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RESEARCH

Syntactic analyses of discourse particles through the microvariation of Basque *ote*

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In this article I look into dialectal data related to Basque discourse particles and I provide evidence that topics discussed in the literature on discourse particles can also be addressed within Basque microvariation. Four syntactically different types of the particle *ote* are examined: first, the general pattern found in all dialects where *ote* functions as a head and occupies a position in the TP-domain; second, the use typical of the eastern dialects where *ote* behaves as a maximal projection and is located in the CP-domain; furthermore, the configuration formed by *wh*-words and the discourse particle *ote* only found in the North-Eastern Basque; and, finally, a novel type of *ote* only used in the far east of the Eastern Basque (included the Souletin Basque, Amikuze's variety and also the disappeared variety from the Roncalese valley) which functions as a sentence final particle occurring after all constituents of the clause and, apparently, conveying an intersubjective interpretation, unlike its canonical behaviour. Along with the syntactic data, phonological-prosodic and interpretational evidence also point to the same direction, i.e. to differentiate those four types of *ote*. This microvariation displayed by the particle *ote* allows us to compare the different syntactic statuses and positions claimed for discourse particles side by side in the same language; thus, the analysis of their separate properties attains a significant improvement.

Keywords: Discourse particles; microvariation; syntactic status; syntactic position; *wh*-particle

1 Introduction

Two topics on the syntax of discourse or modal particles have dominated the literature lately:[1] on one side, the debate on the syntactic status of these particles between those positioning in favour of considering discourse particles as heads and those claiming that particles are phrases occupying specifier positions. On the other side, the position of discourse particles in the syntactic structure has also received attention in the literature with some proposals locating them in the TP-domain (Coniglio 2007; Bayer 2009; Scherf 2017; among others), some others in the CP-domain (Kuong 2008; Coniglio & Zegrean 2012; Kuwabara 2013) and, finally, other studies claiming that they occupy a position in the Speech Act layer above CP (Munaro & Poletto 2002; Haegeman 2014; Corr 2016; Heim et al. 2016). This article examines the Basque discourse particle *ote* and its microvariation in eastern dialects[2] and discusses the issues mentioned above from a perspective internal to Basque data. First, the data found in those varieties bring up the question of whether

[1] I will use the term 'discourse particle' to refer to those which have been traditionally referred as 'modal particles'.

[2] The data presented in this paper have two sources: on the one hand, there are extracts from the interviews I conducted in the relevant varieties of Basque (High Navarrese, Navarrese-Lapurdian and Amikuze's variety) from January 2017 to August 2017, and also in July 2018 for further data; on the other hand, I collected examples from written sources such as dialectological monographs and literary works.

the behaviour of discourse particles in Basque agrees with that described for heads, as has been claimed in the literature (Albizu 1991; G. Elordieta 1997; A. Elordieta 2001; Haddican 2008; Arregi & Nevins 2012; Lizardi-Ituarte 2017; Monforte 2018), or, rather, whether they should also be considered maximal projections (Etxepare 2010; Etxepare & Uria 2016). Secondly, I argue that *ote* occupies different syntactic positions depending on whether it functions as a head or a maximal projection: the head *ote*, as the other canonical particles, is base-generated in the TP-domain, whereas the weak adverb-like *ote* occurs in the CP-domain.[3] Additionally, two other behaviours of discourse particles discussed in the literature are found in Basque concerning the discourse particle *ote*: the combination of the particle and *wh*-words creating a single constituent (Trotzke & Turco 2015) and the use of *ote* at the end of the utterance, similar to sentence final particles (Izutsu & Izutsu 2013).

The term *particle*, as pointed out by Paul (2015), has been used for those words which have not successfully been assigned their own particular category. Indeed, in languages such as German or Italian it has been debated whether discourse particles form their own category or they belong to the same category as their historically related counterparts, despite of their function in the proposition. For instance, some of the discourse particles in German derive from adverbs as *doch*, *einfach*, *auch*, *eingentlich*, *wohl*, *bloß* and *schon* according to Meibauer apud Struckmeier (2014: 18); therefore, some authors (Abraham 1991; Jacobs 1991; Zimmermann 2004; Cardinaletti 2007) consider them a subclass of adverbs, as Struckmeier (2014) suggests.[4]

Furthermore, the vagueness of their character makes it complicate not only to decide which words belong to the group of discourse particles, but also to establish their status within the generative framework. For instance, let us consider the following properties usually listed to describe discourse particles: a) they have a fixed order, unlike the majority of adverbs;[5] b) they cannot occur in first position in V2 languages such as German; c) they behave mostly as clitics; d) they are not stressed;[6] e) they are diachronically related to elements of other categories; f) they cannot be the only element as a reply to a question; g) they cannot be coordinated or modified; h) they cannot be topics or foci. Apart from the aforementioned ones, other general properties are also usually listed when describing discourse particles; for instance, that they cannot all occur in every kind of clause, i.e. they are clause-type dependant (Zimmermann 2011; cf. Rapp 2018), or that they can only be used in clauses containing full illocutionary force; hence, they can appear in root clauses and in certain embedded clauses (Coniglio & Zegrean 2012). Analyses on the syntactic nature of discourse particles take into account those properties as evidence in favour of their headness status. Likewise, these same properties (a-g) have been used to postulate that particles function as maximal projections. Indeed, the two hypotheses mentioned earlier (those positing that discourse particles can have X^0 or XP status) have been proposed for two well-studied languages such as German and Italian based on the previous properties (a-g). Hence, the same evidence leads to contradictory hypotheses regarding the syntactic nature of discourse particles.

Some authors (Bayer & Obenauer 2011; Struckmeier 2014) claim that German discourse particles behave just as described above; therefore, they consider German particles to be heads, namely the head of the Particle Phrase located in the *Middle Field*. In a similar vein

[3] The discourse particle *omen*, whose meaning is close to 'reportedly', also shows microvariation in eastern dialects; based on that, similar distribution has been proposed for that particle too (Etxepare 2010; Etxepare & Uria 2016).

[4] Lindner (1991: 163) asserts that discourse particles have been traditionally called adverbs.

[5] Note that not all adverbs enjoy free distribution, in fact, some of them such as *just*, *well*, *often*, *right*, *even* have limited distribution.

[6] This property is an open issue in the description of discourse particles, since authors do not agree whether discourse particles receive stress or not (Thurmair 1989; Coniglio 2007; Cardinaletti 2011; Egg & Zimmermann 2012; Struckmeier 2014).

Coniglio (2008) concludes that Italian discourse particles are heads. Interestingly, he also examines German discourse particles and reaches the conclusion that these are maximal projections occupying a specifier position.

Coniglio is not the only one denying the head status to German particles; indeed, Cardinaletti (2011) supports this idea. Based on a previous work on pronouns (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999), she distinguishes three levels for adverbs: full adverbs, weak adverbs and clitic adverbs.[7] She claims that discourse particles in German are weak adverbs considering their syntactic and phonological behaviour. Let us briefly illustrate the main arguments Coniglio (2007) and Cardinaletti (2011) use in favour of the non-head status: a) discourse particles are closer to full words than clitic functional words concerning their phonological properties and prosody; b) if they were heads, they should block V raising, for instance, in German where they are supposed to occupy a position between TP and vP; or, otherwise, particles should move along with V; c) scrambled DETPs and PPs can appear between two discourse particles, not an expected distribution if they were syntactic heads. Therefore, Cardinaletti (2011) and Coniglio (2007; 2008) conclude that discourse particles in German occupy a specifier position where they remain since they are weak adverbs, i.e. because of the lack of some phonological properties.

So far, I have briefly reviewed the hypotheses on the syntactic status of discourse particles. In the Section 3 I will present data of the Basque language to conclude that discourse particles in that language behave as clitic-heads in their canonical pattern. Nevertheless, microvariation related to the discourse particle *ote* found in Eastern Basque shows that this particle can also behave as a weak adverb. This will be examined below in Section 4. Let us briefly exemplify both statuses:

(1) Head status, *Standard Basque*
Non utzi **ote** dut egunkaria?
where leave PART AUX newspaper.ABS
'Where did I leave the newspaper? (I'm wondering)'[8]

(2) Phrasal nature, *eastern dialects*
Non utzi dut **ote** kazeta?
where leave AUX PART newspaper.ABS
'Where did I leave the newspaper? (I'm wondering)'

The debate on the syntactic position of discourse particles has been less controversial in the literature. Most of the analyses have looked into the distribution of particles along the clause, namely with respect to verbs, subjects, foci, topics and other particles. Such an approach is found in Scherf's (2017) work on Swedish particles: she examines the behaviour of particles, for instance, in contexts where the verb moves to CP or stays *in situ*, and in clauses containing strong and weak pronouns and she concludes that they occupy a high position in the TP-domain based on the fact that they always occur after the verb when this is moved to C^0 but higher than subjects which are claimed not to have moved from TP. German discourse particles have also been granted a similar position, i.e. high in the TP-domain (cf. Coniglio 2007; Bayer & Obenauer 2011; Struckmeier 2014) considering their distribution and restrictions along the clause. Nevertheless, this is not the only

[7] Following Cardinaletti's (2011) analysis, the distinction among full, weak and clitic words depends on their prosodic, inflectional and peripheral properties. Those words which, at least, lack one of those properties cannot be considered full words and they must be either weak elements or clitic ones.

[8] I translate the particle *ote* as 'I'm wondering' following the traditional interpretation (de Rijk 2008). I do so not only in its canonical use, but also in those noncanonical contexts dealt with in Sections 4 and 5, based on the fact that, if we change the position of the particle from the noncanonical one to the canonical one, the interpretation is not altered, as expressed so by consulted native speakers.

syntactic position where discourse particles can appear: the CP-domain has also been identified for some particles in Italian, Romanian and Asian languages such as Japanese (Kuwabara 2013; Del Gobbo, Munaro & Poletto 2015; among others). Not only syntactic distribution (namely at the beginning or the end of the clause) and strict order led into this conclusion, but also pragmatic arguments, since they modify the illocutionary force directly from that position, unlike those cases locating them in the TP-domain which need an LF movement of the particle to the CP-domain to account for its contribution. Finally, some works have rescued the idea of Speech Act Phrase following Ross's (1970) performativism and located the particles there. Authors following neoperformativism basically take the interpretational function of particles into consideration and how related they are to the subject or the addressee and the propositional content or the speech act; based on that, particles can be distributed along four phrases:

(3) [Addressee Response Phrase [Speaker Response Phrase [Addressee Ground Phrase [Speaker Ground Phrase […]]]]] (Wiltschko 2017)

Additionally, authors such as Haegeman (2014), Speas and Tenny (2003) and Corr (2015; 2016) put forward analyses in a similar direction. For instance, Corr (2015; 2016) distinguishes two phrases related to the speech act of the clause: the Speech Act High Phrase (henceforth *SAHIGHP*) and the Speech Act Low Phrase (henceforth *SALOWP*). The former is performative since it establishes discourse set-up and the speaker-addressee interaction; the latter is related to the speaker attitude and encodes modal and evaluative values (Corr 2015: 12). They both occupy positions above CP-domain, namely in the Speech Act phrase domain; also, they occur in a strict order: SAHIGHP is higher than SALOWP. In this article I argue that these three domains are found in Basque regarding *ote*: the Middle Field (1), the CP-domain (2) and the Speech Act domain (4).

(4) Sentence final particle, *Far Eastern Basque*
Ez duzu horren berri ukan **ote**?
not AUX this.GEN new have PART
'Didn't you hear from him OTE?'[9]

Apart from these positions out of the clausal spine, Bayer and Trotzke (2015), Trotzke and Turco (2015) and Trotzke (2018) have related discourse particles to smaller syntactic enviroments such as Determiner Phrases or phrases containing *wh*-words. Setting the construction within discourse particles found in German (Trotzke 2018) aside, the latter has been found in typologically different languages such as German, Italian and Japanese (Munaro & Poletto 2002; Bayer & Trotzke 2015; Endo 2018). Also, the Basque particle *ote* occurs combined to *wh*-words:

(5) Combination between *wh*-word and *ote, North Eastern Basque*
Zer **ote** ari da haur hori?
what PART PROG AUX child that.ABS
'What is that child doing? ('I'm wondering)'[10]

[9] Although I do not look into detail the interpretation of *ote*, it is usually translated as 'I'm wondering' following the traditional interpretation (de Rijk 2008). However, I do not translate it so in the case of the most restricted noncanonical *ote* (§6), since it may have a different reading in this use. The contexts they appear are not alike and the fact that speakers from western dialects who lack this use refuse the particle even in its canonical position (§6) lead us to think that. Therefore, I will not provide paraphrases for such use and mark its contribution by using '*OTE*'.

The paper is organised as follows: some properties of the Basque language will be briefly explained so that the reader can fully understand the data dealt with below; then in Section 3 the canonical behaviour of discourse particles in Basque will be examined and I will conclude that they behave as heads and occupy a position in the TP-domain; further, in Section 4 the non-canonical pattern of the particle *ote* found in eastern dialects is looked into and it is proposed that it has a maximal projection nature located in the CP-domain; in Section 5 the construction formed by a *wh*-word and the discourse particle *ote* is described and I argue that they form a single constituent, unlike the analysis claimed by Munaro & Poletto (2002) for similar structures in North Italian dialects; in Section 6 another piece of dialectal data is provided related to *ote* occurring at the end of the utterance and conveying an intersubjective interpretation; and, finally, Section 7 recapitulates the main conclusions of this article.

2 Some notions on Basque grammar

Basque is mostly classified as a non-rigid SOV language (Villasante 1980; Elordieta 2001; Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003; Irurtzun 2007; de Rijk 2008; Pastor 2019); in other words, although SOV order has been identified as the neutral one, other phrase combinations are possible conveying different pragmatics at the level of information structure, for instance:

(6) Xabier etxera etorri da.
Xabier.ABS house.ALL come AUX.PRS.IND.3SG.ABS
'Xabier came home.'

(7) XABIER etorri da etxera.
Xabier.ABS come AUX.PRS.IND.3SG.ABS house.ALL
'XABIER came home.'

(8) ETORRI DA Xabier etxera.
come AUX.PRS.IND.3SG.ABS Xabier.ABS house.ALL
'Xabier did come home.'

As can be observed in the previous examples, finite verbs are for the most part analytic, 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 (Oyharçabal 1993; Alberdi 1994; Lizardi-Ituarte & Munduate 2015).[11]

Lexical and inflected verbs are usually adjacent; indeed, nothing can occur between them, such as adverbs:

[10] As stated above, if we change the position of *ote* from the noncanonical position to the canonical one, the interpretation is not altered, as expressed so by consulted native speakers. Therefore, it is translated as 'I'm wondering' in both cases. Let us exemplify this:

(i) Zer ari **ote** da haur hori?
what PROG PART AUX child that.ABS
'What is that child doing? ('I'm wondering)'

As can be gathered from examples (5) and (i), *ote* conveys the same interpretation.

[11] Additionally, there are about 12 verbs which can be synthetic but only when the aspect is punctual (Laka 1996), for instance:

(i) Leirek hori dakar.
Leire.ERG that.ABS bring.PRS.IND.3SG.ERG.3SG.ABS
'Leire is bringing that.'

These synthetic forms present the same information as periphrastic ones but realised in a single constituent. Also, they show similar syntactic behaviour as auxiliary verbs.

(9) *Xabier etxera etorri lehen da.
Xabier.ABS house.ALL come before AUX
(Intended reading: 'Xabier came home before.')

Nevertheless, the adjacency between lexical and auxiliary verbs[12] can be broken in some contexts such as in negative (main) clauses:[13]

(10) Ez naiz Lindaura joan ~~ez~~ ~~naiz~~.
not AUX Lindau.ALL go
'I didn't go to Lindau.'

Furthermore, Eastern Basque offers another context where this adjacency does not arise: whereas the standard procedure to form focal structures and *wh*-questions is by fronting both lexical and auxiliary verbs, in eastern dialects the inflected verbal form can be the only constituent moved next to (and immediately following) the focal element or *wh*-word, leaving the lexical verb *in situ*:

(11) *Standard Basque*
MAITENAK [erran du] ~~MAITENAK~~ hori [~~erran du~~].
Maitena.ERG say AUX that.ABS
'MAITENA said that.'

(12) Eastern dialects
MAITENAK [du] ~~MAITENAK~~ hori erran [~~du~~].
Maitena.ERG AUX that.ABS say
'It was MAITENA who said that.'

Concerning the formation of questions in Basque, the generative literature has claimed the following analysis (Ortiz de Urbina 1995; Artiagoitia 2000; among others): in *wh*-questions not only the *wh*-word moves to the CP-domain, but also the verb; in the case of polarity questions, there is also fronting of the verb. Let us briefly exemplify this:

(13) [$_{CP}$ Zer [$_{C'}$ [$_{C}$ erosi du] [$_{TP}$ Asierrek ~~zer~~ ~~erosi~~ ~~du~~]]] ?
What buy AUX Asier.ERG
'What did Asier buy?'

(14) [$_{CP}$ [$_{C'}$ [$_{C}$ Erosi du] [$_{TP}$ Mikelek etxea ~~erosi~~ ~~du~~]]] ?
buy AUX Mikel.ERG house.ABS
'Did Mikel buy the house?'

As can be inferred from the previous examples, the CP field is head-initial in Basque. In fact, for this article I adopt the analysis put forth by Ortiz de Urbina (1999; 2008) following the cartographic approach. Based on syntactic and morphological grounds, he sketches a structure where the FINP and phrases below it are head-final and those phrases above it are head-initial.[14] Additionally, he proposes that the target-position for *wh*-words, and hence the verb, is FOCP:

[12] When I use the term 'verb' regarding the analysis of Basque data I refer to both the lexical verb and the auxiliary verb as a unit. However, I favour the terms 'lexical verb' and 'inflected verb' when I want to emphasize an intrinsic property or behaviour of one of the two components.

[13] I adopt the idea that negation in Basque is base-generated below TP but it moves to a position in the CP-domain, namely the Polarity Phrase, following Haddican (2008), Arriortua (2017) and Elordieta & Haddican (2018).

[14] See Vergara (2018) for an interesting analysis of the CP-domain based on the production of complementizers by Basque-Spanish bilinguals in code-switching contexts.

Also, the focalised constituent and the verb move both to the CP-domain in questions, so that they are adjacent. In fact, nothing can intervene between the *wh*-word or focus and the verb in Basque:

(15) Non (*sarritan) erosten du Liriak Riesling lehorra?
where often buy.IPFV AUX Liria.ERG Riesling dry.ABS
'Where does Liria often buy dry Riesling?'

Once we have established some basic notions on Basque grammar, I will proceed to examine syntactically discourse particles in Basque in the next section, with special focus on the particle *ote*.

3 Canonical discourse particles in Basque: X⁰ in the TP-domain

The particle *ote* is usually grouped with other discourse particles, namely *ahal*, *al*, *bide*, *ei* and *omen*.[15] Despite not being a long list, they can be classified into different groups: those conveying evidentiality (*ei*, *omen*), those expressing epistemicity (*ahal*, *bide*, *ote*) and the interrogative particle (*al*); for instance:

(16) Txiki Iurretan lanean hasi **omen** da.
Txiki.ABS Iurreta.IN work.IN begin PART AUX
'Reportedly, Txiki began working in Iurreta.'

(17) Ba **ahal** dakizu arbola usteletik ez daitekela etor fruitu onik!
CL PART know tree rotten.ABL not can.COMP come fruit good.PRTT
'You certainly know that a rotten tree cannot give good fruits!' (Larzabal 1992)

These particles are traditionally considered to form a single syntactic group since they all are claimed to modify the illocutionary force and they behave in a similar manner. One shared property is that the canonical position of discourse particles in declarative sentences is between the lexical and the inflected verbs:

(18) (*__Ei__) Marga (*__ei__) etxera (*__ei__) etorri (__ei__) da (*__ei__).
PART Marga.ABS PART house.ALL PART come PART AUX PART
'Reportedly, Marga came home.'

Another shared property is that all discourse particles form a morphonological word attached to the inflected verb (Arregi & Nevins 2012). Evidence of this relationship is found in contexts mentioned above (§2) where the inflected verb is fronted, whereas the lexical verb stays *in situ* as in negative contexts (19) and focus contexts in eastern dialects (20); in such contexts the particle moves along with the inflected verb.[16] Moreover, the fact that discourse particles cannot be found in clauses lacking the inflected verb reinforces the idea of their dependency on such verbs since discourse particles cannot be used if finite T does not occur (21 and 22).

[15] As stated above, in this paper I refer to those particles which have been traditionally grouped together under the name 'modal particles' as 'discourse particles'; hence, when I mention 'discourse particles' with no further reference, I make reference to *ahal* ('surely'), *al* (question particle), *bide* ('seemingly'), *ei* ('reportedly'), *omen* ('reportedly') eta *ote* ('I wonder' and 'perhaps'). Other discourse particles such as *ba*(*da*) ('then') are excluded from that categorisation.

[16] Although it seems that lexical verbs and discourse particles behave similarly regarding their movement to the Left Periphery attached to the inflected verb, we are not dealing with the same syntactic operation. Following the traditional argument given in the Basque literature (Ortiz de Urbina 1995; G. Elordieta 1997), features related to the necessity for a lexical head trigger the adjacency between lexical and inflected verbs in contexts such as questions when the latter move to the CP; however, discourse particles do not fulfil this requirement since the lexical verb still moves attracted by those features. Furthermore, lexical verbs rescue inflected verbs from sentential first position, whereas discourse particles cannot (see example 25).

(19) Ez **al** duzu egunkaria erosi ~~ez~~ ~~al~~ ~~duzu~~?
not PART AUX newspaper.ABS buy
'Didn't you buy the newspaper?'

(20) Jonek **ote** di**a** ~~Jonek~~ hori erran ~~ote~~ ~~du~~?
Jon.ERG PART AUX.PART that.ABS say
'Was it Jon who said that? (I'm wondering)'

(21) Hori erosi (***al**) eta bestea bota **al** duen galdetu dut.
this.ABS buy PART and other.ABS throw PART AUX.COMP ask AUX
'I asked whether s/he bought this one and threw away the other one.'

(22) Ez dakit nora joan (***ote**)
not know where.ALL go PART
'I don't know where to go.'

Additionally, forming a morphological word with the inflected verb implies that nothing can intervene between the particle and the inflected verb; this prediction is borne out:

(23) Txiki Iurretan lanean hasi **omen** (*berriro) da.
Txiki.ABS Iurreta.IN work.IN begin PART again AUX
'Reportedly, Txiki began working in Iurreta.'

Indeed, if the particle stayed *in situ* after the lexical verb, the sentence would be ungrammatical:

(24) *Jonek di**a** ~~Jonek~~ hori erran **ote** ~~du~~?
Jon.ERG AUX.PART that.ABS say PART
(Intended reading: 'Is it John who said that? (I'm wondering)')

Furthermore, synthetic verbs are banned from the very first position and, therefore, an expletive morpheme *ba-* is required to precede the verb (Ortiz de Urbina 1989; 1994; A. Elordieta & Haddican 2018; among others). Even when a discourse particle appears before a synthetic verb in clause initial position, this does not count as a constituent and the use of *ba-* is still obligatory:

(25) *(Ba) **omen** daki
CL PART know
'Reportedly, s/he knows it.'

Concerning their phonological-prosodic properties, although the prosodic characteristics of particles in Basque should be studied deeply, at first glance it seems that they behave as follows: first, regarding the issue of whether they receive stress or not, they do show stress although this is not always located on the same syllable since it depends on the length of the inflected verb they are attached to. Let us briefly exemplify this with the particle *ote*:[17]

[17] The particle *ote* has three phonological forms: *ete* in western varieties, *othe* in Souletin and *ote* in the rest of dialects; *hote* is also attested in the variety from Salazar valley, although there is no aspiration in that area, unlike in Souletin.

(26) Inchauspe (1856)

a. Bil **o'the** dai'te elhorrie'tan maha'xic e'do phico'ric
gather PART can hawthorn.IN grape.PRTT or fig.PRTT
naharre'tan?
blackberry.IN
'Can we gather grapes from hawthorns or figs from blackberries?'

b. Ni **othe'** niz, Jau'na?
I.ABS PART be sir.ABS
'Is it me, Lord?' (ibidem)

In some prosodic systems[18] the *o-* receives the stress if the inflected verb has two syllables (26a), but it is *-te* which receives it if the inflected verb has only one syllable (26b). Hence, Basque discourse particles do not have inherent stress. Moreover, it is the combination of particle and inflected verb which receives stress[19] and, therefore, they form a prosodic word.[20] Interestingly, these particles may suffer apheresis in some contexts as the result of the position of the accent:

(27) Barandiaran (1972)
Loak artu **men'**tzun. [*omen' > men*]
sleep.ERG take PART.AUX
'Reportedly, s/he fall asleep.'

(28) Nun utzi **te'** (d)et periodikua? [*ote' > te*]
where leave PART AUX newspaper.ABS
'Where did I leave the newspaper? (I'm wondering)'

In addition, they cannot occur by themselves since they need to occur always attached to the inflected verbal form; this seems to be a common property of discourse particles cross-linguistically:

(29) - Heldu da David Bostonera? - ***Ei***.
arrive AUX David.ABS Boston.ALL PART
'- Did David arrive in Boston? – Reportedly.'

So far, this pattern is attested in all particles; indeed, the only difference they present concerns their interpretation.

[18] The high degree of fragmentation of the Basque language also affects its prosodic pattern; this results into a system where some varieties have a [+2] system, whereas others [–2] and so on (Hualde 1997).

[19] One reviewer points out that the particle *ote* and the inflected verb *daite* both have stress in example (26a). This is true; however, they are not the same kind of stress: whereas the stress received by *ote* is the primary stress, the one received by *daite* should be considered the secondary stress, i.e. *othédaitè* (cf. Hualde 1997).

[20] In the Basque of Lekeitio (Hualde, Elordieta & Elordieta 1994: 57), the presence of the discourse particles *ei* or *ete* (*ote* in the western dialect) has an impact on the location of the stress provoking that the particle and the inflected verb constitute a new prosodic compound which differs from the one made up of the inflected and the lexical verb:

(i) Gâur etorri- diras?
today come- AUX
'Did they come?'

(ii) Gâur etorri **ete** di'ras?
today come PART AUX
'Did they come? (I'm wondering)'

Finally, it is an acknowledged fact that discourse particles in German or Italian (Thurmair 1989; Coniglio 2008; Cardinaletti 2011; Bayer 2012; Bayer & Struckmeier 2017) are historically related to other categories such as adverbs or conjunctions. This field has been recently explored in Basque linguistics (Lakarra 2019) and the particles *ahal*, *ei*, *omen* and *ote* have been claimed to originate from verbs; for instance:[21]

(30) a. $ahal_{MV}$ ('to be able to') > $ahal_{DP}$ [epistemic particle] (Monforte 2019b)
b. **bo(c)-te_{V} ('yielding') > ote_{DP} [epistemic particle] (Lakarra 2019)
c. **$enin_{V}$ ('to give') > ei_{DP} [evidential particle used in the Western dialect] (ibidem)
d. $emon_{V}$ ('to give') > $omen_{DP}$ [evidential particle in central and eastern dialects]
> $emon_{V}$, $eman_{V}$ ('to give, to seem')[22] (ibidem)

This hypothesis has improved our understanding of discourse particles in Basque since they show an impoverished nature (restricted syntax, bleached interpretation, weakened phonology and prosody), as expected for grammaticalised constituents, and occupy the canonical position of lexical verbs, namely preceding the finite verb.[22]

Based on their syntactic behaviour, Basque grammarians have considered discourse particles as heads which behave clitic-like and occupy a position in the TP-domain (G. Elordieta 1997; A. Elordieta 2001; Monforte 2018), since they always move along attached to the head of TP. Furthermore, the properties cross-linguistically claimed for discourse particles functioning as syntactic heads (Bayer & Obenauer 2011; cf. Gutzmann 2015) are also found in the Basque ones: a) they have a fixed order (18); b) they cannot occur in first position in V2 structures (25); c) they behave mostly as clitics (19, 20 & 24); d) they have no own stress (26); e) they are diachronically related to elements of other categories, in this case to verbs (30); and f) they cannot be the only element as a reply to a question (29) (see (Monforte 2019a; 2020b) for further details).[23] In addition to this, the fact that they move with the finite verb when this rises to the CP-domain (Coniglio 2007; 2008; Scherf 2017) also reinforces the hypothesis that they function as heads.

Regarding to their syntactic position, particles in Basque also display a fixed order, since they always occur preceding the inflected verb, as observed in (16) and (17). Considering that the position they occupy in neutral contexts, i.e. between the lexical and finite verbs, and the fact that they derive from lexical verbs, it seems reasonable to locate their phrase between vP and TP. Moreover, their dependency on finiteness leads into this hypothesis. Let us illustrate this (remind that Basque is a head-final language).

[21] Following the convention in historical linguistics, I use ** here to mark that this form is not found in texts and it has been reconstructed.

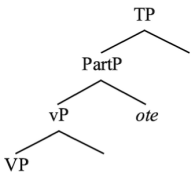
[22] As for their interpretation the verb expressing 'to give' also conveys 'to seem', 'to be of one's opinion/ judgement'. Those interpretations are closer to the evidentiality expressed by the discourse particles *omen* and *ei* as similar correspondences have been claimed in other languages such as Dutch or German (Schoonjans 2012; Van Bogaert & Leuschner 2015; Cruschina & Remberger 2017). Regarding the particle *ote*, Lakarra (2019) claims that it may have developed as follows: the action of giving, seeming, believing > apparently, it seems to somebody that, probably > perhaps, doubt.

[23] Gutzmann (2015) and Scherf (2017) argue that properties a and b listed above are more related to the semantics field than to the syntax of discourse particles. For instance, not all adverbs can be modified:

(i) *Peter har väldigt antagligen köpt boken.
Peter AUX very probably bought book.ABS.DEF
(Intended reading: 'It is very probable that Peter has bought the book.')

Also, they could not behave as focus because they cannot evoke alternatives. Thus, those restrictions usually consider to be caused by their syntactic nature should be attributed to their semantics. Following these ideas, such properties play no role in our current discussion.

(31)



To sum up, in this section I have demonstrated that discourse particles in Basque behave as heads and occupy a position in the TP-domain. Nevertheless, the particle *ote* has more than one grammar; as I will argue in the following section, this particle also behaves as a maximal projection occupying a position in the CP-domain.

4 Microvariation of ote in eastern dialects: XP in the CP-domain

Discourse particles have been proved above to function as heads based not only on their syntactic behaviour, but also on the data collected by testing the cross-linguistic properties of discourse particles. In this section I will provide evidence that *ote* can behave either as a head or as a weak adverb in Eastern Basque; in order to avoid confussion between both kinds of *ote* I will refer to the *ote* under exam now as *ote2*.

As observed before, discourse particles have a fixed position in the clause, i.e. preceding the inflected form. Nevertheless, data from eastern dialects goes against this statement, since *ote2* occurs also in a postverbal position:

(32) Coyos (2013)
Ez dü*a* **ote** eginahala egin?
not AUX.PART PART effort.ABS do
'Didn't s/he do everything possible?'

(33) Camino (2017: 501)
Bena ezpitakit nik lamina horiek zer zien **othe**!
but not.COMP.know I.ERG mermaid those.ABS what were.COMP PART
'But I don't really know what those mermaids may have been.'

(34) Hiriart-Urruty (1971)
Eta gero Jainkoa zertako dugun **ote** samur, estonatuko gira gu!
and then God.ABS why have.COMP PART soft astonish.FUT AUX we
'And then we'll be astonished why God may be hard on us.'

The fact that *ote2* always occurs after the finite verb is not surprising since we are dealing with questions and those, as described above, always show the verb fronted in matrix questions. The same distribution is found in embedded contexts if they are *wh*-questions or polar questions containing a focal constituent. Nevertheless, it does not appear right after the finite verb, because the complementizer -(*e*)*n* (33 and 34), the interrogative mark -*a* (32) or the discourse particle *bada* ('then') may occur in between:

(35) Nor deitzen du *bada* **ote** Peiok egun guziz hain goizik?
who call.IPFV AUX PART PART Peter.ERG day all.INS so soon
'Who does Peter phone every morning so early? ('I'm wondering)'

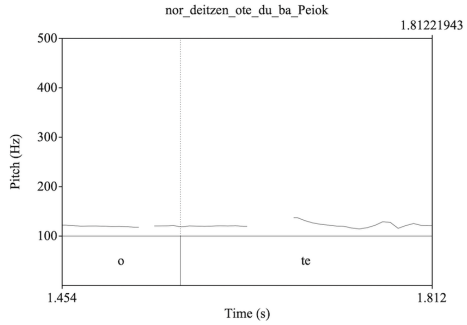
However, *ote2* also has a specific position in the syntactic structure, after the finite verb and the discourse particle *bada* ('then') and before the subject; in fact, appearing in other positions results into the ungrammaticality of the sentence:

(36) Nor deitzen du (**ote**) Peiok (*__ote__) egun guziz (*__ote__)?
who call.IPFV AUX PART Peter.ERG PART day all.INS PART
'Who does Peter phone every morning? ('I'm wondering)'

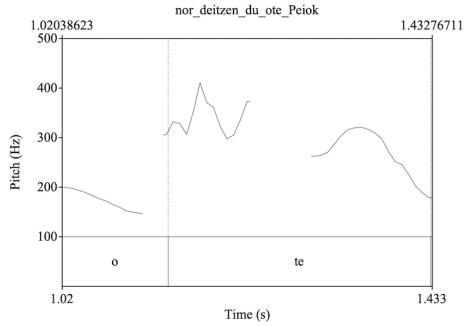
This agrees with the properties proposed by Cardinaletti (2011), i.e. that weak adverbs, unlike full adverbs, may only appear in a fixed position.

Following these authors, proof that the particle does not function as a clitic-head comes from the fact that the particle does not attach to the finite verb and form a prosodic word with it; in fact, *ote2* shows an independent intonational contour. Let us illustrate this:

(37) a. Canonical *ote*



b. Noncanonical *ote2*



Consequently, it cannot be phonetically reduced, i.e. *ote* > **te*, in contrast to what can happen when *ote* behaves as a head (cf. 28), as confirmed by speakers when asked for this issue based on examples such as (32–34):

(38) *Ez dü**a** **te** eginahala egin? (cf. 32)
not AUX.PART PART effort.ABS do
(Intended reading: 'Didn't s/he do everything possible?')

Concerning our topic, this is relevant because it suggests that *ote* and *ote2* have separate phonological nature.

A similar situation is also attested in Austrian German (Coniglio apud Bayer & Obenauer 2011); those who claim that discourse particles in German behave as syntactic heads argue that the adverb *vielleicht* 'maybe' can be reduced to *leicht* in the Austrian variety but only when it functions as a discourse particle, i.e. as a head:

(39) DIE ist [**vielleicht** > **leicht**] schlau!
this.F is PART PART smart
'My God, how smart this one is!'

(40) *[**Vielleicht** > **Leicht**] DIE ist schlau!
PART PART this.F is smart

It is an acknowledged fact that German discourse particles cannot occur in first sentential position; thus, *vielleicht* can occur in that position only if it had an adverbial reading and not a particle reading. Nevertheless, contrary to what has been stated in the literature,

I would like to point out that this difference does not depend on the syntactic status of discourse particles (i.e. heads or maximal projections), but on their phonological nature, i.e. whether they are clitics or not. In fact, a X^0 or XP can function as a clitic and, hence, be phonologically reduced.

In addition to this, *ote2* can occur in clauses lacking the inflected verb, unlike the one described in Section 3:

(41) Non **ote**?
where PART
'Where? ('I'm wondering)'

(42) Moreno (2018)
Pentsatzen dizü bihamonin oano harri hoi nola elkhiko **ote**.
think.IPFV AUX following.day.IN still stone that.ABS how leave.FUT PART
'The following day you keep thinking how they will remove that stone.'

Moreover, another difference compared to the discourse particles described above is that they do not block the rise of the finite verb to CP and they do not move along together, as Coniglio (2008) expects for particles with head status (see 35).

Finally, instances of the innesive case marker -(*a*)*n* attached to the particle *ote* [*ot*(*h*)*e*+*an* > *othian*] or the partitive case marker -(*r*)*ik* attached also to it [*ot*(*h*)*e*+*rik* > *otherik*] provide further evidence in favour of a maximal projection nature:

(43) Oihenarte (1971)
Eztüt*a* nik **othian** egün bonür handia?
not.have.PART I.ERG PART.IN today happiness big.ABS
'Don't I have perhaps today great joy?'

(44) Hiriart-Urruty (1994 [1903])
Ez, eta **otherik** gabe oraino. Zu hunen irakurtzen ari
not and PART.PRTT without still you.ABS this.GEN read.IPFV PROG
ziren bezen segur.
AUX.COMP so sure
'No, and even with no doubt. As sure as you're reading this.'

As can be observed in the previous examples, the behaviour of *ote2* is closer to that one expected for adverbs, as adverbs can function similar to nouns in some contexts (e.g. the adverb 'tomorrow') and admit case marking (e.g. *biharrik* 'tomorrow.PRTT'). For instance:

(45) Oñederra (1999)
Negar egingo zenuke (…) biharrik ez balego.
cry do.FUT AUX tomorrow.PRTT not if.be
'You would cry if there were no tomorrow.'

Based on this evidence, I conclude that *ote* in eastern dialects can behave not only as a head, but also as a maximal projection following Coniglio's (2007) terminology or as a weak adverb following Cardinaletti's (2011) terminology.[24]

[24] Etxepare (2010) and Etxepare and Uria (2016) examine the evidential particle *omen* which also shows microvariation in the same dialects and claim a similar analysis in terms that *omen* can function as a head and as a phrase. Nevertheless, there are some differences between both particles. For instance, *omen* can be used as an answer to a question in eastern dialects; however, *ote* cannot (a restriction shared also by German discourse particles). This may suggest that *ote* is more restricted than *omen*, not only syntactically, but also semantically. However, the parallelism that both particles have separate syntactic statuses stands.

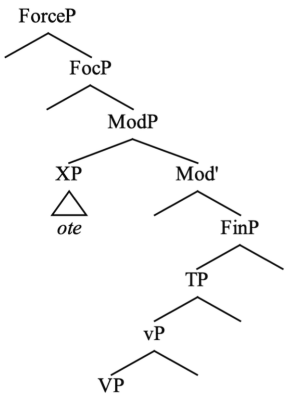
As for its syntactic position, we have seen that *ote2* can occur in non-inflected clauses; moreover, it appears next to the focus of the sentences in those contexts which have suffered the ellipsis of TP:

(46) Non **ote** ~~Aitor egon da~~?
where PART Aitor.ABS be AUX
'Where (may Aitor be)? ('I'm wondering)'

(47) Berlinen **ote** ~~Aitor egon da~~?
Berlin.IN PART Aitor.ABS be AUX
'In Berlin (may Aitor be)? ('I'm wondering)'

This pattern cannot be accounted from the position located below TP proposed in Section 3. In fact, the sentential position and prosody of *ote2* in such contexts do not agree with the pattern canonical discourse particles have and they are reminiscent of Rizzi's (2004) Modifier phrase. Rizzi details constituents occurring in such position as follows: a) adverbs in that position share the same prosody as topics, althougth they are not connected to the background and, therefore, they cannot be considered as topics; b) adverbs in that position modify the constituent they interact with. Concerning the intonation contour of *ote2*, it can be noticed that it goes higher at the end, similar to topics. As for the second property, note that Monforte (2020c) argues that, only if FOCP is lexicalised, *ote2* is licensed in such context. In other words, according to this author *ote* is dependent on the activation of FOCP since it can only occur unless a focalised element has moved to such position (i.e. FOCP); a similar distribution is described for Italian and German by Munaro & Poletto (2002), Bayer & Obenauer (2011) and Egg & Mursell (2017). Taking the properties described for constituents appearing in Modifier phrase and for the particle *ote* in eastern varieties into account, there is enough resemblence to posit that *ote* behaves in a similar way to those adverbs claimed to occupy Rizzi's (2004) MODP.[25] Returning to the issue on the position of this kind of *ote*, the position of MODP agrees with that expected for *ote* since it is above TP and below FOCP, but more importantly, in the CP-domain:

(48)



To summarise, *ote* in eastern varieties functions not only as a head but also as a maximal projection as its phonologic-prosodic properties (independent prosodic word, intonational

[25] Nevertheless, the particle *ote2* is not a full adverb like those examined by Rizzi (2004) as its restriction to appear in first position or to move from its base-generated position suggest. In fact, Cardinaletti (2011) gathers those elements traditionally named as *discourse* or *modal particles* in the Germanic linguistics under the term *weak* or *clitic adverbs* based on their impoverished nature. Therefore, it is expected that weak adverbs such as *ote* have a more restricted syntactic behaviour or weakened phonology or functional interpretation compared to full adverbs. In our current case, *ote* would have a more reduced syntactic nature; this would explain its fixed position.

contour similar to topics, no apheresis) and its syntactic properties (fixed position, no movement attached to the verb even when the latter moves to CP-domain) suggest. Also, it occupies a position in the CP-domain, namely in Rizzi's (2004) Modifier phrase considering the resembled pattern between *ote2* and Italian adverbs occurring in such position.

5 On an (un)usual context of discourse particles

Thus far, discourse particles in Basque have patterned mostly as described in the literature, i.e. they function as free constituents or similar to clitics by attaching to a specific word in the clause. Beside these patterns, there is another one which has recently received more attention in different languages, namely the '*wh*-word particle' configuration; however, it does not seem as common as the behaviour of particles described above. This construction consists of a discourse particle combined with a *wh*-word, following the strict order '*wh*-word – particle':

(49) *wh*-word PART / *PART *wh*-word

Combinations between *wh*-words and discourse particles are found cross-linguistically. This can be found in languages such as German (Abraham 1991; Bayer & Obenauer 2011; Bayer & Trotzke 2015), Italian (Munaro & Poletto 2002; Coniglio 2008), Dolomitic Ladin (Hack 2014) and Japanese (Endo 2018):[26]

(50) *German* (Bayer & Obenauer 2011: 472)
Von wem **schon** kann man das sagen?
of who PART can one that say
'Who can one say that about? About nobody!/Hardly about nobody!'

(51) *Italian* (Coniglio 2008: 109)
Cosa **mai** avrebbe Gianni potuto fare in quel frangente?
what PART would.have Gianni could do in that occasion
'What could Gianni do on that occasion?'

(52) *Japanese* (Endo 2018)
Nani-**yo** John-tara kidotteru wa
what- PART John-TOP vain mood
'John is so vain/John acts cocky.'

They have received distinct analyses: some posit that the *wh*-word and the particle form a single constituent (Bayer & Obenauer 2011; Bayer & Trotzke 2015; Endo 2018), whereas others (Munaro & Poletto 2002) claim that the particle maintains its position in the CP-domain and the adjacency between *wh*-word and particle is due to the lack of movement of the verb or the remmant constituents below it. I adopt the first hypothesis and, thus, put forward that *wh*-words and particles combine together in the base-generated position expected for the *wh*-word and that they form a single constituent.

Similarly, Basque also has this configuration, although it can only be found in north-eastern dialects (Trotzke & Monforte 2019):

(53) Non **ote** utzi dut kazeta?
where PART leave AUX newspaper.ABS
'Where did I leave the newspaper? ('I'm wondering)'

[26] See Hagstrom (1998), Kishimoto (2005) and Cable (2008) for an interesting analysis of the interaction between particles attached to *wh*-words and their position at the edge of the clause in Sinhala, Tinglit and Japanese.

(54) Camino (2009: 193)
Ez dakit nik nola **ote** egiten ahal zükean.
not know I.ERG how PART do.IPFV can AUX.COMP
'I don't know how it could be done.'

(55) Casenave-Harigile (1997)
Nork **ote** jan züan?
who.ERG PART eat AUX
'Who ate it? ('I'm wondering)'

This construction arises not only by the combination between a *wh*-word and the particle *ote*, but also between a *wh*-word and the discourse marker *ba*(*da*):

(56) Borda (2005)
Nondik **bada** zetozen eskatu zien.
where.ABL PART come.COMP ask AUX
'S/he asked them where they were coming then from.'

Note that the usual order in main questions is that of [*wh*-word + verb] and that no phrase can intervene between the *wh*-word and the verb, not even adverbs such as *atzo* 'yesterday', since the *wh*-word and the verb have been both fronted to the CP-domain and are in a [specifier-head] relation:

(57) *Zer atzo erosi zuen Asierrek ~~zer~~ ~~erosi~~ ~~zuen~~?
What yesterday buy AUX Asier.ERG
(Intended reading: 'What did Asier buy yesterday?')

Based on that evidence, the idea claimed in the literature that *wh*-words and discourse particles form a single constituent fits the Basque data, as the obligatory adjacency between the *wh*-word and verb suggests (cf. 53 vs. 57) and, hence, the '*wh*-word ote V' distribution can only be explained by assuming that '*wh*-word ote' counts syntactically as a single element.

However, one should evaluate two alternative accounts available for this configuration in order to reinforce my analysis by showing that the two are not appropiate for our data: on the one hand, *ote* could be attached to the verbal complex, i.e. the merge between lexical and inflected verbs, instead of being adjacent to the inflected verb as in the canonical behaviour. In other words, [*ote* [V AUX]] would be the analysis, in contrast to the canonical pattern [V [*ote* AUX]]. On the other hand, analyses within the Italian languages claim that the particle occupies the same position in this kind of configuration as when it is not attached to another constituent (Munaro & Poletto 2002; Coniglio 2008);[27] the difference between them is related to the movement of the *wh*-word or the whole CP:

(58) Munaro & Poletto (2002: 90)
a. Quando, **po**, eli rivadi?
when PART have.they arrived
b. Quando eli rivadi, **po**?
when have.they arrived PART

(59) a. [$_{FP}$ *wh*$_i$ [$_{F0}$ *particle*] [CP t$_i$ [IP …t$_i$….]]] [Derivation of (58a)]
b. [$_{FP}$ CP [$_{F0}$ *particle*] [~~CP *wh*$_i$ [IP …t$_i$….]~~]] [Derivation of (58b)]

[27] Munaro & Poletto (2002) argue that these particles are syntactic heads. This does not agree with the Basque data, since *ote2* is considered to have XP nature. Nevertheless, putting aside this difference between the two languages, the sentential distribution of particles is alike. This similar order and the fact that both languages show also a combination between *wh*-words and particles make their comparison of great interest.

Therefore, in cases such as (58a) only the *wh*-word rises to the specifier position of the Functional phrase containing the particle (cf. 59a), whereas in clauses such as (58b) it is the whole CP which moves to the specifier position of the Functional phrase (cf. 59b). Nevertheless, as the following data show, these approaches must be rejected, at least regarding the '*wh*-word *ote*' combination. Note that in North-Eastern Basque the adjacency between the *wh*-word and the verb is not obligatory, at least in embedded contexts, as can be observed in (60); this makes them an appropriate context to test both approaches:

(60) Ez dakit non **ote** kazeta utzi dudan.
not know where PART newspaper.ABS leave AUX.COMP
'I don't know where I may have left the newspaper.'

(61) *Ez dakit non kazeta **ote** utzi dudan.
not know where newspaper.ABS PART leave AUX.COMP

(62) Ez dakit non *ote* utzi dudan kazeta.
not know where PART leave AUX.COMP newspaper.ABS
'I don't know where I may have left the newspaper.'

First, the particle cannot occur before an *in situ* verbal complex and nothing can intervene between the *wh*-word and *ote* as shown in (61); however, if we alter the order so that the particle and the *wh*-word are adjacent, the sentence is grammatical (cf. 60 and 62). Furthermore, these examples prove that *ote* is attached to the *wh*-word since in those cases the *wh*-word and the particle move along together to the target position of *wh*-words in the CP-domain and they appear contiguous irrespective of whether the verb also moves to the CP-domain (62) or not (60). Therefore, this discards the idea that *ote* merges with the complex verb rather it precedes the complex verb in these cases.

Additionally, this behaviour goes against the idea that the particle always occupies the same position and the different distributions ('*wh*-word ote V' and '*wh*-word V ote') depend on which constituent moves to the specificier position of the phrase containing the particle (Munaro & Poletto 2002). In fact, movement of the verb to the CP-domain could be singled out as responsible for the two distributions in Basque: if the verb moved to the CP-domain, we would get the order of configurations described in Section 4 and illustrated here in examples (63a) and (64a) and, if the verb did not move to CP, then the construction dealt with in this section would arise (63b and 64b):[28]

(63) a. $[_{XP}$ Non$_i$ $[_X$ utzi dut$_j$] $[_{YP}$ **ote** $[_{ZP}$ …. t$_i$ t$_j$...]]]
b. $[_{XP}$ Non$_i$ $[_{YP}$ *ote* $[_{ZP}$ …. t$_i$ utzi dut]]]

(64) a. $[_{XP}$ wh$_i$ $[_X$ V$_j$] $[_{YP}$ **ote** $[_{ZP}$ …. t$_i$ t$_j$...]]]
b. $[_{XP}$ wh$_i$ $[_{YP}$ *ote* $[_{ZP}$ …. t$_i$ V]]]

However, such idea is not borne out by our data, since a) the movement of the verb does not alter the distribution in those contexts under exam in this section, given that the particle always follows the *wh*-word and precedes the verb whether the verb stays *in situ*

[28] Munaro & Poletto (2002) claim that the distinct distributions lies in the movement of the *wh*-word to the specifier position of the phrase whose head is the particle or of the whole CP to the specifier position of such phrase. This does not seem to be the case of the Basque data since constituents appear after the moved verb and the particle in both cases; therefore, we would have to argue that those constituents have moved to a TOPP below the position of the particle, at least in the structure dealt with in Section 4. Since there is no evidence supporting such movements, I do not adopt the same syntactic structure proposed by Munaro & Poletto (2002); in fact, the main reason to evaluate their analysis is that superficially they have the same two distributions and they offer a single structure for both of them. However, this seems to be inappropriate in the case of the Basque particle *ote*.

(60) or is fronted (62) and b) the verb moves in both distributions '*wh*-word ote V' and '*wh*-word V ote' (65 & 66):

(65) '*wh*-word ote V'
Non **ote** utzi dut kazeta ~~non ote utzi dut~~? (cf. 53)
where PART leave AUX newspaper.ABS
'Where did I leave the newspaper? (I'm wondering)'

(66) '*wh*-word V ote'
Non utzi dut **ote** kazeta ~~non utzi dut~~? (cf. 2)
where leave AUX PART newspaper.ABS
'Where did I leave the newspaper? (I'm wondering)'

Hence, this invalidates the account based on Munaro and Poletto's (2002) work for our data, i.e. that a single syntactic position and different derivations may account for the distinct superficial distribution.

Based on the idea that *wh*-words and *ote* form a single constituent, another analysis could also be suggested: the *wh*-word merges with the weak adverb *ote* which occupies the specifier position of a Modifier phrase when the former moves Spec-by-Spec to the CP-domain and then they (*wh*-word and *ote*) move to FOCP. Even though this is an elegant analysis for this construction, there are data to discard it. Note that the wh-word 'why' in Basque (but also in French, Italian and Spanish) behaves differently compared to the other *wh*-words since it does not need to be adjacent to the verb; thus, it has been proposed that the *wh*-word 'why' does not occur below TP and does not trigger movement to CP because it already occurs in CP, namely in a position above FOCP (Cecchetto & Donati 2012). In such case the *wh*-word could not adjoin to the particle by head movement to the Left Periphery; however, relevant data show that 'why' merges with *ote*:

(67) Zergatik **ote** galdegin dit Peiok hori?
why PART ask AUX Peter.ERG that.ABS
'Why did Peter ask me that? ('I'm wondering)'

(68) Zergatik **ote** Peiok hori galdegin dit?
why PART Peter.ERG that.ABS ask AUX

(69) *Zergatik Peiok hori **ote** galdegin dit?
why Peter.ERG that.ABS PART ask AUX

Based on this evidence, I conclude that the hypothesis which posits that *wh*-words and the particle are base-generated together and form the structure '*wh*-word *ote*', or generally stated '*wh*-word Particle', is appropriate for the analysis of configurations such as those described here. Indeed, prosodic data reinforces this approach, since the particle must be pronounced forming a prosodic unit with the *wh*-word.[29]

Regarding its syntactic derivation, I adopt the analyses brought forward by Bayer & Trotzke (2015), Trotzke & Turco (2015) and Trotzke & Monforte (2019) that *wh*-word and *ote* combine together in a separate derivational workspace and merge in the position expected for the *wh*-word. Nevertheless, I propose that the combination '*wh*-word *ote*' moves directly to its target position in the CP-domain following the canonical derivation

[29] Also, the *wh*-word, and as a result the [*wh*-word *ote*], receives an extra strong accent in those constructions. See Bayer (2009), Bayer and Trotzke (2015), Trotzke and Turco (2015) for an interesting analysis of this phenomenon relating to emphasis and mirativity.

for *wh*-questions in Basque; this is unlike previous hypotheses (Bayer & Trotzke 2015; Trotzke & Turco 2015; Trotzke & Monforte 2019), which claim that this combination needs to move to PARTP to take scope over the proposition by checking features with PART^0 and, then, move to the CP-domain. The argument to discard this theoretically well-founded movement comes from the fact that *zergatik ote* ('why *ote*') could not fulfil it since, as stated above, it is base-generated in CP. Thus, I postulate that the particle takes scope over the proposition (and, hence, contributes to the interpretation of the clause) at the stage where the *wh*-word is inserted in CP, namely in FOCP (or INTP in the case of 'why').

In conclusion, the microvariation found in Eastern Basque is not restricted to the issue of its syntactic status; the cross-linguistic combination between a *wh*-word and a particle is also found in those varieties, namely in North-Eastern Basque. As I proved above, syntactic evidence favours the analysis that *wh*-word and *ote* combine together in a separate derivational workspace, merge in the position expected for the *wh*-word and follows the canonical derivation of *wh*-questions in Basque, in contrast to the hypothesis claimed by Munaro and Poletto (2002) for a similar structure in Italian.

6 *Ote* as a sentence final particle

As remarked above, Basque is rich in microvariation not only among dialects, but also regarding subdialects. The particle *ote* has been a good example of this richness, since it shows differentiated behaviour in eastern dialects. *Ote* can function as a head, a weak adverb and it attaches to *wh*-words. Furthermore, there is a fourth distinguished syntactic use of *ote* in these varieties: the sentence final particle *ote* (henceforth 'SFP *ote*'). This pattern, however, is used in a more reduced area, namely in the far east of the Eastern Basque (included the Souletin Basque, Amikuze's variety and also the disappeared variety from the Roncalese valley). Also, it is more restricted regarding the syntactic type of question it occurs: whereas *ote* appears in *wh*-questions, alternative questions and polar ones, this SFP *ote* has been only found in yes/no questions. Regarding its pragmatic type of question, the canonical particle *ote* (and *ote2* too) is used in rhetorical and conjectural questions, hence, never in *bona fide* questions; however, questions containing SFP *ote* seem to demand a piece of information. Finally, it appears to have developed a separate interpretation since contexts containing it are not accepted by speakers of other areas, unlike the other kinds of *ote*.

We have seen in Section 4 that the particle *ote* can appear after the verb as in:

(70) Salaberry (1978)
Egiazko apeza de**a** **ote** hori?
real priest.ABS is.PART PART that
'Is that person a real priest?'

However, some examples are not as clear regarding the position of *ote*, since it could be considered to occupy a position in the right periphery:

(71) Camino (2017: 501)
Ezpitakit nik lamina horiek zer zien **othe**! (cf. = 33)
not.COMP.know I.ERG mermaid those.ABS what were.COMP PART
'I don't really know what those mermaids might be.'[30]

[30] This utterance was recorded by Prof. Camino (2017) while a speaker was telling old legends and tales about the *laminas* (mythological mermaids) and she was wondering what they may have been. The use of *ote* in this context is expected since the speaker is wondering about something with a low degree of certainty.

(72) Thikoipe (2009)
Orain gazte batekin zirea **ote**?
now young one.COM be.PART PART
'Are you with a young one now OTE?'[31]

Both examples show *ote* at the end of the clause, but I will argue that they do not occupy the same position. First, syntax provides evidence that we are dealing with a different kind of *ote*. If we compare the following examples with those in Section 4, we observe that in (73) the particle appears sandwiched between the finite and lexical verb, as expected for constituents occupying a position between FOCP/POLP[32] and TP in negative sentences; nevertheless, in (74) and (76) the particle occurs after all the constituents of the sentence even the lexical verb in negative sentences:

(73) Coyos (2013: 100)
Ez dü**a** **ote** eginahala egin? (cf. 32, 38)
not AUX.PART PART effort.ABS do
'Didn't s/he do everything possible?'

(74) Estornés (1985: 43)
Eztaukizi**a** etxea sutan **ote**?
not.have.PART house.ABS fire.IN PART
'Don't you have your house on fire OTE?'

(75) Thikoipe (2009: 155)
Ez gire**a** bilkurarat gomitatuak **ote**?
not AUX.PART meeting.ALL invited PART
'Weren't we invited to the meeting OTE?'

(76) Ez da joan **ote**?
not AUX go PART
'Didn't s/he go OTE?'

Also, if we change the position of *ote* and place it preceding the finite verb, as in the canonical pattern, further differences arise: the former (71) is pragmatically felicitous also for speakers interviewed and consulted from western and central dialects, whereas the latter (72) is not. For instance, the judgments of native speakers on examples such as (74) clearly reflect that SFP *ote* must have a distinct interpretation compared to the previous ones, since the use of the particle in its canonical behaviour (and, hence, its canonical interpretation) is rejected:

(77) #Ez **ote** daukazi**a** etxea sutan?
not PART have.PART house.ABS fire.IN
(Intended reading: 'Don't have your house on fire? (I'm wondering)')

[31] This question is used in the following context: some women are taking part in a sex course and one of them tells a story about her husband; then, another woman adds surprised that she did not know that she was married. The first woman replies that she was and it was pretty hard to sleep with an old man because he was always snoring. Then, the second woman asks her: 'Are you with a young man now OTE?'.
This is not a felicitous context for the use of the canonical *ote* in western and central dialects.

[32] As an anonymous reviewer points out, the particle in examples (74–77) does not appear sandwiched between FOCP and TP. In fact, it is between the position occupied by the negation in the Left Periphery, namely POLP (Haddican 2008; A. Elordieta & Haddican 2018) and TP. Nevertheless, this does not invalidate the fact that *ote2* and *SPF ote* have separate distribution.

This leads me to formulate the idea that these uses of *ote* may not convey the same interpretation; however, further research should be done on this topic in order to clarify this point.

Consequently, this is a separate use of *ote* which seems to appear in what has been referred to as the Right Periphery (Izutsu & Izutsu 2013) and may occupy a position above CP. If we look at the data gathered in those dialects, it could be hypothesized that clauses as (74) and (76) may have originated this SFP *ote* by reanalysing the particle in MODP as occupying a sentence final position. Let us illustrate this by taking the following sentence as an example:

(78) Landart (2011)
Ez nintzelakoz laborari izateko sortua **ote**?
not AUX.COMP farmer be.to born PART
'Because I wasn't born to become a farmer? ('I'm wondering)'

The ellipsis of the main predicate would have yielded this new use since the particle and the embedded clause (presumably in FOCP) occur adjacent. Let us briefly exemplify this.

(79) Ez nintzelakoz laborari izateko sortua$_i$ ~~ez zuen~~$_j$ **ote** ~~enetzat estimurik~~? t$_i$t$_j$
not AUX.COMP farmer be.to born not have PART I.BEN esteem.PRTT
'Wasn't he fond of me because I wasn't born to become a farmer? ('I'm wondering)'

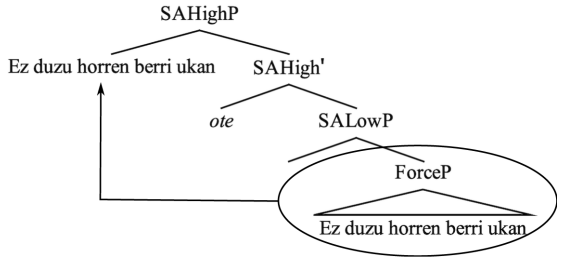
Considering the hypothetical origin of SFP *ote*, it could be posited that the SFP *ote* in (74–76) remains in the same position as its source *ote2*, i.e. [SPEC, MODP], and the proposition below it moves to [SPEC, FOCP]. Nevertheless, to propose the same syntactic position and almost identical derivation to distinct structures exemplified in (73) and (74) seems conflictive since they do not share the same sentential distribution in all contexts and they do not convey the same contribution to the sentence, as argued above based on the fact that they are not interchangeable. Although the interpretation of this kind of *ote* is beyond the scope of the aim of this paper, based on the context of these examples, a first conclusion could be presented: unlike the interpretation of *ote* in the other cases, this has an intersubjective meaning which apparently matches the fact that it appears in utterance-final position (Izutsu & Izutsu 2013; Haselow 2015) since the speaker seems to expect a specific response or reaction from the addressee by using the particle *ote* at the end of the utterance. In fact, this use reminds of those containing usual elements which can be easily considered as SFP such as *ja* and *oder* in German (Izutsu & Izutsu 2013: 230), *but* in English (Richards apud Izutsu & Izutsu 2013: 232) or, even more language specific as *e* in Basque (Lizardi-Ituarte 2019); for instance:

(80) Lizardi-Ituarte (2019)
Ez esan inori **e**.
not tell anyone.DAT PART
'Don't tell anyone E.'

Since such pragmatic markers are considered to occupy a position above CP, I adopt the same analysis for the kind of *ote* under question in this section. Following del Gobbo, Munaro & Poletto (2015), particles in the CP-domain are attractors, unlike particles occurring in the TP-domain; I extend this property to particles in the CP-domain and above it. Thus, the particle triggers the movement of the whole proposition to the specifier position of a functional phrase whose head is occupied by the SFP *ote*.

Having said that, I would like to briefly discuss two issues. On the one side, it would be interesting to specify the phrase it occupies having in mind those separate phrases differentiated in the neoperformative approach: following Corr's (2015; 2016) analysis, there is *SAHIGHP* related to the discourse set-up and speaker-addressee relation and also *SALowP* related to the speaker attitude, evidentialy and epistemicity commented above in Section 1. Although it is necessary to deepen the interpretation of the SFP *ote* first in order to avoid misanalyses, I sketch the distribution of the SFP *ote* considering that its contribution is related to speaker-addressee interaction and, therefore, occupies the position SAHIGHP, as represented below (81). On the other side, I propose that the SFP *ote* has a head status since it attracts the phrase containing the whole proposition to its specifier position, property not available for XPS; also, crossinternal and typological evidence such as those proposed for *e* in Basque (Lizardi-Ituarte 2019) or for *a* in Mandarin Chinese (Del Gobbo et al. 2015) reinforces that hypothesis.[33] Let us illustrate the derivation of an example as (72):

(81)



Therefore, the SFP *ote* occupies the head position of the SAHIGHP based on its function in the clause, closer to those elements marking the discourse set-up and, since those particles are attractors, the whole proposition (i.e. FORCEP) rises to the specifier position of the SAHIGHP.

To summarise, *ote* shows a fourth separate behaviour in a reduced domain of the East Basque area syntactically and pragmatically distinct from the ones previously discussed; this *ote* always appears in a sentence final position and it conveys an intersubjective interpretation. Based on its syntactic and interpretational properties, I have concluded that it functions as a head and occurs in a position above CP; furthermore, the particle attracts the whole proposition to its specifier position.

7 Conclusion

Syntactic microvariation offers new insights into a deeper study of phenomena discussed in other languages from distinct research approaches. The discourse particle *ote* was examined through these lines considering its microvariation and, hence, this provided us the oportunity to observe the behaviour of those phenomena identified cross-linguistically within the same language. First, I looked into the canonical use of *ote*, i.e. its behaviour in non-inflected contexts and in those where the finite verb moves along the sentence, and

[33] One could point out that the evolution of the syntactic status of *ote* seems inconsistent, since it turns from a head one into a phrasal one and further from a phrasal one into a head one again. Nevertheless, I follow the hypothesis put forth in Monforte (2020a) that the *ote2* does not derive directly from the canonical *ote* (dealt in Section 3), but from a paratactic clause (Schoonjans 2012; Van Bogaert & Leuschner 2015). This grammaticalization process is not unknown in the Basque language since other particles or epistemic adverbs seem to share a similar evolution; for instance:

(i) antza denez ('as it seems') > antza ('apparently')
(ii) behar bada ('if it is neccesary') > beharba(da) ('maybe')
(iii) bada ('if it is') > ba(da) ('then') (see Lizardi-Ituarte 2017 for its syntactic analysis)

This new resulted *ote* would have further grammaticalised into a head when speakers reanalysed it as argued in Section 6 regarding Example (80).

its phonologic-prosodic properties; based on that, I concluded that discourse particles in Basque have head status and that they occupy a position in the TP-domain. Second, I have turned into the data gathered from eastern dialects where the particle *ote* can function not only as a head but also as a maximal projection. As for its syntactic position, I have argued that it occupies the specifier position in Rizzi's (2004) Modifier phrase in the CP-domain considering its occurrence in contexts affected by the ellipsis of TP, its dependency on the lexicalization of FOCP and also typological evidence. Furthermore, I have presented data from eastern dialects which gives evidence of two distinguished uses: the '*wh*-word Particle' configuration, also found in German, Italian, Dolomitic Ladin or Japanese, and the utterance final *ote* presumably conveying intersubjectivity. Regarding the former, I have suggested that they are combined together at the stage the *wh*-word is inserted into the proposition and form a single constituent which moves along the sentence, namely to the FOCP following the canonical derivation of *wh*-questions in Basque. Concerning the latter, its sentential distribution and distinct interpretation yield the idea that this *ote* should be considered a sentence final particle which occupies a head position in a phrase above CP; this SFP *ote* attracts a phrase containing the whole proposition to its specifier position deriving the word order displayed in this use, i.e. the particle at the end of the utterance. As can be perceived, the discourse particle *ote* has a high degree of microvariation and, consequently, this provides fine-grained insights and evidence into the study of discourse particles discussed in other languages.

Abbreviations

ABL = ablative; ABS = absolutive; ALL = allative; AUX = auxiliary; BEN = benefactive; CL = clitic; COM = comitative; COMP = complementizer; DAT = dative; DEF = definitive; ERG = ergative; F = femenine; FUT = future; GEN = genitive; IN = inessive; IND = indicative; INS = instrumental; IPFV = imperfertive; PART = particle; PROG = progressive; PRS = present; PRTT = partitive; SG = singular; TOP = topic.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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