ke-* (34a) and the epistemic particle *ahal* (34b) are two ways to express epistemicity nowadays alongside with adverbs (34c) (Altube 1930):

- (34) a. *Gaur ekarri a(ha)l du.*
 today bring PART AUX

13 Whether the epistemic reading developed from the dynamic or deontic one or viceversa is not clear since ambiguities do not help us clarifying which path was taken in the grammaticalisation process (Ziegeler 2010). Cross-linguistic data demonstrate that deontic modals can be the source or result of the grammaticalisation of the epistemic ones (Ziegeler 2016).

- b. *Gaur ekarri duke.*
 today bring AUX
- c. *Gaur ekarri du hurrean.*
 today bring AUX apparently
 ‘S/he brought it today, apparently.’

Additionally, we can imagine that plausible contexts located in the past as ‘they could have paid for it’ would have induced the shift of the modal verb to the modal particle since the ambiguity between root/ dynamic modality and epistemic modality is higher in such structures. Speakers may have reanalysed *ahal* as a modal particle based on the fact that Basque already expressed the speaker’s attitude towards the proposition by using modal particles (the epistemic particle *bide* and *ote*, and the evidential ones *ei* and *omen*).

- (35) i. They could have paid for it (giving x information, they would have been able to pay for it).
 ii. They could have paid for it (according to the speaker’s point of view, they would probably have paid for it).

Therefore, the pragmatic component was crucial for the process to succeed, i.e. the appropriate pragmatic contexts would have helped extend *ahal* to more subjective uses and the subsequent accretion of such uses would have triggered the change from *ahal*_{MV} to *ahal*_{MP}. Such cases have been classified within the context model in the literature (Heine 2003: 587).

In conclusion, it is not surprising that *ahal* has developed a specific syntactic behaviour to convey a more complex or ambiguous function related to epistemicity (Wegener 2003: 382).

Moreover, the fact that it shows a imprecise interpretation, in contrast to the verb *ahal*, aligns not only with the description of modal particles (Gutzmann 2017) but also with the features typically associated with constituents that have undergone a grammaticalisation (or pragmaticalisation) process. Wegener (2003: 382) claims that the semantic bleaching of modal particles comes with an increase of their illocutionary and epistemic functions (cf. Heine 2003: 579). Furthermore, the constrained syntax of the epistemic particle *ahal*, unlike the modal verb *ahal*, also suggests that we are dealing with a grammaticalised element; as demonstrated in Section 4 and Subsection 5.1, modal particles are not independent words since they need to be attached to a finite verb so that the two of them form a morphonological word. The restriction to adjoin aspect markers also points out in favour of a simpler syntax.

epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al* and pinpoint their distinctive characteristics.

6 THE MODAL PARTICLE *AHAL* AND QUESTION PARTICLE *AL*

Although the epistemic and question particles behave similarly in the syntactic contexts presented in Section 4, upon closer examination, it can be noted that they also show distinguished and independent characteristics, which suggest a separate analysis. The main difference between these particles is their contribution to the proposition. The descriptions found in the majority of grammars point out that they play a very different role in the sentence: whereas *ahal* conveys the speaker's high degree of commitment towards the proposition, *al* is claimed to mark the proposition as a polar question, although it is not obligatory, as is the case in other languages (Li 2006; Cruschina 2012; Kuwabara 2013; Hack 2014; Mensching 2015). Therefore, *ahal* can be compared to what traditionally has been named a *modal particle* and *al* should be identified with question particles since it lacks proper meaning and its function is more related to the performative field.¹⁴ Additionally, the question particle *al* is restricted to polar questions; meanwhile the epistemic *ahal* can occur in declarative contexts as well as in biased and rhetorical polar questions. If we adopt the idea that *al* derives from *ahal*, the fact that *al* is used exclusively in polar questions is not surprising, as the hypothetical historically related *ahal* is limited to this type of interrogative clause.

- (37) *Baina erradazu, nere emaztea bizi ahal da?*
 but tell.1SG.DAT.2SG.ERG my wife.ABS live PART AUX
 'But tell me, my wife lives, right?' (Larzabal 1991)

This accounts for the restriction of the question particle *al* to occur only in polar questions, since the contribution of *ahal* is built on declarative clauses or rising declarative questions, i.e. completed propositions. The reanalysis of its function in such contexts would have resulted in the question particle *al* and this would have limited its use to questions which only lack the yes/no value, excluding it from constituent questions. Thus, the grammaticalisation of the particle *ahal* brought not only the loss of the epistemic contribution in favour of a more performative function, but also the generalisation of the

¹⁴ Two groups can be distinguished within modal particles: evaluative-evidential-epistemic particles and performative ones (Rooryck 2001; Gutzmann 2017). The former convey the speaker's attitude, point of view or the source of information. The latter play a role in the interaction between speaker/addressee and speech-act.

particle in a specific syntactic context it already occurred at, namely in polar questions.

Those are the most obvious distinct grammatical characteristics between the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al*. Nevertheless, a closer look into their syntactic behaviour shows that they also have slight differences in that field. First, the use of question particles is banned in clauses with no illocutionary force; for instance, *al* cannot be used in Noun Complement Clauses selected by saying or asking nouns (see 38a); the epistemic particles (*ahal* and *ote*), however, can (see 38b & c).^{15,16}

- (38) a. *Etorriko (*al) den galdera ez zaio batere gustatu.*
 come.PROSP PART AUX.COMP question.ABS not AUX at.all
 like
 ‘S/he didn’t at all like the question whether s/he will come here.’
- b. *Horretaz oroit ahal den segurtasunaz mintzatu behar du.*
 this.INS remember PART AUX.COMP security.INS talk
 must AUX
 ‘S/he must talk about it showing the security that s/he certainly remembers it.’

15 Also, the same pattern is found in clauses embedded under belief and knowledge (Dor 2005: 352) or attitude/opinion predicates (Döring 2007: 24): whereas the use of *ahal* and *ote* is felicitous, *al* cannot occur in such contexts, as shown in ((ii)).

- (i) *Ez dakit etorri (*al) den.*
 not know come PART AUX.COMP
 ‘I don’t know whether s/he came here.’
- (ii) % *Etzakiñat errentie paatzeko aillauko a(ha)l tzakun.*
 not.know rent.ABS pay.NMLZ.GEN arrive.PROSP PART AUX.COMP
 ‘I don’t know if we’ll have enough money to pay the rent.’ (Castillo & Giralt 2001: 51)
- (iii) *Ez dakit etorri ote den.*
 not know come PART AUX.COMP
 ‘I don’t know whether s/he may have come here.’

Nevertheless, the use of *ahal* in predicates as ((ii)) is not accepted by all speakers. As can be observed in some varieties the difference of the particle *ahal* and *ote* may not be always clear; therefore, the contribution of *ahal* may be more *ote*-like depending on the varieties. Also, note that the use of *ahal* as a modal particle is in decline since it only keeps its full use in Navarrese-Lapurcian Basque nowadays.

16 Since eastern dialects keep the different uses of the epistemic particle *ahal* better, examples regarding this particle have been mostly gathered in such dialects.

- c. *Etorriko ote den galdera ez zaio batere gustatu.*
 come.PROSP PART AUX.COMP question.ABS not AUX at.all
 like
 ‘S/he didn’t like at all the question whether s/he may come here.’

Furthermore, the question particle, unlike the epistemic particle, cannot occur in clauses where the vP is elided as in:

- (39) A: *Sveniak azterketa gainditu du.*
 Svenia.ERG exam.ABS pass AUX
 A: ‘Svenia passed the exam.’

- B: **Al duzu? (Zuk?/ Zuk gainditu al duzu?)*
 PART AUX YOU.ERG YOU.ERG pass PART AUX
 B: ‘What about you? / Did you?’

- (40) A: *Gero euzkie aterako do berriz.*
 later sun.ABS come.out.PROSP AUX apparently
 A: ‘Apparently, the sun will shine later.’

- B: *Ahal do!*
 PART AUX
 B: ‘I do hope so!’ (Olano 1998: 103)

In the case of example (40) the hearer has no problem to interpret that the elided vP corresponds to the previously uttered clause [the sun will shine later] and, therefore, the proposition can be rescued and (40B) understood as the speaker’s wish for sun. This difference, however, may be more related to the interpretative contribution of the particle i.e. the fact that *al* does not express mood or modality. In fact, modal verbs, and also the modal particle *ote*, can occur in such contexts conveying their contribution to a previously uttered context:

- (41) *Nik ezin dut hori egin, baina zuk ahal duzu.*
 I.ERG cannot AUX that.ABS do but YOU.ERG can AUX
 ‘I cannot do that but you can.’

(42) A: *Gaur hotz itzela egiten dau.*
today cold huge.ABS do.IPFV AUX

A: 'It's really cold today.'

B: *Ete dauen ba!*
PART AUX.COMP PART

B: 'Indeed!'

Considering these data, I adopt the idea that the question particle *al* is the result of the grammaticalisation of the epistemic particle *ahal* based on a) the restriction of *al* to occur only in polar questions, unlike *ahal* which can appear in declaratives and polar questions; b) the constrained use of *al* to contexts containing illocutionary force (inquiring, ordering, offering...), unlike *ahal*; c) the performative function of *al* compared to the interpretative contribution of *ahal*; and d) the pragmatic gain or extension of contexts where *al* can occur in contrast to *ahal*. In addition to the typological evidence discussed in Section 2 regarding the origin of question particles, *al* is the morphophonologically, syntactically and semantically reduced version of *ahal*, as its restriction concerning clause types and its lack of meaning suggest.

Another piece of evidence in favour of this hypothesis has to do with the history and geographical spread of these particles. Firstly, looking at their history, the epistemic particle *ahal* is older than the question particle *al*. On the one hand, the first attestation of *ahal* brings us back to the very first texts written in Basque, i.e. the 15-16th century. On the other hand, the question particle unmistakably appears for the first time in theater plays written at the end of the 19th century. In addition to this, they do not agree on their geographical spread either: whereas there is evidence of the epistemic *ahal* all over the country, the question particle *al* is limited to the central dialect.

Consequently, I hypothesise that the homophony between the epistemic particle and the question particle is due to a historical change, as the epistemic particle *ahal* can be regarded as the origin of the question particle *al*. However, that change from modal particle to question particle would have arisen gradually; it seems that the transitional step from modal particles to question particle can be currently found in Navarrese-Lapuradian Basque. Speakers of this dialect use the particle *ahal* in polarity questions to form biased questions, as suggested by Lafitte (1944).¹⁷ Considering Heine's (2003: 589-590)

¹⁷ Lafitte (1944: 99) included the particle *ahal* within the interrogative markers in his grammar of Basque based on the Navarrese-Lapuradian dialect. He distinguishes the use of *ahal* from the one of the question particle *-a*, only used in the eastern dialects: whereas the latter is employed to form polarity questions, the former adds a connotation to the proposition as if the speaker

hypothesis that grammaticalisation arises gradually and that the grammaticalised and the ungrammaticalised constituents coexist during a period of time until they are no longer ambiguous (i.e. $A > A, B > B$), I hypothesise that the ungrammaticalised particle *ahal* and the grammaticalised particle *al* coexisted in the central dialect. However, since only the grammaticalised particle exists in present day, the epistemic particle *ahal* would have disappeared or, more precisely, specialised to specific paradigms, such as desiderative clauses expressing wishes. The fact that the question particle *al* does not contribute semantically to the proposition compared to the modal particle *ahal* (dese-manticisation) and that *al* is used in a wider range of questions in contrast to *ahal* (extension) reinforces the idea of such grammaticalisation.

Hence, this change suggests that the syntactic and interpretative properties of the question particle *al* are more impoverished in comparison to *ahal*, and also the other modal particles such as *omen* and *ote*.

In the next section I will examine how the three kinds of *ahal* are distributed along the syntactic structure bearing their distinctive properties in mind.

7 THE SYNTAX OF BASQUE MODAL PARTICLES

The question relating to the position of the three types of *ahal* is addressed in this section. Separate phrases for modal verbs and modal particles seem to be motivated since aspect and negation draw the border between both categories. If we adopt the idea that grammaticalised elements reanalysed into a different position in the syntactic structure (Roberts & Roussou 2003; Roberts 2021; Biberauer & Sheehan 2011), we expect the epistemic particle *ahal* to occupy a separate position from the modal verb *ahal*. Indeed, this hypothesis is supported by the distinction between the modal verb *ahal* and the epistemic particle *ahal*. Considering their distinguished patterns described in Section 5, I observe the following distribution: the prospective marker follows the modal verb but precedes modal particles. Negation shows the same distribution, if we adopt the analysis by Ortiz de Urbina (1989; 2002: 767) and Arriortua (2017) who locate NegP between the AspectIP and TP. I summarise the distribution of those elements in the sentence as follows:

- (43) Verb - imperfect/perfect - *ahal*_{MV} - prospective marker - negation -
*ahal*_{MP} - auxiliary

were inviting the addressee to evaluate it. Indeed, the contribution of *ahal* according to Laffite seems to be *j'espere* ('I hope'), *je pense* ('I think'). Based on that, I assume he meant that *ahal* was used to direct the commitment towards the proposition. In other words, that *ahal* was an epistemic particle which may be used in questions.

This distribution recalls Cinque’s (1999) cartographic proposal. Based on the distribution of adverbs and heads in typologically different languages, he draws the hypothetical universal spine of categories above VP and their hierarchy. In what concerns us, Cinque (1999: 106) defends the following configuration:

- (44) Mood SpeechAct > Mood Evaluative > Mood Evidential > Mood Epistemic > T(Past) > T(Future) > Mood Irrealis > (...) Asp Perfect > (...) Asp Durative > Mood root > V

Basque is a head-final language, therefore, we expect its distribution to be the mirror image of (44). That agrees in general terms with the structure suggested by the data presented in this article: the modal verb *ahal* is above the lexical verb and below aspectual markers, while the epistemic particle *ahal* is above them. Furthermore, Cinque (1999: 78) states that epistemic marking is located not only higher than root modal and aspect but also higher than negation. This patterns again with our data, as shown in (45) and (46).

- (45) a. *Etxera joan ahalko da.*
 home.ALL go can.FUT AUX
 ‘S/he’ll be able to go home’
 b. $[TP[FutP[MVP[VP\ joan_V] [ahal_{MV}] [ko_{Fut}]] [da_T]]$
- (46) a. *Etxera joango ahal da.*
 home.ALL go.FUT PART AUX
 ‘I wish s/he had gone home’
 b. $[TP[EpistP[FutP[VP\ joan_V] [go_{Fut}] [ahal_{Epist}]] [da_T]]$

As for the epistemic particle and the question particle, there is *a priori* no clear syntactic reason to locate them in separate positions, as they cannot occur together in the one sentence. I have argued that they do not belong to the same group, as has been traditionally claimed, and form two separate categories based on a) their behaviour to occur in contexts with no illocutionary force and b) their distinct semantic contributions (*ahal* conveys epistemicity, while *al* is closer to a speech-act performative marker). If we assume that elements related to the Speech-Act occupy higher syntactic positions than those conveying evidentiality, epistemicity and evaluation, we could apply such a distribution to our particles *ahal* and *al*.

- (47) a. *Etxera joango ahal da.*
 home.ALL go.FUT PART AUX

'I wish s/he had gone home'

b. $[TP[EpistP[FutP[VP\ joan_V] [go_{Fut}] [ahal_{Epist}] [da_T]]]$

(48) a. *Etxera joango al da?*
 home.ALL go.FUT PART AUX
 'Will s/he to go home'

b. $[TP[QuestionparticleP[FutP[VP\ joan_V] [go_{Fut}] [al_{Questionparticle}]] [da_T]]]$

Therefore, I hypothesise that *al* occupies a phrase similar to the Speech-Act Phrase, a higher phrase in Cinque's (1999) distribution, since its function is related to that, i.e. the speech-act. Kuong (2008) and Corr (2015; 2016) also assign a similar position to particles related to precisely the speech-act, namely the Outer Particle Phrase and High Speech-Act Phrase respectively. Note that, on interpretative grounds, the hierarchy between the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al* is motivated, because those which signal evidentiality, epistemicity or evaluation on behalf of the speaker interact with the proposition by adding their value before speakers indicate what they want addressees to perform with that proposition. Alternatively put, the epistemic particle *ahal* is lower than the question particle *al* since the interrogative interpretation is built above the proposition included the speaker's attitude or evaluation. Otherwise, incorporating the speaker's attitude into an interrogative would not change the proposition's modality, leading to a functional conflict.

Nevertheless, such hypotheses (Kuong 2008; Corr 2015) are not only based on pragmatic grounds. Indeed, particles display a very strict order among themselves cross-linguistically. Based on the linear distribution of particles in Cantonese, Kuong (2008) comes up with the terms 'inner particle' and 'outer particle': the former conveys mood or modality and the latter the sentential force:

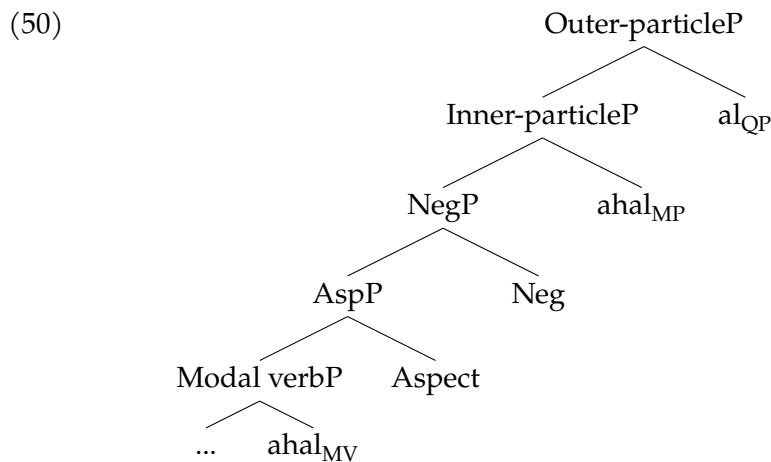
(49) Cantonese

*Keoi5 maai5 lau2 laa3 me1/ *me1 laa3?*
 bera erosi pisu PART AUX PART PART
 'Pisua erosi du dagoeneko?' (Kuong 2008: 729)

A similar structure has been proposed by Speas & Tenny (2003), Heim, Keupdjio, Lam, Osa-Gómez, Thoma & Wiltschko (2016), Wiltschko (2017), Frey (2018) and Corr (2015; 2016). Hence, the hierarchy between the epistemic

particle *ahal* and the question particle *al* is not only well-founded on pragmatic grounds, but also attested cross-linguistically.

The following diagram sums up the proposal presented here concerning the syntactic position of the three *ahal*, each of them occupy the head position of three separate phrases:



The distribution sketched in (50) raises the following question: could the modal verb *ahal*, the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al* occur in the same clause? The answer is no. First, the incompatibility between the modal verb *ahal* and the epistemic particle *ahal* seems to be related to the tendency of languages to avoid cacophony, i.e. the repetition of the same syllable as in [al al].¹⁸ Second, the combination between the epistemic particle *ahal* and the question particle *al* is out since they do not share the same syntactic and/ or pragmatic environment (declarative clauses and rising declarative questions vs. polar questions). Finally, in the central dialect where the question particle *al* is productive, the modal verb *ahal* is not used to express possibility. Instead, the structure *-t(z)ea eduki/egon* is used, which combines the verb *to have (got)* or *to stay/be* with the lexical verb nominalised with the absolutive case. Thus, although the syntax structure permits it, these three constituents cannot occur together, possibly because their interpretations are

18 A look into the corpora Contemporary Reference Prose (University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) 2009) and Classic Basque Corpus (University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) 2013) suggests that this must be the case, since both the modal verb *ahal* and the epistemic particle *ahal* could be combined when they do not occur adjacent as in negative contexts:

- (i) Ez ahal dik holako gertakizun bat ukatzen ahal, ez?
 not PART AUX such event one.ABS deny not
 '(I'm pretty sure) you cannot deny such an event, right?' (Thikoipe 2009: 127)

not compatible.

Returning to the diagram in (50), a similar distribution can also be applied to the particle *ote*, as the proto-verb ***bo(C)-te* is the head of VP, the modal particle *ote* is the head of the Inner Particle Phrase and the quasi-question¹⁹ particle *ote* from North-Eastern Basque is the head of the Outer Particle Phrase.

Distinct syntactic positions for both evidential-epistemic particles and the question particle suggest that the occurrence of more than one particle should be an option. However, this is not the case, as illustrated in (1) and repeated here in (51) for convenience.

(51) Basque

- a. *Lana lortu [ote] du Mikelek?*
 job.ABS get PART AUX Mikel.ERG
 ‘Did Mikel get the job? (I’m wondering)’
- b. **Lana lortu [ote] [al] du Mikelek?*
 job.ABS get PART PART AUX Mikel.ERG
 ‘Intended reading: ‘Did Mikel get the job? (I’m wondering and asking you directly)’

As stated above, I argue that a semantic restriction causes the non-occurrence of *al* with other particles because their contributions to the propositions cannot be combined and/or because they do not share the same clause type.

- (52) **Etorri omen al da?*
 come PART PART AUX
 Intending reading: ‘Did s/he reportedly come?’

We could furthermore expect evidential and epistemic particles to occur together following Cinque’s (1999) distribution. Such combinations are also impossible in Basque, perhaps because only one epistemic or evidential particle can appear in each sentence, as illustrated in (51). Nevertheless, I do not extend the semantic restriction proposed for the combination between *al* and the other particles to the constraint among epistemic or evidential particles. The incompatibility among them may be motivated by syntactic means, since the constraint between the particles *ahal* and *ote* to occur in the same clause only holds when they function as syntactic heads but not when they behave similar to what Coniglio (2007; 2008) defines as maximal projections.

¹⁹ I use this term to refer to those particles that do not function as clause-typing particles. Instead, their use is almost generalised pragmatically and syntactically in questions and therefore they seem to be undergoing change at the moment to become syntactic interrogative markers.

Indeed, two modal particles (*omen* and *ote*) behave not only as syntactic heads, but also as phrasals in Eastern Basque (Etxepare 2010; Etxepare & Uria 2016; Monforte 2020b). As argued by Monforte (2020b), the particle *ote* in (53) does not share the same syntactic position and status as *ahal*. *Ahal* behaves as modal particles described in this article, that is, it has head status and occupies a position in TP, whereas *ote* has phrasal status and occupies a position in CP. This different behaviour allows their combination:

- (53) [[_{CP} Ez *ahal* *duzu*] [[_{PartP} *ote*] [_{TP} *horren* *berririk*
not PART AUX PART this.GEN new.PRTV
ukan]]]]?
have
‘Didn’t you receive perhaps any news from her/him?’ (Monforte 2020b)

Therefore, the fact that *ahal* and *ote* can be combined in the same clause when they have different syntactic statuses strengthens the hypothesis that the restriction among those particles is because they occupy the same syntactic position.

8 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have dealt with a syncretism among the modal verb *ahal* (‘to be able, can’), the epistemic particle *ahal* (‘certainly, I wish/ hope’) and the question particle *al* (no proper semantic interpretation). Their phonological similarity makes them ambiguous in certain contexts. Nevertheless, they display separate properties, apart from their distinctive interpretive nuances. Firstly, the modal verb differs from the epistemic and the question particles in two main ways: a) the movement of the epistemic and modal particles attached to the finite verb to the CP-domain, and b) their position relative to negation and the prospective marker. The modal verb is base-generated below NegP and AspP, whereas the epistemic and question particles occur above those phrases. Hence, the modal verb and the modal particles do not behave syntactically alike.

Secondly, the modal verb and the epistemic particle differ from the question particle in three respects: a) they can occur in contexts that lack illocutionary force, unlike the question particle *al*; b) they contribute differently to the proposition (the modal verb *ahal* expresses root/dynamic modality, the epistemic particle *ahal* conveys epistemic meaning, while the question particle *al* is a performative marker); and, finally, c) their historical and geographical distribution has been, or still is, wider than that of the question particle.

Therefore, those modal particles do not form a syntactically homogeneous group.

Based on the properties presented above, I conclude that they are all diachronically related: the epistemic particle *ahal* derived from the modal verb *ahal* and the question particle *al* is the result of the grammaticalisation of the epistemic particle in the central dialect. Also, I assign separate syntactic positions for each one based not only on their behaviour concerning the properties under discussion, but also on the hypothesis that grammaticalised constituents may occupy higher positions. This hypothesis is borne out when we observe the distribution the modal verb and the epistemic particle display regarding negation and aspectual markers. I extend this idea to the epistemic *ahal* and the question particle *al*. They have been traditionally considered to occupy the same syntactic position since only one particle can occur in a proposition in Basque, contrary to cross-linguistic evidence. Nevertheless, I hypothesise that *al* occurs higher in the syntactic structure than *ahal* since *al* has gone further in the grammaticalisation process, as its constrained grammar and bleached contribution suggest. Furthermore, the hierarchy between *al* and *ahal* aligns with the expected and claimed positions for elements that convey epistemicity and modify the speech-act. Modality, evidentiality and epistemicity modify the proposition before sending it to the speech-act. Hence, the speech-act layer is higher than the mood/modality related domain. In conclusion, the analysis of the three *ahal* provides evidence for the hypothetical development of modal particles and question particles and for the interaction between grammaticalisation and syntactic position.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, Werner. 1991. Discourse particles in German: How does their illocutive force come about. In Werner Abraham (ed.), *Discourse particles: descriptive and theoretical investigations on the logical, syntactic, and pragmatic properties of discourse particles in German*, 203–252. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Albizu, Pablo. 1991. Sobre la existencia del movimiento largo de núcleos en euskera. Unpublished manuscript, Instituto Universitario Ortega y Gasset, Madrid.
- Altube, Seber. 1930. *Erderismos*. Bilbo: Euskaltzaindia.
- Arocena, Fausto. 1961. El Euskera y los judíos de Guevara. In Fausto Arocena (ed.), *Selecciones vascas*, 137–149. Zarautz: Itxaropena.
- Arregi, Karlos & Andrew Nevins. 2012. *Morphotactics: Basque auxiliaries and the structure of spellout*. Dordrecht/ New York: Springer.

- Arriortua, Alazne. 2017. *Perpauz ezeztapena euskaraz: tipologiatik hurbilketa berri baterantz*. Vitoria-Gasteiz UPV/EHU Master's thesis.
- Bailey, Laura R. 2013. *The syntax of question particles*. Newcastle: Newcastle University dissertation.
- Balza, Irene. 2018. *Syntactic structure and modal interpretation: the case of Basque behar*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: UPV/EHU dissertation.
- Bayer, Josef. 2012. From modal particle to interrogative marker: a study of German *denn*. In Laura Brugé (ed.), *Functional heads. the cartography of syntactic structures*, 13–28. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bayer, Josef & Hans-Georg Obenauer. 2011. Discourse particles, clause structure, and question types. *The Linguistic Review* 28(4). 449–491. doi:10.1515/tlir.2011.013.
- Biberauer, Theresa & Michelle Sheehan. 2011. Introduction: particles through a modern syntactic lens. *The Linguistic Review* 28(4). 387–410. doi:10.1515/tlir.2011.011.
- Cardinaletti, Anna. 2011. German and Italian modal particles and clause structure. *The Linguistic Review* 28(4). 493–531. doi:10.1515/tlir.2011.014.
- Cardinaletti, Anna. 2015. Italian verb-based discourse particles in a comparative perspective. In Roland Hinterhölz Josef Bayer & Andreas Trotzke (eds.), *Discourse-oriented syntax*, 71–92. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Castillo, Jose A. Romo, Vanessa & Bakarne Giralt. 2001. *Azkoittiko euskerie*. Azkoitia: Azkoitiko Udala.
- Cheng, Lisa L. S. 1997. *On the typology of wh-questions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT dissertation.
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 1999. *Adverbs and the universal hierarchy of functional projections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coniglio, Marco. 2007. German modal particles in the IP-domain. *Rivista di Grammatica Generativa* 32. 3–37.
- Coniglio, Marco. 2008. Modal particles in Italian. *Working Papers in Linguistics* 18. 91–129.
- Coniglio, Marco. 2022. On the adverbial origin of German modal particles. In Arantzazu Elordieta Xabier Artiagoitia & Sergio Monforte (eds.), *Discourse particles syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and historical aspects*, 13–40. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Corr, Alice. 2015. Insubordination, speech acts and syntax: the view from ibero-romance. In *Proceedings of the 29th edition of going romance*, Nijmegen: Radboud University.
- Corr, Alice. 2016. *Ibero-romance and the syntax of the utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University dissertation.

- Cruschina, Silvio. 2012. *Discourse-related features and functional projections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199759613.001.0001.
- Degand, Liesbeth, Bert Cornillie & Paola Pietrandrea. 2013. Modal particles and discourse markers: Two sides of the same coin? introduction. In Liesbeth Degand, Bert Cornillie & Paola Pietrandrea (eds.), *Discourse markers and modal particles: Categorization and description*, 1–18. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Dor, Daniel. 2005. Toward a semantic account of that-deletion in english. *Linguistics* 43(2). 345–382.
- Döring, Sophia. 2007. *Zur Kontextverschiebung bei deutschen Diskurspartikeln*. Berlin Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin Bachelor's thesis.
- Döring, Sophia. 2016. *Modal particles, discourse structure and common ground management. Theoretical and empirical aspects*. Berlin: Humboldt Universität zu Berlin dissertation.
- Eguzkitza, Andolin. 1991. Partikula modalez ohar pare bat. *Anuario del Seminario de Filología Vasca "Julio de Urquijo"* 25(3). 961–963.
- Elordieta, Arantzazu. 2001. *Verb movement and constituent permutation in Basque*. Utrecht: LOT dissertation.
- Elordieta, Gorka. 1997. *Morphosyntactic feature chains and phonological domains*. Los Angeles: University of Southern California dissertation.
- Endo, Yoshio. 2018. Exploring the right periphery in Japanese by RM: Expressive meaning questions. In *Workshop on Clause Typing and the Syntax-to-Discourse Relation in Head-Final Languages*, Allensbach: University of Konstanz.
- Etxamendi, Eñaut. 1962. *Idazlanen bilduma*. Baiona: Maiatz.
- Etxepare, Ricardo. 2010. *Omen bariazioan*. In Pablo Albizu Beatriz Fernández & Ricardo Etxepare (eds.), *Euskara eta euskarak: aldakortasun sintaktikoa aztergai*, 85–112. Bilbo: ASJU supplements 52.
- Etxepare, Ricardo & Larraitz Uria. 2016. Microsyntactic variation in the Basque hearsay evidential. In Beatriz Fernández & Jon Ortiz de Urbina (eds.), *Microparameters in the Grammar of Basque*, 265–288. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Euskaltzaindia. 1987. *Euskal gramatika. Lehen urratsak II*. Bilbo: Euskaltzaindia.
- Faller, Martina. 2002. *Semantics and pragmatics of evidentials in Cuzco Quechua*. Palo Alto: Stanford University dissertation.
- Frey, Werner. 2018. Root clause phenomena may depend on a private act or on a public act. In *Workshop on Clause Typing and the Syntax-to-Discourse Relation in Head-Final Languages*, Allensbach: University of Konstanz.

- Garmendia, Joana. 2015. *ote*: hiztunaren ziurtasunik eza. *Gogoa* 1213. 7–26. doi:[10.1387/gogoa.14061](https://doi.org/10.1387/gogoa.14061).
- Goenaga, Patxi. 2002. Euskal gramatika puntu batez: ahalaz eta ezinaz. In Patxi Goenaga Xabier Artiagoitia & Joseba A. Lakarra (eds.), *Erramu Boneta: Festschrift for Rudolf P. G. de Rijk*, 261–275. Bilbo: ASJU supplements 44.
- Gutzmann, Daniel. 2008. *On the interaction between modal particles and sentence mood in German*. Mainz Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz Master's thesis.
- Gutzmann, Daniel. 2017. Modal particles ≠ modal particles (= modal particles). In Josef Bayer & Volker Struckmeier (eds.), *Discourse particles: Formal approaches to their syntax and semantics*, 144–172. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Hack, Franziska M. 2014. The particle *po* in the varieties of Dolomitic Ladin—grammaticalisation from a temporal adverb into an interrogative marker. *Studia Lingüística* 68(1). 49–76. doi:[10.1111/stul.12022](https://doi.org/10.1111/stul.12022).
- Haddican, Bill. 2001. Basque functional heads. *Linguistics in the Big Apple*. Working Papers in Linguistics, New York University, New York.
- Haddican, Bill. 2008. Euskal perpausaren oinarritzko espez-buru-osagarri hurrenkeraren aldeko argudio batzuk. In Xabier Artiagoitia Iñigo Arteatz & Arantzazu Elordieta (eds.), *Antisimetriaren hipotesia vs. buru parametroa: euskararen oinarritzko hurrenkera ezbaian*, 65–92. Bilbo: UPV/EHU.
- Haddican, Bill. 2018. The syntax of Basque allocutive clitics. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics* 3(1). 101. doi:[10.5334/gjgl.471](https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.471).
- Haegeman, Liliane. 2014. West flemish verb-based discourse markers and the articulation of the speech act layer. *Studia Lingüística* 68(1). 116–139. doi:[10.1111/stul.12023](https://doi.org/10.1111/stul.12023).
- Heim, Johannes, Hermann Keupdjio, Zoe W. Lam, Adriana Osa-Gómez, Sonja Thoma & Martina Wiltschko. 2016. Intonation and particles as speech act modifiers: A syntactic analysis. *Studies in Chinese Linguistics* 37(2). 109–129. doi:[10.1515/scl-2016-0005](https://doi.org/10.1515/scl-2016-0005).
- Heine, Bernd. 2003. Grammaticalization. In Briand D. Joseph & Richard Janda D. (eds.), *The handbook of historical linguistics*, 575–601. Malden / Oxford / Melbourne / Berlin: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hualde, José I. & Jon Ortiz de Urbina. 2003. *A grammar of Basque*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter Mouton.
- Jendraschek, Gerd. 2003. L'évolution diachronique de l'expression de la possibilité en basque. *Lapurdum* 8. 263–283.
- Jendraschek, Gerd. 2014. Future tense, prospective aspect, and irrealis mood as part of the situation perspective: Insights from Basque, Turkish, and

- Papuan. In Mikhail Kissine Philippe De Brabanter & Saghie Sharifzadeh (eds.), *Future times, future tenses*, 138–164. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Korta, Kepa & Larraitz Zubeldia. 2014. The contribution of evidentials to utterance content: Evidence from the basque reportative particle *omen*. *Language* 90(2). 389–423.
- Korta, Kepa & Larraitz Zubeldia. 2022. Meaning and use of the basque particle *bide*. In Xabier Artiagoitia, Arantzazu Elordieta & Sergio Monforte (eds.), *Discourse particles: Syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and historical aspects*, 209–228. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Kuong, Io-Kei J. 2008. Yes/no question particles revisited: The grammatical functions of *mo4*, *me1*, and *maa3*. In Marjorie Chang (ed.), *The 20th north american conference on chinese linguistics (naccl-20)*, 715–733. Ohio: The Ohio State University.
- Kuwabara, Kazuki. 2013. Peripheral effects in Japanese questions and the fine structure of CP. *Lingua* 126. 92–119.
- Lafitte, Pierre. 1944. *Grammaire basque:(navarro-labourdin littéraire)*. Baiona: Le Livre.
- Laka, Itziar. 1996. *A brief grammar of Euskara, the Basque language*. Bilbo: UPV/EHU. <http://hdl.handle.net/10810/14282>.
- Lakarra, Joseba A. 2019. *Bon-/bor-/bol-* familiaren berreraiketarako (ii): Etimologia, partikulen historiaurrea eta hots-lege batzuen irregularitateez. In Irantzu Epelde & Oroitz Jauregi (eds.), *Bihotz ahots. M.L. Oñederra irakaslearen omenez*, 377–396. Bilbo: UPV/EHU.
- Larzabal, Piarres. 1991. *Piarres Larzabal idazlanak II*. Donostia: Elkar.
- Lehmann, Christian. 1985. Grammaticalization: Synchronic variation and diachronic change. *Lingua e Stile* 20. 303–318.
- Li, Boya. 2006. *Chinese final particles and the syntax of the periphery*. Utrecht: LOT dissertation.
- Littell, Lisa Matthewson, Patrick & Tyler Peterson. 2010. On the semantics of conjectural questions. In Tyle Peterson & Uli Sauerland (eds.), *Evidence from evidentials*, 89–104. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.
- Lizardi-Ituarte, Aitor & Manex Munduate. 2015. Non-argument agreements: an approach to Basque allocutivity. *Dialectologia: Revista Electrónica* 321–350.
- Lusini, Sara. 2013. *Yes-no question/marking in Italian dialects: a typological, theoretical and experimental approach*. Utrecht: LOT dissertation.
- Mensching, Guido. 2015. New insights on the question particle *a* in Sardinian. *Isogloss Special Issue*. 7–40.
- Monforte, Sergio. 2018. Question particles in Basque. *Isogloss. A*

- Journal on Variation of Romance and Iberian Languages* 4(1). 29–53. doi:10.5565/rev/isogloss.48.
- Monforte, Sergio. 2020a. *Galderetako -a, al eta ote partikulak euskaraz*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: UPV/EHU dissertation.
- Monforte, Sergio. 2020b. Syntactic analyses of discourse particles through the microvariation of Basque *ote*. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 5(1: 126). 1–29. doi:10.5334/gjgl.1179.
- Monforte, Sergio. 2021a. About the *al* particle in Basque. In Ania Pérez Pérez Marta Díaz Ferro, Jorge Diz Ferreira & Ana Varela Suárez (eds.), *Novas perspectivas na lingüística aplicada*, 19–31. Lugo: Axac.
- Monforte, Sergio. 2021b. *Hori emain ote nauzu?* on a pragmatic development of modal particles. In Alexander Haselow & Sylvie Hancil (eds.), *Discourse markers and discourse-related grammatical phenomena*, 57–75. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Mounole, Céline. 2011. *Le verbe basque ancien : étude philologique eta diachronique*. Vitoria-Gasteiz and Bordeaux: UPV/EHU and Université Bordeaux Montaigne dissertation.
- Müller-Carstens, Sonja. 2014. *Modalpartikeln*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag.
- Munaro, Nicola & Cecilia Poletto. 2002. Ways of clausal typing. *Rivista di Grammatica Generativa* 27. 105.
- Olano, Mikel. 1998. *Areso eta Leitzako hizkerak: (bertako hitz eta historian barrena)*. Iruñea/Pamplona: Government of Navarra.
- Ortiz de Urbina, Jon. 1989. *Parameters in the grammar of Basque: A GB approach to Basque syntax*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Ortiz de Urbina, Jon. 2002. Checking domains in Basque and Breton. *Anuario del Seminario de Filología Vasca "Julio de Urquijo"* 27(3). 751–775.
- Prieto, Pilar & Gemma Rigau. 2007. The syntax-prosody interface: Catalan interrogative sentences headed by *que*. *Journal of Portuguese Linguistics* 6(2). 29–59. doi:10.5334/jpl.139.
- Rebuschi, Georges. 1984. *Structure de l'énoncé en basque*. Paris: Selaf.
- de Rijk, Rudolf. 1969. Is Basque an SOV language? *Fontes Linguae Vasconum* 1(3). 319–352.
- Roberts, Ian. 2021. *Diachronic syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, Ian & Anna Roussou. 2003. *Syntactic change: A minimalist approach to grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rooryck, Johan. 2001. Evidentiality, part i. *Glott International* 5(4). 125–133.
- Sheehan, Michelle, Theresa Biberauer, Ian Roberts & Anders Holmberg (eds.). 2017. *The final-over-final condition: A syntactic universal*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Speas, Peggy & Carol Tenny. 2003. Configurational properties of point of

- view roles. In Anna M. Di Sciullo (ed.), *Asymmetry in grammar*, 315–344. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Struckmeier, Volker. 2014. Ja doch wohl C? Modal particles in German as C-related elements. *Studia Linguistica* 68(1). 16–48.
- Thikoipe, Mixel. 2009. *Jin bezala*. Baiona: Maiatz.
- Thurmair, Maria. 1989. *Modalpartikeln und ihre Kombinationen*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter.
- University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). 2009. Ereduzko prosa gaur (epg). <https://www.ehu.eus/euskara-orria/euskara/ereduzkoa/>. Accessed 20 March 2026.
- University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). 2013. Euskal klasikoen corpusa (ekc). <https://www.ehu.eus/ehg/kc/>. Accessed 20 March 2026.
- Van Bogaert, Julie & Torsten Leuschner. 2015. Dutch (*'t*) *schijnt* and German *scheint* (*'*) s: on the grammaticalization of evidential particles. *Studia Linguistica* 69(1). 86–117.
- Villasante, Luis. 1980. *Sintaxis de la oración simple*. Oñati: Editorial Franciscanas Aránzazu.
- Wegener, Heide. 2003. The evolution the German modal particle *denn*. In Ilse Wischer & Gabriele Diewald (eds.), *New reflections on grammaticalization*, 379–395. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wilbur, Terence H. 1981. Basque syntax. *Iker* 1. 169–186.
- Wiltschko, Martina. 2017. Ergative constellations in the structure of speech acts. In Jessica Coon (ed.), *The oxford handbook of ergativity*, 419–446. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Xiang, Xuehua. 2012. External information processing versus property ascertaining: a discourse-pragmatic study of three yes/no question particles in Shishan (Hainan Island, China). *Text & Talk* 32(2). 255–280.
- Ziegeler, Debra. 2010. Semantic determinism and the grammaticalisation of *have to* in English: a reassessment. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 11. 32–66.
- Ziegeler, Debra. 2016. The diachrony of modality and mood. In Jan Nuyts & Johan Van Der Auwera (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of modality and mood*, 387–405. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zimmermann, Malte. 2004. Zum *wohl*: Diskurspartikeln als Satztypmodifikatoren. *Linguistische Berichte* 198. 253–286.
- Zimmermann, Malte. 2011. Discourse particles. In Klaus von Heusinger Claudia Maienborn & Paul Portner (eds.), *Semantics: An international handbook of natural language meaning*, 2011–2038. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Zuazo, Koldo. 2014. *Euskalkiak*. Donostia: Elkarlanean.

Zubeldia, Larraitz. 2010. *Omen partikularen azterketa semantikoa eta pragmatikoa*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: UPV/EHU dissertation.

Sergio Monforte
Basque Language and Communication
Department
Faculty of Science and Technology
Sarriena auzoa, Leioa (Bizkaia)
.....
sergio.monforte@ehu.eus