# Question particles in Basque*

## Sergio Monforte

UPV/EHU
sergio.monforte@ehu.eus

**Abstract**

This article proposes separate analyses for the question particles -*a* and *al* in Basque, which occur only in polarity questions, within the framework of Generative Grammar. I will propose that the former one, used in the eastern dialects, is the head of FiniteP and that the latter one, used in the central dialects, occupies the head of Particle Phrase located between TP and the CP field. I provide the following evidence in support of this dual analysis: 1) -*a* can be used with *ote* but no other particle can appear at the same time with *al*; 2) *al* is compatible with allocutivity but -*a* is not; 4) and, finally, *al* can be used in embedded clauses, whereas -*a* cannot. The fact that -*a* is not allowed to occur in indirect questions and that it is incompatible with the allocutive verbal paradigm shows that it is in complementary distribution with the head of CP and, therefore, that -*a* occupies such a head; on the other hand, the impossibility of *al* to appear with other particles suggest that they must occur in the same position and, since it can appear in embedded questions and with allocutive forms, it does not occupy the head of the CP, but the head of a phrase below.

**Key words:** syntax, question particles, morphology, microvariation

## Table of Contents

## 1.   Introduction

Recent research (Li 2006, Paul and Pan 2017, Scherf 2017) has differenciated two posi-
tions for particles: Li (2006) distinguishes an outer position and an inner position. This
author provides evidence for this distinction from Cantonese, Mandarin and Wenzhou,
since in these languages more than one particle can occur in the same sentence:[1]

(1)   Lǐ Miǎnníng hái  méi   gěi nǐ  jièshào    wǒ shì shéi ne ba/*ba ne?
      Li Mianning still NEG to   2S introduce 1S  be  who P  P

      'Li Mianning hasn't told you yet who I am, right?'


Similarly, Scherf (2017) claims that in Swedish there are two kind of modal particles
occurring in differentiated positions:

(2)   Nog har väl Peter köpt    boken?
      P    has P   Peter bought book.ART

      'Peter definitely has bought the book, hasn't he?'


In the view of these distinctions, the proposals to locate question particles across lan-
guages can be reduced to two:
        - Those which claim that interrogative particles occupy the head of CP or some
other position in the Left Periphery (for Italian Rizzi 2001, for Mandarin Li 2006, Paul and
Pan 2017, for Catalan Prieto and Rigau 2007, for Cantonese Kuong 2008, typologically
Bailey 2013, for Japanese Kuwabara 2013), i.e., that they occupy an outer position.
        - Those which suggest an internal position (Kuong 2008), in the field of TP/vP (for
Sinhala Hagstrom 1998, for Vietnamese Duffield 2004, for German Bayer and Obenauer
2011, Egg and Mursell 2017, for Swedish Scherf 2017).
        As I hope to show in this article, Basque data confirm that there are typologically
two positions for question particles.
        In what follows, I shall be analysing question particles in as much detail as space
permits focusing on their syntactic characteristics and putting aside the semantic contribu-
tions of these particles to the sentence. First, I will give a brief explanation of some aspects
of Basque grammar dealt with in this paper; second, I will analyse the features which dif-
ferentiate the two particles from each other; afterwards, in section 3, the weaknesses of
previous analyses will be pointed out: one related to interpretation, the impossibility of
-a occurring in embedded clauses and with allocutive forms and -a's compatibility with
ote. Finally, section 4 will argue that, given the characteristics examined previously in
this paper, the particle -a is the head of the Finite Phrase and the particle al is located in a
separate Particle Phrase. Section 5 summarizes the main conclusions of the article.

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[1]      The abbreviations used in glosses are as follows: ABS = absolutive, ACC = accusative,
         ALL = allative, ALC = allocutive, ART = article, AUX = auxiliary, CL = clitic, COP =
         copula, DAT = dative, ERG = ergative, F = femenine, FO = formal, FUT = future, GEN
         = genitive, IPFV = imperfect tense, IN = inessive, INS = instrumental, M = masculine,
         P = particle, PTCP = participle, PTV = partitive, PST = past tense, Q = question, SG =
         singular, SOZ = sociative.

## 2.   Basics on particles in Basque

### 2.1.   *A brief introduction to question particles in Basque*
In order to create a polarity question in Basque, speakers from eastern dialects may use the question particle *-a* and speakers from the central dialect may use the question particle *al*.[2][3] These particles cannot occur together, since they belong in two different dialectal areas which are not in contact:[4]

(3)   Nehor    ikusi duzu-a? [Eastern dialects]
     anybody see    AUX-P

     'Did you see anybody?'


(4)   Inor       ikusi al dezu? [Central dialect]
     anybody see    P AUX

     'Did you see anybody?'


These particles appear neither in Wh-questions, nor in disjunctive questions[5]:

(5)   * Nor etorri al da?    /*Nola hiz-a?
     who come P  AUX/ how     AUX-P

     'Who came here?'/ 'How are you?'

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[2]    Nevertheless, polarity questions do not obligatorily require the presence of these particles in order to be acceptable, since Verb-Auxiliary fronting (Ortiz de Urbina & Hualde 1989, 1993) and prosody mark a proposition as a question (Zuazo 2014); in fact, the data collected for this research confirms their optionality with some clarifications: in Central Basque, speakers resort to *al* as the preferred and prestigious way to ask polarity questions (cf. Hack 2014); in eastern dialects, the use of *-a* in yes/no questions is more a matter of sociolinguistic or generational variation (younger speakers use it less often than older speakers). Further research will result in more accurate data.

[3]    In this work and due to space limitations I will consider all the so-called question particles as true, pure question particles, although they are not obligatory in order to form acceptable polarity questions in most languages, as Xiang (2012) states.

[4]    I am aware of a sole example where these particles occur together:

(1)   Harrigarria   da!   Peio al dea      liburu au  ekarri duena?
     unbelievable AUX Peio P  AUX.P book  this bring  AUX.C.ART
     'Unbelievable! Is it Peio who has brought this book?' (Norantz 2009)


    Nevertheless, this rare example or *hapax* may after all turn out not to be relevant because of its isolated character and because the occurrence of both particles can be explained considering that the speaker was a native of the eastern dialects and studied in full immersion Basque schools, so the particle *-a* could be the particle adquired at home and *al* the one learned at the school.

[5]    Typologically we observe that there are particles restricted to polarity questions, for instance, the particle *que* in Catalan (Prieto & Rigau 2007) or *-a* in Sardinian (Mensching 2015) and other particles which can occur in yes/no questions, Wh-questions and disjunctive questions such as *ka* in Japanese (Kuwabara 2013).

(6)  \* Mikel etorriko    al da    ala zu  (etorriko   [al] zara)?
       Mike  come.FUT P  AUX or  you come.FUT P   AUX

     'Is Mike coming or are you coming here?' (Goenaga 2009: 383)


(7)  \*Mikel heldu dea     ala zu  (heldu zira[-a])?
     Mike   come AUX.P or  you come  AUX.P

     'Is Mike coming or are you coming here?'[6]


Nevertheless, this restriction is not related to the nature of particles, since the epistemic particle *ote* can occur in Wh-questions just as in polarity questions:

(8)  Norat        hartuko   ote du?
     Where.ALL take.FUT P   AUX

     'Where is he taking it/him/her? (I'm wondering)' (Etxamendi 2010[1989]: 29) [7]


(9)  Aterako     ote gera, (...)?
     Leave.FUT P   AUX

     'Are we leaving? (I'm wondering)' (Altzaga 1888)


Below, I will shortly describe some basic grammatical issues of modal particles in Basque.

### 2.2.  Modal particles in Basque

Traditionally, grammarians (de Rijk 1969, Euskaltzaindia[8] 1987, Albizu 1991, Elordieta 1997) have grouped these particles, *al* and *ote*, together with others which seem to have a similar distribution; in the case of the particle *-a* few grammars have mentioned it and, when it has been cited (Azkue 1923, Laffite 1944), it has been labeled as a interrogative marker, separated from modal particles. It is the normative grammar of the Royal Academy of the Basque Language (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 486) who lists both of them, interrogative markers and modal particles, together under the term "elements attached to the inflected form": *omen/ ei, ote, bide ahal/al* and *-a*.

Furthermore, recent research (Haddican 2006, Monforte 2015) has led to a new classification considering semantics and contextual differences:

(10)  a.  Evidential particles: *omen/ ei*

      b.  Epistemic particles: *bide* and *ote*

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[6]    In contrast to the particle *al*, it is not clear whether *-a* can occur in disjunctive clauses, since eastern dialects speakers do not always refuse such sentences.

[7]    In order to carry out this research, I have used two kinds of sample: one made up of data from literary works and dialectical research works; the other one shows data gathered from interviews and surveys realised in Gipuzkoa, Low Navarre (Baxe Nafarroa) and Soule (Zuberoa). Examples used in this article are part of both corpora.

[8]    To save time, I will refer to the Royal Academy of the Basque Language as Euskaltzaindia, its name in Basque.

    c.  Question particles: *al* and *-a*

In what follows, I will briefly explain why these particles have been previously grouped together.

    Although written separately, they usually function as proclitics to the finite verb. Evidence of this relationship is found in the following contexts (Euskaltzaindia 1987, Ortiz de Urbina 1993, Hualde et al. 2003).

    In negative contexts the inflected verb is fronted; if a particle occurs, it moves along with the inflected form:

(11)    Gure herrira    [ez al zara] inoiz etorriko    [~~al zara~~]?
           Our  town.ALL not P  AUX ever  come.FUT

           'Won't you ever come to our town'?(de Rijk 2008: 169)

Also, in focus contexts the inflected verb is fronted in eastern dialects, carrying the particle along with it:

(12)    AITAK     [omen du]   aurdiki [~~omen du~~]
           Father.ERG P     AUX throw

           'Apparently, it was father who threw it.' (Hualde et al. 2003: 317)

(13)    Jonek    [ote dia]    erran [~~ote dia~~]?
           Jon.ERG P    AUX.P say

           'Was it John who said that? (I'm wondering)'

Finally, particles can only occur in inflected sentences, never in non-inflected contexts:[9]

(14)    Ez  dakit              nora          (*ote) joan (*ote)
           not know.$_{\text{1SG.ERG.3SG.ABS}}$ where.ALL P     go    P

           'I don't know where to go.' (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 511)

As regards the phonology, some morphonological changes occur between particles and auxiliaries, such as the so-called Sandhi rule and vowel change:

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[9]    Nevertheless, Etxepare (2010: 91) provides an example where *omen* can appear in non-inflected sentences, for instance:

  (1)    Aldiz  Euskal Herrian    ere gazte batek    OMEN gauza bera  eginik,
         though Basque country.IN too young one.ERG P      thing  same  do.PTCP
         amanda eta  presondegia ukan zituen
         fine    and prison      have AUX
         'However, a young guy reportedly doing the same thing in the Basque country ended in fine and prison.'

    Leaving this work aside, nobody else reports the use of particles outside finite sentences.

(15)   Urduri   altzaude     [alzaude → altzaude]?
      nervous P.be.$_{2SG.ABS}$
      'Are you nervous?'


(16)   Badea       [daa → dea] portuges?
      CL.be.$_{3SG.ABS}$ P                   Portuguese
      'Are there any Portuguese people here?'


      Therefore, based on the presented data, I propose that particles and inflected verbs form a morpho-phonological-word, in the terms stated in Elordieta (1997).
      Before starting the analysis of these question particles, I will give a brief explanation of some aspects concerning the syntax of Basque Left Periphery in (2.3).

*2.3.   An outline of assumptions made in the CP field in Basque*
Rizzi (1997) claims that two phrases can be differentiated in the Complementizer Phrase, one related to the illocutionary force (Force Phrase) and another one to the finiteness (Finite Phrase); along with the two phrases above, Rizzi also proposes two other phrases connected with the information structure, i.e. Topic Phrase and Focus Phrase. Ortiz de Urbina (1999b), following Rizzi (1997), proposes for the Basque language that polarity operators occur in Force Phrase, Wh-words and foci in Focus Phrase and complementizers in the Finite Phrase. He claims that, for instance, the Basque complementizer *-(e)n*, a suffixal complementizer attached to the inflected form, is a head expressing the finiteness morphology of the sentence, since complementizers such as *-(e)n* and *-(e)la*, are only found in tensed sentences.
      Although phrases in Basque are claimed to be head-final (de Rijk 1969), head-movement to the left is attested in some contexts such as negation, question formation and focalization. Since the target of these movements is taken to be either CP (Ortiz de Urbina 1989), ΣP (Laka 1990), or FocusP (Uriagereka 1995, Ortiz de Urbina 1999a), the said target phrase has been considered sentence initial; however, Ortiz de Urbina (1999b) proposes that the split CP should be further articulated as follows (Ortiz de Urbina 1999b):

(17)   [(TopicP) [(Topic)] [ForceP [Force] [(TopicP) [(Topic)] [FocusP [Focus] [FiniteP
      [...] [Finite] ]]]]]


(18)   Galdetu dute  [$_{Top}$ liburua]   [$_{Force}$ ea] [$_{Top}$ Jonek]   [$_{Foc}$ nori]     erregalatu
      ask     AUX    book.ART    Q     Jon.ERG   who.DAT give
      dio[$_{Fin}$n]
      AUX.C
      'They asked who John gave the book to.' (Ortiz de Urbina 1999a: 183)


Therefore, not all phrases located in the *Left Periphery* are head-first: Ortiz de Urbina (1999b) claims that FiniteP is final and phrases above it are sentence initial. The head final character of FinP explains the canonical sentential position of complementizers at the end of the sentence:

(19)   [Force'] Jonek      Mikeli      liburua      erregalatu dio[Fin la] esan dute
              Jon.ERG Mikel.DAT book.ART give        AUX.C   say  AUX
        'They say that John gave the book to Michael.'

On the other hand, as Rizzi (1997) states, the CP will be articulated only if necessary; therefore, in this paper CP in main clauses will not split into ForceP and FinP, unless FocusP or TopicP are activated (see Kuwabara 2013 for a similar proposal for Japanese).

(20)   [CP Joan da]    Mikel etxera      [~~joan da~~] ?
              go    AUX Mikel home.ALL
        'Did Michael go home?'

(21)   [Force'] [Foc Mikel joan da]    [~~Mikel~~] etxera        [~~joan da~~] [Fin'] ?
              Mikel go   AUX            home.ALL
        'Was it Michael who went home?'

In (21) we can see that main and auxiliary verbs (*joan da*) are fronted, adjacent to the focalised element (*Mikel*); as proposed by Ortiz de Urbina (1999a), in Basque the focalised element triggers movement to [Spec, FocP]; once the inflected form is lexicalized by the lexical verb, the complex $V^0$-$T^0$/$I^0$ unit moves to $Foc^0$, in order to match features between the operator of the focal element and the $T^0$/$I^0$. Therefore, since there is movement to FocP, CP is split into the phrases detailed in (17).

## 3.   Basque question particles: their syntactic characteristics

Below, I will introduce some characteristics of *-a* which make it different from *al* and the rest of particles. As stated before, I will not consider the semantic contribution of these particles; therefore, all characteristics mentioned above are related to their syntactic behaviour. However, I would like to indicate that these particles, *-a* and *al*, do not seem to be clause-typing ones, since they are not obligatory in order to form acceptable polarity questions, as said in footnotes 2 and 3; hence, I consider them as pragmatic markers. Nevertheless, further research must be conducted to clarify their character.

### 3.1.   Particles' sentential position
Previously, (2.2), I have pointed out that particles occur attached to the inflected form. As most grammars describe, modal particles are prefixed to the inflected verb:

(22)   Lurdes etxera       joan bide da
        Lurdes home.ADL go    P    AUX
        'Lourdes seems to have gone home' (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 502)

Nevertheless, that does not hold true for both question particles. Indeed, the particle *-a*, unlike *al* and the others, appears suffixed to the auxiliary:

(23)   Hemen bizi dea?
       here    live AUX.P

       'Does s/he live here?' (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 500)

Therefore, the particle *-a* shares its sentential position with complementizers such as *-(e)la(ko)* or *-(e)n*, since they also occur suffixed to the inflected form:

(24)   Galdetu du    (ea) egitea merezi  du-en
       asked    AUX ea   doing deserve AUX-C

       'He has asked whether doing it is worth it' (Ortiz de Urbina 1999b: 181)

As will be shown in (3.3) and (3.4), the particle *-a* could be closer to complementizers than other modal particles, concerning its syntactic behaviour and distribution.

### 3.2.   *Compatibility with other particles*

Although the normative grammar of the Royal Academy of the Basque Language postulates the contrary,[10] there is evidence that the particle *-a* is compatible with the particle *ote* in the same proposition, as shown in (25 and 26):

(25)   JONEK    ote dia     erran?
       John.ERG P   AUX.P say

       'Was it John who really said that?'

(26)   Amatxi       Iholdiko     othe zena?
       Grandmother Iholdi.GEN P     be.P

       'Was our grandmother from Iholdi, I wonder?' (Camino 2009: 193)

This piece of data strongly suggests that the particles *-a* and *ote* are compatible both syntactically and semantically.[11] Consequently, since *-a* is compatible with the epistemic *ote*, I propose that *-a* has no other function than reinforcing that the question is of the yes/no type.

On the other hand, the particle *al* cannot occur in the same sentence with any other particles:

(27)   *Auto gorria    erosi ote al / al ote duzu?
       Car    red.ART buy   P P  / P P   AUX

       'Did you buy the red car?'

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[10]   Typologically there is no such restriction. In fact, more than one particle can occur in the same sentence in languages such as Catalan (Prieto & Rigau 2007), Mandarin, Cantonese and Wenzhounese (Li 2006, Kuong 2008), Japanese (Kuwabara 2013), German (Bayer and Trotzke 2015) and Swedish (Swerf 2017) .

[11]   The presence of a particle reinforcing or marking a polarity question and another one conveying an 'I wonder' effect is well found in other languages such as Lillooet Salish, Thompson Salish, Gitksan (Littell et al 2010).

(28)   *Egia omen al / al omen da?
       True  P P    / P P    AUX
       'Is it true?'

      The incompatibility between *al* and *ote* could be due to the fact that they occupy the same syntactic position or because they have similar semantics; nevertheless, I favour the syntactic approach, since, on the one hand, *al* is incompatible not only with *ote*, but also with the other particles such as *omen*, *ei* and *bide* and, on the other hand, because *ote* and *al* do not have the same semantics: whereas *ote* reconducts the addressee of the question to the speaker himself, *al* is compatible with a *bona fide* question.

### 3.3.  Compatibility with allocutive forms

In Basque, when one is speaking to someone whom one would address with the pronoun *hi* (or *zu* in eastern dialects such as Souletin and Low Navarrese varieties), the finite verb requires the addition of an allocutive morpheme which corresponds to the overt addressee, which is in fact not an argument selected by the verb (see Haddican 2015)[12]. As show in (29), the auxiliary agreees with the subject (prefix *n-*, 1st sg. abs) but it also agrees with the addressee (*-k* 2nd sg. alc.mas and *-n* 2nd sg.alc.fem). These morphemes, *-k* and *-n*, are not an argument selected by the verb:

(29)   Barakaldora      etorri nauk/-n
       Barakaldo.ALL come AUX.$_{1SG.ABS.2SG.\textbf{ALC}.M/2SG.\textbf{ALC}.F}$
       'I've come to Barakaldo.'

      Oyharçabal (1993) shows that in classical Basque and in the eastern dialects the allocutive cannot occur if the particle *-a* is present. Therefore, even if the context leads to its use, the neutral form will be used:.

(30)   Hire amak    ba-daki-(-*k)              -a?
       your mother CL-know$_{3SG.ABS.3SG.ERG\ -(ALC)}$ -P
       'Does your mother know that?'

      This restriction is not related to the fact that the sentence is a yes/no question; although it is a generally acknowledged fact that questions in eastern dialects are a barrier for the allocutive forms (Alberdi 1994), we can find polarity questions inflected with the allocutive form in recent works (Coyos 1999: 205, Santazilia 2009: 234, Etchebest 2014):

(31)   Hun  züzün?
       Good AUX.$_{\textbf{ALC}F/FO.}$.PST
       'Were you ok?' (Coyos 1999: 205)

(32)   Hire lagun bat duk?
       your friend one AUX.ALC
       'Is s/he your friend?' (Thikoipe 2009: 39)

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12    This phenomenon is also attested in Japanese, in the so-called performative honorific *teinei-go* which expresses the relationship between the speaker and the addressee (Harada, apud Oyharçabal 1993).

As stated above, *-a* cannot appear in contexts such as (31) and (32) where the allocutive morpheme is present, although they are polarity questions.

However, the central particle *al* can attach to an allocutive auxiliary form:

(33)   Jaiatekuak    al dituk      oiek?
       festivals.ART P  AUX.ALC those

       'Are those ones for festivals?' (Altzaga 1888)

Therefore, the two question particles pattern differently with respect to their compatibility with the allocutive paradigm.

### 3.4.    Occurrence in embedded questions

Finally, these particles do not behave similarly regarding their occurrence in indirect questions.[13] On the one hand, *-a* cannot appear in embedded sentences. This particle and complementizers both seem to occupy the same position:

(34)   Hemen bizi de(*-a)n      galdegin du.
       here    live AUX(-*P)C ask        AUX

       'S/he asks whether s/he lives here.' (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 500)

On the other hand, *al* and complementizers both can occur in the same clause:

(35)   Entzuten    al duzun   galdetzen dizut.
       listen.IPFV P  AUX.C ask.IPFV  AUX

       'I'm asking whether you are listening me.' (Lertxundi, apud de Rijk 2008: 442)

Moreover, the particle *al* can occur adjacent not only to the auxiliary of the embedded questions, but also to the auxiliary of the main clause:

(36)   Ez  al zizuten galdetu beti     hemen bizi behar al zenuen?
       not P  AUX    ask      always here    live must  P  AUX

       'Didn't they ask you whether you had to live here forever?' (Irazusta, apud de Rijk 2008: 443)

The occurrence of the particle in both the main and the embedded clauses provides evidence to limit the field of use of the particle *al*, since each particle in example (36) has scope over one clause.[14]

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[13]    If we observe particles from other languages such as *ka* in Japanese, *ma* in Mandarin and *si* in Italian, we realise that not all of them behave similarly in embedded questions: some (the Japanese and the Italian particles) must appear in indirect questions, others (the Mandarin and Cantonese particles) are not possible in such contexts. Therefore, we could separate particles into two groups regarding their possibility to occur in embedded questions.

[14]    As stated by Li (2006: 30), the Mandarin particle *ma* has not an embedded question reading, although it occurs adjacent to the embedded clause; it will be always interpreted as a matrix yes/no question:

*3.5.  Interim conclusions*

In view of the evidence at hand, I conclude that *al* and *-a* do not behave similarly; consequently, I propose that they occupy separate positions in the syntactic structure.

The following section discusses the analyses put forward so far within the Generative framework and dismisses some aspects of these hypotheses on further empirical grounds.


## 4.  Previous analyses

In this section I will present the grammatical issues which neither of the analyses proposed previously in Basque grammar can solve entirely; the analyses under examination are the following: Albizu 1991, Elordieta 1997, Elordieta 2001, Haddican 2008, Arregi & Nevins 2012. I classify the issues found in two groups: 1) the negation-particle scope issue and 2) other syntactic issues.

*4.1.  Who c-commands whom*

It is an acknowledged fact that in positive sentences particles c-command the proposition, since they contribute to the interpretation of the whole proposition. However, in negative contexts negation also must c-command the whole proposition, therefore, there is a conflict between particles and negation.

As Haddican (2008) and Etxepare (2010) point out, in Basque the particle has scope over the negation and, therefore, over the whole proposition. Consider the following example:

(37)  Ez  omen zuen  urik          topatu
      not P      AUX water.PTV find

      'Reportedly, s/he didn't find water.' (Haddican 2008: 72)


The interpretation of this example is that "it is said that s/he didn't find water"; this proves that the particle c-command the negation because it adds evidentiality to the negative sentence. If the negation c-commanded the particle, the interpretation would be "it is not true that it is said that s/he found water". However, this is not the interpretation speakers get. The next example further clarifies the relationship between particle and negation:

(38)  Ez  omen zen   Oiartzunen jaio,    # baina ez  omen zen    kanpoan jaio
      not P      AUX Oiartzun.IN be.born  but    not P      AUX out.IN    be.born
      ere.
      too

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(1)   Hòngjiàn xiǎng zhīdào Xiǎofú huì zuò  yú  ma
      Hongjian want  know   Xiaofu can cook fish PRT

      '*Hongjian wonders if Xiaofu can cook fish.'

      'Does Hongjian want to know that Xiaofu can cook fish?'

'S/he's said not to have been born in Oiartzun, but s/he's said not to have been born outside Oiartzun.' (Haddican 2008: 72)

The interpretation of this example is not acceptable in terms of the pragmatics, although it is grammatically correct: speakers are given the impression of a person who was born nowhere. The reason why the continuation of (38) is pragmatically infelicitous is because, according to Haddican (2008), this suggests that the particle c-commands the negation. Indeed, if negation c-commanded the particle, the interpretation would be totally normal, i.e. it is not the case that s\he is said to have been born in Oiartzun but it is not the case that s\he is said to have been born outside Oiartzun. Nevertheless, once again, this is not the interpretation speakers get. Therefore, particles c-command negation.

Based on this piece of data, Haddican (2008) and Etxepare (2010) propose that particles are heads of a ModalP located between PolarityP and IP/TP inside which negation is generated; therefore, in these analyses particles c-command negation as just claimed. Even though negation moves to PolarityP, i.e. over the phrase hosting particles, it reconstructs to its TP-internal position and, hence, we get the scope facts right.

The analyses of Elordieta (1997) and Elordieta (2001) also claim that particles occupy the head of ModalP; however, this phrase is located between IP/TP and VP and not on the top of the proposition. Therefore, regarding the scope over the whole proposition, neither Elordieta (1997) nor Elordieta (2001) meet the criteria of the scope domain of the particles over IP/TP.[15]

Concerning the negation, the two analyses diverge: Elordieta (1997) suggests that it occupies a position below IP/TP, whereas Elordieta (2001) claims that it occupies a position above IP/TP:

(39)   [TP. . . [AuxP. . . [ModP. . . [NegP. . . [VP]]]]]] (Elordieta 1997)

(40)   [NegP. . . [TP. . . [AuxP. . . [ModP. . . [VP]]]]]] (Elordieta 2001)

Regarding the fact that particles c-command negation, Elordieta (1997) explains the hierarchical relationship between particles and negation; Elordieta (2001), however, does not, since in this proposal particles are in any case located below negation and, as shown in (37), particles being c-commanded by negation would lead to an incorrect interpretation.

Therefore, these analyses cannot totally explain the scope showed by particles since ModP is located below IP/TP.[16]

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[15]   Elordieta (1997) explains the scope domain of the particles over the whole proposition by LF-raising of the particle to CP.

[16]   The hypotheses of Albizu (1991) and Arregi & Nevins (2012) do in principle meet the criteria of the scope domain of particles over IP/TP:

(1)   [CP [C] [ModP [IP [Mod] ]]] (Albizu 1991)

(2)   [CP [ModP [TP [Mod] ]] [C] ] (Arregi & Nevins 2012)

However, they do not discuss the position of negation in the syntactic structure; therefore, they cannot be tested according to this parameter.

In conclusion, question particles must occupy the highest position on the syntactic structure, higher than the negation.[17]

### 4.2.  Other syntactic issues

Now I will examine the hypotheses previously cited from a syntactic perspective. This will provide the basis to elaborate and build a new analysis.

### 4.2.1.  Compatibility of the particles -a and ote

As previously shown in examples (25 & 26) and (41) below further corroborates, -a and the epistemic ote can appear in the same sentence:

(41)  Miñarri mendiaren      sabela gatzez   beterik ote datekea?
      Miñarri mountain.GEN belly   salt.INS full     P  AUX.P
      'Might the belly of the Miñarri mountain be full of salt (I wonder)?  (Camino 2009: 193)

None of the five proposals we are evaluating here could admit both particles in the same sentence because they provide the same head for all of them; therefore, the particles -a and ote should be assigned different heads.

### 4.2.2.  Restriction of the particle -a in embedded questions

Similarly, none of these five analyses can explain why the particle -a cannot appear in indirect questions. If it behaved like the rest of the particles, we would expect it to occur in embedded questions. The usual explanation says that the incompatibility with the complementizers lies in the suffix character of -a. Nonetheless, as I have proposed above, if the particle -a is the head of the CP, or the Finite Phrase, the issue of the incompatibility with the complementizers is immediately solved, since both the particle and the complementizers will be occupying the same position.

### 4.2.3.  Incompatibility of -a with allocutive forms

Considering that allocutive forms are excluded from any sentence where C is filled by a lexical element or its trace such as relative clauses, subjunctive complement sentences, indirect and direct questions, Oyharçabal (1993) and Miyagawa (2012) claim that there must be a relationship between allocutivity and complementizers. Therefore, they propose that complementizers block the presence of allocutive forms, because allocutivity can only arise when an allocutive operator moves from [Spec, TP] to [Spec, CP] and $C^0$ is empty to be available for the operator (Oyharçabal 1993) or when an allocutive probe, bearing uninterpretable agreement features, occupies the head of CP, which accounts for the complementary distribution between complementizers and allocutivity (Miyagawa 2012).

This hypothesis would explain 1) that -a can neither occur with allocutive forms nor 2) arise in embedded sentences.

Therefore, as in 3.2.2., none of these five hypotheses can explain why the particle -a cannot appear with allocutive forms.

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[17]    Although the negation has to move higher than the particle, it is interpreted in the original position; therefore, the interpretation of the particle is higher than the negation's (Haddican 2008).

*4.3.   Interim conclusion*

To sum up all the information presented so far in this section, we should consider the following before proposing the syntactic position of the particles:

a) Particles c-command negation; in fact, their scope domain is over IP/TP.

b) Allocutivity (Oyharçabal 1997, Miyagawa 2012) and complementizers occupy C$^0$ (Ortiz de Urbina 1999b); none of them is compatible with the particle *-a*, but they both are with *al*. Therefore, *-a* seems to occupy the same position as allocutivity and complementizers.

c) Evidence from morphological, syntactic and prosodic fields proves that particles and auxiliaries merge; indeed, they form a morphological word (Elordieta 1997).

Therefore, since these particles have been shown not to behave similarly in some aspects, I conclude that they do not constitute a single group i.e. they seem to form two different kinds of particles (cf. Li 2006 on outer and inner particles) and they occupy separate syntactic positions. In the following section I will bring more arguments for assigning them different syntactic positions.

## 5.   Towards a new analysis of *al* and *-a*

*5.1.   A new proposal for the particle* al

I propose that *al* occupies the head of the Particle Phrase (Bayer & Obenauer 2011), and that so do the rest of the particles except *-a*, since more than one of these particles cannot occur at the same time. I suggest that the Particle Phrase is located between the Finite Phrase and the Inflectional or Tense Phrase due to the following two considerations:

a) With the exception of *-a*, which may be considered as a way to reinforce the polarity question type, the particles *al*, *bide*, *omen/ei* and *ote* do not mark the clause type;[18] in fact, typologically the occurrence of particles depends on the clause type (Coniglio & Zegrean 2010, Cardinaletti 2011, Haegeman 2014).

b) As I have indicated the particle *al* and the complementizer *-(e)n* are compatible in the same clause. If we look at the order of the constituents, i.e. V-Part-Aux-C, the complementizer[19] is the last one to appear. Indeed, if the particle were hierarchically higher, there would be a problem with the interpretation because the particle would c-command the complementizer.

For the time being, I will consider that all the particles, except *-a*, occur in the same head, i.e. the head of the Particle Phrase.

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18      For instance, it would not be grammatically correct to ask a question using the particle *ote* alone, e.g. [*Paulek nori liburua eman ote dio*?] (Paule to whom the book gave, I'm wondering) although this particle only occurs in questions; other syntactic operations are required to form a question such as fronting of the Verb and Auxiliary and movement of the Wh-word in the case of Wh-questions.

19      According to Cinque (1999: 56) complementizers always mark the limit of the periphery where particles occur.

*5.1.1.   Syntactically analysing polarity questions containing the particle* al
In this section I will present my analysis for the particle *al* and prove that it solves the problems of the previous analyses.

*Direct yes/no questions.* First, let us consider a standard yes/no question containing the particle *al*, such as (42):

(42)   Ikusi al dezu  poligono        hori?
        See   P  AUX industrial-area that
        'Have you seen that industrial area over there?' (Txurruka & Urbieta 2003: 148)

        The derivation proceeds as in (43).  I suggest that the particle has a [$u$Tense*] feature which is strong (Adger 2003) and $T^0$ has a [Tense] feature; after checking features, the strength of the particle triggers movement of $T^0$ to $Part^0$.  Additionally, $T^0$ has a [$u$Q*] feature transferred to $Part^0$ once both heads merge.  Therefore, since it is a polarity question, the presence of a strong [Q] feature in $C^0$ triggers movement of $Part^0$ to that location so that they can check features.  As stated in (2.2), the CP will be split only if FocusP and TopicP are activated; since in this example there is no topic, no focal element, the CP field is not articulated, so the target phrase of $Part^0$ is $C^0$.  Finally, *al* does not satisfy the lexical necessity of the finite $T^0$, so, it attracts the nearest lexical head under its c-command, i.e. the Verb head moves to $C^0$ constituting the following head: [$V^0$[[$Part^0$-$T^0$]']]:

(43)
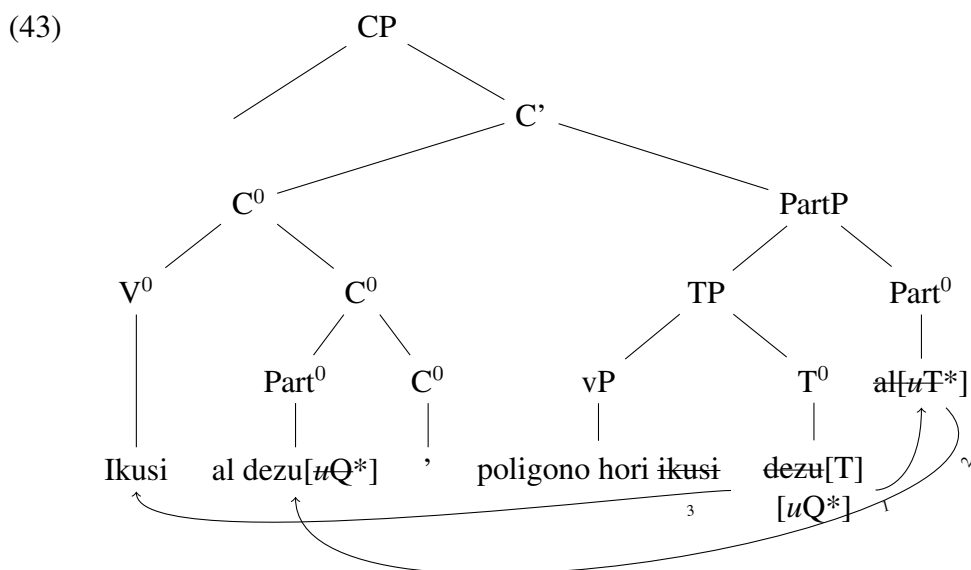


        Consequently, this analysis accounts for the syntactic relationship and the hierarchical position between the particle and the auxiliary.

*Embedded questions.* Previously I have stated that the particle *al* and the complementizer *-(e)n* are compatible, as shown in (44). Now I will further illustrate that this analysis can account for the use of both particle and complementizer. Consider the following example:

(44)  Ea      gazte bi, zaldi gañen, aizen      erun    jûten ikusi altzittuên
      whether young two horse on      wind.GEN way.IN going see   P.AUX.C
      galdetu ementziên.
      ask     P.AUX
      'They reportedly asked whether they had seen two young people leaving by horse
      as fast as the wind.' (Azurmendi 1996)

First, since TopicP is activated in this example, the CP field is articulated as detailed in (17), repeated here for convenience:

(45)  [(TopicP) [(Topic)] [ForceP [Force] [(TopicP) [(Topic)] [FocusP [Focus] [FiniteP
      [...] [Finite] ]]]]]

Moreover, since it is an embedded question, the complementizer *-(e)n* appears in the $Fin^0$, following Ortiz de Urbina (1999b). This permits the occurrence of *al* in $Part^0$:

(46)  [... [ForceP [Force *ea*] [TopicP [Topic *gazte bi*] [TopicP [Topic *zaldi gañen*] [FiniteP [ParticleP [IP [I' [vP *aizen erun juten ikusi* ] [$I^0$ *zittuen*]]] [$Part^0$ *al* ]] [$Fin^0$ *-(e)n*]]]]]]]

Therefore, as can be observed, the presence of the complementizer does not prohibit the occurrence of the particle *al* if they are located in $C^0$/$Fin^0$ and $Part^0$ respectively.

*The restriction of the particle* al . Finally, I will provide evidence that this analysis explains the incompatibility of the particle *al* with any other particles, as shown in (27-28) and here in (47):

(47)  Izan ote (*al) da    euskal eskolarik pinturan?
      Be   P   P   AUX basque school    painting
      Has there been a Basque school in painting (I wonder)? (MEIG, apud de Rijk
      2008)

As with the previous case, I will only examine the part concerning the restriction of the particle *al*. In this case the reason for its not occurring with other particles is that they all occupy the same position; therefore, if *ote* occurs, *al* cannot appear:

(48)

```
                          C
                         / \
                       C⁰   PartP
                            / \
                          TP   Part⁰
                         / \
                       VP   T⁰   *ote+al
                       |    |    *al+ote
        euskal pinturarik eskolan izan   da    ote
                                              al
```

Up to this point I have presented a new analysis of the particle *al*; below, I will proceed with the analysis of the particle *-a*.

*5.2.   A new proposal for the particle* -a

I propose that the particle *-a* is located in the head of the CP or FiniteP (Rizzi 1997). Below I will present more evidence for this position:

a) In other languages (Catalan, Japanese, Mandarin) Q-particles have been located mainly in ForceP (or the phrases immediately around the ForceP), which is claimed to mark the clause type (Li 2006, Prieto & Rigau 2007, Kuong 2008, Bailey 2013 and Kuwabara 2013). In fact, this site is generally assigned to the complementizers in other languages, but not in Basque. According to Ortiz de Urbina (1999b) Basque complementizers occur in FinP. Consequently, it seems reasonable to propose the head $Fin^0$ as the position of the particle *-a*.

b) Secondly, in Basque the particle merges with the auxiliary; in Italian, however, the Q-particle does not merge with the auxiliary, i.e. *se* does not attract the inflected form in order to be adjacent and can occur even in non-inflected contexts (Rizzi 2001). We obtain also proof of the merging between the particle and the auxiliary in Irish, since the copulative verb merges with the particle and changes its form in this language:

(49)   An        cosúil le      taibhse é                  ?
       Q.COP like    SOZ ghost   3SG.M.ACC
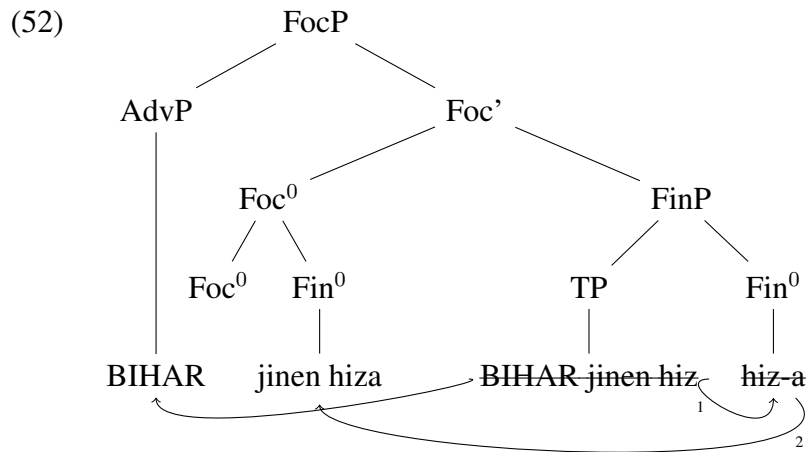       'Is it like a ghost?' (McCloskey 2005: 160)

Moreover, considering that the particle and auxiliary merge, if *-a* occupied $Force^0$, it would be difficult to explain how they merge in such contexts as in (50) since *-a* would appear on its own in $Force^0$ :[20]

(50)   BIHAR   jinen        hiza?
       tomorrow come.FUT AUX.P
       'Is it tomorrow when you're coming here?'

(51)



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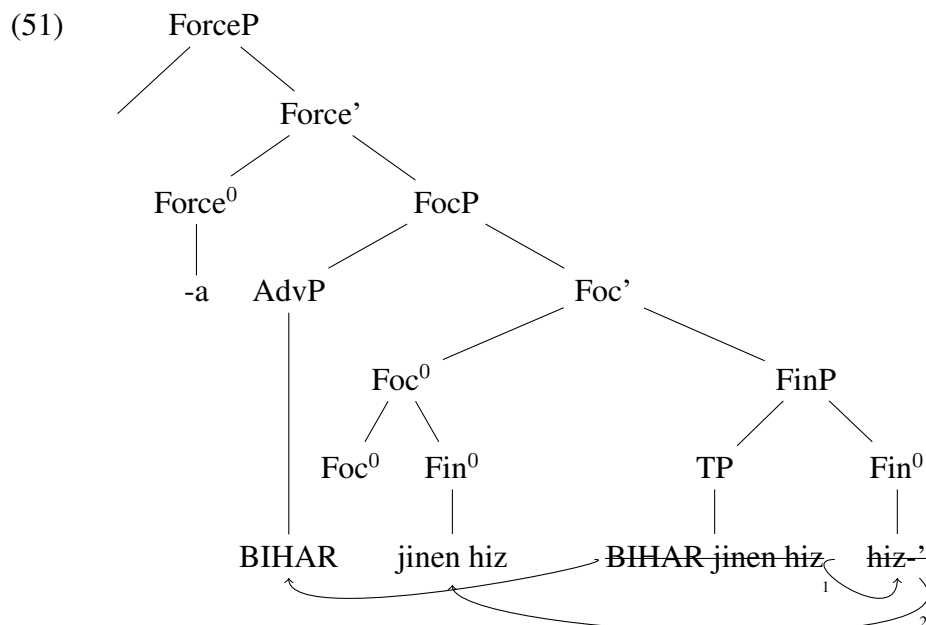
[20]      In Basque the focalised element trigers movement to [Spec, FocP]; whereas the complex $V^0$-$T^0$/$I^0$ unit moves to $Foc^0$, in order to match features between the operator of the focal element and the $T^0$/$I^0$.

An *ad hoc* morphological rule could be claimed in order to amend this incorrect order, i.e. move the Force$^0$ to Foc$^0$ at FF so that particle and inflected verb are adjacent. Nevertheless, I suggest that the derivation is more natural by locating the particle in Fin$^0$, considering that the auxiliary would merge with the particle while triggering movement to Foc$^0$ :[21]

(52)

```
                        FocP
                      /      \
                 AdvP         Foc'
                  |          /     \
                          Foc⁰      FinP
                         /    \    /     \
                     Foc⁰  Fin⁰  TP      Fin⁰
                      |      |    |        |
                   BIHAR  jinen hiza  BIHAR jinen hiz   hiz-a
```

c) Finally, I would like to present a fossilised usage which provides more evidence in favor of the Fin$^0$ as position of *-a*:

(53)   NIK-a? [Nik hori erran duta?]
       I-P     [I    that say   AUX.P]

       'Me? [Did I say that?]' (Euskaltzaindia 1987: 500)

---

[21]    Since *-a* does not satisfy the lexical necessity of T$^0$, the auxiliary form attracts the nearest lexical head in its c-command domain, i.e. the Verb head moves to Foc$^0$ constituting [*jinen* [ [*hiz*] [*-a*] ] ]

In this case,[22] apparently, the particle *-a* has not merged with the auxiliary, but the focalised constituent: *NIK-a*[23]. If *-a* were located in Force[0], an *ad-hoc* morphological movement would be necessary; however, as illustrated in (54), the particle and the focus merge as a result of silencing the constituents below the Finite Phrase:

(54)   [ForceP [Force⁰] [FocP *NIK* [Foc⁰ ] [FinP [~~hori erran dut~~][Fin⁰ *-a* ] ] ] ]

Considering this evidence, I conclude that the particle *-a* occupies the head of the Finite Phrase (or the CP) differently from the rest of the particles.

*5.2.1.   Syntactically analysing polarity questions containing the particle* -a*:*
Now I will present my analysis for the particle *-a* and, as previously done in (5.1.1) for *al*, prove that it solves the problems of the preceding analyses.

*Direct yes/no questions.* After proposing a new position for *-a*, now I will explain the derivation of a yes/no question containing the particle *-a* step by step:

(55)   Nahi (d)uka  borroka?
       want AUX.P fight
       'Do you want to fight?' (Etxamendi 2010[1989]: 74-75)

Following Adger (2003), I theorise that the auxiliary has a [*u*clause type*] feature which is strong and *-a* has a [Q] feature; after checking features, the strength of the particle triggers movement of T⁰ to C⁰. Finally, *-a* does not satisfy the lexical necessity of T⁰, so,

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[22]     Other similar structures have been found in eastern dialects (Larrasquet 1931, 1935, Estornes 1985):

(1)   Baia? [Bai - a]
      yes.P
      'Really?'

(2)   Eza? [Ez - a]
      no.P
      'No?'

(3)   Kemena? [Kemen - a]
      here.P
      'Here?'

[23]     Considering this behaviour, *-a* may be thought to be a focus particle such as *desu* in Japanese (Kuwabara 2013) or *b'a* or *ay'a* in Somali (Saeed 2000); however, *-a* does not appear in other contexts than polar questions, never in declarative clauses containing a focal element, and it do not always occur in polar questions with focal elements.

it attracts the nearest lexical head in its c-command domain, i.e. the Verb head moves to $C^0$ constituting the following head: $[V^0[[T^0\text{-} C^0]]]$

(56)
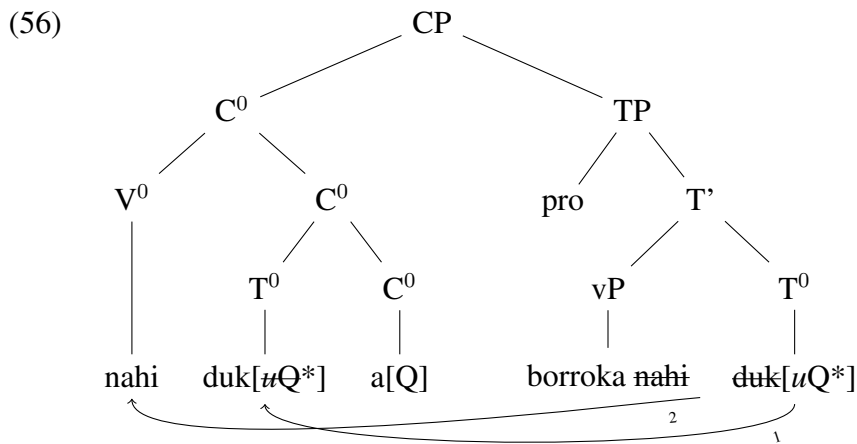


Consequently, this analysis explains the syntactic relationship and the hierarchical position between the particle and the auxiliary.

*Embedded questions.* As noted above, *-a* and complementizers are in complementary distribution. Therefore, in an embedded question, since the complementizer *-(e)n* appears in the $Fin^0$ following Ortiz de Urbina (1999b), this prevents the occurrence of *-a*:

(57)   Jin    denetz  galdetu dute
       arrive AUX.C ask      AUX

       'They have asked if s/he has arrived.'

(58)
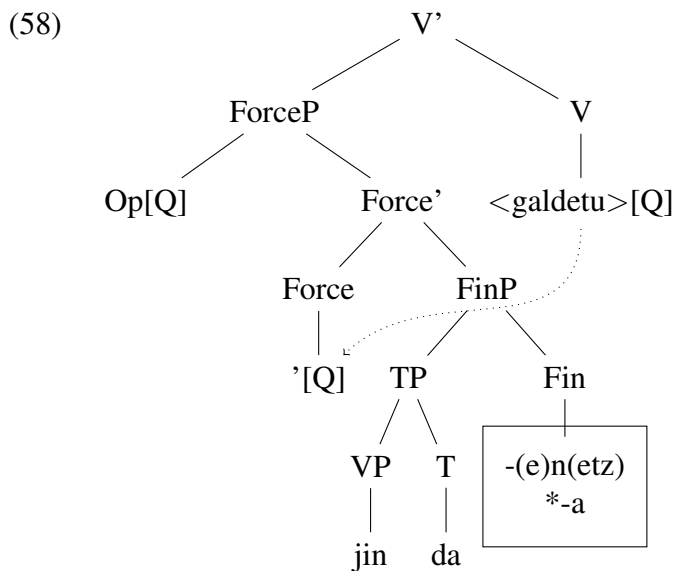


If *-a* were in the $Part^0$, there would be no impediment for *-a* to appear in this kind of sentence. However, we know it cannot; therefore, this analysis explains its restriction. *Polarity questions where two particles occur: -a and ote.* Finally, I will prove that this analysis explains the compatibility of *-a* with other particles such as *ote*, as shown in (59):

(59)  JONEK     ote dia      erran?
      John.ERG P   AUX.P say
      'Was it John who really said that?'

The particle *-a* occupies the head of FinP, since the presence of a focalised element activates the split CP; and, on the other hand, *ote* is located in the head of PartP. Therefore, as shown in the diagram, there is no constraint for these particles to occur in the same proposition:

(60)
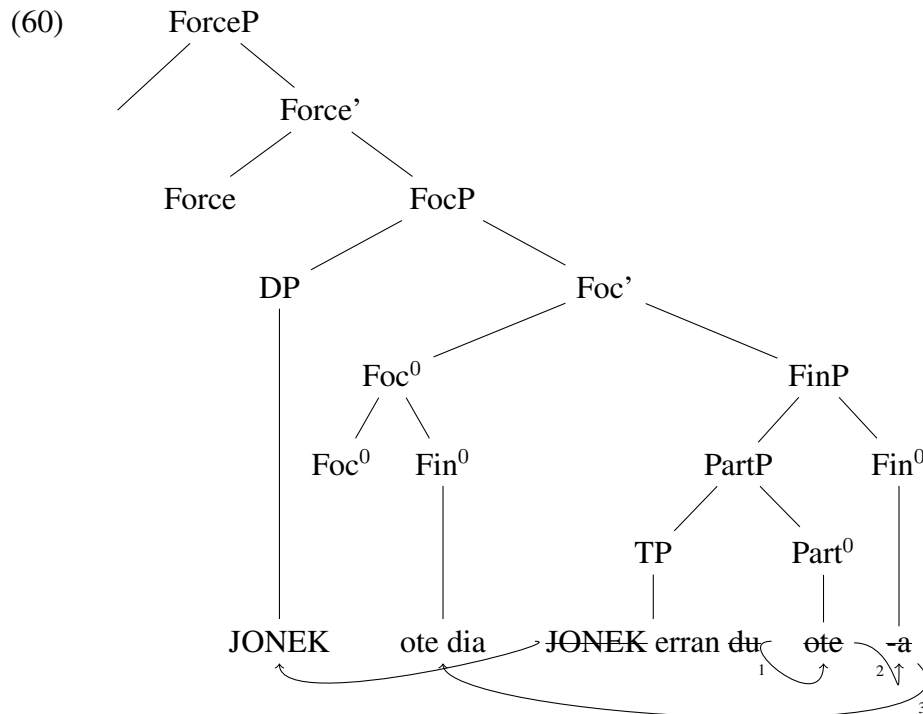


In addition to this, in this example it can be observed that if the particle were in Force$^0$, the inflected verb and *-a* would not merge, unless an *ad hoc* movement of *-a* to Foc$^0$ were employed.


## 6.  Summary

In this paper I have examined two particles which occur in polarity questions in Basque, the eastern particle *-a* and the central particle *al*. Considering that they have a different behaviour in three relevant aspects (they are not used in the same way in embedded questions, with allocutive forms and with respect to other particles), I propose that they each belong to a separate set of particles (Hagstrom 2004, Kuong 2008) and that they occupy separate syntactic positions: *-a* occurs in the head of CP or FinP and *al* appears in the head of Particle Phrase. This last phrase is located between FinP and TP, and the other (epistemic and evidential) particles (*ote*, *omen/ei, bide*) occupy the same position.

This provides us with evidence that propositions can be marked as questions by using particles from two positions: an outer position (Li 2006, Prieto & Rigau 2007, Kuong

2008, Kuwabara 2013) and an inner position (Hagstrom 1993, Duffield 2004, Bayer & Obenauer 2011). As can be seen, these positions have been proposed for other languages and, consequently, two kinds of particles appear to exist (Li 2006) across languages: outer particles and inner particles. Outer particles are claimed to occupy a position in the Left Periphery and inner particles are stated to occur in the area below the CP.

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