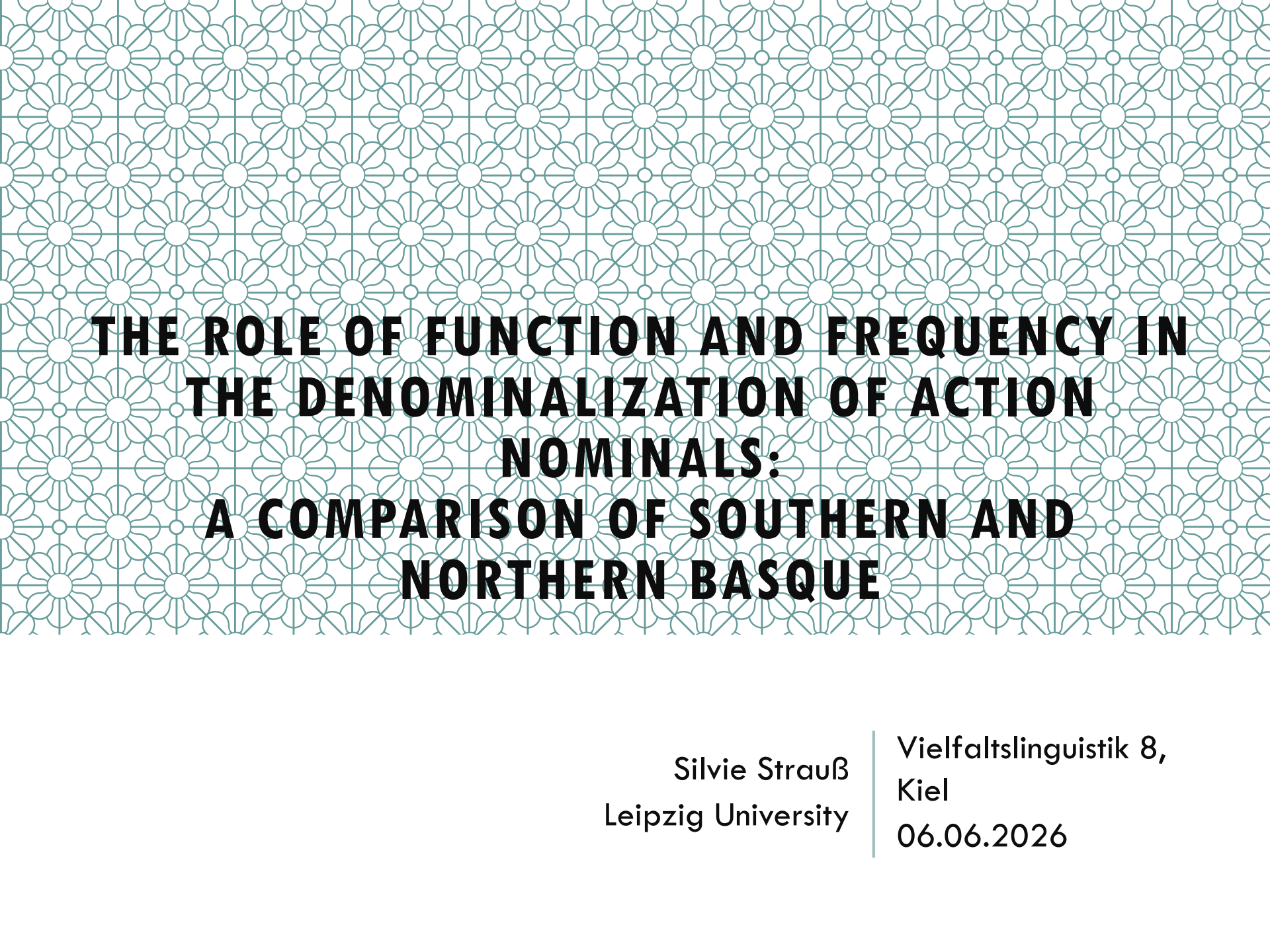




THE ROLE OF FUNCTION AND FREQUENCY IN THE DENOMINALIZATION OF ACTION NOMINALS: A COMPARISON OF SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN BASQUE

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ACTION NOMINAL CONSTRUCTIONS

- Action nominals: “nouns derived from verbs (verbal nouns), with the general meaning of an action or process” (Comrie 1976: 1978)

(1) a) *The city's **destruction** by the enemy.*

b) *The cat **having caught** a mouse.*

- Inflectional action nominals commonly grammaticalized from derivational nouns, taking on verbal properties and losing nominal properties in a process of “clause expansion” (Heine 2009) → “denominalized”
- Action nominal constructions (ANC) differ cross- and intralinguistically in the number of nominal vs. verbal/clausal properties they possess
→ e.g. possessive vs. sentential marking of arguments

ACTION NOMINALS CONSTRUCTIONS

- (2) a. Southern Basque

katu-a-Ø [arrain-a-Ø ja-te-n] has-i da
cat-SG-ABS fish-SG-ABS eat-NMLZ-INE start-PFV AUX.ITR.3SG

- b. Northern Basque

*katu-a-Ø [arrain-a-**ren** ja-te-n] has-i da*
cat-SG-ABS fish-SG-GEN eat-NMLZ-INE start-PFV AUX.ITR.3SG

‘The cat started to eat the fish.’

ACTION NOMINALS CONSTRUCTIONS

- Why are some ANCs more verbal than others?
 - a) Frequency: more verbal properties in languages where they are used more frequently and “in a greater range of productive constructions” (Comrie 1976: 193) → frequent use drives grammaticalization?
 - b) Function: more verbal properties when used in “semantically independent” contexts (i.e. independent truth value, independent time reference, independent participants ...) (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993: 257-258) → in line with the observation that semantically more dependent and integrated complement clauses tend to have less clausal properties (e.g. Givón 1990: Chapter 13; Cristofaro 2003)

A MICROTYPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THIS QUESTION

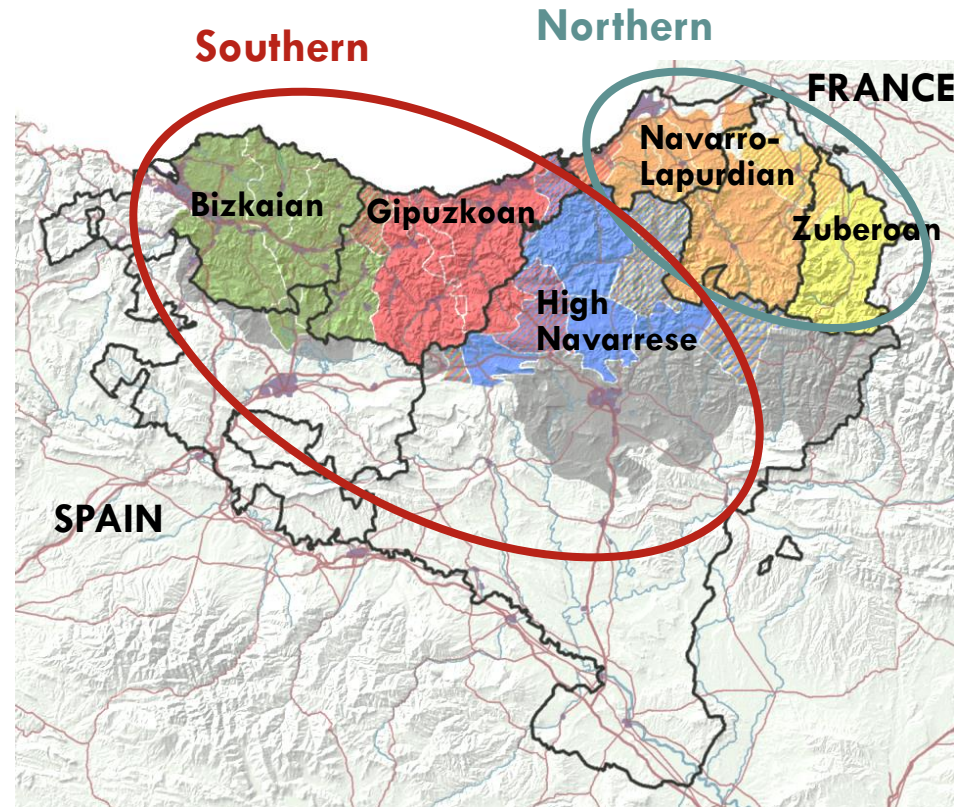
- Comparing ANCs across languages:
 - may differ in several parameters regarding morphosyntactic properties, historical origin, alternatives, argument structure and possible idiosyncracies of matrix predicates ...
 - Comparing verbal nouns in Basque varieties:
 - same historical origin
 - same morphosyntactic properties except for case marking of P
 - part of very similar complementation systems
 - varieties share clause-embedding predicates
- easier to isolate decisive factors

BASQUE AND ITS DIALECTS

- Language isolate spoken by 800.000 speakers on both sides of the western Pyrenees
- Largely agglutinative, ≈ 15 cases, polypersonal verb forms
- Ergative $\sim$ semantic alignment
- Generally head-final word order, basic constituent order SOV but very flexible depending on information structure

BASQUE AND ITS DIALECTS

- Five living dialects
- Two groupings: southern vs. northern and western vs. eastern → only difference behaviour of High Navarrese (southern but eastern)
- Standard Basque based on Gipuzkoan and Lapurdian, but allows quite some dialectal variation



THE BASQUE COMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM

finite	indicative	different complementizers
	subjunctive	
non-finite	verbal noun, perfective nominalization	different cases
	perfective participle, verb stem	interrogative with participle (South)/ verb stem (North) vs. bare participle

- Subjunctive clauses much less common in southern varieties, verbal nouns used instead (Trask 1995: 219; Euskaltzaindia 2021: 1304)

VERBAL NOUNS AND THEIR HISTORY

- Grammaticalized from derivational nouns to inflectional verb forms (Urgell 2006)
- Gradual change from nominal to sentential marking of arguments (Lakarra 1983; Padilla Moyano 2013)

Dependent marking	A	S	P	
fully nominal ↑ ↓ fully sentential	GEN	GEN	GEN	
	ERG	GEN	GEN	old eastern Basque
	ERG	ABS	GEN	modern northern Basque, old western Basque
	ERG	ABS	ABS	modern southern Basque

VERBAL NOUNS AND THEIR HISTORY

- For some speakers, genitive marking of P is incompatible with the presence of an overt A (N'Diaye 1970: 141; Duguine 2012: 369)
 - Perfective/past counterpart, based on perfective participle, only attested with sentential argument marking, with the possible exception of the easternmost dialect (Padilla Moyano 2013: 388)
- less genitive marking in semantically more independent complements

VERBAL NOUNS AND THEIR HISTORY

- VNs more denominalized in the South, where they are used more frequently
- Also more denominalized in semantically more independent contexts?

→ Two main questions:

- To what extent do VNs in Southern and Northern Basque differ in frequency? Do they also differ in function, i.e. the semantic contexts they are used in?
- To what extent is genitive marking in northern Basque affected by the function of the VN?

DATA

- Egungo Testuen Corpora (Corpus of Contemporary Texts, ETC):
 - written texts, more than half of which is press
 - Occurrences from three regional newspapers:
 - *Bizkaiko Hitza* and *Gipuzkoako Hitza*, covering the western provinces Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, for Southern Basque
 - *Herria*, covering all three northern provinces, for Northern Basque
 - High Navarrese left out because of intermediate position
- generally written in Standard Basque with dialectal flavours

DATA

- Five clause-embedding predicates
 - different degrees of semantic integration
 - alternate between VN complements and finite complement clauses without change in meaning
- For each context and dialect cluster, first 25 occurrences with complement clause, + another 25 for *ukatu* ‘deny’ and *lagundu* ‘help’ because only one occurrence with VN/ no occurrence with finite clause in first sample
- Annotated for finite clause vs. VN as well as case marking of P in northern VNs

CONTEXTS

1. *ukatu* ‘deny’:

- Complement has its own truth value, time reference and participants
- Complement indicative clause (with default declarative complementizer) or absolutive VN/ perfective nominalization

(4) a. Indicative clause:

uka-tu egi-ten d-u-te [helburu-ak **bete-Ø** **dir-ela**]
deny-PFV do-IPFV 3SG.ABS-AUX.TR-3PL.ERG goal-PL.ABS **fill-PFV** AUX.ITR.3PL-COMP

‘They deny that the goals have been reached.’ (ETC: Bizkaiko Hitza, 2012-09-21)

b. Absolutive perfective nominalization:

uka-tu d-u-Ø [ETA-k zer ikusi-a-Ø **izan-Ø-a-Ø**] *Egunkaria-rekin*
deny-PFV 3SG.ABS-AUX.TR-3SG.ERG ETA-ERG what see-SG-ABS **be-PFV-SG-ABS** Egunkaria-SOC

‘He denied that ETA has had something to do with the newspaper *Egunkaria*.’ (ETC: Herria, 2010-01-14)

CONTEXTS

2. *harritzekoa izan* 'be surprising':

- Complement is presupposed to be true but fully independent regarding time reference and participants
- Complement absolute VN or indicative clause (interrogative or, in the North, with default declarative complementizer, factive complementizer *bait-* or conditional conjunction)

CONTEXTS

2. *harritzekoa izan* ‘be surprising’:

(5) a. Conditional clause:

*ez da harritzeko-a-Ø [sekulako liburu andana-a-Ø **ager-tu***
NEG be.3SG surprising-SG-ABS enormous book bunch-SG-ABS **appear-PFV**

ba-da gerla trixte hor-taz]
if-AUX.ITR.3SG war sad DEM.MED-INS

‘It is not surprising that (lit. if) a huge number of books has appeared about this sad war.’ (ETC: Herria, 2011-02-17)

b. Absolutive verbal noun:

*ez da harritzeko-a-Ø [estilo ugari-Ø entzungai **ego-te-a-Ø]***
NEG be.3SG surprising-SG-ABS style numerous-ABS to_hear **be-NMLZ-SG-ABS**

‘It is not surprising that lots of different styles can be heard.’ (ETC: Bizkaiko Hitza, 2012-06-22)

CONTEXTS

3. *espero izan* ‘hope’:

- Expresses both epistemic evaluation and preference, independent time reference and participants
- Complement absolute VN or indicative clause (with default declarative complementizer), rarely subjunctive clause

(6) a. Absolute verbal noun:

[*den-a-Ø* *ondo* ***atera-tze-a-Ø*** *espero* *d-u-t*
all-SG-ABS well **go_out-NMLZ-SG-ABS** hope 3SG.ABS-AUX.TR-1SG.ERG

‘I hope that everything goes well.’ (ETC: Bizkaiko Hitza, 2013-05-24)

b. Indicative clause:

espero *d-u-gu* [*anitz* ***izan-en*** ***zarete-la*** *martxo-a-ren* *29-a-n*]
hope 3SG.ABS-AUX.TR-1PL.ERG many **be-FUT** **AUX.ITR.2PL-COMP** March-SG-GEN 29-SG-INE

‘We hope that you will be many on the 29th of March.’ (ETC: Herria, 2008-03-27)

CONTEXTS

4. *galdegin* 'ask to':

- Dependent time reference, addressee directly or indirectly responsible for realization of complement state-of-affairs
- Complement absolute VN or subjunctive clause

CONTEXTS

4. *galdegin* ‘ask to’:

(7) a. Absolutive verbal noun:

*udal-a-ri, adibide-z, [webgune-a-n zabalpen-a-Ø **ema-te-a-Ø**]*
town_council-SG-DAT example-INS website-SG-INE distribution-SG-ABS give-NMLZ-SG-ABS
galdegin-Ø d-i-e-gu
ask-PFV 3SG.ABS-AUX.DITR-3PL.DAT-1PL.ERG

‘We have asked the town council, for example, to distribute it on their website.’ (ETC: Gipuzkoako Hitza, 2016-07-29)

b. Subjunctive clause:

ONU erakunde-a-ri galdegin-Ø da-ko-Ø [bere
UNO organization-SG-DAT ask-PFV 3SG.ABS-AUX.DITR-3SG.DAT-3SG.ERG POSS.3SG.REFL
*hitz-a-Ø **atxik d-eza-Ø-n]***
word-SG-ABS **hold** 3SG.ABS-AUX2.TR-3SG.ERG-COMP

‘S/he asked the UN to keep their word (and lift the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq).’ (ETC: Herria, 2002-08-15)

CONTEXTS

5. *lagundu* ‘help’:

- Time reference of main and complement SoA identical, participants overlap
- Complement inessive VN or subjunctive clause

(8) a. Inessive verbal noun:

departamendu-a-k *[beren* *eliza-a-ren* ***berri-tze-n*** *lagun-du-ko*
département-SG-ERG POSS.3PL.REFL church-SG-GEN renovate-NMLZ-INE help-PFV-FUT

dit-u-Ø

3PL.ABS-AUX.TR-3SG.ERG

‘The département is going to help them to renovate their church.’ (ETC: Herria, 2005-08-04)

b. Subjunctive clause:

[heriotza *duin-a-Ø* ***izan*** *d-eza-Ø-n]* *lagun-tze-ko*
death dignified-SG-ABS have 3SG.ABS-AUX2.TR-3SG.ERG-COMP help-NMLZ-PUR

‘in order to help them have a dignified death’ (Berria, 2003-11-04)

OVERALL TENDENCIES

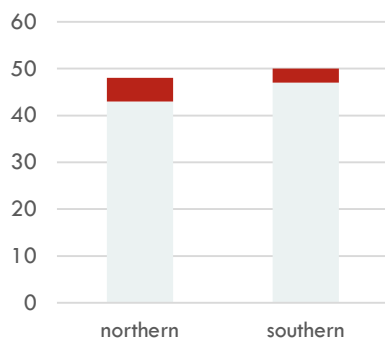
	Finite	Verbal noun
Northern	53,5%	46,5%
Southern	33,3%	66,7%

P arguments in northern VN complements:

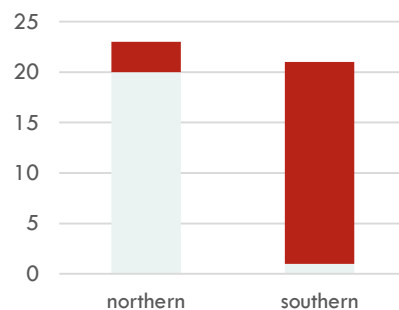
Absolutive	Genitive
61,5%	38,5%

BY CONTEXT

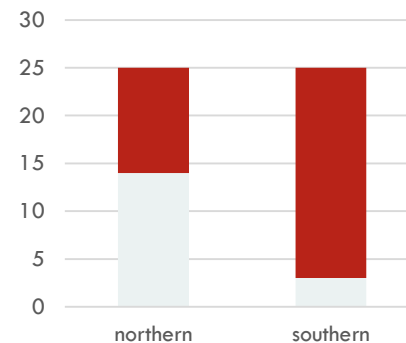
ukatu 'deny'



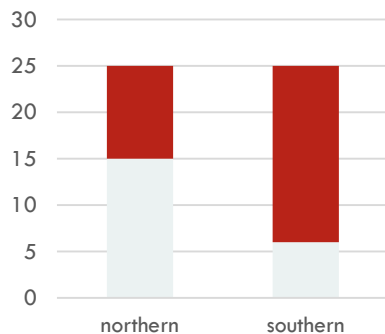
harritzekoa izan 'be surprising'



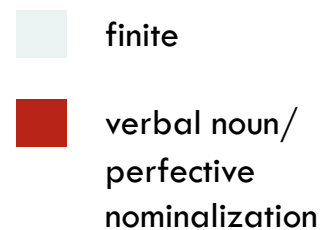
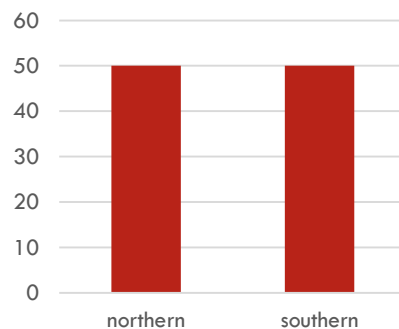
espero izan 'hope'



galdegin 'ask to'



lagundu 'help'



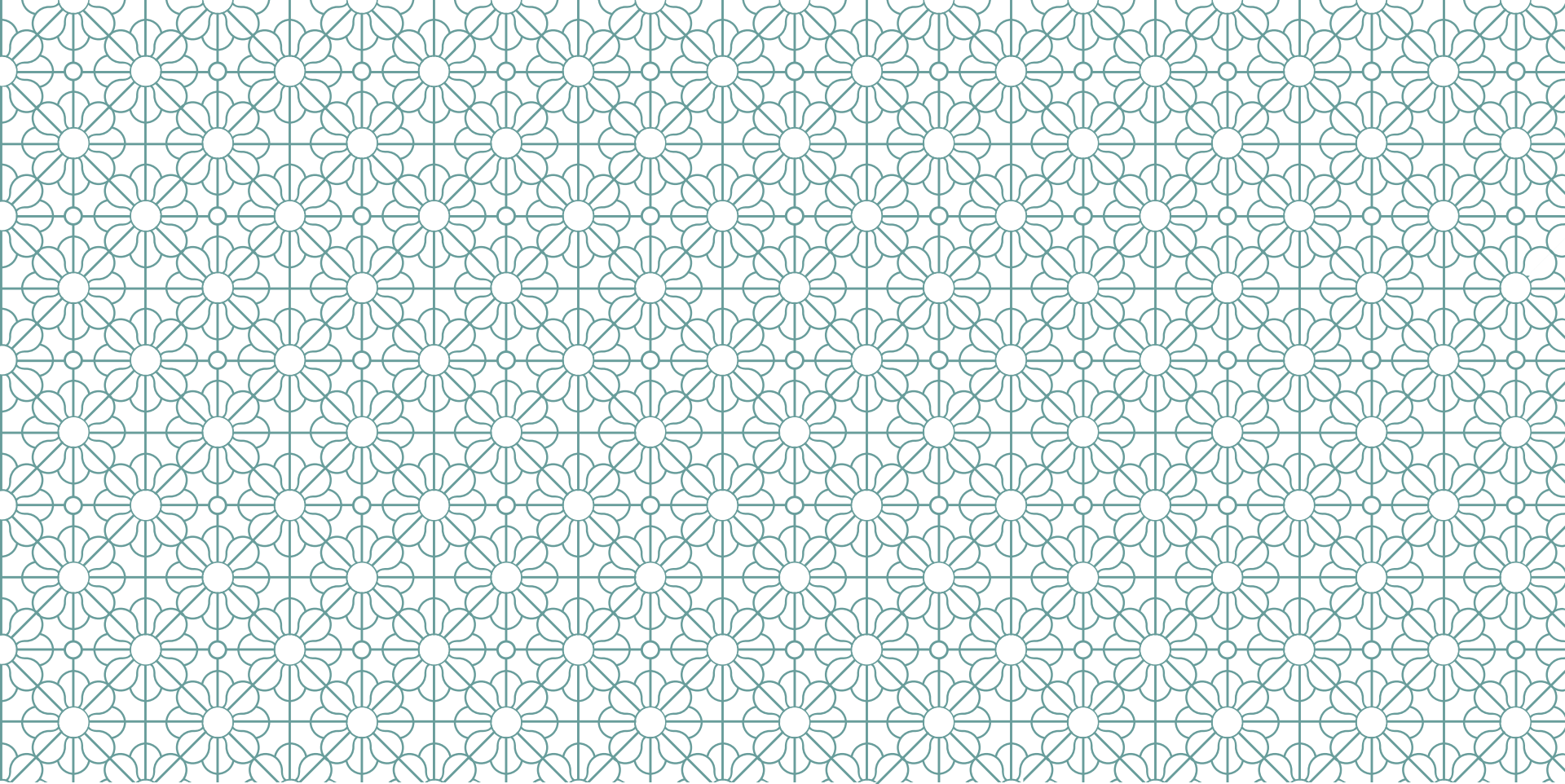
CASE MARKING OF P IN NORTHERN VNS

Context	VN type	Genitive	Absolutive	Rate of genitive marking
<i>ukatu</i> 'deny'	absolutive	0	1	0,0%
<i>harritzekoa izan</i> 'be surprising'	absolutive	0	3	0,0%
<i>espero izan</i> 'hope'	absolutive	1	8	11,1%
<i>galdegin</i> 'ask to'	absolutive	3	4	42,9%
<i>lagundu</i> 'help'	inessive	16	16	50,0%

→ suggests that genitive marking might be more common in semantically more integrated complements, but sample is very small

CONCLUSION

- VNs occur in the same range of contexts in southern and northern Basque, but differ notably in frequency → denominalization less advanced in those varieties where they are less frequent
- Function might also play a role: denominalization more advanced in more independent complements?
- But: data from sources that are still more or less Standard Basque → possible that use of VNs in more independent contexts in northern newspaper is copied from southern Standard Basque



MILESKEER! | [miʎeʂker]
[mileʂkeʁ]

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