

The Perfective Present and the Perfective Past in Lapurdian: a French-side Dialect of Basque

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Keywords: Basque language, Lapurdian dialect, Gipuzkoan dialect, perfective present, perfective past, French language, compound past, simple past

Abstract

In this paper, two verbal forms used for past actions are dealt with: the perfective present (P-PRS) and the perfective past (P-PST). In the literature, it has been said that P-PRS indicates hodiernal past, and P-PST non-hodiernal.

I point out that in Lapurdian, a dialect spoken in France, P-PRS is used in colloquial contexts, whereas P-PST is employed mainly in literary contexts. The hodiernal/non-hodiernal distinction is seen only in subordinate clauses. I attribute this dialectal variation to the influence of the French language, by comparing the compound past in French with P-PRS in the French-side dialect.

0. Introduction

This article aims to discuss the usage and the meaning of two finite verbal forms used in Lapurdian, a French-side dialect of Basque. The Basque language is spoken in the Basque Country, which is located across Spain and France. Some dialects have their own written tradition which can date back to the sixteenth century.

The organization of this paper is as follows: in section 1, I outline the two finite verbal forms as described in the literature. Both verbal forms are used for past actions, but there are some differences. The following two sections are devoted to the description and the discussion of the usage of the two forms in the Bible translation in Lapurdian. In the following sections, I take up the compound past and the simple past in French to compare them with the two verbal forms for past actions in Basque.

1. The two finite forms: the perfective present and the perfective past

The verbal forms treated in this paper, the *perfective present* and the *perfective past*, are both employed for past actions, but they are used in different situations. In the literature, it has been said that the distance from the speech time should be relevant for the distinction of their meanings.

The Basque verbs are conjugated periphrastically¹. As far as the indicative mood is concerned, they consist of a nonfinite participle and a finite auxiliary. The perfective present (henceforth P-PRS) is formed with the perfective participle and the present form of the indicative auxiliary. The

¹ A small number of verbs can be finite by themselves.

perfective past (P-PST) is formed in the same way except for the past tense of the auxiliary. Basically, the former is used as hodiernal past as in (1)², and the latter non-hodiernal (2):

- (1) *Gaur goize=an Peru ikus-i du-t.*
 today morning=IN Peru see-PFV PRS-E1S
 'I saw Peru this morning.' (Oyharçabal 2003: 257)

- (2) *atzo hamaik=e=tan etorr-i zineten.*
 yesterday eleven=PL=IN come-PFV PST.A2P
 'You came at eleven o'clock yesterday.' (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 128)

The P-PRS also indicates past actions in 'this' unit of time, e.g. this week, month, year, or century; otherwise P-PST is employed:

- (3) *aste hon=etan ez du euri=rik egin*
 week this=IN not PRS.E3S rain=PRT do.PFV
 'It didn't rain this week.' (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 129)

- (4) *joan zen aste=an ez zuen euri=rik egin*
 go.PFV PST.REL week=IN not PST.E3S rain=PRT do.PFV
 'It didn't rain last week.' (ibid.)

Dialects spoken in France, however, use P-PRS more broadly than those in Spain. They use P-PRS in expressions such as *atzo* 'yesterday' or *joan den astean* 'last week':

- (5) *Atzo gizon bat ehortz-i du-zue hemen nonbait*
 yesterday man one bury-PFV PRS-E2P here somewhere
 'You buried a man around here yesterday.' (Oyharçabal 2003: 257)

Lafitte (1979) says that in the Nafaro-Lapurdian written dialect, which was used in western territories of the French side of the Basque Country, P-PRS corresponds to the form *passé composé* in French. It marks general past tense meaning, and it is particularly used for past actions in *this* unit of time (ibid. p. 379). On the other hand, it is impossible to employ P-PST in expressions which refers to *this* unit of time (Lafitte 1979: 373, Euskaltzaindia 1987: 128f., Haase 1994, Oyharçabal 2003: 265):

- (6) **Aurthen egin ginuen*
 this.year do.PFV PST.E1P
 Intended meaning: 'we did it this year' (Lafitte 1979: 373)

The characteristics which have been pointed out in the literature can be summarized as follows:

² All noun phrases which have no gloss describing case are absolutive (in Basque) or nominative (in French). All finite verbs without gloss describing absolutive/nominative-argument agreement agree with the third person singular.

- On the whole, P-PRS is used for past actions in *this* unit of time.
- In French-side dialects, P-PRS can indicate actions which happened outside of *this* unit of time, e.g. yesterday, last week and so on.
- P-PST is employed for past actions outside of *this* unit of time, and not selected if the actions took place in *this* unit of time.

Here is a problem: if P-PRS can be used for actions which occurred outside of *this* unit of time in the French-side dialects, and if at the same time P-PST can also be selected for actions outside of *this* unit of time, what is the criterion in the dialects for the selection between the two past-tense forms, when one wants to talk about what happened outside of *this* unit of time? It is obviously not the distance from the speech time. It does restrict the usage, but there will still remain an overlap between the two forms.

In the following sections, I will explore for the criterion adopted in the Lapurdian dialect written in the nineteenth century, contrasting two Bible translations, one of which is in Lapurdian and the other in Gipuzkoan (one of the Spanish-side dialects).

2. The Bible translations

The late-mid nineteenth century saw two Bible translations into Basque carried out in immediate succession. The one written in Gipuzkoan³, *Biblia*⁴, was accomplished by Jose Antonio Uriarte and its final volume was issued in 1859. In the same year, the first tome of the other translation, which Jean Duvoisin had executed in Lapurdian, was published with the title of *Bible Saindua*⁵. Both of them employed the Vulgate as the original text. Henceforth I will call the former U-version, and the latter D-version.

Table 1. Two Bible translations

Translation	Dialect	Region
D-version	Lapurdian	French side
U-version	Gipuzkoan	Spanish side

³ I follow Hualde (2003: 4f) to classify dialects.

⁴ Rosa Miren Pagola *et al.* eds. (2004 [1858-1859]) *Bonaparte Ondareko Eskuizkribuak: Bilduma osoaren edizio digitala* (CD-ROM). Bilbao/San Sebastián: Universidad de Deusto.

⁵ Jean Duvoisin (1859-1865) *Bible Saindua, edo Testament Zahar eta Berria, Duvoisin kapitainak latinezko Bulgatatik lehembiziko aldiko Lapurdiko eskarara itzulia. Luis-Luziano Bonaparte printzeak argitara emana*. Londresen (London). [Reprint (1972) *Bible Saindua: versión euskerica de la Vulgata realizada por el capitán Duvoisin; prólogo a esta primera reedición facsimil, enriquecida con varios cientos de antiguos grabados bíblicos, por Lino de Aquesolo*. Bilbao: La Gran Enciclopedia Vasca.]

I scrutinized the Book of Genesis in each translation, and inspected the correspondence of finite forms in the two versions⁶. As a result, I found that the P-PST forms in the D-version always appear in the same form in the U-version, whereas the P-PRS forms are not consistent in the two versions.

3. Comparing the two versions

In the narrative part, not in the characters' direct speech, both D- and U-versions use the P-PST form. They do not use P-PRS in the narrative part. The P-PST form is employed in main clauses (7)⁷, and in subordinate clauses (8).

- (7) D *Sara=k ichilik irri egin zuen*
 Sara=ERG secretly laugh do.PFV PST.E3S
- U *Sara=k farra egin zuen ezkutuan*
 Sara=ERG laugh do.PFV PST.E3S secretly
- V *quae risit occulte*
- 'Sara laughed secretly.' (18:12)

- (8) D *goan zen Jainko=a=k mana-tu izan zioen lekhu=ra.*
 go.PFV PST God=SG=ERG command-PFV PST.E3S:D3S.REL place=ALL
- U *abia-tu zan Jaungoiko=a=k agin-du zion mendi=rontz.*
 leave.for-PFV PST God=SG=ERG command-PFV PST.E3S:D3S.REL mountain=DIR
- V *abiit ad locum quem praeceperat ei Deus*
- 'He went to the place which God had commanded him.' (22:3)

In the speech of a character, however, only in subordinate clauses do they both select the same form in an identical context. For instance, in (9), the main verb of the relative clause takes the P-PST form in both, and in (10), both versions employ the P-PRS form in the relative clause.

- (9) D *Jaun=a=k, Abel Kain=ek hil zuen=a=ren orde,*
 Lord=SG=ERG Abel Cain=ERG kill.PFV PST.E3S.REL=SG=GEN instead
- eman izan darot bertze ondore bat.*
 give.PFV PRS.E3S:D1S other descendant one
- U *Eman dit Jaungoiko=a=k beste seme bat*
 give.PFV PRS.E3S:D1S God=SG=ERG other son one
- Kain=ek ill zuen Abel gatik.*
 Cain=ERG kill.PFV PST.E3S.REL Abel ABL

⁶ In some examples the D-version uses the surcompound construction with the infinite form of the auxiliary (*izan*). The normal compound construction (P-PRS and P-PST) and the surcompound construction have much in common (Ishizuka 2010), and therefore I treated them in the same way in comparing.

⁷ In following examples, I put sentences in order of the D-version, U-version and the Vulgate.

V *posuit mihi Deus semen aliud pro Abel quem occidit Cain*

[After giving birth to Seth, Eve said] ‘God gave me another son instead of Abel, who was killed by Cain.’ (4:25)

- (10) D *Eta orhoipen=e=tan landa-tu du-da-n harri hau,*
and memory=PL=IN set-PFV PRS-EIS-REL stone this
deithu-ko da Jainko=a=ren etxe=a.
call-FUT PRS God=SG=GEN house=SG
- U *Eta oroipen-garri-tzat zuta-tu de-da-n arri au,*
and memory-deserving-PROL set-PFV PRS.E-1S-REL stone this
izango da dei-tu=a Jaungoiko=a=ren etxe=a
be-FUT PRS call-PFV=SG God=SG=GEN house=SG
- V *et lapis iste quem erexi in titulum vocabitur Domus Dei*

‘And this stone, which I have set up for a title, shall be called the house of God’ (4:2)

In main clauses of speech, on the other hand, the D-version uses no P-PST form: it always selects the P-PRS form, even if the U-version employs the P-PST form for the same context. The U-version uses P-PRS only for actions which happened in *this* unit of time, and otherwise P-PST is selected. One can see this contrast in the example (11):

- (11) D *Eta ene nausi=a=k zin eragin da-rot, [...]*
and my master=SG=ERG swear make.PFV PRS.E3S-D1S
- U *Eta juramentu eragin zidan nere nagusi=a=k, [...]*
and swear make.PFV PST.E3S:D1S my master=SG=ERG
- D [39.] *Eta ni=k ihardets-i dio-t: [...]*
and 1S=ERG answer-PFV PRS.D3S-E1S
- U [39.] *Ni=k berriz erantzun nion nere nagusi=a=ri: [...]*
1S=ERG and.then answer-PFV PST.E1S:D3S my master=SG=DAT
- D [40.] *Erran da-rot: Jaun=a=k, zein=a=ren aitzin=ean bai-nabila, [...]*
say.PFV PRS.E3S:D1S Lord=SG=ERG REL=SG=GEN front=IN REL-walk.PRS.A1S
- U [40.] *Jaun=a=k, esan zuen, zeñ=en aurr=ean nabilla-n, [...]*
Lord=SG=ERG say.PFV PST.E3S REL=GEN front=IN walk.PRS.A1S-REL
- D [42.] *Ethorr-i naiz beraz egun ithur-ur=era, [...]*
come-PFV PRS.A1S and .then day fountain-water=ALL
- U [42.] *Allega-tu naiz bada gaur urezko iturri=ra, [...]*
reach-PFV PRS.A1S and .then today watery fountain=ALL
- V *et adiuravit me dominus meus [...]*
[39.] *ego vero respondi domino meo [...]*
[40.] *Dominus ait in cuius conspectu ambulo [...]*
[42.] *veni ergo hodie ad fontem [...]*

‘My master made me swear [...]

[39.] And I answered him [...]

[40.] My master said to me “the Lord, in front of whom I walk, [...]”

[42.] I have come up to the fountain today [...] ’

(24:37-42)

This passage is a direct speech by Abraham’s servant, who is talking about his journey. Before section 40, the narrated actions are those which happened in the previous days, and thus the U-version selects P-PST. In section 42, on the other hand, the action described is what happened that day (‘today’), and therefore P-PRS is employed. The D-version, notwithstanding the difference in the distance from the speech time, uses P-PRS in all main clauses.

To sum up, the difference and the similarity is:

- In the narrative part, only P-PST is used in both versions.
- In the direct speech, both versions employ the two forms in the same way in subordinate clauses. The selection is made according to the action’s distance from the speech time.
- In the direct speech, the D-version always uses P-PRS in main clauses, whereas the U-version selects P-PST or P-PRS according to the action’s distance from the speech time.

In the next section, I will discuss the differences and the similarities between the two versions, particularly the fact that the D-version *always* employs P-PRS in main clauses, even if the U-version selects P-PST in the same context.

4. Discussion of P-PRS and P-PST in the Lapurdian dialect

In the following, I will consider the difference between the two versions as dialectal one.

The characteristics identified in the literature can explain most part of the usage of the two forms in the Bible translations. First, in the narrative part, only P-PST is used: this is because the story of Genesis is obviously not what happened in *this* unit of time. Second, in subordinate clauses of the speech, P-PST and P-PRS are selected according to the distance from the speech time. Third, the ‘more broad usage’ of the P-PRS form in French-side dialects is found: the D-version employs P-PRS in main clauses, even if the U-version selects the P-PST form.

But why *always*? The D-version always selects P-PRS, in main clauses of the speech. If one claims that the Lapurdian (French-side) dialect uses P-PRS more broadly, P-PRS would be employed more broadly also in subordinate clauses. This is not the case, however: in subordinate clauses the selection agrees with the U-version’s one.

I think that the very criterion for the selection in main clauses is whether it is speech or narrative part. In other words, the P-PRS form is selected for colloquial use, and the P-PST form for literary one, with regard to main clauses. Thus the D-version always employs P-PRS in the speech: the speech part is the only colloquial portion in the Bible. On the other hand, in subordinate clauses I should conclude that the distance from the speech time determines the selection.

Table 2. The criterion used in each version

	D-version (French side)	U-version (Spanish side)
Main clauses	colloquial/literary	hodiernal/non-hodiernal
Subordinate clauses	hodiernal/non-hodiernal	

This kind of disparity, colloquial/literary and hodiernal/non-hodiernal, found in the distinction of past-tense forms is reminiscent of the compound/simple distinction in Romance languages. In the next section, I will examine similarity between the compound/simple distinction in Romance languages and the P-PRS/P-PST one in Basque dialects.

5. The compound past and the simple past in French and Spanish

Some Romance languages have two kind of past-tense forms: compound and simple. Those forms take their origin from Latin. The simple past derives from the perfect of Classical Latin, and the compound past developed after the classical period. According to Dahl (1985: 125), in the seventeenth century, Paul-Royal Grammarians wrote that the distinction between them is a hodiernal/non-hodiernal one. Spanish, Catalan, and Occitan maintain the distinction, but French no longer has that contrast.

In Peninsular Spanish, the compound past indicates near past as in (12). Some dialects, Alicantian for example, use it for hodiernal actions, whereas others use it more broadly such as in Madrid (Squartini and Bertinetto 2000: 416).

- (12) *Hoy me he despertado a las cuatro de la madrugada*
 today me have.1S woken.up at the.PL.F four of the.F morning

‘I woke up at four o’clock this morning.’

(ibid.)

Modern French employs the compound past always in colloquial context. For instance, in a history textbook one can write as (13a) using the simple past, while when giving a lecture about it, one usually selects the compound past (Asakura 2002: 376):

- (13) a. *Louis XIV mourut en 1715*
 Louis XIV die.SPST in 1715
 b. *Louis XIV est mort en 1715*
 die.CPST

‘Louis XIV died in 1715’

(ibid.)

This difference between French and Spanish is similar to that between Lapurdian and Gipuzkoan: in France, both French and Lapurdian adopt the colloquial/literary contrast as the criterion for past-tense selection; in Spain, both Spanish and Gipuzkoan distinguish the past-tense forms according to the distance from the speech time.

In the next section, I will introduce another translation of the Bible, which was translated into French in 1859. This version's usage of the compound past is paralleled to that of P-PRS in D-version, as far as main clauses are concerned.

6. The compound past in Darby Bible

A Bible translation in French was published in 1859, when the D-version's first volume and U-version's final one were brought out. That translation was achieved by John Nelson Darby, who also translated the Bible into English and German. This version is not from Vulgate but from Greek and Hebrew originals.

I investigated the Books of Genesis of this version in the same way as for the D- and U-versions, and found that, in main clauses, the compound/simple contrast in Darby's version (Da) and the P-PRS/P-PST contrast in the D-version are in accord with some exceptions:

- (14) D *Sara=k ichilik irri egin zuen*
Sara=ERG secretly laugh do.PFV PST.E3S
- Da *Sara rit en elle-même*
Sara laugh.SPST in herself
- 'Sara laughed secretly.'
- (18:12)
- (15) D *Eta ene nausi=a=k zin eragin da-rot, [...]*
and my master=SG=ERG swear make.PFV PRS.E3S-D1S
- Da *Et mon seigneur m'=a fait jurer, [...]*
and my master me=make.CPST swear
- D [39.] *Eta ni=k ihardets-i dio-t: [...]*
and 1S=ERG answer-PFV PRS.D3S-E1S
- Da [39.] *Et je dis à mon seigneur: [...]*
and I say.1S.SPST to my master
- D [40.] *Erran da-rot: Jaun=a=k, zein=a=ren aitzin=ean bai-nabila, [...]*
say.PFV PRS.E3S-D1S Lord=SG=ERG REL=SG=GEN front=IN REL-walk.PRS.A1S
- Da [40.] *Et il me dit: l'=Éternel, devant qui je marche, [...]*
and he to.me say.SPST the=Lord in.front.of whom I walk
- D [42.] *Ethorr-i naiz beraz egun ithur-ur=era, [...]*
come-PFV PRS.A1S and.then day fountain-water=ALL
- Da [42.] *Et je suis venu aujourd'hui à la fontaine, [...]*
and I come.1S.CPST today to the.F fountain
- 'My master made me swear [...]
[39.] And I answered him [...]
[40.] My master said to me "the Lord, in front of whom I walk, [...]"
[42.] I have come up to the fountain today [...]'
- (24:37-42)

The only exception is the verb *dire* 'say'. This verb takes either the compound or simple form, even in the speech where the D-version uses the P-PRS form. The selection seems to be done at random:

- (16) D *Eta gu=k ihardets-i du-gu gure jaun=a=ri [...]*
 and 1P=ERG answer-PFV PRS-E1P 1P.GEN lord=SG=DAT
- Da *Et nous dîmes à mon seigneur [...]*
 and we say.1P.SPST to my master
- D [21.] *Eta erran diozute zure zerbitzari=e=i: [...]*
 and say.PFV PRS.E2S:D3P 2S.GEN servant=PL=DAT
- Da [21.] *Et tu as dit à tes serviteurs [...]*
 and you say.CPST to your.PL servant.PL
- D [22.] *Gu=k, ene jaun=a, ihardets-i d-arotzu-gu [...]*
 1P=ERG my lord=SG answer-PFV PRS-D2S-E1P
- Da [22.] *Et nous avons dit à mon seigneur [...]*
 and we say.CPST to my master
- ‘We answered to my lord [...]
 [21.] And you said to your servants [...]
 [22.] And we said to my lord [...]

(44:20-22)

Except for the verb *dire*, when the D-version uses P-PRS, Darby consistently employs the compound past. The opposite is not always true, however. In subordinate clauses of speech, Darby selects the compound past without fail, even if the D-version’s selection is P-PST:

- (17) D *Jaun=a=k, Abel Kain=ek hil zuen=a=ren orde,*
 Lord=SG=ERG Abel Cain=ERG kill.PFV PST.E3S.REL=SG=GEN instead
- eman izan darot bertze ondore bat.*
 give.PFV PRS.E3S:D1S other descendant one
- U *Dieu m'=a assigné une autre semence au lieu d'=Abel;*
 God me=assign.CPST a.F other descendant instead.of=Abel
- car Caïn l'=a tué.*
 for Cain him=kill.CPST

[After giving birth to Seth, Eve said] ‘God gave me another son instead of Abel, who was killed by Cain.’

(4:25)

One can summarize that, as far as main clauses are concerned, excluding the verb *dire* for undetermined reasons, the compound past is in Darby’s version what P-PRS is in the D-version.

7. Conclusion

The P-PRS forms are used differently in the French side and in the Spanish side. In the literature, it has been assumed that the distance from the speech time which is accepted in French-side dialects is broader than that in Spanish-side dialects. This, however, is not the case: as one can see from the usage in the D-version, in the Lapurdian dialect which is written in the nineteenth century, the P-PRS form is always employed in main clauses of colloquial contexts.

I ascribe this fact to the influence of the compound past in the French language. Although it is quite difficult to demonstrate that French did have an impact on the Lapurdian dialect, the compound

past and the perfective present are so similar in use, at least in main clauses, that it is unlikely to be accidental.

It is not unreasonable to hypothesize as follows: the distinction between P-PRS and P-PST is originally according to the distance from the speech time, as in the U-version; in the nineteenth century, some Lapurdian speakers were bilingual in Basque and French; the context in which one can employ P-PRS was similar to that in which one can use the compound past in French; the correspondence between P-PRS and the compound past had been established; usage of the compound past generally in colloquial contexts affected that of P-PRS in the bilingual speakers. The change seems to have begun in main clauses.

In order to make this hypothesis more convincing, one can try to show:

- Lapurdian texts in which P-PRS and P-PST are selected by the criterion of hodiernal/non-hodiernal.
- Evidence for the existence of bilingual speakers in Basque and French before the nineteenth century.
- Data on usage of P-PRS and P-PST in dialects spoken in Lapurdi after the nineteenth century (to reveal how the change has progressed after the D-version's period).

Abbreviations

1: first person, 2: second person, 3: third person, A: absolutive argument, ABL: ablative case, ALL: allative case, CNS: consecutive, COMP: complementizer, CPST: compound past, D: dative argument (in gloss); D-version, Da: Darby version, DIR: direction case, F: feminine gender, E: ergative argument, ERG: ergative case, GEN: genitive case, IN: inessive case, P: plural number, PFV: perfective participle, PL: plural article, PROL: prolativ, PRS: present tense, PRT: partitive article, PST: past tense, REL: relative, S: singular number, SG: singular article, SPST: simple past, U: U-version, V: Vulgate

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バスク語の完了現在と完了過去 —フランスのラブルディ方言における用法—

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キーワード：バスク語、ラブルディ方言、ギブスコア方言、完了現在、完了過去、フランス語、複合過去、単純過去

要旨

バスク語に、完了現在 (perfective present: P-PRS) / 完了過去 (perfective past: P-PST) という二つの動詞形式がある。これらは両方とも過去の事態に用いられる。先行研究では、完了現在は今日起きた事態を指し、完了過去はそれよりも前の事態を指すとされてきた。

この論文では、フランスで用いられていたラブルディ方言においては、これらの形式が今日起きた事態かどうかに関わりなく用いられることを指摘する。ラブルディ方言では、完了現在は口語的文脈で用いられ、完了過去は文章語的文脈で使われる。今日発生したことかどうかという基準は、従属節にのみ関与している。ラブルディ方言の完了現在をフランス語の複合過去と比較した際に見られる並行性から、これらの性質はフランス語の影響と考えられる。

(いしづか・まさゆき)