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APPARENT TIME VARIATION IN BASQUE: VARIATION IN ARAMAIO AND OTXANDIO

Jose Luis ORMAETXEA LASAGA

Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea/University of the Basque Country (Vitoria-Gasteiz)

txipi.ormaetxea@ehu.es

Abstract

In this paper we want to research the sociolinguistic variation among people speaking dialect. The research has been made in two villages, in Aramaio and in Otxandio.

This is a small sample of a wider project carried out by the research team EUDIA of the University of the Basque Country. The name of the project is EAS (Euskararen Atlas sozio-geolingüistikoa or Socio- and geo-linguistic atlas of the Basque language). In this project an enquiry is carried out in 100 villages of the Basque speaking area (in the seven provinces). The questionnaire has about 200 questions (which cover different fields of the language: lexicon, noun morphology, verb morphology and syntax). The questionnaire is done in each village and the respondents are two male speakers, one of them young and the other mature.

We want to know what the linguistic differentiations are (in lexicon, in morphology and in syntax) between young and middle aged people. Moreover, we have paid special attention to measure the influence of Unified Basque.

Keywords

Linguistic variation, sociolinguistic, dialectology, Basque Language

Resumen

En este artículo queremos analizar la variación sociolingüística entre hablantes dialectales. La investigación se ha realizado en dos localidades, en Aramaio y en Otxandio.

Esta es una pequeña muestra de un proyecto más amplio llevado a cabo por el grupo de investigación EUDIA de la Universidad del País Vasco. El nombre del proyecto es EAS (Euskararen atlas sozio-geolingüistikoa o Atlas sociogeolingüístico del País Vasco). En este proyecto se realiza una encuesta en 100 poblaciones de la zona de habla vasca (en las siete provincias). El cuestionario abarca alrededor de 200 preguntas, que cubren diferentes campos de la lengua: el léxico, la morfología nominal, la morfología verbal y la sintaxis. El cuestionario se lleva a cabo en cada localidad, y los informantes son dos hablantes masculinos, uno joven y el otro de mediana edad.

Queremos conocer las diferencias lingüísticas (en el léxico, en la morfología y en la sintaxis) que se producen entre los hablantes jóvenes y los de mediana edad. Además, hemos puesto especial atención en ponderar la influencia del Euskera Unificado.

Palabras clave

Variación lingüística, sociolingüística, dialectología, lengua vasca

1. Introduction

This study looks at intergenerational linguistic differences between adult and young speakers by examining variation between dialect speakers in two Basque towns: Aramaio (Araba province) and Otxandio (Bizkaia province) with particular attention to language change from one generation to the next, its causes, and a comparison between the two towns.

Otxandio has 1,100 inhabitants at the present time. Knowledge of Basque in Otxandio is widespread: in 2001 (Alonso & Artiatx, 2005) three out of four inhabitants (74.7% to be precise) were Basque speakers, 11.5% were partial speakers and non-Basque-speakers made up 13.8% of the population. Use of Basque in public places was measured in 2001 by Otxandio's Basque language committee jointly with a number of local cultural organisations, revealing some alarming statistics: the amount of Basque used among older adults was very low (15.5% as against 84.5% for Spanish), and that used by younger adults was even lower (a mere 6.5%, as against 93.5% for Spanish). Overall (i.e. also including the elderly and the very young), the figures for language use were 22.1% Basque, 77.9% Spanish. Comparing language knowledge with use, the figures for young adults are truly alarming: 91.7% are Basque speakers yet their use of Basque in public is just 6.5%. Although the numbers for more mature adults are slightly higher they are still discouraging: 67.6% knowledge contrasting to 15.5% use.

Aramaio covers a much larger territory than Otxandio and its present day population stands close to 1,500. As in Otxandio, most people can speak Basque: the 2001 data is 85.5% Basque speaking, 8.8% partial Basque speakers and 5.6% non-Basque-speakers. The figures for use of the Basque language in public are considerably higher than in Otxandio. The latest statistics, produced in late 2008 by the Sociolinguistics Cluster, indicate an overall percentage of Basque language use of 56.2%. But there is also cause for concern in Aramaio: according to the latest study, the use of Basque has decreased from 65.4% in 2001 and 61.88% in 2003. Furthermore, use has dropped off sharply among young adults in the 14-25 age group: from 81.1% in 2001 and 69.5% in 2003 to only 32% in 2008.

Some other observations about differences between the adult and young generations that may help to account for the data emerging from the present survey:

- The adult generation is much more closely linked in lifestyle to the elderly generation than the young generation is.
- The adult generation went through school in Spanish, the young generation in Basque at a time when standard Basque had already become fairly well established.
- The adult generation has had relatively little contact with standard Basque and the contact they do have is somewhat sporadic; nonetheless, it exists through contact with children, television and radio, and to a much more limited extent through reading. In contrast, the young generation has been in continuous contact with the standard Basque language since early childhood.

Through the medium of school, young people have had a higher level of education than adults.

The study compares an adult generation of speakers (in the 45-50 age group) to a young generation (20-25 age group). Age is the only variable considered in the study.

A questionnaire was used containing 202 items which cover a wide range of language features touching on the lexicon, noun morphology, verb morphology and syntax.

2. Theoretical framework

It has been traditional in the Basque Dialectology to study only the time-honoured dialects of elderly speakers. The present author has also performed such studies and no criticism of that approach is meant; indeed, still more work along the same lines would be more than welcome.

However, we believe the time has come to incorporate a sociolinguistic dimension into our research too. Little work of this kind has been done so far, although some studies have begun to be published, particularly by G. Aurrekoetxea, both informing the field about pertinent theory (principally European) and publishing results from surveys based thereon. Aurrekoetxea's main findings may be summarised as follows: at least in some speech varieties, the language of the young generation displays strong influence

from the standard language at the expense of local dialect forms (Aurrekoetxea 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008).

This phenomenon has long been taking place across Europe, especially in languages where standardisation occurred early, as pointed out by Auer (1998: 1):

There is overwhelming evidence that the relevance of the standard varieties in everyday life has increased greatly as a consequence of modernization and mobility in the industrialized European societies, as a result of the centralization of the state and the spreading mass media, and in particular following the changes in the educational system.

In the case of Basque there has been less opportunity for such factors to exert an influence (the Basque Country not only lacks a state but its language is subordinated to Spanish and French), yet similar phenomena are observable, and given the dominance of standard varieties in Europe (Auer & Hinskens 1996) the same trend may be expected to prevail in the case of Basque; indeed this has already started to happen. Sociolinguistic research documenting this process is now called for.

The standard language clearly can and does influence dialect, leading to a phenomenon called convergence. Convergence can take place in two directions: either vertically (between the standard and a dialect) or horizontally (between dialects) (Hinskens 1998). Here we shall only discuss vertical convergence, as we are interested in finding out what impact the standard has upon dialect. Given that two localities were examined, Aramaio and Otxandio, it would also have been possible to study horizontal convergence, that is mutual influence between the two dialect varieties concerned; but that is not the subject of the present study.

In order to study vertical convergence, the crucial variable we shall examine is age. Our aim, then, is to find out how the standard language influences the speech of two generations of speakers (adults and youngs) and the differences to be observed between their language use in consequence of such an influence.

As Bellmann (1998) showed in the case of German, convergence may be strong (where the influence of the standard leads to the practical disappearance of a dialect) or weak, and we are also interested in measuring how strong convergence is in the Basque case. At the present time, convergence does not appear to be particularly strong in Aramaio and Otxandio, where there is still fairly solid adherence to the traditional local

speech. This contrasts with Aurrekoetxea's finding for the area of Arratia (Aurrekoetxea, 2006: 158): "Our study of Arratia clearly shows strong convergence between standard and dialectal varieties, at least in certain domains and some localities".

There is still insufficient data to draw hard and fast conclusions, but as the "Socio-geolinguistic Atlas of the Basque Language" (Aurrekoetxea / Ormaetxea 2006) project progresses and our database grows it will be possible to make more confident statements about the strength or weakness of convergence towards the standard variety.

3. Method

A questionnaire was used to gather data for the present study in which informants in each town were asked 202 questions. The same questionnaire was used throughout and the answers were subsequently compared and analysed.

An overview of the questionnaire and analysis of responses follows:

- The 202 items cover the following linguistic areas: lexicon (120), noun morphology (23), verb morphology (39) and syntax (20).
- Informants: the informants from each town are all male, aged between 45 and 50 and between 20 and 25. The survey was carried out between 2006 and 2007.
- The interview was recorded and data was obtained in a variety of ways: by asking directly, through explanations, translating from Spanish etc.
- Given that the objective was to document the informal speech register used in daily activities at home, around town and with friends, our efforts were focused in this direction and it was explained clearly to the informants what was expected of them. I believe this goal was largely achieved, although one rarely obtains 100% success in such cases.

4. The survey data

The objective of the survey is to observe and analyse the similarity, and more especially the differences in speech according to age, that is, to find out what adult and

young people's language have in common and above all where and to what extent they differ from each other.

As might be expected, adult and young speakers coincide in most respects; otherwise mutual intelligibility would be threatened. Not only do they mostly coincide, but even where they differ, unintelligibility does not result. For example, the notion 'one-eyed' (*tuerto* in Spanish) is expressed by the form *tuertue* in the speech of adult speakers from both Aramaio and Otxandio, whereas young speakers use *begibakarra*. Thus the adult speakers use a loanword from Spanish where young speakers use a purely Basque word instead. Now *begibakarra* is not a completely new word in Basque and indeed it is used by elderly speakers of Otxandio (not so in Aramaio where more elderly speakers use *tuertue*). Nonetheless, it may be assumed that the young speaker's usage has been adopted from 'new Basque' (by which I mean the standard taught in schools and used in the media). In any case, there is no question that adult people will understand the word used by the young speakers (and indeed may use it themselves on occasion), and of course the young speakers likewise understand the Spanish-origin borrowing commonly employed by adult speakers.

But a similar situation, though in reverse, occurs with words used to express the notion 'strong' (in Spanish, *fuerte*): here adult speakers from Aramaio and Otxandio both use the Basque-origin word *iñdertzue*, whereas young speakers say *fuertie*. Again, mutual intelligibility is not hampered thereby.

The number of differences between adult and young speakers is now presented, starting with the data for Aramaio:

- a) Lexicon: 25 differences (20.8%)
 - b) Noun morphology: 8 (34.8%)
 - c) Verb morphology: 7 (17.9%)
 - d) Syntax: 7 (35%)
- Total: 47 differences (23.2%).

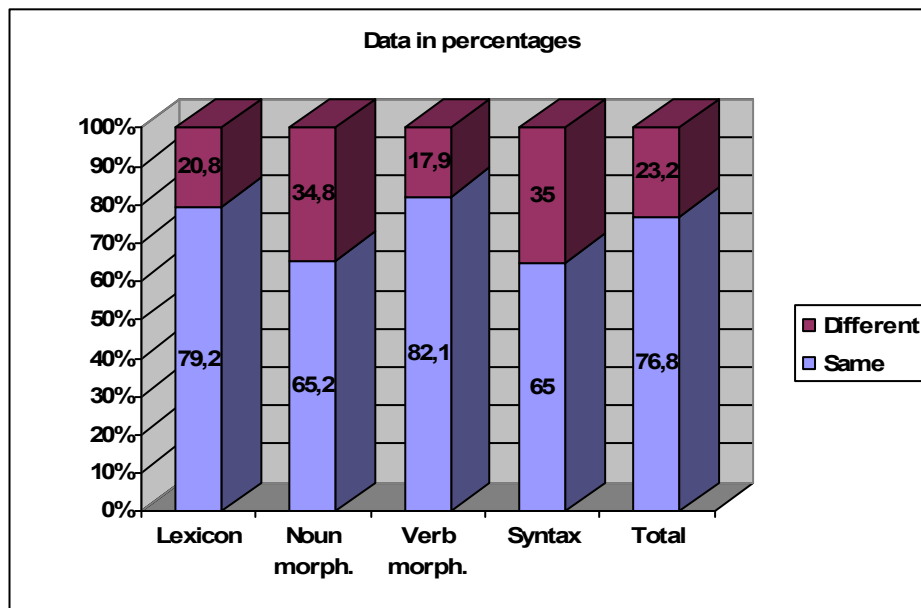


Figure 1. Aramaio data

Now the data for Otxandio (Ormaetxea 2008):

- a) Lexicon: 16 (13.3%)
 - b) Noun morphology: 5 (21.7%)
 - c) Verb morphology: 18 (48.7%)
 - d) Syntax: 8 (40%)
- Total, 47 differences (23.2%).

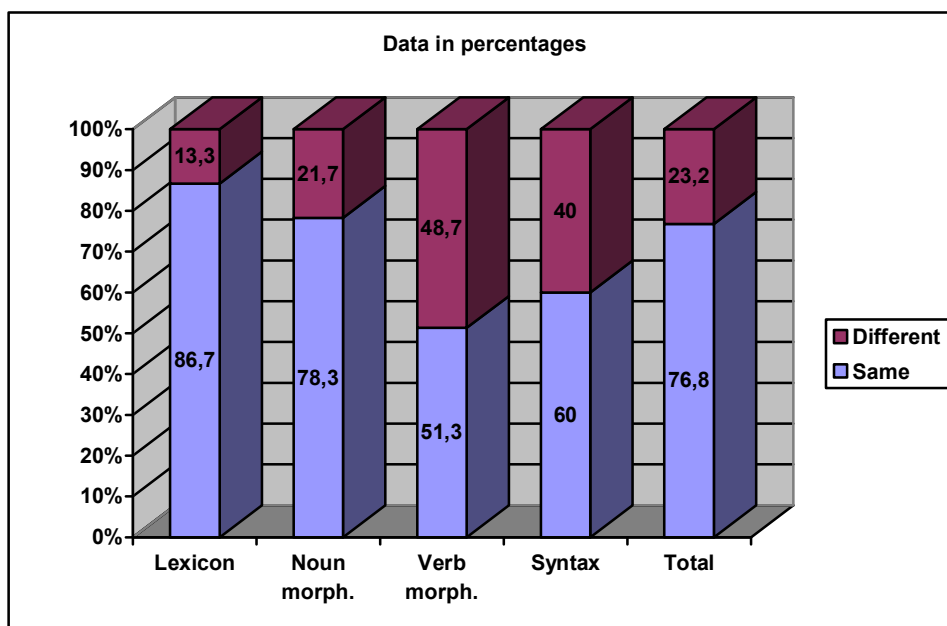


Figure 2. Otxandio data. Differences between adults and young people

4. Analysis of the data

Now we turn to the data. The questionnaire was organised into several sections and the same classification will be used in the following analysis: lexicon, noun morphology, verb morphology and syntax. The section will conclude with a general overview.

5.1. The Otxandio data

5.1.1. Lexicon

120 of the questionnaire items (over half) concerned lexical items. The great majority of the lexical items (104) are shared by both generations; 13.3%, are different¹.

The few differences that occur belong to a variety of types. In some cases the adult informant uses a more archaic item (pertaining to the ‘base dialect’ in Bellman’s [1998: 23] terminology) whereas the young informant uses a modern term, such as (for the adult informant) *igitargidxe* ‘moon’, *samieleko subidxe* ‘rainbow’, *bart* ‘last night’, *dxaurtu* ‘throw’ versus (for the young informant) *illargidxe*, *ostadarra*, *atzo gabien* (or *atzo gabas*), *bota*. At least two of the young informant’s items, *illargidxe* and *ostadarra*, clearly show influence from the standard language.

In one case where two alternatives exist in the base dialect (Burgete & Gaminde 1991) the adult informant chose one (*amandre* ‘grandmother’) and the young informant the other (*amama*).

In another item both responses are loanwords but that of the adult speaker is more old-fashioned than that of the young informant: *enterraidxue* versus *funerala* ‘funeral’.

The adult speaker sometimes uses a loanword, such as *kantzau* ‘tire’, *tuertue* ‘one-eyed’, *apellidue* ‘surname’, *asule* ‘blue’ where the young speaker opts for a word from standard Basque: *nekie*, *begibakarra*, *abisena*, *urdiñe*.

¹ Responses are only considered different when the words given are based on different roots; when the root is the same they are considered as the same even if they show surface differences. For example, where one informant gave *uridxolak* ‘floods’ and the other *euridxolak*, they are regarded as the same word; likewise *ixarie* versus *isarie* ‘bed sheet’.

More rarely the opposite occurs: the adult speaker uses a Basque word from the base dialect and the young informant a loanword, thus *inddertzue* ‘strong’ and *uketu* ‘commit suicide’ versus *fuertie* and *suisidau*.

In two cases (‘calf of the leg’ and ‘son-in-law’) the young informant didn’t have an answer to give, while the adult informant did: *bolie* (also *pantorrillie*) and *suiñe*. For two others (‘swirl’ and ‘sigh’) the adult speaker had no answer and the young speaker had one, which in one case was a loanword (*remolinue*) and a standard Basque word in the other (*asperena*).

These are the differences observed between the old and young informants. This is insufficient data to warrant drawing a general conclusion, but certain tendencies are suggested: the adult speaker is more loyal to the base dialect, while the young speaker shows influence from the standard language and reveals signs of cultural change.

In addition to the complete differences noted so far, we may mention some other contrasts: thus in some instances one informant gave two answers as opposed to a single response from the other. For example, for ‘black pudding’ the adult informant gave two words, *buskentza* and *odolostie*, the young informant only *buskentza*; and for ‘belly button’, the adult informant gave both *tirriñe* and *siñe*, the young one only *txirriñe*. Conversely sometimes it was the young informant who gave two alternatives and the adult one gave a single answer: thus for ‘finger’ the young informant had *bietza* and *atzamarra*, the adult informant only *atzamarra*; or for ‘expensive’ the young speaker had *karue* and *garestidxe*, the adult speaker only *karue*. In these examples again we may note the influence of other varieties of Basque, whether Gipuzkoan dialect (such as in the case of *bietza*) or standard Basque (in *garestidxe*).

5.1.2. Noun morphology

23 questions were asked about noun morphology, of which five yielded different answers from the adult and the young informant, as follows:

Adult inft.	Young inft.	
<i>onek mutikuok</i>	<i>mutiyonek</i>	‘this boy’
<i>oni mutikuoni</i>	<i>mutiyonei</i>	‘to this boy’
<i>a gisona</i>	<i>gison a</i>	‘that man’

<i>astuekin</i>	<i>astuekas</i>	‘with the donkeys’
<i>birritten</i>	<i>bi bider</i>	‘twice’

In the first three of these, the adult speaker chose the more traditional dialectal form while the young speaker gave a newer or more standard form. In the other two, they simply gave different answers.

5.1.3. Verb morphology

There are also some differences in verb morphology between the speech of the adult and young speaker. Altogether almost half of the 39 responses differed, but not all in the same way: some differences are, so to speak, more completely different than others. For instance, we are calling the contrast between *dxat* and *yata* ‘it - to me’ [intransitive auxiliary] a ‘difference’, and likewise that between (*saldu*) *dustasu* and (*saldu*) *nosu* ‘you (have sold) me it’; yet the latter difference is greater because it involves the system per se, while the former only manifests variant forms within an identical basic system. The following are also variants of the superficial type (the adult informant’s responses are given first in each case): *sarie/sare* ‘you [plural] are’; *dxaten* / *yatan* ‘it - to me’ [past intransitive auxiliary]; *daure* / *dabe* ‘they - it’ [transitive auxiliary]; *ebasen* / *ebasan* ‘he - them [past transitive auxiliary]’, *tze* / *tzie* ‘they - him - it’ [auxiliary], *sabise* / *sabitzie* ‘you [plural] go about’; *dauke* / *daukie* ‘they have it’. These others show system-level differences:

Std. Bque.	Adult inf.	Young inf.	
zituzten	<i>eben</i>	<i>ebesan</i>	‘they - them’ [past aux.]
zenuten	<i>sauen</i>	<i>dosuen</i>	‘you plur. - it’ [past aux.]
dezake	<i>(i(n)) leike</i>	<i>(iñ) al dau</i>	‘he can (do)’
diogu	<i>(saldu) du</i>	<i>(saldu) tzau</i>	‘we (have sold) him it’
diezaioke	<i>(ekarri) leike</i>	<i>(ekarri) leikidxo</i>	‘he can (bring) him it’
zegoen	<i>(berbetan) euen</i>	<i>(berbetan) ebiyen</i>	‘he was’ [state]
zeuzkan	<i>euki ebasen</i>	<i>eukesan</i>	‘he had them’
dakarte	<i>ekartzen daure</i>	<i>dakarre</i>	‘they bring it’
dakartza	<i>ekarten daus</i>	<i>dakas</i>	‘he brings them’

Looking at these forms, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1) The young informant observes number agreement more consistently, as in the auxiliary forms *ebesan* ‘they - them’ [past], *tzau* ‘we - him - it’, *leikidxo* ‘he can - him - it’, but in the aforementioned example *dostasu / nosu* ‘you - me - it’ it is the adult informant who conserves the case configuration.

2) Sometimes the adult informant uses the original form where the young informant employs a newer formation or simplifies: *leike / al dau*; (*berbetan*) *euen / (berbetan) ebiyen*; *sauen / dosuen*.

3) As the last three items listed above show, the adult informant was unable to produce synthetically conjugated verb forms and substituted periphrastic equivalents, whereas the young speaker produces synthetic forms which resemble those found in the Otxandio base dialect. Here the influence of school grammar on the young speaker’s responses may be suspected.

4) An impact of standard Basque on the young speaker, which would be unsurprising given its influence through school and the media, is not particularly noticeable in the area of verb morphology.

5.1.4. Syntax

There were twenty questions about syntax, eight of which evoked different responses from the two informants.

An examination of the responses leads to the following conclusions:

1) In at least half of the responses the adult speaker’s responses follow the base dialect more closely:

Adult inft.	Young inft.	
<i>lagundu tzo</i>	<i>lagundu dau</i>	‘he has helped him’
<i>urten dau</i>	<i>urten da</i>	‘he has gone/come out’
<i>yun in biko su</i>	<i>yun biko sa</i>	‘you will have to go’
<i>egon al dosu</i>	<i>egon al isengo sara</i>	‘you will be able to be’
<i>beren besiuue</i>	<i>bere bisilagune</i>	‘his neighbour’

Although the examples are not all of the same kind, it is probably fair to say that those in the left-hand column represent the base dialect of Otxandio's oldest speakers. The influence of standard Basque is visible in some of the young speaker's responses, at least as far as *urten da* and *bere bisilagune* are concerned.

2) In other cases, the two informants merely made different choices from among available solutions in this dialect variety:

Adult inf.	Young inf.	
<i>auki dot disgusto asko</i>	<i>disgusto asko euki dodas</i>	'I have had many disappointments'
<i>bedarra ebaitten daus</i>	<i>bedarra ebaitten dabis</i>	'they are cutting the grass'
<i>Pedro baskaitten dau</i>	<i>Pedro yaten dabil</i>	'Pedro is having lunch'

5.2. The Aramaio data

5.2.1. Lexicon

Although most of the questions on the lexicon elicited identical responses, the number of differences, 25 out of 120 (20.8%), is not insignificant. Often it is the adult speaker who uses a traditional form and the young speaker an innovation in the dialect, as in *ietargixe* 'moon', *ordeixe* 'rust', *odolostie* 'black pudding', *jolas eiñ* 'play', *nagixe* 'lazy', *amandrie* 'grandmother' versus *illargixe*, *erdoille*, *odolkixe*, *jolastu*, *alperra* and *amama* respectively. In most such cases the influence of standard Basque on the young speaker is patent.

Often the adult speaker uses a Basque word where the young speaker uses a Spanish loan, e.g. (adult informant) *urixolie* 'flood', *bernie* 'leg', *asarre eiñ* 'tell off' and *iñddertzue* 'strong' as opposed to (young informant) *inundasiñue*, *bolie*, *bronkie bota*, *fuertie*. The reverse is also frequent: (adult speaker) *tuertue* 'one-eyed', *kostunbrie* 'custom', *tia* 'aunt', *apellidue* 'surname', *asule* 'blue' versus (young speaker) *begibakarra*, *oitxurie*, *iseko*, *abisena*, *urdiñe*. Here again the influence of the standard language can be seen.

Sometimes the two informants make different choices between alternative loanwords or competing native Basque words, e.g. (adult speaker) *konosimentue galdu*

‘faint’, *penie* ‘sorrow’, *sille* ‘belly button’, *isterra* ‘leg’, (young speaker) *mareau*, *konpasiñue*, *tirriñe*, *bernie*.

The young speaker lacks words for some items; he gave no equivalents to these five words provided by the adult speaker: *iñuntze* ‘broom’, *erlakistena* ‘a boil’, *suiñe* ‘son-in-law’, *amañarreba* ‘mother-in-law’, *aittañarreba* ‘father-in-law’.

Finally, in three cases the adult speaker offered two responses to a given item, the young speaker only one: *abitasiñue* and *kuartue* / *kuartue* ‘room’; *suisidau* and *bere burue ukatu* / *suisidau* ‘commit suicide’; *buruti berakue eta katarrue* / *katarrue* ‘a cold’.

Thus the same tendencies found in Otxandio are seen in Aramaio to an even greater extent.

5.2.2. Noun morphology

As in the case of the lexicon, in noun morphology the differences are greater in Aramaio than in Otxandio. Of the 23 items, the two informants gave different answers to eight (34.8%):

Adult inft.	Young inft.	
<i>astuekin</i>	<i>astuas</i>	‘with the donkey’
<i>astuentzako</i>	<i>astuendako</i>	‘for the donkey’
<i>etxeso alde</i>	<i>itxasoa</i>	‘towards the sea’
<i>jente larrei</i>	<i>jente geixei</i>	‘too many people’
<i>bi bider</i>	<i>birritxan</i>	‘twice’
<i>oneik mutillok</i>	<i>mutill oneik</i>	‘these boys’
<i>oni mutilloni</i>	<i>mutill onei</i>	‘to this boy’
<i>a gisona</i>	<i>gison a</i>	‘that man’

Although sometimes the two informants simply make different choices, in general it is the adult speaker who chooses the more traditional form while the young speaker tends more towards standard Basque forms. Nonetheless, in the first item listed it was the young informant who gave the traditional dialect form and the adult informant provided a response influenced by the standard.

5.2.3. Verb morphology

We saw that in lexicon and noun morphology the differences between adult and young speakers were greater here than in Otxandio, yet in verb morphology the opposite is the case: only seven differences were found (17.9%):

Std. Bque.	Adult inf.	Young inf.	
zituzten	<i>sittuen</i>	<i>sitxusten</i>	‘they - them’ [past aux.]
zenuten	<i>sauen</i>	<i>dosuen</i>	‘you plur. - it’ [past aux.]
diezaioke	<i>leikixo</i>	<i>leiketzo</i>	‘he can - him - it’
dauzka	<i>dauko</i>	<i>ittu</i>	‘he has them’
zeuzkan	<i>euken</i>	<i>sitxun</i>	‘he had them’
dakarte	<i>dakarrie</i>	<i>ekarten daue</i>	‘they bring it’
dakartza	<i>dakar</i>	<i>ekarte’itxu</i>	‘he brings them’

Although there are few differences they yield some interesting findings:

- 1) *sittuen/sittusten*: the young speaker has clearly been influenced by the standard.
- 2) The adult speaker shows traditional forms and the young speaker newer or simplified ones in *sauen*, *leikixo* / *dosuen*, *leiketzo*.
- 3) Where the adult speaker uses forms derived based on *eduki* the young speaker bases his on **edun* in the forms *dauko*, *euken* / *ittu*, *sitxun*.
- 4) In contrast to Oxandio, in Aramaio it is the adult speaker who uses synthetically conjugated forms (from the base dialect) while the young speaker here is the one who resorts to periphrastic ones: *dakarrie*, *dakar* / *ekarten daue*, *ekarte’itxu*.

5.2.4. Syntax

Of the twenty syntax items, the two informants gave different responses to seven (35%).

The following was found:

- 1) Generally the adult speaker follows the base dialect more closely:

Adult inf.	Young inf.	
<i>urten dau</i>	<i>urten da</i>	‘he has gone/come out’
<i>fuen en biko su</i>	<i>fuen biko sa</i>	‘you will have to go’
<i>jan eiñ ddau</i>	<i>jan dau</i>	‘he has eaten it’

2) In other cases each of the informants chose a different option but here again the adult speaker tends to opt for more traditional-sounding responses:

Adult inf.	Young inf.	
<i>bedarra ebaitten das</i>	<i>bedarra mosketan dabitz</i>	‘they are cutting the grass’
<i>Pedro baskaitten dau</i>	<i>Pedro bazkaltzen dabil</i>	‘Pedro is having lunch’
<i>iguel dust/parra dust</i>	<i>es jat inporta</i>	‘I don’t care’

6. The influence of standard Basque in Otxandio and Aramaio

We have discussed the differences between adult and young Basque speakers’ usage, and attempted to explain those differences, in view of data from Aramaio and Otxandio.

Although there are various factors involved in explaining the differences between adult and young people’s speech, the influence of standard Basque (*euskara batua*) certainly plays a significant role. One of the most important objectives of the “Socio-geolinguistic Atlas of the Basque Language” project is to measure the influence of standard Basque on the language of dialect speakers. Therefore within the limitations of the present partial study the issue of the influence of the standard on adult and young speakers from Aramaio and Otxandio is of particular interest. It is of course easy to guess that its influence will be strongest on young people, but while that is no surprise, it would also be useful to be able to quantify its influence. In order to plan for the future it is necessary to be informed about the present reality.

Let us look at each of the two municipalities in turn.

In Otxandio the standard language has had very little influence on adult speakers. In the data only two responses suggested any such influence and both involved lexical

items; in fact they were both the names of months. Thus the influence of standard Basque in the adult speaker's Basque is less than 1%.

Not surprisingly, the influence is greater on the young speaker; the following diagram presents the influence of standard Basque on the young speaker by area and in total:

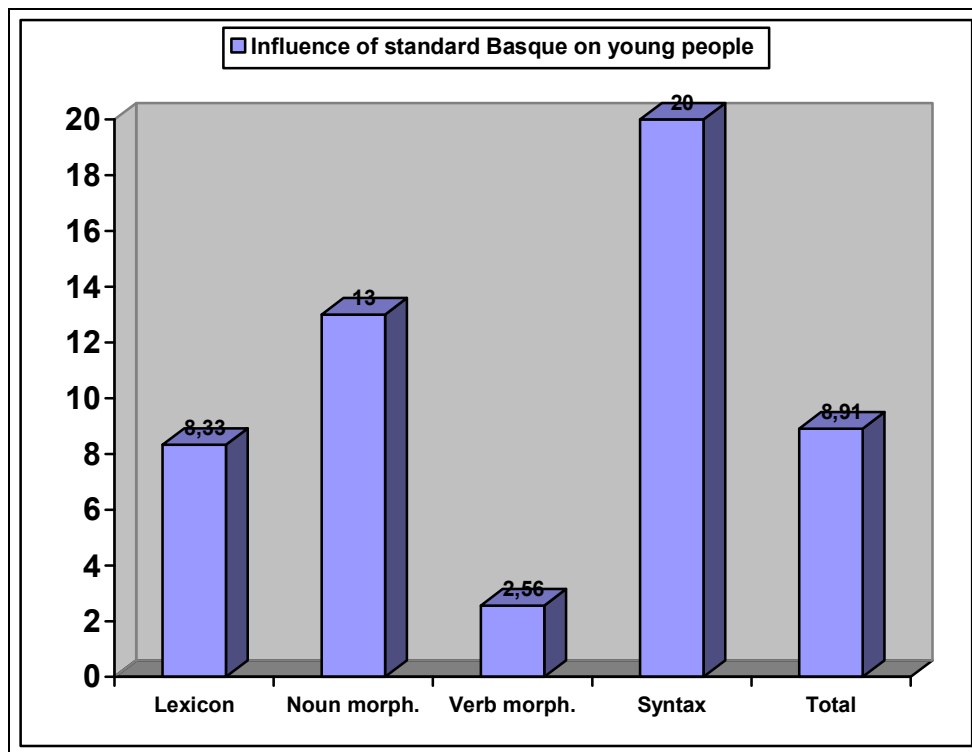


Figure 4. Influence of standard Basque on young people in Otxandio

The diagram shows that the greatest influence of the standard in Otxandio is found in syntax. Influence in noun morphology and the lexicon is more limited, and that in the verb morphology is very small.

Thus the influence of standard Basque on young speakers appears not to be particularly strong in Otxandio.

However, comparing the data for adult and young speakers, the influence of standard Basque may be said to have increased by 8% in one generation (from 1% to 9%). That is not too striking an increase yet it is not altogether insignificant.

Now let us look at Aramaio.

As in Otxandio, the standard language has exerted a negligible influence on the adult speaker. Such influence was only noted in one item, representing a mere 0.5%.

But the influence on the young speaker is greater. Here is the graph:

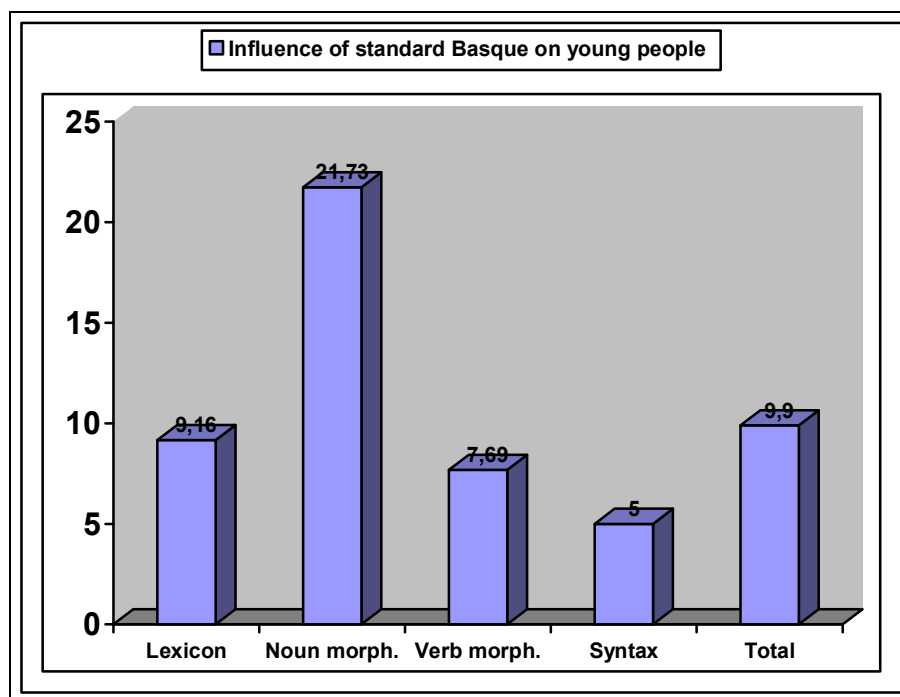


Figure 5. Influence of standard Basque on young people in Aramaio

The overall percentage of influence is similar in both places (9% in Otxandio, 10% in Aramaio), but is different in terms of language areas: in Otxandio the greatest influence appears in the syntax, in Aramaio in noun morphology. In Otxandio the lexicon stands in third place, in Aramaio in second place, although below average for this locality.

Comparing the figures for adult and young people, while in Otxandio the influence of the standard language increased by 8%, in Aramaio it has risen by 9.5%.

The influence of the standard language does not appear very great in either place, and certainly is not alarming, but a trend emerges and the influence of the standard language looks likely to increase in the future.

7. Comparison with other data

Although sociolinguistic variation is a new area in Basque language studies, the present study does have antecedents and it may be of interest to compare findings.

Leaving aside some earlier work (for a review of previous studies see Aurrekoetxea 2008: 24), I shall compare our findings with those of two other studies within the framework of the “Socio-geolinguistic Atlas of the Basque Language” project: Aurrekoetxea’s (2008) study of the town of Dima and Ezenarro’s (2008) survey of Bolibar and Etxebarria. All three municipalities are located in the province of Bizkaia. I shall consider two issues in this comparison: language differences between the two generations and the influence of standard Basque.

The overall percentage of different responses between generations is 42% in Dima, 25% in both Bolibar and Etxebarria, and 23.2% in both Aramaio and Otxandio. Thus we note a greater difference between adult and young generations in Dima than in the other localities studied². Looking more closely we find that: 1) In Dima, Bolibar and Aramaio syntax is the area with the greatest number of differences, in Etxebarria noun morphology, and in Otxandio verb morphology; 2) everywhere except in Aramaio, it is the lexicon where the fewest differences are found, and the percentage is generally very low: 7.5% in Bolibar and Etxebarria, 13.3% in Otxandio, etc.

The influence of the standard language is negligible in the adult generation but noticeable in the young generation: 13% in Dima, 8.3% in Bolibar, 10% in Etxebarria, 9.9% in Aramaio and 8.9% in Otxandio. Dima is again the place showing most influence of the standard language.

8. Conclusions

The “Socio-geolinguistic Atlas of the Basque Language” project covers a hundred municipalities across the Basque Country. Two of the municipalities covered in the west are Aramaio and Otxandio. Until such a time as it is possible to analyse the data for all one hundred localities, it was decided to perform a partial analysis of data for two of them.

The main objective of the study was to measure linguistic differences between adults and young. The principal findings were as follows:

² It is worth quoting the author’s conclusion regarding this striking figure: “The data show that this variety lacks internal cohesion and may be considered chaotic; indeed they raise the question whether there are grounds for assuming that they constitute a single linguistic system, or whether there is too much variation to maintain that they belong to the same system” (Aurrekoetxea, 2008: 23).

- 1) Adult speakers display greater loyalty to the base dialect of their locality. Such is the case in both Aramaio and Otxandio. The influence of Spanish on the lexicon is a notable feature.
- 2) The differences between generations involve almost a quarter of the items (23.2%), a considerable proportion.
- 3) In Otxandio the greatest difference was in verb morphology and syntax, more than in noun morphology and the lexicon. In Aramaio, on the contrary, the greatest difference was in syntax and noun morphology, more than in the lexicon and verb morphology.
- 4) Reasons for the differences range from competition between more archaic or traditional and newer or simplified forms, to rivalry between loanwords and standard Basque forms that are not borrowings, and in some cases merely different choices among existing variants.

The influence of standard Basque is negligible in the case of adult speakers (0.5% in Aramaio and 1% in Otxandio), but significant in the young generation (10% in Aramaio and almost 9% in Otxandio).

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