



# Estudios lingüísticos de jóvenes investigadores

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**174** colección  
estudios



**ESTUDIOS LINGÜÍSTICOS DE JÓVENES  
INVESTIGADORES**



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Coordinadoras:

**Pilar Morales Herrera**

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# **SPEAKER LEGITIMACY IN CONTEXTS OF MINORITY LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF ATTITUDINAL RESPONSES TOWARDS VARIETIES OF BASQUE**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Who is a legitimate speaker of Basque? In contexts of minority language revitalization, this question becomes crucial in relation to the increasing numbers of “non-native” speakers, who play an active role in maintaining and reviving the minoritized language and culture. In the case of Basque (which has been subject to gradual abandonment since the beginning of the fifteenth century), the creation of a unifying standard variety in the late 1960s marked an important milestone on the road to language revitalization and official recognition, as it represents a powerful tool both for language learners and for language planners. Nevertheless, the emergence of the new standard variety has given rise to various questions, as for a very long time, Basque and its numerous local dialects had been «lived out as a local language» (Urla 2012: 77).

With the implementation of Euskera Batua (lit. ‘unified Basque’), Basque native speakers were suddenly confronted with issues of social belonging, correctness of speech and appropriateness of language use in different contexts. Against this back-

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drop and as part of my master's thesis, I conducted a speaker assessment experiment and a quantitative survey among Basque speakers in the province of Gipuzkoa in order to gather attitudinal responses as well as attributions towards the different local varieties of Basque, which provide interesting insights into how social meaning is created by the use and choice of language varieties in the context of Basque. The participants of my study reacted to four different audio stimuli and responded to various questions about language practice and their personal perspective on the use and functions of different Basque varieties. The analysis of my data indicates that the standard variety Euskera Batua is socially accepted, but that there is also a clear tendency of local dialect speakers to claim the ownership of the 'original' Euskera. Local varieties seem to be generally connected to nativeness, authenticity, belonging and to identity-forming functions, whereas the standard is linked to social cohesion, utility, written language and even to artificiality.

Based on the findings of the present study, I argue that these attitudinal and ideological attributions may put pressure on so-called new speakers of Basque, who acquire the language «by means other than family transmission» (Ortega *et al.* 2015: 86). Speaker legitimacy is not a given and may constantly be negotiated by language users (Costa 2015: 129), but in the present case, new speakers of Basque who usually learn the standard variety, may feel that they lack legitimacy on the Basque «linguistic market» (Bourdieu 1991) and therefore recur to speaking Spanish instead. The following paper explores this issue by analysing phenomena closely linked to language attitudes such as folk beliefs about language and ideological frameworks, which could best be subsumed under the term «language regard» (*cf.* Preston 2015).

## **2. THE STANDARDIZATION OF BASQUE**

The Basque Country is characterised by a heterogenous linguistic landscape: in Gipuzkoa, more than half of the population is euskaldun (Basque-speaking), whereas in Biscay it is only a third and in Alaba less than a third of the total population (Gobierno Vasco 2014). In some villages, the whole population speaks Euskera, in some cities like Vitoria-Gasteiz, it is difficult to find Basque speakers, who only constitute 21,5% of the capital's population. This situation is due to a development that we call language shift (Fishman 1991). The association of Castilian with status and formality and that of Euskera with informal home-family contexts is due to this process that has been going on since the 15th century. Socioeconomic changes and political measures both in Spain and in France accelerated the Basque language loss. After Franco's rigid oppression of the Spanish regional languages, small bottom-up initiatives to revitalize Euskera developed into large official campaigns in order to recover from the past centuries. In the research fields related to sociology of language

ge and language planning, this process gained increasing attention through Joshua Fishman's model of «Reversing Language Shift» (1991).

### **2.1. The Implementation of a New Variety**

In order to facilitate the revitalization of Basque, language planners had been looking for a way to standardize the Basque language in order to provide it with some norms and a representative basis and also to provide a basis for Basque learners. Supporters of this idea were convinced that the only way Basque would survive was by elaborating its functions through standardization. This task required enormous efforts regarding the public and private promotion of the new variety. It also implied sharing functional domains with Spanish or French while taking away functions from the local dialects.

Euskera Batua, a standard variety which brings together different elements from all local varieties, has been implemented in 1968 by the Academy of the Basque Language (Euskaltzaindia). The reasons for the success of Batua are multifaceted. Apart from the very favourable social and ideological circumstances, Hualde and Zuazo underline the fact that at the time of its creation, Euskera Batua was «nobody's spoken language» (2007: 7). Although the founding dialects of Euskera Batua were the most prestigious ones among Basque speakers, these dialects were not “occupied” by the elites, as the latter rather spoke Spanish. However, when dealing with the implementation of a norm, language planners have to foresee that this project will not only entail positive consequences. A spoken language is hard to control by external planning, and therefore it is no wonder that some of its users may disapprove of the normative interventions of the Language Academy.

### **2.2. The Dialect-or-Standard-Debate**

In the case of Basque, the implementation of the new standard variety triggered a controversial debate about how to establish uniform pronunciation rules with Euskera Batua being limited to a written norm and about its degree of artificiality vis-à-vis the numerous traditional dialects. The fact of Euskera Batua becoming a competitor of these dialects turned quickly into a matter of controversy. In the first decades after the implementation of Euskera Batua, the so-called «euskaldun zaharrak», that is the generation of native dialect speakers, experienced indeed some insecurity about their way of speaking, as language advocates promoted the standard being the more ‘correct’ and pure language (Urla 2012: 92).

Examining how this problem was faced in the early eighties in the town of Usurbil (Gipuzkoa), social anthropologist Jaqueline Urla illustrates the example of young Basque speakers who learned the new standard forms and began to correct

the way of speech of their own parents and grandparents who, as a consequence, developed an ‘inferiority complex’ about their way of speaking Euskera (*ibid.*).

In the case of Basque language media reception, recent studies reported that many viewers did not identify with the variety they saw and listened to (Moriarty 2007). Related to this topic, Kelly-Holmes *et al.* argue, that «top-down language policing can create a sense of dislocation among the audience it is intended to serve and a devaluing of the linguistic capital of certain speakers in a heteroglossic situation» (Kelly-Holmes *et al.* 2009:231).

Nowadays, this situation has changed significantly. On the basis of the fear that local varieties and ‘authentic Basque’ may disappear or be stigmatized and that Batua would be overused, even in informal situations, dialect loyalty has increased over the last years (Amorrortu 2000: 51-53). This finds expression in the use of dialects in some local magazines and in the introduction of local dialect use on the first educational levels, e.g. in Biscay (Hualde and Zuazo 2005: 13). Also Basque mass media have become aware of the need to promote other varieties than exclusively Euskera Batua.

### **3. COLLECTING RESPONSES TOWARDS BASQUE VARIETIES IN GREATER SAN SEBASTIÁN**

My data collection took place in Gipuzkoa, the province with the highest percentage of Basque-speaking population. Out of a total population of 662.963, it counted 348.899 Basque speakers in 2011, that is 52,6% Euskaldunak (Basque speakers) in Gipuzkoa, compared to 30,3% Euskaldunes in Biscaya and 22,9% Euskaldunak in Alava (Gobierno Vasco 2014: 31). When it comes to the statistics of native speakers, the figures look somewhat different. In the Basque Autonomous Community, only 18,6% are native Basque speakers and 4,9% are bilingual native speakers (*ibid.*: 59). If we contrast the high number of Basque speakers in Gipuzkoa to the significantly lower numbers of native Basque speakers, it becomes clear that new speakers play an important role in maintaining a strong Basque-speaking population. The 2011 government’s report shows that almost half of the Basque Autonomous Community’s Basque-speaking population are euskaldun berriak (*ibid.*: 73).

However, since we have to take into account that reported knowledge of a language does not automatically mean that people use the language, we obtain the most revealing results by comparing the figures of Basque-speakers with the figures of reported language use at home. In the whole Basque Autonomous Community, only 7,1% of the new speakers use Euskera at home, and 11% use Euskera and Spanish at equal shares. My study is situated in this context and the question : Who can be considered as legitimate speaker of Basque? is so important, especially for

language planners and advocates of Euskera, because there is an interest in knowing if the way of speaking of the non-natives is accepted by the linguistic community, as the vitality of this community depends on these speakers.

### **3.1. Research Context and Method**

The present study which was conducted in spring 2017 is based on an online survey and includes a speaker assessment experiment (verbal guise technique) and a short questionnaire. In the first section, participants had to react to four different audio stimuli by filling in a semantic differential with 15 different variables. In a second section, I asked four questions about personal beliefs related to Basque and to its varieties. These questions required multiple choice or free-text answers. The third part consisted of seven questions concerning personal information as well as language acquisition and language use in daily life. The most complex step in the preparation was the creation of the audio stimuli, which consisted of a simple story's short retelling. The selection of Basque speakers in my direct environment in Berlin was quite limited and as a consequence I had to rely on their local varieties and linguistic competence.

The final assessment experiment included three different stimuli recorded by two speakers and an additional one from a local TV show on EITB-1 with a speaker from Azpeitia (named Gip-4 in the following): the first stimulus (Bisc-1) was a western sub-dialect of Biscayan spoken in the small coastal town Bakio. The speaker from Bakio also recorded the Batua stimulus (Bt-3). The second stimulus (Gip-2) consisted of central Gipuzkoan dialect recorded by a Basque speaker from San Sebastián. The university faculties based in Donostia-San Sebastian served as a channel to distribute the survey to the target group. The online questionnaire got a feedback of 142 participants. The 18-25 age cohort of this sample represents 88%. The participant's mother tongue (L1) is distributed as follows: 80 participants are native speakers of a Basque local variety, 49 participants are Spanish natives, 12 participants are native to Euskera Batua, and 1 participant is an English native. The figures show a strong correlation of the urban-rural divide and the participants' native tongue. Almost all participants who grew up in an urban environment acquired Spanish as native language, whereas participants from rural areas are mostly native to Basque.

For the analysis, the correlating variables (contrasting pairs) from the semantic differential had to be clustered under different dimensions, in order to explain the distribution of the data (*cf.* Amorrortu 2000: 131). To do this, a data analysis was carried out by using the principal components analysis (PCA), a multivariate technique that identifies components – or dimensions – under which the correlating variables can be grouped together. In the case of this study, the mean values of the

15 variables were correlated with each other and were clustered in three different dimensions: performance (variables like authentic, pleasant etc.) professionalism (variables like formal, educated, prestigious) and solidarity (variables like openminded, attractive, hardworking).

### 3.2. Results

Most attitudinal studies of this kind focus on two different dimensions when it comes to the analysis of the data: a status or prestige dimension and a solidarity dimension. Normally, the findings show a strong opposition between these two dimensions, e.g. a variety which is rated high within prestige or status, is rated quite low within the solidarity dimension. In this case, the results show a somewhat different situation:

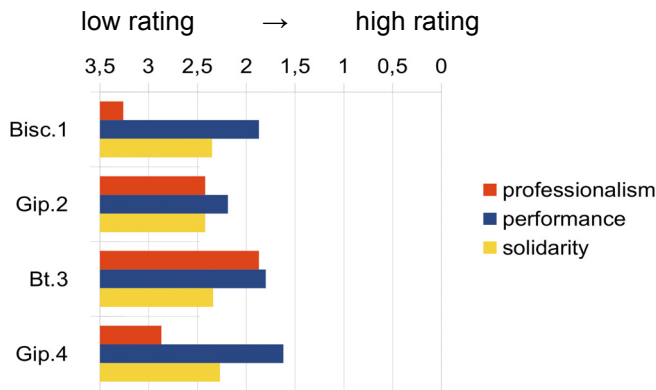


Fig.1: Evaluation of the speaker assessment experiment

The evaluation of the whole sample shows that the respondents do not have stereotypes of the speakers of distinct varieties in the solidarity dimension. However, they consider above all Euskera Batua and also Gipuzkera from San Sebastián to be more formal and professional than the Biscayan (Bisc-1) and the Gipuzkoan (Gip-4) stimulus from Azpeitia. When it comes to the performance dimension, respondents preferred the most fluid and natural speakers. In general it can be stated that those findings are congruent with the findings within the distinct sociolinguistic determinants (e.g. age, origin, native language). In all cases, there is no or very little deviation from the mean values of the whole sample. Only one determinant shows influence within the performance dimension: when separated by native language, the answers show that L2 Basque speakers (Spanish native speakers) rated the Biscayan variety (Bisc-1) as very authentic, but as a much less pleasant hearing

experience than the other stimuli. This may indicate that even if the speakers with strong local dialects are seen as very authentic, Spanish native respondents perceive the standard to be more pleasant to listen to. Since most Spanish natives did not acquire any other resource than the standard variety, the Batua and Gipuzkoan speakers may be easier to understand or more familiar to them.

Nevertheless, it is striking that all respondents, no matter what sociolinguistic background, reacted similar to the four stimuli. Since more than 31% of the respondents are from outside Gipuzkoa, it is possible to show that Gipuzkoan speakers did not prefer the Gipuzkoan variety in the solidarity dimension. Just like the other respondents, they did not make significant differences between the speakers. Likewise, respondents from more rural environments did not deviate in their reactions from the respondents that are from the capitals.

What do these findings tell about the actual status of Basque standard and varieties? Several studies about attitudes in multilingual contexts report a clear opposition between prestige and solidarity of the majority and the minority language. The majority language is highly rated in the status dimension, whereas it is low rated when it comes to solidarity. The minority language represents the opposite case. This scheme can be recognized in the case of Spanish and Euskera (Echeverría 2003: 393f.).

Consequently, one could argue, that this opposition is likely to occur regarding Euskera Batua and Basque vernaculars. In fact, the results of this study likewise show that Euskera Batua is favoured in the professionalism dimension. However, similar to the findings of Amorrortu (2000), the ratings of the standard in the solidarity dimension are just the same as for the dialect stimuli. From the fact that there are no strong stereotypes regarding the speakers of different varieties, one can conclude that today the (no more 'new') standard is socially established and well accepted, at least by young Gipuzkoan speakers. Until recently, people argued that «euskara batua is still nobody's *real* native language [emphasis in original]» (Hualde and Zuazo 2007: 16).

Nowadays, the situation seems to have changed for some of the younger generation. This is also confirmed by the number of L1 Batua speakers among the respondents (12 out of 142, that is 8,45%). The high solidarity with the Gipuzkoan stimulus who's performance rating was lower than the other stimuli's as well as the high solidarity with Batua are indicative for the general tolerance towards L2 speakers. Generally speaking, the findings show that there is no ingroup favouritism among Gipuzkoan speakers. However, the Gipuzkoan case is a special one because its variety is very close to Batua. If the study would have focused exclusively on Biscayan speakers or on speakers from Iparralde, the results would certainly have been different.

Therefore, it is important to take into account that the present outcomes cannot be generalized for all Basque speaking provinces. Regarding the professionalism

dimension, the high rating of Euskera Batua is also an indicator for the variety that has been officially promoted. Traits like formality and professionalism are usually associated with languages that are used in the public domain, such as in governmental institutions, mass media and education (Echeverria 2003: 393). As Bourdieu argues, languages which are imposed and supported by the government are likely to become dominant (Bourdieu 1991). Within the performance dimension, there is a visible tendency among respondents to connect perceived authenticity of speech to a positive hearing experience. In most cases, the dialects are perceived as the most authentic varieties. This can be interpreted as indicative of loyalty towards local dialects or even of a certain «dialectal pride» (Amorrortu 2000: 173) among Basque speakers. As we have seen, this connection between perceived authenticity and high ratings of the ‘pleasant’ trait is less observable among Spanish natives. They may not share the loyalty towards local dialects to the same extent as Basque native speakers, because in many cases, they do not have access to these linguistic resources.

#### **4. THE SOCIAL VALUE OF LOCAL VARIETIES AND STANDARD BASQUE**

The questions in the online survey with free-text answers sought to find out which particular traits the respondents attribute to Euskera Batua and to the local varieties. It is assumed that members of a speech community share «a general set of beliefs about appropriate language practices, sometimes forming a consensual ideology, assigning values and prestige to various aspects of the language varieties used in it» (Spolsky 2004: 14). The respondents’ statements about adequate language use and the status of Basque varieties therefore reveal information concerning prevalent beliefs among L1 and L2 Basque speakers. The analysis of the given answers uncovers a strong contrast between the characteristics attributed to Basque dialects and the standard, although not all of them are necessarily congruent across the data.

##### **4.1. Contrasting Attributions to Local Varieties and to the Standard**

The respondents’ perceptions of Basque local dialects and Euskera Batua complete the image of the broad social acceptance of all Basque varieties, but they clearly show a pattern of antagonistic functional attributions. I will outline the categories of frequently recurring trait attributions and give some significant examples. 45% of the answers to the question ‘What are the advantages of Euskera Batua?’ involved a reference to easier communication between all Basque speakers: «The advantage of Batua could be that it acts like a neutral Euskera which serves our mutual understanding, for us who speak different dialects as well as for those who

are learning Euskera» (participant OB 67<sup>2</sup>; translated from Basque). This example takes up the ascription of Batua as a ‘neutral’ variety. The respondent probably refers to the view of Batua as a variety «from nowhere» which belongs to «nobody in particular» (Woolard 2005). In places where Basque is commonly used, Euskera Batua may be considered as the more neutral, anonymous language. Still, it is not unmarked, because in the bilingual context the majority language is the unmarked public language (*ibid.*: 5). In this case, the use of Basque in public always involves a socio-cultural, ideological, if not political positioning of the speaker. Even in Basque-speaking environments, Batua is a marked form of language, because it identifies the speaker as non-native or at least as somebody who is «not from here» (Lantto 2015: 25f.; Woolard 2005). Lantto argues that new Basque speakers (from Bilbao, in her case) might therefore prefer to speak Spanish to not attract attention to their forms of speech and to pass unnoticed (2015: 26).

Nevertheless, the perceived anonymity of the standard is also seen as social advantage: respondents state that it is «very useful to understand each other between people from different places» (participant OB 107; translated from Basque). Batua is the variety that is supposed to be used anywhere and with anyone (Urla 2012: 95). Therefore it creates social cohesion among new and old Basque speakers, regardless of their local variety. Many of the answers emphasize the utility of the standard. It is among others referred to as «good instrument» (participant OB 241), «useful» (participants OB 97; OB 144; OB 107), «facilitating» communication between Basque speakers (participants OB 209; OB 237). Furthermore, by drawing the line between «us who speak different dialects» and «those who are learning Euskera», the respondent (OB 67; translated from Basque) refers to a common dichotomy: the border demarcation between natives and non-natives. Native speakers seem to be aware of the standard’s necessity and benefit for language learners. Nevertheless, it is assumed that native Basques do not feel comfortable when using Batua. Furthermore, respondents emphasize the importance of Euskera Batua serving the purpose of a uniform written standard, similar to the diglossic situation with written standard German in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland.

Since the establishment of Batua, texts written in any other variety became very rare: «For us natives, Batua is just for writing. There are some expressions we would never write, but we always use them when we speak our local dialect» (informal conversation with participants held in Arano, October 2016). However, this view seems to ignore the fact that for some of the younger generation, Batua has already become a native tongue. Can we therefore assume that in the eyes of native Basque dialect speakers, the Batua speakers lack of ‘nativeness’ as they

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2 The abbreviation ‘OB’ stands for ‘Old Basque’, ‘NB’ indicates ‘New Basques’.

speak a variety that is designated to serve the function of a written and formal standard? Conversely, one has to ask if dialect speakers feel their varieties to be ‘less correct’ than the standard variety, as the latter is institutionally sustained and broadly perceived as the formal and official Basque language (*cf.* Urla 2012: 92)? The examination of the answers to the question of the local dialects’ benefits provides further information regarding this issue.

The most significant contrast between the local dialects and Batua is created by the attribution of unification (or universality) to the standard variety and that of plurality to the dialects. The standard is perceived to create social cohesion among the speakers, whereas the local varieties are believed to produce the specific character of the language as well as a sense of belonging to a particular place or community. The ascription to Euskera Batua that «it makes us all equal» (participant NB 20; translated from Basque) stands in direct contrast to the attributions to the Euskalkiak, which are seen as «something special from every place which distinguishes it from the others» (participant NB 311; translated from Basque).

The most frequent attribution to Basque local dialects in the data is that of «richness», «treasure» or «wealth», that is Basque speakers perceive variable ways of speaking Euskera as culturally and linguistically enriching (*cf.* Urla 2012: 95). Similarly, the varieties are described as cultural heritage that is worth being protected. This argument is related to the idea of the dialects’ historicity, which, in contrast to the ‘artificially created’ standard variety, connotes the preservation of the «original» (participant NB 101) Euskera: «[The dialects] are our authentic roots, what makes Euskera special and the way of maintaining the inner culture of every little village» (participant NB 20; translated from Basque). Interestingly, this attribution is often produced through a negative contrast with Batua. In these cases, the standard is presented as a variety which lacks authenticity, nativeness or which even threatens the persistence of the dialects. Batua is perceived as in the following example: «The local dialects enrich Euskera, Batua oppresses it» (participant OB 113; translated from Basque). This kind of negative connotation of Batua is not uncommon among euskaldun zaharrak. The author of the following answer uses the organic metaphor of the language being ‘alive’ to produce a contrast between dialects and standard: «[The dialects] are the treasures of Euskera. They reflect the living Euskera. Nobody knows how to use Batua with vitality» (participant OB 315; translated from Basque) Euskera Batua is seen as an ‘invented’ (and therefore artificial) variety that cannot be spoken like the other varieties. Speakers are convinced that they ‘own’ their local varieties.

The standard, on the other hand, to be a variety which is always ‘learned’ in an educational setting, from both native and new Basque speakers. Whereas many participants stated before that Batua was the ‘easier way’ to communicate, native

Basque speakers seem to perceive their local varieties as being the simplest way of communication in everyday life, particularly because Batua is «too technical», as participant (OB 229) believes. The statements presented above reflect the general tendency of the queried speakers to link local varieties to historicity, authenticity and nativeness. Basque speakers value them in an aesthetic and emotional way, stressing their identity-forming function both for the places and for the individuals as they create a strong sense of community among speakers of a small limited territory.

#### **4.2. Language and Place - Basque Varieties within the Ideology of Authenticity**

According to the data, authenticity seems to be one of the most important legitimating elements of Basque speakers. Kathryn Woolard states that

[w]ithin the logic of authenticity, a speech variety must be perceived as deeply rooted in social and geographic territory in order to have value (...). [It] must be very much “from somewhere” in speakers’ consciousness, and thus its meaning is profoundly local. (2005: 2)

The varieties ‘from somewhere’ are highly valued within this conception, whereas the standard variety «lacks value in this system» (*ibid.*). Being a product of linguistic engineering, Euskera Batua is viewed by the speakers as useful tool or vehicle to revitalize and normalize the Basque language and to create social cohesion. Nevertheless, it is considered to be less authentic and, at worst, to be a completely artificial variety that does not belong to anybody or anywhere (see Fig 2).

local varieties	standard variety
authentic	artificial
original	technical
the real Basque	facilitates communication
plurality	useful
cultural heritage	linguistic tool
emotional	unifying
culturally enriching	neutral
informal	norms and rules
rooted	formal
expression of local culture	professional
beautiful	written language
character	for Basque learners
inclusive	
↓	↓
„from somewhere“	„from nowhere“

Fig.2: Contrasting trait attributions to Basque local varieties and to the standard.

Space-relatedness of language through a «historically grown bond between the community and the language» (Tacke 2015: 120) has a central place within the ideological concept of Euskera, as it serves nationalists and non-nationalists to claim the political and linguistic territory. Within a language it is the local varieties which link the language (and therefore also the speaker) to a particular geographic space. The data has shown that native Basque speakers strongly identify with their local speech variety, whereas the standard is viewed as a variety “from nowhere” without history.

## **5. CONCLUSION: WHO IS A LEGITIMATE SPEAKER OF BASQUE?**

If we take an overall look at the findings from the present study, there seems to be a tendency of local dialect speakers to claim the ownership of the ‘original’ Euskera and even L2 Basque speakers link the dialects to originality, purity, identity and tradition. Second language learners usually want to achieve a high degree of authenticity in the acquired language. If in the present case the native Basque speaker is considered to be the authentic speaker, then the ideal would be to acquire a vernacular form of speech or a local dialect in order to be considered a legitimate Basque speaker. Within this logic, the image of Penelope Eckert’s «dialectological posterchild» (Eckert 2003: 392), that is the male peasant or shepherd from the mountain village, seems to be still relevant in Basque popular ideology. The reference to the ideal authentic speaker may create a lot of pressure on new speakers, as they also set high demands to themselves, trying to speak the ‘purest’ form of Basque without switching to Spanish.

To come back to the opening question: within the logic of authenticity which has been explained above, new speakers would be accepted as legitimate speakers if they were perceived by other (Basque) speakers as authentic speakers. Therefore, they would need to have access to vernacular forms of speech. Since the classroom Basque is usually the standard variety which lacks value within the ideology of authenticity, new speakers may have problems in accessing and acquiring the necessary linguistic resources to be fully accepted as Basque speakers. However, according to Bourdieu, legitimacy is dependent on appropriateness in a given context and something that is ‘done’ instead of a feature that is ‘inherent’ to or ‘owned’ by the speakers (Bourdieu 1977: 650). In order to learn more about the legitimacy of the speaker, we should focus the legitimisation practices and processes that take effect in the context of minority languages like Basque. Since native Basque speakers seem to feel more ‘authoritative’ over what is legitimate Basque and what is not than new speakers, the latter could find themselves in a situation which is perfectly described by Michael Hornsby:

[...] in a minority language setting, if you are not known locally, if you attempt to use the minority language in, say, an institutional setting where it is not regularly heard, if your capacity to understand is thrown into doubt, or you have the wrong accent or use 'faulty' or too standard grammar, then you might find yourself delegitimized as a speaker and addressed in the majority language. (2015: 12)

Constituting almost half of the Basque speaking population in the Basque Autonomous Community, new speakers are very important to the numbers and demographic representativity of the language. Language planners and experts currently predict that the new Basque-speakers will overtake the numbers of native speakers in the near future. With that in mind, it may become even more obvious that Basque language planners (e.g. the government and the media) should rethink the existing norms and policing and work on helping new speakers get access to Basque-speaking social networks and communities of practice outside the classroom context, not only to guarantee that non-traditional speakers will have enough opportunities to use Euskera, but particularly to provide them with the necessary linguistic resources to use the language in any kind of context.

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