The role of the academic language in the United States: Insights from the case of academic Basque

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the debate surrounding the necessity of academic language (AL) by examining the cases of the United States and the Basque context. In the US, the use of AL, rooted in standard English, has sparked discussions about its promotion in classrooms. Critics argue that it perpetuates the dominance of mainstream white speakers, particularly those from the Midwest (Valdés, 2004). Conversely, I employ the Basque case to illustrate how AL has also played a crucial role in reviving a minority language. The Basque Academy established a standard Basque in 1968, initially aimed at unifying written Basque but evolved into the language of the comprehensive education system and a major spoken variation among young people (Urla et al., 2016, p. 5). Throughout the paper, I emphasize the utility of AL as a unifying tool in both contexts, highlighting its role in integrating underrepresented individuals into a speaker community and providing equal social, academic, and financial opportunities for all young people. I contend that a foundational understanding of local varieties must be included in the curriculum for AL to successfully unite diverse populations. To counter the dominance of US standard English, the paper proposes an annual course that explores language variations. In the context of Basque, I provide a brief poll in which young Basque speakers expressed a desire to speak a non-standard form of the language as well for identification reasons, leading to a recommendation for incorporating dialectology lessons to validate individuality and provide academic Basque speakers access to colloquial forms. Lastly, I stress the importance of distinguishing between appropriate language and academic/standard language, asserting that all language types are equally acceptable in terms of grammar, pronunciation, and use.

RESUM

Aquest article aborda la controvèrsia sobre la necessitat del llenguatge acadèmic (LA), examinant els casos dels Estats Units i el context basc. Als Estats Units, l'ús del LA, basat en l'anglès estàndard, ha generat debats per perpetuar la dominància de parlants blancs, especialment de l'Oest Mitjà (Valdés, 2004). En contrast, s'explora el cas basc, destacant el paper crucial del LA en la revitalització de l'euskera com a llengua minoritària. L'Acadèmia Basca va establir un estàndard el 1968, inicialment per unificar l'euskera escrit, que va acabar evolucionant cap a la llengua del sistema educatiu i variant parlada entre joves (Urla et al., 2016, p. 5). Al llarg del treball, s'emfatitza la utilitat del LA com a eina unificadora en tots dos contextos, facilitant la integració d'individus subrepresentats i proporcionant igualtat d'oportunitats. S'argumenta que és essencial incloure al currículum una comprensió de les varietats locals per cohesionar poblacions diverses. Per contrarestar l'hegemonia de l'anglès estàndard als Estats Units, es proposa un curs anual que explori variacions lingüístiques En el context de l'euskera, presento una breu enquesta en què joves bascoparlants expressen el desig de parlar també una forma no estàndard de la llengua per raons d'identificació, fet que porta a recomanar la incorporació de lliçons de dialectologia per validar la individualitat i proporcionar als parlants d'euskera acadèmic accés a formes col·loquials. Finalment, destaco la importància de distingir entre llenguatge apropiat i acadèmic/estàndard, argumentant que tots els tipus de llenguatge són igualment acceptables en gramàtica, pronunciació i ús.

1. INTRODUCTION[1]

In this paper, I will present the debate on the necessity of academic language by discussing two cases: the US context and the Basque context. In the US, the variety employed in academia, known as the academic language (AL), has raised a considerable debate in pedagogy about whether its use should be encouraged or not. The AL has been based on the US mainstream English (Valdés, 2004), which is the typical variety of the Midwestern white speaker. American English does not have an official standard variety, but midwestern English plays its role. As a result, it is the English we are used to being exposed to in the media and any intellectual work. Since it perpetuates the hegemony of specific white speakers, it has been suggested that it should not be presented at school as the language of instruction because it marginalizes the unprivileged verities (Flores & Rosa, 2015; García et al., 2021),

[1] I would like to thank Dr. Ibon Manterola for being so inspiring and Dr. Scott Grapin for opening the doors of such stimulating debates.

such as the English of the African-American population of the US, known as African-American Vernacular English (AAVE).

On the other hand, I present the Basque case as an example of how the AL has been the key to revitalizing a language in a minority setting. Basque is a minority language spoken in the Basque Country, in western Europe, by less than 1 million speakers. Moreover, it is an endangered language since it has been substituted by Spanish and French in the last centuries and has never had legal rights until the 1980s (Hualde & Zuazo, 2007). In this context, the Basque Academy created a standard Basque in 1968 with the primary objective of being a variety to unify written Basque (Hualde & Zuazo, 2007). It soon became the language of the Basque immersive education system and hence, the primarily spoken variety of thousands of children (Urla et al., 2016, p. 5). Although in its beginning, the incorporation of the standard Basque became an obstacle for the speakers of vernacular varieties, nowadays, the majority of speakers' variety is the Basque learned at school, and those who speak a vernacular tongue have become bidialectal.

Throughout this work, I will explore the value of a unifying tool such as the academic language in both contexts and the importance of mastering or knowing more than one variety. In both cases, the academic language has enabled marginal people to join a speaker community, providing the same social, academic, and socioeconomic opportunities to the whole youth. Moreover, I argue that for the AL to be able to unify a diverse population, there is a need to incorporate a basic knowledge of the surrounding varieties in the curriculum too. In the US context, there should be a yearly lesson in English that explores all the varieties within the language to break the perpetuation of the US mainstream English being the one and only. In the Basque context, I also suggest including a lesson on dialectology in the Basque language subject to legitimize every student's variety and give academic Basque speakers access to more colloquial forms. Finally, I emphasize the importance of differentiating *academic* or *standard* language from *correct* language since all varieties are equally valid regarding grammar, pronunciation, and use (McWhorter, 2017).

This paper will be divided into seven sections. Firstly, I will present how academic language has been theorized in the literature. Secondly, I will expose the debate on whether it should be used in schools, specifically in the context of the United States. Thirdly, I will present the other context of the study: the Basque language as a language in revitalization. In the fourth section, I will argue the importance that academic Basque has had in providing a linguistic model for the survival of the language through schooling. Then, in the fifth section, I will go through a survey study I carried out to check the attitudes of Basque speakers towards academic Basque. In the sixth section, I provide a discussion to answer the research question and to establish a conversation between both contexts, the US and the Basque Country. Lastly, I summarize the most relevant aspects of this work and the

recommendations for the coexistence of the academic and vernacular varieties in the classroom and the communities.

2. ON THE THEORIZATION OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE (AL)

Academic language (AL) could be defined as the linguistic variety employed in the school. It is a variety perceived as formal and sometimes even correct, which is meant to be used for analytical or intellectual work overall. However, it has generated an instrumental and ethical debate in sociolinguistics and education since it is a variety that excludes minority students. Academic language tends to be based on the standard variety (or what is perceived as standard) of the language it is being taught; nevertheless, as dialectology has shown us, not all varieties are equally close to the standard one. Usually, the further they are, the less prestige they will be awarded in the elite of the linguistic community (McWhorter, 2017). Hence, the academic language (henceforth AL) is a variation constructed on social elitism that also perpetuates racism.

Furthermore, not only the standard variety is absorbing all the place in the public sphere (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994), but in some contexts, it seems that academic language is also substituting the vernacular spoken language for matters of prestige and social status. The academic debate poses whether academia should promote a variety that does not contribute to social justice but the marginalization of minorities. In the context of the US, this has been a vivid point of encounter among many educators and language planners.

Due to the societal consequences that each definition would bring to the table, there have been many efforts to define AL. From a systemic functional linguistics approach, the linguist Mary Schleppegrell (2001) defines AL as a set of functional choices people make to attain specific social goals. According to her, those decisions are based on what is being addressed, whom you are communicating with, and the expectations for how texts should be organized. She argues that AL is a compound of grammatical and lexical choices within an authoritative language, conveyed in a declarative sense rather than in a tone that conveys the speaker's attitude or judgment, based on her analysis of school-based texts. On the contrary, in their cross-sectional study, Paola Uccelli et al. (2015) stated that AL is not only about acquiring vocabulary but also syntax and morphology. As a result, AL does not guarantee fluency in reading comprehension. They also contend that AL is considered cross-disciplinary, with traits like nominalizations in common. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that language varies by discipline, arguing that it must be empirically defined.

2.1. THE DEBATE ON THE EXISTENCE AND NECESSITY OF AL

The US context has been pedagogically and sociolinguistically challenging in this discussion since it counts various minorized students who do not speak mainstream English or, in some cases, any

variety of English (Valdés, 2004). Consequently, AL has sparked a significant debate concerning the preservation of privilege through language, as evidenced by the literature (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Valdés (2004) reminds us that everyone thinks about AL differently in the United States, which has noticeable effects. The speaker community plays over traditional assumptions about how AL should be, which poses some ontological questions about the language in which school is imparted. Illustrated by what kind of English AL is based on, what the so-called "mainstream English" is, or even the popularized English as a Second Language (ESL).

Furthermore, it is unclear whether the AL is thought for mainstream English monolingual speakers or if other minorities are contemplated. In her argument, Valdés (2004) further leverages Bakhtinian theory to analyze how academic language impacts speakers' utterances and marginalizes non-academic cultures. As the author points out, utterances within each professional world 'must be regarded primarily as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere…Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account (Bakhtin, 1986/1990, p. 91). However, due to existing boundaries between professional fields, highly relevant dialogues, such as the place of AL, have not been allowed to enter in professional and scholarly conversations, which is why it is crucial to study what is discussed and what is not (Valdés, 2004, p.117).

The polemic on the need for the AL comes from how the counter-hegemonic voices from the linguistic periphery rely on the AL to gain access to the same professional chances as everyone else, denying the possibility of eliminating the AL from the curriculum. Therefore, what would a reasonable solution be? Should bilingual English be taken into account when teaching in AL? As per the author, one's perspective on standard English vs. classroom variations depends on the respondent's ideology (p.105-107). English-Only policies supporters usually are more conservative, which leads to the exclusion of non-hegemonic heritages and cultures. Hence, the debate appears to be always dependent on the background of the participants.

On the other hand, those in favor of legitimating the non-standard varieties are more likely to be related to social rights activism (Valdés, 2004). This viewpoint can also be applied to marginalized communities or languages. For example, when constructing the academic variety of a minority language, which is usually based on a standard variation, there is a discussion about how much of the vocabulary should be "pure" and how many linguistic loans should be tolerated. Independentist movements are frequently connected with purist approaches in a setting like the Galician one; in this setting, loans are avoided to distinguish the minorized from the minorizing. As another example, back in the 60s, when the Basque standardization was in progress, there was a debate about whether the <h> should be included, since the aspiration [h] only existed for one-third of the speakers. The Basque

community got segregated in that debate. It ended up being a political decision whether the Basque Country was perceived as a whole or as two regions of Spain and France. In that sense, those we were in favor to a standardization, where supporters of including the <h> and leaned towards leftist beliefs; whereas those more doubtful of the standard, closer to the catholic and conservative aspect of the society, were not as accepting of including the <h> (Hualde & Zuazo, 2007); hence, rejecting or adopting the <h> in the Basque orthography suddenly took a political positioning too. In that sense, it is concluded that it is hard to provide a unified definition of AL if it will permanently attach to one's ideology.

Equally important, Flores & Rosa (2015) investigate how appropriateness-based language education models have been conceptualized for some intersecting racialized minority students, such as long-term English learners, heritage language learners, and SE learners, and argue that the arguments supporting the need for a standard AL are based solely on raciolinguistic ideologies. The raciolinguistic ideology in language connects the white seeker and listener to monoglossic language beliefs, which assumes that all speakers should aspire to be monolingual of the standard variety (Flores, 2013). According to this ideology, establishing the ideal speaker is a standard English monolingual (white) speaker, which they should all expect to become (Flores, 2013). In addition, researchers including García (2009) and Alim (2005) offer heteroglossic ideologies and critical language awareness as alternatives. That is the incorporation of explicit explanation of certain negative or positive attitudes towards the AL and the marginal varieties, intending to promote linguistic conscience. However, it could be questionable how long it would take to replace socially constructed language ideologies in a monolingual, white middle-class-dominant society like the United States.

García et al. (2021), in line with previous social theories of erasure, point out how teachers tend to pay more attention to the language than the students. This critique is not new in minority language revitalization settings (Urla, 2017). Bilingualism in mainstream schools focuses primarily on accent erasing, and there is always something new to learn. As a result, some ELs will always be learners. According to the authors, racial ideologies are not always reducible to national, state, or economic dynamics; instead, there is a racio-colonial division that distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate ways of being in the world.

Following to anthropologist Kathryn Woolard (2008), linguistic varieties are attributed to respect and authority based on two differentiative axes: anonymity, which is socially indexicalized as neutral and universal (Irvine & Gal, 2000), and authenticity, a value that indicates indexicality of a particular group, such as traditional farmers and fishers (Eckert, 2003; Breda, 2021). Social indexicality often leads to the erasure of a feature to eliminate a negative indexicalization (Irvine & Gal, 2000). For instance, the erasure of the informal negation *ain't*, with the objective of not being identified as

intellectually inferior by those who do not employ it. The legitimization of the standard variety in hegemonic languages comes from the institutions that value it and establish it as the hegemonic and authoritative norm (Gal, 2018). In the US context, mainstream English (Valdés, 2004) would be awarded authority and anonymity, whereas the unprivileged varieties are not authoritative nor anonymous and are strongly socially indexed as non-educated.

Nevertheless, according to the proposal of raciolinguistics, the issue is not necessarily on the language but on the speakers' unprivileged features. As long as the speaker is marked with an unprivileged trait, such as race or low SES, neither the erasure nor substitution of your variety or accent will provide you with high social status of recognition (Flores & Rosa, 2015; García, 2009). García et al. (2017) offer a critical translanguaging approach in the class, where both instructors and students are encouraged to talk about their language and identity from racial, social, and gender perspectives in the variety or languages they consider. The authors mention some specific classroom anecdotes where this was applied to prove how it is viable. In those specific settings, the students belonged to a minorized linguistic group in a foreign country in those cases. However, it is unclear how that would work in a revitalization setting in one's own country. For instance, in minority language immersion systems settings, like the Basque one, often the approach is political, and students tend to be aware of the delicate situation of the language (Erize, 1997); nevertheless, that does not necessarily encourage them to use the language or to feel empowered. On the contrary, sometimes, you would find students who explicitly express their ideological indifference. Thereupon, this solution might be dependent on the specific context.

2.2. AL IN THE CLASSROOM

Besides the definition of AL as a language, there has been much research into how it should be taught, whether it should be taught, and what issues can arise while teaching both English and academic English simultaneously. Content exams have traditionally prompted students' content learning in a limited way (Fernandes et al., 2017). As a result, students frequently must employ AL without explicitly telling what it means (Valdés, 2004). In that sense, bidialectal or bilingual pupils are disadvantaged in bilingual environments or scenarios where more than one variety coexists because they are prevented from employing their whole linguistic repertoire. According to Otheguy et al. (2019), these students are often forced to repress a large portion of their idiolect and traces of translanguage.

In contrast, to their great advantage, monolingual students are forced to suppress only a tiny fraction of their idiolect, the fraction that the social situation would not allow. Moreover, since their variety or language is close to the AL, they are often allowed to translanguage because it is interpreted as informal and not as mistaken. In short, both groups are asked to participate in the same activities but are instead evaluated according to different criteria, giving an advantage to the linguistically

privileged (Otheguy et al., 2019). In order to assess this inequality, language educators, such as Scott Grapin (2019), suggest implementing multimodality models in the classroom that would allow both groups to fulfill the activities successfully with their repertoire. A *model* would be the channel through which language is transacted (Grapin, 2019, p. 32), and multimodality teaching is a teaching method in which students learn material using a variety of sensory modalities. For instance, employing visual and tactile methods, not just written or oral language production (Grapin, 2019, p. 32).

On the other hand, monolingual kids have the advantage of leaving aside only a small piece of their idiolect, the piece that does not match the social context. Thus, they are forced to make a register change, from informal to formal, which still recognizes their own linguistic identity.

Furthermore, because their variety of language is similar to the AL, they are frequently permitted to translanguage because it is perceived as casual rather than incorrect. In other words, both groups are requested to participate in similar activities but are judged using different criteria, providing the linguistically favored group an edge (Otheguy et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, no matter how intriguing this debate is, it changes entirely in language revitalization settings. Switching to the Basque context, the debate has never been about what academic language is or how it should be taught, but instead, whether there should be a linguistic standardization and, if so, whether it should be used in academia.

3. BASQUE STANDARDIZATION AND THE IMMERSION SYSTEM

Basque is a minority endangered language spoken on both sides of the Pyrenees in the Basque Country, which is politically divided between Spain and France. Hence, speakers from the Northern Basque Country are Basque-French bilingual, whereas those from the Southern Basque Country are Basque-Spanish bilinguals. Basque has around 1 million, and it is fully official in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), along with Spanish since 1982's standardization law (Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning [Mercator], 2005). On the other hand, Navarre is partly official, depending on the geography (1986’s zonification law), and in the Northern Basque Country is not official at all.

Basque has been an endangered language for the last centuries since many sociopolitical events turned into constant persecution of the language and culture in favor of the unification of language and nations. Until the 20th century, most Basque population was illiterate since they had little exposure to the language's written version. The Basque language has been in a clear state of diglossia, where Basque was designated to the private and Spanish or French for the public. In the 18th century, the Spanish monarchy pushed for Castilian Spanish as Spain's primary and official language and marginalized the rest of the languages. In France, after the French Revolution (1789), French was

selected as the only language, and the rest of them were persecuted in the name of *égalité*. During the 19th century, industrialization came, which brought mass immigration that changed the demographics and politics (Zuazo, 1995), leading to a more Romance-speaking and modernized population, setting aside the traditional values of the community. Finally, during the 20th century, France was the victim of the two world wars, and Spain, on the other hand, underwent the Civil War (1936-1939), ending in Francisco Franco's long dictatorship (1939-1975). Basque was forbidden and highly penalized during this last period since the Basque Country was categorized as a traitor province, which suffered extreme repression (Hualde & Zuazo, 2007).

Independently of the political environment, there had already been standardization attempts since the 16th century. However, the circles of Basque intellectuals did not agree in the very end. At the beginning of the 20th century, there was an extensive discussion about which dialect the standard should be based on. Since the Labourdian dialect of the Northern Basque Country had a literary hit in the 17th century, the more traditional purists suggested taking it as the linguistic model; for some (more realistic) linguists, however, it was absurd to make everyone learn a Basque variety from three centuries before, and instead suggested to choose the most prestigious variety at the time. Finally, Basque Academy was created in 1918 for that purpose, and even though its mission got interrupted by many political conflicts, in 1945, it was allowed to operate again. Two decades later, in 1968, the linguist Koldo Mitxelena was tasked to design the first draft of the standard, more commonly known as Batua, 'unified'. The publish version was essentially a standardizes version that Gabriel Aresti's employed in his writing, since the standardization movement had already been started in some 20th century southern writers' productions (Hualde & Zuazo, 2007). Although academic Basque has been accused of being a made-up variant, it does not have any grammatical forms not previously documented in the Basque language tradition (ibid.).

The fact that Basque was forbidden gave it a resistance value (Irvine & Gal, 2000) and provoked a strong desire to learn it arose among Spanish monolinguals; in fact, academic Basque became indispensable for Basque education and the production of new speakers (Hualde & Zuazo, 2007). Along with publishing academic Basque, many movements to create clandestine schools and train teachers started (Lasagabaster, 2010: 404), becoming the beginning of a long revitalization process. Academic Basque became the language for academia, intellectual work, and publishing. When the dictatorship finally ended, the linguistic situation was critical. As soon as the revitalization law was passed, the Basque and other minority communities started working on their immersion and alphabetization system for adults to revert the disturbing statistical figures. At the beginning of the century, 83% could speak Basque; however, after the critical movements towards the community and Franco's regime, the percentage decreased to 24% (Etxeberria, 1999). Fortunately, thanks to the

revitalization efforts and immersion system, the numbers could be shifted again, at least where Basque is official.

In order to normalize Basque in the public sphere, as hegemonic languages do, Batua, or academic Basque, was chosen as the language for administration, which provoked a small amount of resistance from the traditional speakers because they did not feel identified with it. Batua's creators emphasized that the norms were intended primarily for writing, but it quickly became the de facto "public" Basque voice (Urla et al., 2016, p. 5). Hence, two different attitudes emerged in the political discourses: acceptance and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1982/1995). The discourse of the legitimization of Basque normalization was conceptualized with language rights, where speaking the minority language represented the collective rights, and the diglossia, instead, the lack of balance of Basque between the public and the private (Hernández et al., 2005). This discourse is still on everyone's lips, as Ciriza (2019) showed in her case study, where Basque-speaking parents judged Spanish-speaking parents in the classroom for not doing enough for language transmission.

The immersion system is highly supported by the Basque Government, which is linked to the Basque nationalist ideology (Mercator, 2005, p. 31); thereupon, in the Basque Country, not only the debate on the standard and academic language is ideological (cf. Flores & Rosa, 2015; García, 2009), but the Basque language itself as well.

4. ISSUES IN EDUCATION: BASQUE SCHOOLING IS NOT ENOUGH

The Basque immersion system has been one of the most successful examples of language revitalization examples; that is, Basque has been a model of a language in disappearance which has managed to restore its number of speakers through language policies implemented by educators and supported by the Basque Government. Its incredible results have even challenged the theorization of language planners, such as Fishman's (1991) *Reversing Language Shift*, which stated that making the dying language the language of compulsory education is the fifth step for the revitalization, which in the Basque context was the first. The recovery efforts in the Basque Country have been massive due to the social implication of the Government, many independent organizations, and especially the community. The revitalization has been extreme in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), not in the whole Basque Country, primarily due to the schooling and rising of Basque knowledge among close to 40% of the general population (Urla & Ramallo, 2022). However, there are high differences in the language used across towns; in some towns, 80% or more are frequent Basque speakers, and we would find 10% or less (Urla & Ramallo, 2022). Those diverse shapes experiences for Basque socialization (Ortega et al., 2015; Kasares, 2017). The language shift in the BAC has been radical. Whereas in the 90s, most speakers were traditional speakers who spoke a vernacular variety from a rural area, in the last decades, more than half of the speakers are new

speakers to the community, whose variety tends to be the standard. In 2019, the majority (54.3%) of young speakers (16-24 years old) were the product of the Basque immersion system (Basque Government, 2019b), and for the majority of them, that is their primary Basque source (Urla & Ramallo, 2022, p. 3). Hence, nowadays, the standard is gaining space in the Basque Country, both administratively and socially. Nevertheless, the question that language planners raise is whether these children socialize in Basque once they are out of school.

Two decades after the normalization, the number of Basque speakers increased exponentially (EUSTAT, 2022); however, according to the research on language trends of the Basque Country by Martínez de Luna and Suberbiola (2008), the youth who had learned Basque in school did not seem to be using it outside the classroom (Martinez de Luna and Suberbiola 2008). This caused a big concern among researchers and language planners and raised the question of what could be done to encourage students from Spanish/French-speaking households to socialize in Basque.

Moreover, in 2015, the cognitive skills of secondary school students in the BAC, measured by the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), experienced a significant decline compared to the previous years (Gortazar, 2018). The Basque education system had always been above the mean scores in Spain, proving its superiority and legitimizing bilingual education. However, after this finding, language planning started being questioned again, retaking the doubt of whether just school transmission is enough to promote language use.

The language planner and sociologist Paula Kasares (2017) addresses the transmission problem through two case studies of Navarra, the autonomous community where Basque is partially official; hence it is not accessible to everyone in public education. According to the author, language transmission is based on the paradigm of language socialization, achieved through Basque public or private schooling in most of Navarre. Basque's perdurance has gone through the rising in Basque and linguistic continuity through generations; however, in Navarre, it advances slowly. After some decades after the creation of the revitalization law of 1982 (Mercator, 2005), Kasares (2017) aimed to examine the intergenerational transmission in Navarre (1970-2012) and its conditions since she claims not to be an adequate sociolinguistic theory behind the policies. The author studied two Navarrese towns during a school year: Irurita, the Baztan valley, and Iruñea, the capital. Irurita is a small town where the use of Basque is daily assured, and it is located in the Basque area of the zonification; hence Basque is co-official. Iruñea, on the other hand, is a city where most of the population lives, and it is located in a diverse area of zonification; thus, Basque is co-official in some institutions but not all. She examined three generations of each environment and saw that in low-presence Basque towns, the fact of “mother tongue” does not make sense since it is not necessarily their favorite, more common, or primary language; there had been a language shift where parents whose mother tongue was

Spanish had decided to switch to Basque. According to Kasares (2017, p. 142), when language use is reduced to family, there is no linguistic socialization guarantee for the incoming generations since social usage is fixated on family transmission; nevertheless, it is not always in the parents' hands. She argues that children act as active language introducers in their families, who spoke only Spanish; now, little by little, Basque was getting into the family. In short, the transmission of Basque is a process that goes bottom-up and up-bottom, which is interactive and multidirectional and can be assured through socialization. The objective now would be for children to speak in Basque in free play (not in institutions, at home).

5. WHEN THE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE IS THE ONLY LANGUAGE

Since the Basque immersion system started working in the BAC, the standard Basque has been the only Basque variety known by those who acquired Basque at school: the new speakers[2] (Urla et al., 2016, p. 3), also known as early bilinguals (De Houwer, 2009). Originally, the standard Basque had been created only for academic writing purposes (Urla et al., 2016, p. 5); however, it soon became the tongue of the majority of Basque speakers, who conform to the youth of the Basque Country. Thereupon, there is a vast population whose main variety is the Basque academic variety; even further, for some, it is even the variety of the household. Like wide other academic varieties, the standard Basque has often been accused of being artificial or the tongue of no one. Since academic Basque cannot be identified with any geographical or social group, it denotes anonymity (Woolard, 2008), which is not well-received in a minority setting like the Basque Country. On the other side, it has been widely studied that speaking a vernacular variety gives the speaker legitimacy and authenticity in the community (Ortega et al., 2014; Ortega et al., 2015; Urla et al., 2016; Urla et al., 2018), because it indexes them as traditional or original speakers (Irvine & Gal, 2000). Hence, new speakers, or better said, non-native speakers are perceived as illegitimate and non-authentic members of the community; this has been seen in many minorized linguistic communities (Jaffe, 1999, 2015; Costa, 2015; O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2013; O'Rourke et al., 2015; Ortega et al., 2015; Sallabank & Marquis, 2018; O'Murchadha & Ó hIfearnáin, 2018).

The extensive literature has shown that the variety Basque speakers employ is the prime factor in defining their authenticity in the community (O'Rourke et al., 2015; Ortega et al., 2014, 2015;

[2] *New speakers* have been defined as "individuals who have learned Basque by means other than a family transmission" (Urla et al., 2016, p. 3). However, the reader should be warned that this definition is highly problematic since it does not differentiate early bilinguals and adult L2 Basque speakers (terminology from De Houwer, 2009), and it is a pretty stigmatized term in the community. Due to space and time limitations, I will not discuss it here, and hence, the term will appear when citing other works that employ it, following the trend in the literature.

Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2018; Urla et al., 2016, 2018). In this speakerhood, not even being highly competent can be recognized as one actual speaker (Urla et al., 2016). In minority settings, several attitudes or language ideologies have been reported, which put so-called new speakers' identities on constant evaluation (Dorian, 1994, Jaffe,1999, O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2013). In Urla et al.'s (2016, 2018) study, they interviewed (early) L2 Basque speakers who had acquired Basque by other means rather than family transmission and inquired about their perception as speakers. In concordance with previous research (Ortega et al., 2014, 2015), there was a consensus among speakers that the standard was not more correct than the rest of the varieties, lacking the prestige that standards usually have in hegemonic contexts. Many showed indifference towards the necessity of a standard variety and suggested restricting it to the written language. Even though some wore with pride having learned (standard) Basque in adulthood, a majority stated that they wished to speak a vernacular variety. Interestingly, those speakers who spoke a variety or included some local features in their speech felt more authentic than the others, as they did not identify as “new speakers” but as “just a Basque speaker” (Ortega et al., 2014, 2015; Urla et al., 2016, 2018). The latter also demonstrated pride when being confused with traditional native speakers. (Ortega et al., 2014, 2015; Urla et al., 2018). In addition, having a Basque network was a critical feature in acquiring a vernacular and becoming active speakers (Amorrortu et al., 2009; Ortega et al., 2015; Urla et al., 2018). In a few words, academic Basque fails to provide the authenticity values that new speakers need to be part of the community (Urla et al., 2016, p. 9). This same phenomenon has been found in other minority languages, such as in Galician (O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2013) or Irish (Ó Duibhir, 2019).

Based on anthropological, social, and linguistic research on new and traditional speakers of the Basque country, many authors encourage the incorporation of the vernacular into education since that will be their primary input (Hadiccan, 2005; Urla et al., 2016, 2018). If there were not a minority setting, the standard would have had an anonymity value, but instead, being “unmarked” generates complexities for Basque speakers (Urla et al., 2018; Woolard, 2008). Academic Basque is a negatively marked variety in the casual social Basque context, which is why there is an urgency to be able to provide informal and authentic Basque input at school too.

On the other hand, another suitable option could be legitimizing what is already there, the standard varieties. In Gal’s (2018) terms: “In minorized contexts, standardization processes have the potential to ‘re-signify, reindexicalize, re-imagine hegemonic discourses that lead to new situated indexical meanings” (Gal, 2018: 238).

Some of the previous research has reported the emergence of new informal varieties in new speaker contexts (Nance, 2015, 2018). Initially, new speakers were thought to be politicized individuals who decided to study and embrace the minority language as a form of defiance against what they saw

as a history of linguistic dominance (Ramallo, 2020, Urla & Ramallo, 2022); nowadays, the resistance is inside the community, and they are acting as agents of linguistic change (O'Rourke et al., 2015; Kasstan, 2017). In the Basque context, so-called "new speakers" have been conscious of their linguistic practices, such as adopting Spanish markers or vernacular features, which are conterminous with their activism and motivation towards Basque (Lantto, 2014, 2018). Moreover, new speakers who perceived themselves as more authentic or closer to the native community tend to align more with the grammatical irregularities that natives would employ rather than those associated with a lack of proficiency and, by extension, with new speakers (Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2015, 2016, 2019). There might be two possible ways of self-authentication, that is, of self-proclaiming a faithful member of the community: the incorporation of varieties in schooling or speakers' self-transformation.

6. THE STUDY: ATTITUDES OF ACADEMIC BASQUE SPEAKERS IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

To shed light on the debate on whether academic Basque (AB, henceforth) should be learned or used in class, I will focus on a specific context where without the AB, the revitalization of Basque would not have been possible: the minority context of Basque. Nowadays, most Basque speakers are young people under the age of 40 who speak the standard academic variety learned at school (Basque Government, 2019); hence they consist of an essential collection for the future of the language. Usually, speakers that employ the academic language as their vernacular tongue have not acquired Basque in the family or surroundings, which is why they do not master a local variety. However, thanks to those who learned Basque at the end of the 20th century, there are even youngsters whose house variety is the academic variety.

In this new era, children are the ones who insert Basque into the family due to their schooling (Kasares, 2017). However, it has been reported that they do not necessarily use it with their peers outside the classroom (Martinez de Luna & Suberbiola, 2008; Kasares, 2017). Moreover, several studies report that those who speak academic Basque do not always feel legitimized in the community since their variety is way too associated with the norm; as a result, many decided to incorporate local varieties into their repertoire (Ortega et al., 2015; Urla et al., 2018), or even create their identifiable variety (Lantto, 2014, 2018). This situation, along with the debate on AL, made us raise the following question: What are the ideologies and attitudes of Basque students regarding academic Basque? In order to answer this question, a survey was administered to 98 young AB speakers who had learned Basque through the Basque immersion program or spoke the AB at home.

6.1. PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 98 15-30 years old young Basque speakers who had studied in Basque their whole life. They were all from Getxo, one of the most significant localities of the province of Bizkaia in the BAC. It has 75,625 inhabitants, of which 33,53% are bilinguals, 23,12% are passive bilinguals, and the rest are monolinguals (EUSTAT, 2022). Most Basque speakers are situated among youth under 34 years old, and in 1891, only 9,9% of the Getxoan population was a Basque speaker (EUSTAT, 2022). Therefore, it is a clear indicator that most current Basque speakers have acquired Basque through schooling school.

Moreover, in 2010, almost 1500 adults were enrolled in Basque evening schools, showing that Basque is being revitalized through children's education and some adults' involvement. In 2006, only 7,5% had Basque as their mother tongue, and 4,5% had both Spanish and Basque; the rest came from monolingual households. Of all the study participants, 75% spoke standard Basque, whereas 25% spoke standard and a local variety.

6.2. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data was collected through an online survey spread out through the snowball method in social media. The survey's main objective was to assemble attitudes, ideologies, and prejudices (if any) towards the standard language and its relationship with the academic language. The survey was gathered in four sections: (1) basic information about the speakers and their linguistic habits, (2) information about their education, (3) speakers' opinions about the local and regional Basque and AB, and (4) attitudes and perception towards bilingualism. In the latter, participants were asked about Basque's role and future in Getxo, Basque's transmission and normalization, and attitudes towards both the dialect and the standard Basque. The survey consisted of 29 questions: 28 with multiple choice answers (a, b, c, d) and 1 for the personal elaboration of the matter. The answers were analyzed with descriptive statistics through Qualtrics.

7. RESULTS

The results were organized into two main sections: (1) speakers' view on standard Basque; and (2) attitudes towards the local variety and the future of the language. Before starting with the results, let us retake the above research question: What are the ideologies and attitudes of Basque students regarding academic Basque?

A) Speakers' view on standard Basque

In order to answer the role of AB in the community, participants were asked about their school experiences and socialization habits in Basque and Spanish. There was significant consent among speakers who reported being told that their Basque was artificial, following what has been found in the

literature (Ortega et al., 2014, 2015; O'Rourke et al., 2015; Urla et al., 2016, 2018). Even though they understand Basque perfectly, they feel uncomfortable speaking it. In 41% of the cases, a teacher or more had told the participants that they spoke poorly in Basque (whereas 9% were told they spoke poorly in Spanish). Not surprisingly, 37% reported believing not having learned it correctly. Moreover, quite a disquieting result arose regarding Basque socialization. Participants were asked which language they felt more comfortable in (if any, or both), and 91% responded that Spanish was their comfort language, echoing what Martínez de Luna & Suberbiola (2008) found.

Nevertheless, some results were quite hopeful too. When they were asked if they believed that AB could account for the participation in the Basque speakerhood, 66% thought that just with standard Basque was enough to be part of the community. Interestingly, 70% stated that the standard could also be informal and juvenile, showing a positive attitude towards their dialect. Lastly, they were asked about their town's linguistic future and their perspective, and 60% believed that Getxo could become an (even more) bilingual town.

B) Attitudes toward the local variety and the future of the language

Regarding the local dialect, some positive ideologies came out, too, opening the possibility of different paths for the future of Basque. Firstly, 70% confessed to not knowing the existence of the local dialect, which cannot be blamed since it might have less than twenty speakers nowadays. Interestingly, when the participants agreed that the local variable should be taught at school, too, 72% of the participants agreed. However, if the revitalization activities were to be outside of school, only 27% reported the commitment to participate. Once again, putting all the weight of language transmission on the education system. Finally, 75% thought dialectal speakers have a more significant attachment to Basque.

Even though 14% answered that they did not care about Basque's disappearance, most attitudes were favorable towards both the standard variety and the local one.

8. DISCUSSION: VARIETY LEGITIMIZATION THROUGH THE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

Throughout the literature and the data, I have had the chance to appreciate how academic language can be a tool and an obstacle. In the case of the US, the academic language tends to marginalize those speakers of non-mainstream varieties (Flores & Rosa, 2015; García, 2009) and simultaneously provides a unified code for academia (Valdés, 2004). On the other hand, in the Basque Country, without the academic language, it would not have been possible to create all the material needed to revitalize a whole generation. Hence, even though some traditional speakers might feel strange to them (Urla, 1999, Haddican, 2005), it has been proven to be a necessary tool for revitalization.

Retaking the question, I can deduct from the answers of the youth that AB might come as a challenge for many whose primary language is Spanish: on the one hand, due to the lack of legitimization both by the teachers and by other Basque speakers, and on the other hand, due to the insecurities they might feel when not speaking in their mother tongue. However, it has been widely reported that setting the bad experiences and prejudices aside, the variety the school provided them has allowed them to integrate into the Basque community and create their juvenile variation (Lantto, 2014, 2018). Even though the lack of confidence and the prejudice still constitute an issue in the community. Thereupon, academic Basque might come up as a transactional obstacle that allows speakers from Spanish/non-Basque-speaking households to the integration of the community. Furthermore, regarding the other varieties, standard speakers recognized the exact value of the local variety (Woolard, 2008), both to be part of the community and as a valuable asset to education, which is why they were open to adding it to the immersion system. Lastly, it is worth remarking that a significant percentage of the participants agreed that speaking a variety is closely tied to having a more significant attachment to the language.

In this study, two main issues have been evaluated: (i) the attitudes towards the AB and (ii) the future of Basque with AB as the only socialization tool.

8.1. THE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

According to the answers gathered from participants of the study, even though the AB carries a series of unpleasant feelings in the community, it ends up providing access to the Basque speakerhood to those that do not have it from birth. Moreover, depending on the speaker, standard and local variety can account for a legitimate identity. Considering that a vast majority from the survey agreed on the relationship between speaking a variety and the attachment towards the language, I would suggest that Basque should be taught, considering the students' sociolinguistic situation. This can also be extended to English(es) in the US context.

In the case of Basque, one of the issues is that speakers do not feel fluent enough, which is a big issue regarding providing the necessary tools for socialization in Basque. In the university access exams of the Basque Country, only written Basque is examined, leaving aside the oral competencies of the students. As a result, many young speakers have language knowledge but not language control (Lasagabaster, 1997, p. 79). Therefore, oral skills should be developed and reinforced in education towards a daily use of the language in order to achieve fluency (Lasagabaster, 1997). Moreover, some participants (14%) also showed a bad attitude towards Basque, which has been described as ego-defensive tactics to confront the feeling of being rejected by the community. To address this issue, the educational system should consider implementing techniques that embrace self-love and acceptance instead of more “threatening ones” (Katz, 1960).

Lastly, it has been previously suggested that basic dialectal knowledge should be included in the curriculum of the Basque immersion system (Hadiccan, 2005; Urla et al., 2016, 2018). However, data has shown that it is a common wish to include the local variety in education, and the speakers associate speaking a variety with having an attachment to the language. Henceforth, creating an official space for varieties would be beneficial, where sensitivity towards dialects and the critical content of the local history and culture can be taught. In sum, the dialects guarantee attachment, and attachment guarantees the preservation of the language; thus, it is vital to consider varieties and the standard or AB. Nevertheless, the AB has shown to be a valuable immersion tool in the Basque-speaking community, which is why it is equally important as the variety.

8.2. TOWARDS A UNIFICATION OF THE THEORIZATION OF THE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

Similar to the Basque case, in the US context, the issue is not the academic language itself but how it is being conceptualized. AL is a convention for intellectual work based on another sociopolitical convention, the standard language. Every student who aims to be part of academia should have access to the needed variety for it. However, that does not mean encouraging the substitution of their tongue for the academic language or the standard variety. Instead, I urge educators to make two significant changes in language education.

On the one hand, there should be explicit instruction on what constitutes academic language, the standard language, and what both are used for. On the other hand, inevitably, there will always be a unified code because societies tend to move in centripetal forces towards uniformity (Bakhtin, c. 1935/1981). hence the AL is necessary to be taught, always considering that the non-standard is not incorrect but a different variety based on language change (McWhorter, 2007). On the other hand, the speaker of a non-mainstream variety needs to have the resources to be part of the hegemonic public sphere to provide equal chances to all speakers, regardless of their background.

Closely linked to the previous recommendation, I encourage adding a national dialectology lesson in language classes. That way, it would be a chance to get to know the varieties of the school peers better and provide vernacular features that those who speak mainstream varieties seek for authentication. In the US context, making non-standard varieties part of the language curriculum would legitimize minority students' speech and identities. In addition, it would work against the perpetuation of linguistic elitism (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Similarly, in the Basque setting, a yearly dialectology lesson would legitimize the vernacular speech of traditional classroom speakers and provide some linguistic insights to new speakers who wish to self-identify with a more local speech (Urla et al., 2018).

In short, I argue that practical linguistic awareness, such as incorporating basic dialectology knowledge into the classroom, would be a life-changing asset to the education of minority language

or variety students. Its objective would be twofold: i) It would improve the quality and experience of the peripheral variety speakers; ii) it would allow mainstream speakers to critically learn about their peer's speech rather than limiting themselves to ideological prejudices. In a few words, if taught correctly, vernacular varieties can be legitimatized by the academic language.

9. CONCLUSIONS

In this work, I have aimed to present the problem of academic language based on two very different settings. On the one hand, I have presented the debate around how it should be defined and what its place should be in the educational context of the United States. Often it has been misinterpreted as the correct English variety when it is only a social convention that chose it as the English that would be employed for intellectual matters (Valdés, 2004). On the other hand, however, it has perpetuated the linguistic hegemony of white listeners, marginalizing, even more, the peripherical varieties (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Due to this social injustice, it has been suggested that the substitution of the academic language by the employment of the vernacular varieties (Flores & Rosa, 2015) or allowing to translanguage in class (García et al., 2021). Nevertheless, if the academic language stopped being taught at school, speakers of underprivileged varieties would not be offered the same professional opportunities in the long run (McWhorter, 2017).

On the other hand, I have presented how in the Basque context, academic Basque was initially designed to unify the written language but rapidly became the main spoken variety of Basque through the immersion system (Urla et al., 2016). Thereupon, most youth would not be able to speak Basque if it was not for its use and transmission in school. In this context, academic Basque is seen as less legitimate than the vernacular varieties because it lacks authenticity (Woolard, 2008). However, it is the only accessible variety to students from Spanish or French-speaking households.

The study in this work shows that AB can be an integration tool that can account for the successful transmission of the Basque language and identity. Even though, as it has been shown in the literature (Ortega et al., 2015; Urla et al., 2018), there is an apparent necessity for the incorporation of the vernacular variety into education to provide students with a legitimate speech model to be accepted as authentic in the community.

Throughout this paper, I have argued for the need to master or know more than one variety of academic languages as a unifying tool in both situations (U.S.A. and the Basque Country). In both cases, the academic language has enabled marginalized people to join a speaker community, allowing all youth to benefit from the same social, academic, and financial prospects. Furthermore, I have emphasized that for the AL to unite a different community, a fundamental understanding of the surrounding types must be included in the curriculum.

In the United States, I recommend that there should be a yearly English class that studies all of the other variants of the language in order to break the cycle of the US standard English being the only one. For the Basque context, I have also proposed including a dialectology lesson in the Basque language topic to legitimize each student's diversity and provide academic Basque speakers access to more vernacular forms. Finally, I have stressed the necessity of distinguishing a correct language from academic or standard one (English, Basque) because all types are equally acceptable in terms of grammar, pronunciation, and usage (McWhorter, 2017).

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