
The Public Sphere and Normalization of Minority Languages¹

An Analysis of Basque Television in Light of Other Experiences in Europe

Esfera pública i normalització de llengües minoritàries Una anàlisi del cas basc (EITB) a la llum d'altres experiències europees

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Television channels in minority languages are frequently the only television channels specifically targeting the whole population of the territory in which that language survives. This means that they can be seen not only as tools for linguistic normalization, but also as means for the building of a public sphere open to the whole population. In cases where the linguistic community is a minority within the whole population, the problem of how to deal with the building of the public sphere in a language that is spoken by only a part of the population may arise. An analysis of the cases of Scotland, Wales and Finland shows us that minority language television can develop strategies that will enable them to be accessible to the whole territorial community. In the case of the Basque Country, however, the approach has been a dual model according to which broadcasting in the minority language is used to fulfill linguistic goals, and broadcasting in the

Les televisions en llengües minoritàries són, sovint, les úniques televisions que tenen com a objectiu primordial el territori de la llengua. Això significa que poden ser vistes no tan sols com a instruments de normalització lingüística, sinó també com a mitjà per a la construcció d'una esfera pública que englobi el conjunt de la població d'aquest territori. En els casos en què la comunitat lingüística és una minoria dins d'aquesta població, pot sorgir el problema de com servir a la construcció d'una esfera pública en una llengua que només és parlada per una minoria. Una anàlisi dels casos d'Escòcia, Gal·les i Finlàndia ens mostra com es desenvolupen estratègies que permetin a la televisió en llengua minoritària obrir-se cap a la comunitat territorial. En el cas basc, però, s'ha optat per un model dual segons el qual l'objectiu lingüístic és cobert en la llengua minoritària, mentre que l'objectiu de construir una esfera pública és afrontat en

mainstream language is used for the building of the public sphere. As a result, the model is certainly damaging for the minority language, since it is condemned to a situation of diglossia.

Key words: *minority language, television, public sphere.*

la llengua majoritària. Com a resultat, podem afirmar que la llengua minoritària surt certament perjudicada per aquest model, en ser condemnada a una situació de diglòssia.

Palabras clave: *llengües minoritàries, televisió, esfera pública.*

Televisions broadcasting in minority languages are, generally speaking and by definition, televisions broadcast in non-hegemonic languages. In this sense, they may be considered to be media with the main goal being largely cultural and providing public service. All too often, nevertheless, there are other things happening behind the scenes. Said television stations, aside from operating in minority languages, are often also the only television stations operating in the territory of the language. This is attractive to those who believe that the territory should have its own public sphere, especially in nationalist circles.² When the *minorized language*³ is a language of a minority within its territory, on the other hand, a problem arises: How to make use of a television service operating in a minority language as a television station for the population as a whole, a part of which does not know that minority language.

Cormack aptly raised this question when analyzing minority language media in Europe as well as the relationship between minority languages and the public sphere (Cormack, 1998). Language, in his words, is *per se* a key component in the public sphere as understood by Habermas, that is to say, a speech community in which every participant takes part by making use of language (Habermas, 1962). On the other hand, the public sphere is not limited, as we may deduct from Habermas' work, to discussions centered around political and social issues and, in a wider sense, it may be understood that leisure content present in today's television may also be taken into account. This is how Curran understands it by placing said leisure content as one of the mainstays of the public sphere (Curran, 1991).

Habermas' successful concept has been valuable in understanding the relationship between nation building and the mass media. Moreover, together with the importance that Anderson lends to the press in building up a national community (Anderson, 1983), both academics and political operators have come to highlight the important role that the mass media, in general, can play (Schlesinger 1991). Likewise, among several minority nations that have clamored for their own state, the concept of a *communication space* as proposed by Catalans has been successful (Gifreu, 1989).

The problem of a relationship between language and the public sphere has been raised in various guises from place to place. Indeed, in some cases, the minority language community has no particular nationalist aspirations, which lends a certain character to the local media. In some other cases, on the other hand, when nationalist sentiment is greater, the nature of the problem takes on a different form. There is a vast casuistry between both extremes and although every situation is unique, they share various characteristics. Indeed, the public sphere that can be built based on a minority language will always be weaker according to Cormack; especially when, at the same time, the speakers of that language are able to take part in another public sphere by using the main language since they are bilingual.

In order to be able to better analyze this relationship between the construction of the public sphere and the normalization of a minority language, we have analyzed how the issue has been raised in four countries (Finland, Scotland, Wales, and the Basque Country) by laying special emphasis on the fourth. Indeed, it is in the Basque Country where the contradiction between using television as for normalization of the language and for the building up of a political public sphere appears more clearly. In order to draw some conclusions about this relationship, we will analyze both the objectives that each television claims regarding the different language groups and the strategies directed to such goals; we will put them in the context of the sociolinguistic situation and—in the Basque case, evolution— will have a look at the linguistic profiles of the audiences.

In our opinion, this is important since the role that the media should take both in the normalization of the minority language and in nation building lies in the discussion on surging nationalist aspirations that is gaining strength in Europe.

MINORITY LANGUAGE TELEVISION IN EUROPE

If we take a look at television stations operating in European minority languages, several statements may be made. Although, in theory the issue is not very clear as to how the media overall, and television in particular, exactly can help minority languages, there is a kind of intuition according to which the media play an exceptionally important role in the survival and development of a language. In this light, Cormack reminds us that the great sociolinguists (e.g. Fishman) do not lend any special importance to the media in the process of language replacement and renaissance; they are placed on a secondary level (Cormack & Hourigan, 2007). Nonetheless by having a reality check, we can find that, at least in Europe, most communities with a minority language have tried to have their very own media. In such ventures, some have got further along than others (Amezaga & Arana, 2012).

The second piece of evidence is that in the case of communities with their own television—that is, those with broadcasts not coming from another state—the main initiative has come from the public administration. That is to

say, if we look at television aimed at the whole body of speakers in a community—thus apart from local stations—, there is hardly any private channel for minority languages. The sole exceptions are the following: TV Breizh, a satellite TV station that wished to gain an audience by using Breton to gain viewers, which, in the very end, shunted that minority language aside; and Barça TV which is a thematic channel connected with the football club; as well as the partially Catalan-broadcasting 8TV, BOM TV and RAC 105 TV—in the last one just the promotionals, being the rest music videos—, linked to the same company as the football channel (Godo Group).⁴ In the rest, it is public initiative—that is to say the state—that lies behind them, whatever the different formulae that might be used, according to local legislation and media systems.

Language minority television stations generally imply a problem on account of its public nature. In other words, minority language television, which is by definition, media for some minorities is financed with the money from all of the citizens, and thus should be meant to be at the service of all of the citizens in that territory. This is especially clear in the case of communities having their own television. Indeed, with the exception of Catalonia, Galicia, Friesland, and Luxembourg, (where a high percentage of the population of the territory can understand the minority language), the rest of the minorized language communities with their own television service (Basque, Welsh, Gaelic, Irish, Frisian, Swedish in Finland, Italian in Slovenia, Finnish in Sweden, Breton, Corsican, Ladin, Sorbian, and Saami) are minorities within their territories. Consequently, a contradiction may arise here between a policy demanded by the population of the territory as a whole and what the local language minority needs.

Of the cases which we have just cited, we shall now focus our first analysis on three of them, in order to see how the contradiction arises and how that outlook touches on the topic: Gaelic in Scotland, Welsh in Wales, and Swedish in Finland.

SCOTLAND

BBC Alba television, which broadcasts in Gaelic, went into operation in 2008 as a result of the agreement between BBC Trust and Gaelic Media Services (MG Alba), which is dependent upon the Scottish Government. The conditions to gain BBC Trust public financing make it very clear that the service is not only for Gaelic speakers: “The service shall be aimed at those who speak Gaelic as well as at those who are learning it, at those who would like to learn it as well as for those interested in the language and culture” (BBC Trust 2012). In order to achieve that end, the 2008 concession that went into service would have to have a reach of 250,000 viewers.⁵ This was a goal that was set for a language of 60,000 speakers. Added to this would be those who cannot speak it but who can understand it which, altogether, means it is a language with a reach of 90,000 people (General Register Office for Scotland 2005).

We should also take into account that BBC Alba was set up on September 19, 2008 when the first signs of the current financial crisis came to light; or that in

BBC itself there might have been layoffs. This was hardly helpful in winning legitimization of the new project and there was some criticism about the public financing of 16 million euros for a small minority (Some 1.8% of the population of Scotland understands Gaelic).⁶

In order to reach such a hard-to-reach goal to gain viewers, BBC Alba resorted to subtitles in keeping with what BBC usually does in its channels. In that way, with the exception of children’s programming and live broadcasts, all the rest of the programming is subtitled in the wish to make it attractive to those who knew nothing or little of the language (Murray, 2009). In this way, it could be said that the channel achieves the audience targets set by BBC Trust: according to its own data (BBC Scotland, 2012), it reaches 12% of the population of Scotland on a weekly basis, i.e. 480,000 viewers. Thus, the challenge of having a Gaelic-language service for the whole of Scotland is justified and public financing thereof appears as legitimate.

WALES

There could be also a contradiction in Wales between the interests of a linguistic minority and the interests of the public at large and there has been some debate about this in recent years. 21% of the population in Wales can speak Welsh, and another 5% can understand it. The Welsh-language television service, S4C, went on air in 1982, after a long campaign in favor of it.

From the outset, S4C appeared tied to the British tradition of public service. In that way, according to various laws that have protected it over the last 30 years, the mission of S4C is offering the population of Wales a high-quality television service.⁷ By expanding Welsh-language broadcasts as a part of such a public service, different laws have brought several rules into effect such as—during the years when they were bilingual—the need to offer a meaningful number of broadcasts in Welsh or the need to offer them during prime time. The legal context in that way leaves the door open for a debate whether S4C television should be for all of the Welsh or a television for Welsh-speakers. Indeed, although Welsh is the default language, all of the “members of the public of Wales” deem it as public whether they are speakers of Welsh or not. This debate, for instance, has been lively over the last few years, with some claims that S4C should be a television service for all of Wales and not primarily for Welsh speakers (Jones, 2009).

In such circumstances, S4C was in its early years a bilingual television service: only Welsh-language programming was broadcast during prime time while during the rest of the time English-language programming from Channel 4 was broadcast. However, with the spread of digital television in the 2000’s, S4C Digidol was added to the previous setup but said digital channel has broadcast exclusively in Welsh. In the end, with the shutdown of analogue TV in 2010, the early analogical S4C channel disappeared together with the bilingual arrangement. The monolingual digital channel took its place and name: S4C.

This Welsh-language channel, however, allows those who do not know the language to also use the service by providing subtitles for such a purpose.

Nearly 80% of current programming is broadcast with English-language subtitles (in which most are optional, i.e. the viewers themselves turn them on or off by means of the remote control). In addition, 8% are broadcast with Welsh-language subtitles (S4C, 2011). It should be noted, furthermore, that this optional subtitling policy is also available in the video-on-demand offer in which it is possible to turn on or off the language for videos being viewed via the Internet.

In order to understand this meaningful use of subtitles, aside from the need for a service aimed at all of the people in Wales, there are another two elements if we are to situate the attitude of S4C. On one hand, UK television services have, generally speaking and BBC in particular, traditionally made extensive use of subtitles because, among other things, it provides a service aimed at the hearing-impaired. On the other hand, S4C very early on detected the potential for a body of viewers who were learning the language and having subtitles would play a key role in reaching them.

With this strategy, S4C has achieved a significant number of viewers. In 2011, it got an weekly average reach of 635,000 people throughout Wales,⁸ i.e. 23% of the population. Nevertheless, there is an even more significant aspect about the data for us: out of all of the viewers, only 360,000 were Welsh-speakers, that is to say, half of S4C's viewers (53%). Again there is another piece of information that ought to be bear in mind: unlike in the Basque Country, the number of passive bilinguals (i.e. those who understand the language but cannot speak it), is significantly low, just 5% of the population (Office for National Statistics 2004). Thus, it stands to reason that S4C's reception from those who cannot understand Welsh is rather telling.

FINLAND

Finland is another example to take into account when discussing whether television service should be for a linguistic minority or for the population at large, especially regarding the Swedish-speaking community. This case is different from the previous ones as there is no wide nationalist feeling present among this linguistic minority. Finland's Swedish-speakers regard themselves as Finns and there is, over all, no demand for setting up a country with a given territory. There is also no demand for separation from Finland or unification with Sweden.

Swedish is an official language of Finland and the mother tongue of 6% of the population of Finland, i.e. some 300,000 out of a population of five and a half million. A third of them are bilingual in Swedish and Finnish (Euromosaic, 2004). Despite the small number of speakers, Swedish enjoys a significant status in the country; because of its official status and its weight within the Finnish school system, as well as on account of its presence in the media.

Its primary television keystone is on the Yle Fem channel (known until recently as FST5). This channel was set up in 2001 as a Swedish-speaking channel. Before, Finland's Yle public television service broadcast programming in Swedish on its channels in which Finnish-language programming had the lion's share of

programming. Following the digitalization process in 2007, Yle placed all their programming in Swedish on Yle Fem channel.

Yle confesses that one of its main goals is "strengthening democracy and culture in Finland" and to that end it aims to provide service to all Finns. (YLE, 2012a). The Yle Fem channel is in keeping with such a philosophy as it considers Swedish to be a part of Finland's cultural heritage. Furthermore, when goals are set, the public television makes mention of, among other things, interaction between the cultures. (YLE, 2012b). Mary Gestrin, Director of Media, states even more precisely that one of the main goals of Swedish-language television is building a bridge between the two languages: Finnish and Swedish (Gestrin, 2009).

In order to undertake such bridge building and to reach a larger public beyond the small Swedish-speaking community, Yle Fem has developed a policy of subtitling. In accordance with such a policy, most of what is produced in Swedish is subtitled into Finnish (with the exception of children's programming, news and a morning program —altogether an hour and a half a day—), and everything that is not in Swedish is subtitled in that language. In this way, besides being well received by Swedish speakers (it reaches as many as 70% of speakers on a weekly basis), it also reaches a significant audience that knows little or no Swedish. Thus, the average ratings is 1.6% or 70,000 viewers. Many of these viewers, nonetheless, are not Swedish-speaking but rather Finnish-speaking: Gestrin continues by saying that in several programmes only 20% are Swedish-speaking (Gestrin, 2009).

FROM THE MINORITY LANGUAGE COMMUNITY TO THE TERRITORIAL COMMUNITY

Among the cases discussed above, each with its own characteristics, there is one thing that they all have in common: Minority language televisions target those who do not know their language, for different reasons. One of them is the contradiction mentioned above (how to legitimize the high price of financing a television service for a minority with tax money paid by all) which is the case in Scotland in its crudest form (namely the strict conditions laid out by the BBC Trust to gain public financing for BBC Alba). On the other hand, the minority language television service has also resulted in there being a single "national" service for the whole territory, both in Scotland and Wales, with the need to be open to the population as a whole (speakers and non-speakers). Indeed, although some other channels may offer broadcasts for that territory, these are usually windows of channels broadcasting for all of the United Kingdom. Together with these two characteristics, another reason is the need to provide information about the culture of the minority language to non-speakers or, in terms used in Finland, to aim at building bridges between the two language communities (one must take into account that most Finnish speakers are not able to understand Swedish and many Swedish speakers do not understand Finnish). Finally, Wales provides yet another goal: television can be a valuable tool for those who are learning the minority language.

Whatever the reason, the television services which we have looked at have come up with strategies aimed at breaking out of the confines of a smaller language community to reach a larger one, potentially composed by all the inhabitants of the territory, whether speakers of the minority language or not. In order to meet that goal, they have chiefly—but not exclusively—made use of subtitles within the arrangement of a channel that broadcast solely in the minority language. The results achieved through this strategy are hardly ordinary as we have seen, if the sociolinguistic imbalance is taken into account; and it can be said that the goal of opening up to the wider community has, to a large extent, been met.

THE CASE OF EUSKAL TELEBISTA

We shall now look into the case of the Basque Country in the belief that the stormy relationship between normalization of a language and the establishment of a wider and territory-based public sphere can be clearly shown. First of all, we shall consider the founding of EITB (Basque Radio and Television Service) with the aim of identifying the main goals behind it followed by a study of the model that has been undertaken over the last 30 years in order to arrive at some conclusions.

THE FOUNDING OF EITB

EITB (Basque Radio and Television) was established in 1982 as one of the main initiatives of the newly constituted Basque Government. The setting up of a radio and television public system three years after the passing of the statute of autonomy must be understood as a consequence of two main factors: on the one hand, the long-standing social demand for Basque-language media—with television being an essential part of it—while, on the other hand, the advent of the formation of the Basque Autonomous Community as an institutional and political entity set up after home rule was granted.

The demand for Basque-language media had intensified during the 70's and it became a social movement (Arana, Amezaga & Azpillaga, 2006) which grew very strong until finally, in 1982, the newly established Basque Government set up the Basque Radio and Television Service (EITB). Thus, all of EITB, especially television, was defined legally as an essential tool for the recovery of the Basque language, and that was how it was perceived socially (Torrealdei, 1985; Moragas, Garitaonandia & López, 1999).

The creation of EITB was, on the other hand, a dividend of political change as the Spanish Constitution, which was passed in 1978, allowed for the state to be divided up into autonomous communities. Within that context those who were in charge of running the new political structure in the Basque Country were very clear about the role that television could have both in the establishment of political power as well as a legitimization of the newly established political entity.

These two contextual factors (the demand for Basque-language media and the demand for political self-rule) were very much present in the EITB Establishment

Act. Indeed, according to what was voted on in 1982 and which is in effect to this day, EITB has two main missions: “This constitutes an essential tool regarding information for and political participation by Basque citizens, as well as a fundamental means of cooperation with our own education system and for promoting and spreading of the Basque culture, bearing in mind the promotion and development of the Basque language” (The preamble of the 5/1982 Act). It is our view that highlighting this dual nature is of great importance since, in the other European cases that we have studied, the television service was mainly set up for the sake of a language in which the desire for political institutionalization hardly appears or does not appear at all (although, in the case of Scotland and Wales, the context for this demand must certainly be taken into account).

The 5/1982 act does not define in detail both goals and it took 10 years for there to be more concrete criteria in order for the rule to take shape as we shall see below. As for the goals linked to language, let us say that no one doubted at that time the importance that television would have in the promotion and normalization of Basque. It was taken for granted that Basque-language television would help Basque *per se*, and, as in other fields, it was done more according to an intuition for action rather than for detailed planning. Although the law rather astutely defines the goal of that law as “promotion and development of the Basque language”, it must be understood within the context of its time in which the main mantra was centered on the “recovery” of Basque: i.e. with Basque being a native language of the Basque Country, it was necessary for there to nurture the heritage of every Basque citizen, with the goal of gaining a fully bilingual society. In the law itself, the reference made to the educational system is very significant.⁹

As for the goal of fomenting political participation, the concept of legitimization identity that Castells proposed may help us to understand the context of the time (Castells, 1997): i.e. the building up of a collective identity is, at the same time, the seeking of the legitimization not only of the community but also the legitimization of the power structure who is meant to represent it. Moreover we must consider that it is not always easy to distinguish between the legitimization of the newly created political subject from the legitimization of the political group guiding the process. Such is the situation in this case since it is the same political party that had held on to its hegemonic power for nearly 3 decades since the very beginning of the new political reality. The model of governance chosen for EITB, along with the political setup, suggests that the legitimization of the government of the day is a factor to be taken into account. Such model of governance followed the Spanish model from the very outset while casting aside other models (e.g. the British one). As a result, public radio and television fell under the control of the autonomous government or legislative majority both in choosing the Board Council as well as how it would be financed. This dependency on a political majority, on the other hand, allowed the following: in its thirty years the Director General of EITB has almost always had close ties with the governing party of the day.

Thus, in keeping with this logic, the television service ETB was launched by broadcasting four hours a day entirely in Basque, sometimes with Spanish subtitles. However, this model did not last long: within a year, ETB started to broad-

cast news in Spanish among the rest of Basque programming. The introduction of Spanish was undoubtedly related to the political function and the sociolinguistic situation mentioned above: only 21% of the Basque population were Basque speakers at that time. Therefore, the Basque Government's objective of political integration through television—which included 100% of the population as a target—was not considered feasible with Basque-only broadcasts.

The introduction of Spanish raised some questions: among others, the lack of a clear language policy in ETB. Indeed, when ETB was set up, the sociolinguistic situation was all too well known, as it was the fact that, in such a context, a Basque-only channel could hardly meet the political objectives established by law. Was it a lack of a clear language policy or just a hidden language policy? According to some of the people in charge of EITB, it was clear from the beginning that, sooner or later, Spanish would be present on ETB. Thus, the introduction of Spanish in ETB was just a question of time (Díez Urrestarazu, 2003).

After having entered ETB, the presence of Spanish gradually gained the upper hand until 1986. In that year, the model that hitherto had been in place (i.e. the supremacy of Basque) was done away with and it was decided that the channel should be split up in two different services. One, ETB1, was to operate entirely in Basque while the other, ETB2, was to be in Spanish (even though, for a while, some Basque-language programming was aired). It would seem that was the intention all long for reasons already discussed above. Thus, that is how ETB2 started out in 1986 with its Spanish-language programming, thereby giving rise to the dual model.

THE CHANGE TO A DUAL MODEL

The dual “Two Channels / Two Languages” model was officially formalized in 1992. In other words, the law was unchanged and it was a criterion of the Parliament. With the advent of ETB2 the initial approach had changed, and a Commission was constituted by the Basque Parliament to lend institutional support to such a change. The Department of Culture sent a white paper as a basis for debate in which a new model was explained (Department of Culture, 1992). Basically it stated that the Basque-language media (TV and radio) should address the goal of linguistic normalization while the Spanish-media should approach the objective of political integration.

After the debate, a criterion was passed by the Basque Parliament in January, 1993 (Basque Parliament, 1993) thereby making the dual model official and, in the very end, changing the interpretation of the EITB Establishment Act. Indeed, the Establishment Act, as mentioned above, commends both of these primary missions to Public Radio and Television. However, these missions are not differentiated according to language. What is more, given the context that it was set up as primarily a Basque-language channel, its interpretation was that both missions would have to be carried out primarily in Basque. Thus, the interpretation made by the Parliament 10 years after its foundation underwent a total transformation. Ever since then, this assumption of a dual nature or duality, on the other

hand, has enabled both channels to come under the same management. Indeed the Spanish-language channel did not come about as another separate television service but, instead, it started out as another broadcast of the Basque channel that had already been established. As a result, the management, administration, resources, budget, staff and so on were shared. This enhanced the trend towards meeting the goals assigned to it by having two separate channels.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A DUAL MODEL

The splitting of channels resulted in a rethink of the goals set from the very outset, specially regarding the one seeking the normalization of Basque: it went from intending to foment the recovery of Basque, which we have mentioned above, to providing a channel for each group of the population and thus the Basque-language channel would target the Basque speakers and the Spanish-language channel was for those who knew no Basque, at least so it might seem. According to those who were behind this new rhetoric, such a doubling for efforts would allow public television to reach a bilingual public: each group with their own language. Indeed, EITB went, to a certain extent, from wishing to change the linguistic reality to accepting the existing language reality thereby accepting that there are two language communities and that each community would be served in their own language.

In such circumstances, the mission of the Basque-language channel became increasingly restricted to being a single channel for Basque speakers. That is why it is understandable that those running EITB and a few others were concerned for a long time about how to come up with “a television for 600,000 people” (in reference to the number of Basque speakers and not the whole population of the Basque Autonomous Community or the entire Basque Country: two million people and three million respectively). This concern, to a large extent, equated defining the original mission of fomenting Basque as insuring a single television offering for Basque speakers. There have been exceptions to EITB's dual model throughout its history: having all children's programming or sports broadcasts only on the Basque-language channel had suggested that the aim was to go beyond just reaching Basque speakers. The sports broadcast, at first, provided a means for EITB to reach homes where only Spanish was spoken and such a strategy may be deemed as wholly adequate in its goal of expanding the horizons of a newly set up television service. Even better results were achieved in children's programming on the Basque-language channel (first on ETB1 and later on ETB3)¹⁰ as Basque-language television had a nearly exclusive hold on this audience. These strategies have been frustrated over the last few years: sportscasts that attract viewers (football) the most have become out of reach for EITB on account of the sharp rise in broadcasting rights fees; and children's programming has proliferated thanks to thematic channels arising from digitalization thereby depriving EITB of many children viewers. In this way, with the exception of these important but limited attempts, ETB1 has primarily aimed at the body of 600,000 people mentioned above since the second channel was started up.

This rhetoric has, however, distorted the actual sociolinguistic situation: the Basque-speaking community, as it is defined, is made up of people who are bilingual in Basque and Spanish or in Basque and French. Not only do these people have the opportunity to switch to Spanish or French, they also need to use the mainstream language in several spheres of their lives as diglossia (Ferguson, 1959) works against Basque. This turns them into members of the larger Spanish/French speaking community whether they like it or not. Thus, there are not two separate language communities. In the case of the Southern Basque Country, there is one large community, the Spanish-speaking one, and a smaller one, the Basque-speaking one constituted by members who are at the same time part of the mainstream community.¹¹ Hence, while a channel operating in Basque is aimed only at a part of the population that knows Basque, the one operating in Spanish is aimed at the population as a whole, including Basque speakers.

The Spanish-language channel thus attracts potential viewers that could also watch the Basque-language channel. Furthermore, this is even more apparent if we take into account the demographic evolution that Basque has undergone thanks to the educational system as well as other factors. Indeed, when EITB was founded, 37% of the population understood Basque (putting together those who could speak plus those who could understand it). Today, that percentage has risen to around 52%.

In this way, part of the viewership that could be attracted to a Basque-language channel is attracted to the Spanish-language as we can see in Table 1:

Table 1: ETB1 and ETB2 viewers, as per knowledge of Basque ¹²

Knowledge of Basque	ETB 1	ETB 2	Population
Speak, read, and write	54%	30%	25%
Speak and read	7%	4%	3%
Speak	7%	5%	4%
Understand (not speak)	11%	25%	20%
Don't understand	21%	36%	48%
	100%	100%	100%

As shown in the data, 39% of those who watch the Spanish-language channel are fully bilingual (i.e. are also able to speak Basque). Therefore, if we add those able to understand Basque, ETB2 gets 64% of its viewers from a potential Basque-language viewership. Those viewers who are fully monolingual Spanish speakers make up just 36% of the viewers

This low ratings share that the Spanish-language channel manages to get with Spanish-language monolinguals, on the other hand, may be compared to what ETB1 gets which is 21% of the ratings share. There is a difference between the two but not as great as what one might think. For a Basque-language channel to attract Spanish monolinguals is significant and shows that the main language of a television channel is not a unique determining factor. Nonetheless, the ratings

penetration that ETB1 gets among those who are not bilinguals is much lower than what BBC Alba, S4C or Yle Fem are able to achieve in their countries. In light of the data above, the belief that ETB1 serves Basque speakers while ETB2 serves Spanish speakers is on rather shaky ground, at least there is a need for some kind of nuances.

What data on Table 1 show is that EITB fails when dealing with the sociolinguistic evolution in the Basque Country. We must bear in mind that due to the great effort made by the school system and the social movement for the teaching of Basque to adults, nearly half of today's bilinguals, 45%, have Basque as a second language. They usually live in mainly Spanish speaking towns and cities, as well as in linguistically mixed households: i.e. 38% of fully bilinguals and 43% of potential viewers for ETB1 (fully bilinguals plus passive bilinguals) live in homes where not all the members can understand Basque (EUSTAT, 2006).

On the other hand, the typology of bilinguals has changed dramatically in the last decades. For many of the new speakers, Basque is associated with school, rather than with other contexts (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2013). In the case of the passive bilinguals, there are, moreover, different situations to be found among them, with different capabilities in understanding. At this point, the concept of a "fully Basque speaker" (i.e. somebody who can understand, speak, and write Basque), when referring to a potential TV audience, falls far short. Insofar as television is an audio-visual medium, it is not inappropriate to say that its potential viewers are the ones who are able to understand Basque.

EITB has generally failed to respond to these sociolinguistic changes and has continued with the model launched in 1986; that is to say, it has failed to take into account that a great many new Basque speakers were coming out of school, that those who were able to understand Basque were ever-growing in number or that Basque speakers were more and more spread out.¹³ Nor did it respond to other changes even though the technological changes that have taken place over the last few years have opened up great opportunities to develop other ways and means of reaching audiences. One of these, though by no means the only one, is subtitling aimed at those whose level of Basque is lower or at those who understand no Basque and whose use would allow bilinguals who live among non-bilinguals a superb tool to be able to watch Basque-language television. The Basque Government had given the recommendation in the 1992 white paper that called for a halt to the hitherto subtitling policy in the belief that it was causing more harm to Basque speakers than good (Department of Culture, 1992). In today's digital television broadcasts, nevertheless, the viewers themselves have the power to switch them on or off according to their needs. Furthermore, subtitles allow for a choice of more than one language. In conjunction with that, television channels are also able to offer dual audio which is chosen by the viewer so that he or she can follow a program in one language or another.

These two resources doubtlessly open up many doors, all of which could be experimented with for a bilingual public. Nevertheless, EITB is not very advanced in this field. Table 2 shows the uses of subtitles and second audio channels of the main general channels in the Southern Basque Country:

Table 2: Language choice on General TV broadcast in the Southern Basque Country, 2012 ¹⁴

	Subtitles	Second Audio Channel
ETB 1	13.37%	2.82%
ETB 2	75.61%	24.81%
Antena 3	64.93%	13.89%
Cuatro	57.55%	34.61%
Tele 5	24.31%	3.06%
La Sexta	77.34%	36.19%
TVE 1	77.78%	9.86%
La 2	71.78%	36.09%

As we can see, although ETB2 often makes use of subtitles, they are hardly used by ETB1 which is the one which makes the least use of this resource of all the channels (we should say that these subtitles are in Basque on ETB1 and in Spanish on all of the rest of the channels). It stands to reason that, in view of its language-oriented goals, it should be the Basque-language channel that should make the most use of subtitles, even more so in light of what we have seen above in some cases. However, that is not what is happening and ETB1 is very much behind in this point thereby leaving new modes of bilinguals (whose with a limited knowledge or those surrounded non-Basque speakers) “untargeted”.

The presence of a second audio is also worthy of note. On some channels, a viewer may watch more than a third of the programming in a language other than Spanish by pushing a remote control button. English is the second language most of the time as it is the original language of production. Even here, ETB1 lags far behind.

The choice for viewers to choose a language (both audio and subtitles) begs the question: to what extent can the equation “one channel = one language” be sustained? Indeed, in view of what is on offer, it would seem that equation is breaking down even though it could be argued (there is still no data available on audience choice according to language) that use of the second audio is low for now. As the technical capability is there, the issue now lies with usage and habits. EITB, in turn, has played a very conservative hand up to now.

CONCLUSIONS

Minority language television services in some cases are not solely minority language televisions; at the same time, they usually are the unique television services targeting exclusively the territory where the language finds itself. Taking into account the most significant channels, that would be the case of Catalan, Galician, Basque, Welsh, Frisian, Luxemburgish, Irish, and Gaelic. The case of Swedish in Finland is different as Swedish speakers are not confined to a single territory.

For some agents, the coincidence of language and territory can make television attractive when a kind of political project exists in that country whatever that project might be (be it cultural autonomy or political independence). Indeed, television and mass media are usually regarded as promoters of the first order in the establishment of a public sphere.

In some of the cases that we have studied, when the main legal competence of television does not lie with public entities pertaining to minority language territories (e.g. Finland and Great Britain), goals linked to building up a political community take second place or even do not exist at all, while priority is placed on goals linked to the language and even more so if it is within the context of a great and solid tradition of public service. Nevertheless, as the debate raging in Wales would suggest, as the regional autonomous government gains in strength, television can touch off a debate about its role in a political setup that goes from language goals to a field beyond it, essentially, to building up a public sphere. Aside from language and cultural television goals, politicizing the goals can raise problems in the cases in which the subject of the political project and the language community are not the same. This means that, for instance, in Catalonia, Galicia, or Friesland, a television service operating solely in a minorized language and aimed at the population as a whole is viable on account of its sociolinguistic characteristics. In countries with different sociolinguistic characteristics, on the other hand, (e.g. Scotland, Wales, or the Basque Country), it is harder to bring both kinds of goals together. Indeed in the very end, when we are talking about political projects (whatever they might be), we are talking about building up a public sphere: that is to say, about a space of communication that will be open to all of the population in the country. Insofar as the public sphere is a space of communication, language is a fundamental element. As the minorized language is the language of a minority, it will run into difficulties to become the main communication tool in the public sphere which can take in all of the population and therein lies the problem: how to work for the normalization of the language while at the same time sticking to other goals related to the building up of a public sphere.

The study of the case of public television in the Basque Country has shown us that separating both goals (language normalization and building up a public sphere) according to linguistic criteria—in other words a desire to have one goal served in one language while the other is served in another language—works against the smaller language. In the very end, the model recreates the diglossia in society by strengthening the larger language and weakening the smaller one—or by hindering its strengthening.

The study of the cases in Scotland, Wales, and Finland have shown us that the relationship between language normalization and building up a public sphere can be channeled in a different way and by means of a television in which a minority language will be dominant and by overcoming a dual model (using each language for a certain goal).

By having the main target as going beyond the minority language and by taking it to the territorial community, several strategies may be devised

in order to build bridges between linguistic communities (specially needed for monolinguals), in order to attract new speakers to the minority language, in order to help those who are learning it, in order to help bring the new speakers of the language together and so on and so forth. To that end, digital technology offers a myriad of opportunities, such as optional subtitles as well as dual audio channels; and it is within the realm of imagination that there will be new opportunities in the future (automatic translation technology for instance).

Furthermore, we cannot discard another fact, to wit: although the mass media in general and television in particular continue to play an important role in building up the public sphere and a political community, it remains to be seen whether that role might not be changing in these times with the advent of deregulation of communications, transnationalization of cultural industries as well as the development of new media. Indeed, we ought to be asking ourselves whether a strong and efficient national media system of an era can go on being so robust. As we have argued elsewhere (Amezaga, 2011), the mass media may be losing their importance as mainstays of a national public sphere. This being the case, in addition to rethinking the role for national television, we should also rethink the role that minority language television services could play in building the public sphere.

The Group Nor is recognized as a Research Group by the Basque Government, made up of senior lecturers who have been working jointly on projects, as well as for some junior researchers. Its main research interests are:

the structure of communication and local television in the Basque Country; television minority languages in Europe (both regional as immigration languages); and communication and collective identity.

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Notes

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²We are not solely taking into account regarding a movement seeking independence as

a nationalist movement but rather, generally speaking, as a movement that seeks both political or cultural autonomy in the territory.

³ Although the term “minorized language” is scarcely used in English it is commonly accepted in other languages from the South Europe (e.g. Basque, Catalan, Galician or Spanish) the distinction between the fact of being the language of a numerically minority and the fact of having limited social functions, as a consequence of a process of “minoritisation” (Cormack, 2007). In order to keep the original meaning of this article, we use the term *minorized language* when emphasizing the lack of social hegemony rather than the numerical disadvantage.

⁴ In the name of precision, we should also add here some Catalan-language broadcasts offered by private Spanish television stations although, in some cases, it is more anecdotal. In any cases, we should not forget that the case of Catalan is hardly typical in the area of European minority languages, whether it be on account of the dimensions of its speakers or on account of the spread and normalization of the language which has been achieved.

⁵ By 2012 the concession of services had doubled this goal by setting 500,000 viewers as its target audience.

⁶ For example, John Whittingdale, the Chairman of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee of the Westminster Parliament, in charge of media financing, including the BBC, openly and publicly came out

against the project by arguing this very point (Thomas, 2008).

⁷ According to the 2003 Communications Act: “*The Welsh Authority shall have the function of providing television programme services of high quality with a view to their being available for reception wholly or mainly by members of the public in Wales*” (Communications Act 2003, art. 204).

⁸ That is to say, those who viewed at least 15 minutes continuously a week.

⁹ The protagonism that the education system of the time had in the recovery of Basque was widely accepted in Basque society.

¹⁰ ETB3 was created in 2008 as a digital channel targeting the children and the young viewers.

¹¹ The same applies to the Northern Basque Country and the French language.

¹² Araba, Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Navarre, population over 14. Source: CIES 2011.

¹³ The idea of television as a basis for “geolinguistic regions”, applied by J. Sinclair and others when studying the use of the media among diasporas spread all over the world (Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996), is really suggestive to understand the role that media can play to integrate the scattered new speakers into the minority language community (Amezaga & Berriozabal, 2012).

¹⁴ Source: Averages of the monitoring conducted by the authors on two waves in 2012: first week of June and third one of November, 168 hours per week and per channel.

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