

The addition of a uvular trill in two Basque dialects

Oroitz Jauregi

University of the Basque Country (oroitz.jauregi@ehu.es)

Miren Lourdes Oñederra

University of the Basque Country (ml.oinederra@ehu.es)

Irantzu Epelde

CNRS, Iker UMR-5478 (irantzuepelde@euskaltel.net)

In language contact situations it is very common to have the less prestigious language being influenced by the most prestigious one, but the contrary is also attested (Heine & Kuteva 2005). Basque is considered a 'vulnerable' language (Moseley 2010), one that lives in a diglossic situation with respect to two of the world's most powerful languages; Spanish and French. Nowadays, all Basque speakers are bilingual with either French or Spanish, and this language contact situation makes Basque very prone to borrowings from these two languages.

The case of phonetic features is of a special relevance in externally-induced variation and change phenomena, given that it is widely assumed that, in cases of language contact, phonetic features are amongst the easiest ones to borrow (Silva-Corvalán 2001). In this paper, we will focus on the addition of a uvular trill in two Basque dialects from the French area (Labourdin and Low Navarrese), as for most Lapurdian and Low Navarrese speakers the trill has acquired a uvular articulation (as in French), in contrast to the alveolar trill which can be found in the rest of dialects.

In our data, the addition of this unit appeared to be associated with differences in age. We will focus on three age groups: youngs (-30), middle-aged (40-60) and octogenarians (+80) from the traditional provinces of Lapurdi and Low Navarre (France). All of the informants (60) have the Basque language as their mother tongue and home language, but the older ones received education only in French and use it in formal (and often informal) situations, in oral and in written communication. The data come from recorded interviews —individual as well as in-group— held in Basque, and from specific questionnaires and word lists used in our project *Norantz: contact des langues et variation linguistique. Création d'un observatoire des nouveaux parlars basques*. A sample of data is analysed perceptually and acoustically with the Praat speech analysing program in order to study the alveolar or the uvular condition of each unit.

Language variation can mark stable class differences or stable sex differences in communities, but it can also indicate instability and change. When it marks change, the primary social correlate is age (Chambers 2002), and the change reveals itself prototypically in a pattern whereby some minor variant in the speech of the oldest generation occurs with greater frequency in the middle generation and with still greater frequency in the youngest generation. If the incoming variant truly represents a linguistic change (Labov 1994, Trudgill 1974), as opposed to an ephemeral innovation as for some slang expressions or an age-graded change, it will be marked by increasing frequency down the age scale, as it occurs with the youngest generation in this community.

References

- Chambers, J. K. 2002. Patterns of Variation including Change. In *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell. 349-372.
- Heine, B. & Kuteva, T. 2005. *Language Contact and Grammatical Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hualde, J. I. & J. Ortiz de Urbina. 2003. *A Grammar of Basque*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hualde, J. I. 1991. *Basque Phonology*. Routledge: London.
- Labov, W. 1994. *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Ladefoged, P. & I. Maddieson. 1996. *The Sounds of the World's Languages*. Oxford & Malden: Blackwell.
- Moseley, C. 2010. *Atlas of the world's languages in danger*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Silva-Corvalán, C. 2001. *Sociolingüística y pragmática del español*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Trudgill, P. 1974. Linguistic change and diffusion: description and explanation in sociolinguistic dialect geography. *Language in Society* 3: 215-246.