

LANGUAGE PLANNING AND LINGUISTIC ATTITUDES IN THE BASQUE CASE

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1. Introduction²

The Basque case is often mentioned as a successful language-planning story. Popular and governmental efforts to reverse its minority status lead to a situation where use of Basque is more visible: it is now used in print, mass media, and education, and it is present in linguistic landscape. Although the sociolinguistic situation is still clearly diglossic, Basque is present in many institutional settings. However, scholars are still concerned about minority language use (Larrañaga, 1998). Even though the number of bilingual speakers increases, actual use of Basque, especially in informal interactions, does not seem to increase as well³. In this paper, I examine linguistic attitudes in the Basque case in two dimensions, status and solidarity, and relate them to language planning and possible future use of Basque.

Linguistic attitudes represent attitudes hold towards speakers of the given varieties. Speakers holding high socio-economic status are the ones believed to speak “good language”, whereas the dialects of stigmatized groups are perceived as “ugly”, “imperfect”, “lazy”, or just “bad X”. *Prestige* in the context of a variety is often associated to the status dimension of language: prestigious varieties are those used by professional or high-class groups, and those varieties promoted in institutional settings such as education, religious services, or mass-media. However, stigmatized varieties often have *covert prestige* (Trudgill, 1974): although their *overt prestige* may be low, because their speakers have low socioeconomic status or a low educational background, their speakers still have great attachment to them and do not want to shift to the variety

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³ See measurements of language use in informal situations (Altuna, 1998).

of the more powerful people, because their own is linked to their identity⁴. If a variety plays an important role in the definition of a group's identity, it will be easier to implement reversal language shift measures and easier for their speakers to maintain it. If a variety has overt prestige, not only its speakers will retain it, others may learn it for instrumental reasons. Speakers of minority languages sometimes mistakenly expect that an increase in the overt prestige of their variety will ensure its maintenance.

Linguistic attitudes are often examined in an attempt to predict linguistic behavior. Although more factors influence language use, the wide social acceptance of a variety in both dimensions would allow us to be optimistic about its maintenance. In addition, we can also evaluate the success of language planning in changing social attitudes by gauging linguistic attitudes towards the varieties being promoted. In the case under study, by examining attitudes toward speakers of Basque, on one hand, and Batua, Unified Basque, on the other, in both status and solidarity dimensions, we can highlight their social acceptance and make an educated guess on their future.

2. Attitudes toward Basque

Basque is a minority language not only because it is the native language of a minority, but also because it is used in fewer situations and, especially, because it is hardly used in most institutional settings. In this section, I introduce linguistic attitudes in the Basque case with a historical perspective in an attempt to give a better understanding of the current situation. After briefly reviewing the historical process of Basque language shift and its connection to linguistic attitudes, I describe the beginning of the recovery movement and some of the efforts conducted in the field of governmental language planning. Finally, I raise some questions that will lead the remaining sections of this paper.

2.1. Language shift and attitudes: a historical perspective

Before I get into evaluating attitudes toward Basque speakers nowadays, I need to describe the process of both geographical and social language shift undergone by

⁴ Basque speakers, though, are not associated to specific socio-economic status neither to an ethnic or social group. Rather than stressing group distinctiveness, Basque society is more *individual-centered* (Giles & Ryan, 1982). Speakers are evaluated not in relation to the group they belong to, since it is not easily identifiable, but in relation to their competence or expertise in status-stressing situations, and in relation to their social attractiveness in solidarity-stressing situations.

Basque until becoming a minority language. The minority status of Basque in terms of the number of bilingual speakers and situations of use goes hand by hand with an increasing stigmatization of the local language with regard to surrounding and more powerful Romance languages.

Geographical language loss is attested from the Roman period, when Basque was lost in the south of Navarre. Despite Latin use in Roman urban centers, Latin influence was not very intense in the rest of the Basque Country, due to the decline of the Roman Empire. To the contrary, contact with Romance varieties was more intense and produced geographical regression of Basque from the borders inland. Basque was lost in most of Alava in the 18th century; and by 1863, when Prince Bonaparte drew his map of Basque dialects, Basque had been lost in west Biscay, most of Alava, south of Pamplona –this boundary is nowadays located further north–, and the Baiona area in the northern Basque Country. More recently, linguistic erosion affected the very East of Navarre.

Basque regression has not only been geographical. Social regression can be observed from the times Latin was the socially dominant language for high functions. Later, Latin was replaced by Romance varieties, which were used for all administrative, judicial, and political purposes. The creation, from the 16th century, of urban centers and their quick association with modernization and loss of traditional social values, led to the association of Basque with *tradition* and Spanish with *modernity*, which produced language shift. Furthermore, the more powerful social groups (nobility, church, and bourgeoisie) have traditionally shifted to Spanish distancing themselves also linguistically from the lay people and provoked with this attitude the almost exclusive use of Romance languages in status-stressing situations.

The local language started to be considered primitive and inadequate for the modern times to come. Despite the apologetic support of 16th century authors, the social prestige of Basque did not increase. To the contrary, later planning to reinforce the supremacy of Spanish during the Bourbon period in the 18th century contributed to the stigmatization of Basque since Spanish was to be the only language promoted in Spain –the only language to be used in education. The exclusive use of Spanish as the medium of instruction and subsequent punishment to children who used Basque or any other local language in school not only made students be illiterate in their mother tongue and

caused difficulties in their academic success, it also increased the association of Basque with “the language of the farmers”, of the illiterate.

In addition, as a consequence of industrialization and the need of labor force during the second part of the 19th century, a great number of Spanish-speaking immigrants outnumbered Basque speakers in many areas. Industrialization also caused a crisis in traditional values and life-style and the supremacy of Basque bourgeoisie, which traditionally had shifted to Spanish, causing further stigmatization of Basque.

Immigration from other Spanish regions was especially intense in the 1940s and 1950s during the Franco area. A significant number of monolingual immigrants moved not only to the historical industrial areas in the west of Biscay, where Basque was already lost, but also to less industrialized rural areas in Biscay and Gipuzkoa. This last flow of immigrants and the prohibition by the Franco government to use Basque produced destructive sociolinguistic regression in areas where it was the primary language. Use of Basque was restricted to the most intimate domains, especially the family, for decades until the beginning of democracy, provoking an important stigmatization of Basque in the status dimension.

2.2. Beginning of language planning: from a grass-root movement to governmental intervention; from integrative to instrumental motivations to maintain Basque

Linguistic and cultural repression during the dictatorship period and greater consciousness of the loss of Basque distinctiveness made Basques perceive language shift as traumatic and produced a popular reaction to recover the Basque language and culture. The recovery popular movement emphasized the affective dimension of language as a symbol of belonging to the group (Tejerina, 1992, 1996). Although the status dimension of Basque was strongly hurt, the personal adherence to the minority language got reinforced.

At the end of the 1950s, the Basque language became the central element in a process of change in different aspects (Tejerina, 1992: 318 and ff.). Against the political and social situation of the time, Basque was perceived as the central element in a process of cultural renovation. Distinguishing from previous rural cultural manifestations, urban youngsters wanted to show their urban voice and they wanted to do it in Basque. They proved that Basque did not have to be linked only to the rural

environment, that Basque was not just “the farmers’ language”, but rather that it could occupy an important place in the manifestation of modern urban Basque culture. The use of Euskara also distinguished the younger generations from the lack of action among the older: the younger were not only politically and socially active, they carried out their activism largely in Basque.

At the same time, the last decades of the Franco period were characterized by a rising of nationalist feelings. The Basque language took a central role in a redefinition of Basque nationalist ideology. Against previous conceptions of Basque ethnicity based on race, the language was going to be the integrative most important element of Basque distinctiveness, which produced a desire to learn L2 Basque not only among native families who had not transmitted the minority language during the dictatorship, but also among recent immigrants who wished to integrate into the host community. Considering the high number of immigrants⁵, their linguistic integration was crucial for the success of the reversing language shift measures to be taken.

However, the linguistic situation was not homogeneous across regions. At the beginning of the 1980s, Basque was spoken by only 10% of people in areas such as Metropolitan Bilbao, most of Alava, or industrial Encartaciones in western Biscay. But, the situation in other Biscayan areas and most of Gipuzkoa was better: Basque was spoken by 25 to 50% of the population in the San Sebastian area, for example, and more than 50% in many rural Biscayan and middle-size towns in Gipuzkoa.

As already mentioned, a sense of loss of Basque identity parallel to the language shift process provoked a popular reaction in defense of Basque culture and language in Biscay and Gipuzkoa. The first important efforts to revitalize Basque were conducted in the 1960s in the field of acquisition planning. Schools supported with popular funds were created to teach adults Basque as a second language (*gau-eskolas* ‘night schools’) and to educate children using Basque as the medium of instruction (*ikastolas* ‘Basque schools’). The introduction of Basque into education was the first step to promote the minority language in status-stressing situations.

Planners engaged in the promotion of Basque had some difficulties. Apart from being a language spoken by only a minority –about one fourth of the population in the

⁵ According to the 1986 census, 35% of the population in the BAC was immigrant and 20.4% was born in the BAC from immigrant parents.

BAC⁶–, Basque faced other important problems for its recovery. On one hand, its speakers were illiterate in Basque. Even the most highly educated Basque speakers most frequently did not know how to write in Basque and were not accustomed to reading in this language because they were educated in Spanish or French. In addition, Basque had not been used in many status-stressing situations (education or mass-media, for instance) for a long time; modern technical registers were not developed; the literary tradition was small and mostly restricted to religious works; there was no standard variety that could be used in education and mass media; and great regional variation caused intelligibility problems among most illiterate-in-Basque speakers, who, in addition, were not used to talk to speakers of other dialects.

All these problems required corpus planning to modernize and standardize Basque, and to make available teaching materials. Textbooks that fulfilled the primary education curriculum were needed for the increasing number of students enrolled in *ikastolas*. In addition, the new demand of L2 and literacy teaching materials for adults required an important effort to language teachers. Finally, in order to face the lack of register variation problem and the regional variation phenomenon, it was necessary to elaborate technical lexicon and codify a standard variety that will be named *Batua* ‘Unified’.

But, corpus planning was not the only difficulty that planners faced. The previous stigmatization of Basque among monolingual Spanish speakers, and even many bilingual speakers, had to be reversed. In order for Basque to be prestigious and for monolingual Spanish speakers to be motivated to learn it, government intervention promoted Basque for instrumental reasons. However, Basque had to be declared co-official so authorities could implement measures favoring it. The declaration of Basque as official together with Spanish in 1979 allows governmental institutions to promote Basque language use in the public administration and require competence in Basque for certain positions. The spread of Basque to mass media, education and the public administration was an important step to increase the overt prestige (status) of Basque. At the same time, even though many still maintained or learned Basque as an L2 for integrative reasons, many also did it encouraged by instrumental ones, motivated by the opportunities that being bilingual started to bring in.

⁶ Data gathered from the 1986 census, first census that provides language competence data.

In 1982, the Parliament of the BAC approved the *Act of Normalization of the Basque Language* (Law 10/1982). This act outlines the general planning guidelines that will be followed by governmental institutions in the BAC to guarantee the co-official status previously granted to Basque by the Statute of Autonomy. Specifically, it establishes the creation of an Advisory Board, which is chaired by the President of the Basque Autonomous Community, of Basque Radio and Television, the regulation of the linguistic models in primary education, and the creation of the Institute for Adult Literacy and Basquization (HABE). The main goal of all these institutions is to promote the acquisition and use of Basque in status-stressing situations. Since only a minority speaks Basque, the spread of its use presents great difficulties and its future depends largely on the success of teaching it. Basque society expects the younger generations to guarantee Basque language maintenance and the primary education system to teach it to monolingual children and produce an increasing number of balanced bilinguals.

2.3. The current situation: a new generation fully educated in Basque

The Act of Normalization of the Basque Language (1982) officially established the use of Basque in primary education in the BAC. Following the pedagogical principle that children should be educated in their native language (Etxeberria, 1999: 130), four linguistic models were defined, as shown in Table 1.

LINGUISTIC MODELS
MODEL A: Spanish is the language of instruction, Basque is just a subject.
MODEL B: Both Basque and Spanish are used as the medium of instruction.
MODEL D: Basque is the language of instruction, Spanish is just a subject.
MODEL X: Everything is done in Spanish; Basque is not studied at all.

Table 1. Linguistic Models in the Education System in the BAC.

Model D is the full immersion program developed by ikastolas at the end of the 1960s. Children enrolled in a Model D program take all their classes in Basque except for Spanish language and literature. The other two linguistic models are Model A, in which Spanish is the language of instruction and L2 Basque is taught for a few hours a week, and Model B, a bilingual program. Students living temporarily in the Basque Country can study in Model X, a program in which Basque is not taught at all. In what

follows, I disregard data related to Model X because less than 1% of children study in this program in the BAC.

As stated before, the system of linguistic models was created in an attempt to answer to the linguistic plurality of the Basque Country, taking into account that children's native language may be Basque, Spanish, or both Basque and Spanish. However, it is the parents' decision in which model they want their children to be educated and a majority of families choose the Basque models (B and D), regardless of native language(s) of the family. Figure 1 shows the increasing demand for education using Basque as the main vehicle of instruction.

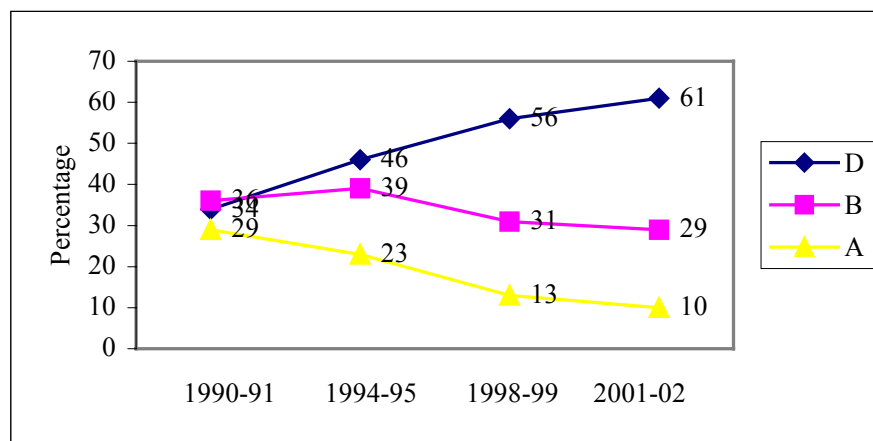


Figure 1. Enrollment in Pre-Primary⁷ Education (2 to 5 year-olds) in the BAC, in each linguistic model.

(Source: Basque Institute of Statistics and Department of Education, Basque Government)

As we can observe in Figure 1, only Model D, the model where Basque is used as the medium of instruction and Spanish is taught as a subject, has increased during the last decade. Models B and, especially, A have clearly decreased, which shows the wider social acceptance gained by Basque through the last decades. Today, although Basque is still a minority language both in terms of number of speakers and situations of use, it is used in a wider range of status-stressing situations and it can be used by an increasing number of youngsters, due mostly to the introduction of the bilingual models in primary and secondary education. The last census data available clearly shows increasing individual bilingualism across age groups.

⁷ I provide enrollment data in pre-primary education because it reflects parents' latest reaction to the possibilities that the education system provides. Students usually continue in the same linguistic model through all primary education.

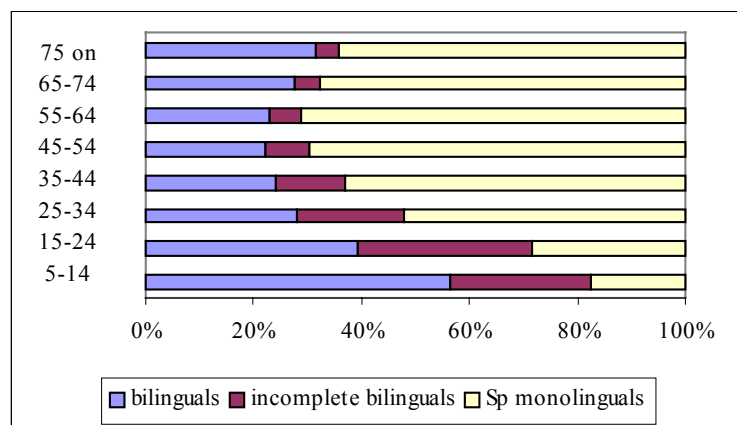


Figure 2. Language competence in the BAC across age groups (1996 Census data).

The more monolingual age group is the one of those who were 45 to 64 year-old in 1996. This group is formed by two groups of people: on one hand, Basques who were raised after the civil war, when Basque was prohibited. Many did not transmit the local language within the family due to social and political pressure. On the other, Spanish immigrants who moved to the Basque Country during the 1940s and 1950s did not need to integrate linguistically in the hosting community. The former group experienced significant language loss and the latter did not take part in the language recovery movement. To the contrary, many in the younger generations learned L2 Basque as adults or in immersion or bilingual programs in primary education. The high and increasing percentage of bilingual speakers in the younger generations is directly related to promotion of Basque in education and, to a less degree, to familial transmission of Basque by non-natives.

On the other hand, Basque is now used not only in primary and secondary education but also, at the university, mass media, the public administration, etc. Most youngsters are now being educated in Basque and exposed to it in more official settings than ever before. This apparent improvement in the general situation of the minority language should go hand by hand with a better perception of Basque speakers, at least in the status dimension⁸. In fact, now it seems unreasonable to associate Basque with

⁸ This paper only deals with the linguistic attitudes of Basque speakers. See Jausoro (1996) for a qualitative analysis of language attitudes toward Basque among bilingual and monolingual Spanish speakers.

rurality or lack of education, given its increasing use in publishing, mass-media, and education⁹.

At this point, an evaluation of the whole RLS movement seems necessary. I focus on the linguistic attitudes of bilingual university students toward the different varieties used in the Basque-speaking community: Biscayan, Gipuzkoan and Batua (Unified) Basque and Spanish. The subjects who participated were educated and pursued at the time university studies in Basque, which implies that they were familiarized with institutional use of the minority language and the new standard Basque variety. It is extremely important to highlight their perception of speakers of the different varieties at both the solidarity and status levels for the consequences that their attitudes may have on the future of the language. Shedding some light on the following questions is especially crucial:

1. Are Basque speakers well considered with respect to Spanish speakers in a status or professionalism dimension?
2. Does Basque have strong emotional adherence at the solidarity level for in-group speakers?
3. What is the social acceptance of the new variety? Is it fully accepted by Basque speakers at the professionalism level? What about the solidarity level?

In order to answer the posed questions, I report some of the results found in Amorrortu (2000), where I conducted a measurement of linguistic attitudes among university students and educators using indirect methods. The *matched guise* technique allows us to compare objectively how judges evaluate speakers of different varieties, since they are based on stimuli¹⁰ produced in different varieties by the same person. If the evaluations given to that person when using one variety or the other are different, we can conclude that the variety being used is determinant on the attitudes given. I also used a *semantic differential* to produce the attitudes and *Principal Components Analysis* to corroborate the two dimensions and reliability of the indicators used to measure them.

⁹ I am not claiming that Basque and Spanish live together in a balanced situation. In fact, Basque is still hardly ever used in many situations, like the health and judicial systems and the work environment.

¹⁰ The stimuli are similar oral narratives elicited after watching a silent cartoon movie. Amorrortu (2000, 2001) explain in detail the methodology used.

3. Evaluations of Basque speakers in the in-group

After four decades of reversal language shift planning in favor of Basque, it seems necessary to evaluate the reactions of Basque speakers with respect to the in-group. Linguistic attitudes need to be observed in two dimensions. On the one hand, I examine attitudes towards Basque and Spanish speakers in a solidarity dimension. In other words, I gauge the emotional adherence to the minority language of bilingual university students. On the other hand, I also examine bilingual speakers' perception of Basque speakers in a status or professionalism dimension.

A measurement of linguistic attitudes in the Basque case is important for various reasons. Although a positive attitude toward a variety does not necessarily ensure its use in either status-stressing or solidarity-stressing situations, and despite the fact that there are no totally comparable data available to be able to show with certainty possible social changes in what respects linguistic attitudes in the Basque case, a positive reaction to Basque speakers in the status dimension would show an improvement in Basque status. Since Basque was not used in official settings before the movement for recovery in the 1960s and since Basque speakers per se are not associated with either powerful or powerless groups in any sense, a good perception of Basque speakers in a professionalism dimension could be related to the influence of language planning and policy and the spread of Basque language use in institutional settings.

Despite the minority status of Basque and its reduced use in status-stressing situations, Basque speakers do not show a negative perception of the ingroup in the status dimension. In fact, a comparison of the attitudes given to Basque and Spanish stimuli (Amorrortu, 2000) showed a more positive professional perception of Basque guises than of Spanish ones¹¹. We need to take into account that the informants are all Basque speakers who chose to study in Basque at the university and are, therefore, familiar with institutional use of the minority language. As stated before, we cannot know with absolute certainty whether reversal language shift measures, and especially the introduction of Basque in the educational system, have caused Basque (speakers) gain overt prestige, since we do not have comparable data to prove actual change.

¹¹ In a scale from 1 (less positive) to 5 (most positive) Basque guises got a mean score of 3.15 whereas Spanish guises got only 2.97, the means being statistically significantly different. $F(1, 386)=7.482$, $p=.007$, $\eta^2=.02$

On the other hand, it would be a good sign for maintenance of the minority language to find strong emotional adherence to Basque, as attested at the beginning of the recovery movement and introduced in section 2.2. In fact, we know from research conducted in several situations that it is emotional adherence that prevents speakers from abandoning their vernacular varieties. However, that is not the case: Basque and Spanish speakers are not perceived differently¹² in the solidarity dimension. Since students are all bilingual and do, in fact, use Spanish as much as (or more than) Basque, speakers using either language are perceived similarly. The fact that there is no in-group bias for Basque speakers at the solidarity dimension is not a good indication for maintenance of the minority language. If Basque young speakers do not feel emotionally closer to Basque than to Spanish, there may be no reason for them to use Basque in natural intimate interaction, given the superiority of Spanish in terms of both situations of use and number of speakers.

4. Social acceptance of a new variety (Batua)

The other important issue that needs to be evaluated in the context of Basque language planning is that of the social acceptance of Batua. Batua is a unified variety codified by the Academy of the Basque language for standard purposes. However, Batua is not the variety of any socially homogeneous group; it is not a social variety¹³ but rather a situational variety, used especially in written form, mass media and education¹⁴. Its use is not totally normalized yet and there is often no social agreement on whether certain variants are Batua and/or regional dialects. Recently, there has been a rise in dialectal pride, especially among Biscayans whose regional dialect is linguistically quite distant from Batua¹⁵. In such a situation, it is convenient to evaluate what is the social acceptance of the new variety and whether university students favor Batua over dialect speakers in either professionalism or solidarity.

¹² The difference between the mean given to Basque (3.43) and the mean given to Spanish (3.37) in the solidarity dimension is not statistically significant ($F(1, 386) = .703, p = .402$).

¹³ It is the variety mostly used by non-natives, though.

¹⁴ It will be very interesting to see if, in the future, Batua becomes the variety transmitted within the family among Basque-speaking professionals.

¹⁵ See Amorrortu (2000: 31-56) for more details.

Not surprisingly, since Batua is a new variety and is not associated with a particular social group, Batua speakers are not favored in either dimension. In fact, students favor Biscayan guises over their Batua ones not only in the solidarity dimension¹⁶, which would not be surprising, but also in the professional one¹⁷, despite promotion of Batua.

In sum, the results do not show strong stereotypes in the way speakers of any of the varieties studied are perceived. However, they do show a preference for Biscayan speakers over their Batua guises among Biscayans. These results do not mean that the respondents do not accept Batua. In fact, Basque college-students do not seem to hold strong stereotyped attitudes towards either Biscayan or Batua speakers, since the difference in the mean ratings given to the two varieties, although statistically significantly different, is not large.

Since Biscayan is a vernacular and Batua a new variety, it is not surprising that Biscayan-dialect speakers are associated with higher perceptions in the solidarity dimension. What is surprising is that they are also more favorably perceived in the professionalism dimension, even though Batua is promoted more than Biscayan in professional settings. The preference for Biscayan over Batua may be associated with the idea that vernacular dialects are more *authentic* than the newly codified Batua and with the rise of dialectal pride mentioned before.

5. Consequences for language planning

One of the important consequences of linguistic attitudes is that we can find out about social prejudice by measuring them. Since speakers of the different varieties in the case under study cannot be easily linked to socio-economic status or other clear-cut social or ethnic characteristics, there are no strong stereotypes associated to the varieties used by the bilingual community. However, some varieties are slightly favored over others. Looking at attitudes in two dimensions gives us a fuller picture of the social acceptance of the different varieties and can shed some light on the aspects that need to be considered when implementing language-planning measures.

¹⁶ Biscayan speakers received a mean rate of 3.63, whereas their Batua guises got 3.42, $F(1, 466) = 7.315, p=.007$

¹⁷ Biscayan speakers received a mean rate of 3.54, whereas their Batua guises got 3.19: $F(1, 466) = 33.087, p=.000$

If language planners want to promote Basque language use, they need to stress solidarity and integrative values of Basque together with status and instrumental ones. Although language planning to reverse the minority status of Basque, and especially the introduction of the minority language in the educational system, may have influenced positively the perception that bilingual university students have of Basque in the status dimension, Spanish and Basque are equally regarded at the affective level. The lack of strong emotional adherence to the minority language makes maintenance difficult.

When evaluating governmental language planning, it has been criticized because it promoted the status of Basque in the educational system, mass media, and the government, and did not pay enough attention to family transmission (Fishman, 1991: 158-82). Government intervention, although necessary, is not enough for minority languages to survive. Instrumental motivations are needed to spread minority language use in formal situations, but speakers must also have strong emotional adherence to their language, if it will be used in intimate situations. It seems that Basque speakers may have relaxed about the future of Basque, trusted by the better situation of the minority language in the status dimension and its more visible use in formal situations. In other words, since, differing from the 1960s situation, when an important grass-root movement for the recovery of Basque language and culture emerged, young bilinguals may not feel Basque language maintenance threatened. However, both governmental and popular language planning, both instrumental and integrative motivations are necessary.

Another important difficulty for Basque language planners relies on the promotion of a new variety that is not associated with an easily identifiable powerful social group. The lack of total social acceptance of Batua in either dimension is not surprising, given that Batua is a new variety, it is quite distant from some regional dialects, such as Biscayan, and its use is not normalized yet. In such a complex situation, the spread of a standard variety is difficult and slow.

To conclude, I must underline the importance of taking into consideration linguistic attitudes before and during language planning. Only considering the social acceptance of the measures implemented can these be successful.

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