Interrogative constructions in Basque and the syntax-phonology interface
Aritz Irurtzun

Research on the structure of wh-interrogatives in generative grammar has been very intensive and fruitful; the morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonological properties of such structures are well studied in a wide variety of languages. The analysis has traditionally been framed in syntactic terms: [+interrogative] (or [+focus]) is taken to be a feature that has to be checked against a dedicated head in the complementizer area, which brings about the observed displacements in a given language (overtly or covertly).

Recent works however propose that rather than as a syntactic phenomenon, the patterns observed in wh-questions have to be understood in prosodic terms (see, i.a. Richards (2010, 2016); Mathieu (2011, 2016); Kandybowicz (2020)). I provide a general critique such theories from the prism of Basque. I will discuss a variety of interrogative constructions of this language that cast doubt on the viability of such approaches, including long-distance displacements, clausal pied-piping constructions, wh in situ strategies and the particular behavior of why-questions. From the discussion I will conclude that the patterns attested in Basque are better studied as a bona fide syntactic phenomenon (with a determinate prosodic interpretation). I will also bring into discussion similar phenomena from a wider variety of typologically distinct languages reinforcing my critique.