In quest of Reason: changes in the encoding of causal roles in Basque

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Motive — or Reason — is a volitional factor that makes the Agent act; hence, intentionality and control are its definitory parameters. Standard Basque does not grammatically distinguish Cause (1) and Motive (2) and expresses both by the causal marker -*gatik*. Interestingly, the language preserves traces of a state of facts before the causal marker. Firstly, some data suggest that erstwhile, the genitive could denote causal meanings [Azkarate & Altuna 2001: 108]. Secondly, the instrumental can convey causal values with many inanimate nouns. Thirdly, old western texts show a moribund case-marker -*rren* specialized in the encoding of Motive (3).

(1) *Eta   zuek   nere   izen-a-gatik* […] *gorrota-tu-ak izan-go   zera-te.* [Central, 1858]
     and   2PL   POSS.1SG name-SG-**CAUS** hate-PFV-PL   be-FUT   be.2-PL
     'And you will be hated […] because of my name.' [Mark 13,13]

(2) *Haur da   ene   odol-a* […]*, anhitz-en-gatik   isur-ten   den-a.* [Northern, 1571]
     this be.3SG POSS.1SG blood-DET   many-PL.GEN-**CAUS** pour-IPFV   be.3SG.SBRD-DET
     'This is my blood […], which is poured out for many.' [Mark 14,24]
     French source of translation: *Ceci est mon sang* […]*, qui est espandue pour plusieurs.*

(3) *Baia beste-rren as-tu   sen-gi-a   ni-gas-ko   oneretxi-a.* [Western, 1653]
     but   other-**MOT** forget-PFV NPR.E2SG<A3SG-do-PST   1SG-COM-REL   love-DET
     'But for someone else's sake you forgot your love for me.'

From the seventeenth century onward, in northern dialects, Motive shifted from causal (2) to benefactive markers (4), while Cause remained within the scope of the causal case. Furthermore, North-Eastern varieties acquired a motivational construction by calquing the Gascon Occitan locution *pr'amor de X* 'for love of X' (5). In other words, well after Western Basque lost the distinction between Cause and Motive, northern varieties began encoding both roles separately.

(4) *Hau   nere   odol-a   da* […]*, guzi-entzat ixuri-a.* [Northern, 2004]
     this POSS.1SG blood-DET   be.3SG   all-PL.**BEN** pour.PFV-SG
     'This is my blood […], which is poured out for all.' [Mark 14,24]

(5) *Goga-tü-rik   nüzü* […]   *oro-ren sofri-tze-ra   zu-re   amorekati.* [North-Eastern, 1862]
     reflect-PFV-RES be.1SG.ALLOC all-GEN suffer-NMLZ-ALL   2SG-**GEN** **love.CAUS**
     'I am determined to suffer everything for your sake.'

I will argue that the changes in the encoding of Motive instantiate transfer of case function from different Romance languages to Basque dialects, a usual type of calque [Aikhenvald 2007: 28]. On another level, I will question the claim that most Indo-European languages encode Cause and Motive similarly [Luraghi 2010: 61]. The study relies on philological work, exploitation of corpora, and quantitative analysis performed on more than 5,000 uses. In line with contact-induced changes in case systems [Krishnamurti 2003: 230–243; Johanson 2009; Belyaev 2010; Luraghi, De Smit & Igartua 2020], ultimately, this talk stresses the need of considering the different varieties in contact with a given language through its history, especially in situations where dialects of the same language undergo contact with distinct languages.

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