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# Standardization and Language Change in Basque

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## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In the decade following the end of the Franquist dictatorship in 1975, a newly invented Basque standard variety, *Batua*, was gradually introduced into the Basque educational system and media as part of a massive language revitalization effort. Prior to this time, no broadly accepted Basque standard existed, and Spanish was used exclusively in many prestige domains—schools, the media, government—in which *Batua* is now an option. In the years since then, a generation of speakers has grown up with extensive exposure to *Batua* through schools and media. These changes suggest the possibility that younger speakers will borrow features from *Batua* into their vernacular, leading to change in local dialects.

This paper presents variation data collected in sociolinguistic interviews in the Basque town of Oiartzun<sup>2</sup> in an effort to gauge the influence of standardization and recent language planning efforts on the local vernacular. In particular, this paper argues that two different kinds of cross-generational variation support the hypothesis of change in progress in the local dialect as a consequence of contact with the emerging standard, *Batua*. First, standard features appear to be entering local speech: for three variables discussed here—one lexical, one morphological, and one phonological—young speakers show significantly lower frequencies of nonstandard forms than middle-aged and older speakers. Second, data from one of these three variables, *t*-palatalization, suggest that a gender difference is emerging in the use of standard vs. non-standard forms that is expected from the perspective of the hypothesis of standardization in progress. Specifically, for the youngest age

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<sup>2</sup>Many place names used herein have both Basque and Spanish (and French) spellings. In this article, Basque orthography is used for all place names.

group only, women show significantly lower frequencies of non-standard forms than men. From the perspective of Echeverria's (2000: chapter 4) proposal that Echeverria's proposal that masculinity is iconically linked to informal/low-prestige forms through their association with "traditional" rural Basque spheres, these data suggest that this gender difference is recurring at the level of opposition between the local dialect and the emerging standard (Gal and Irvine 1995).

The discussion is organized as follows: section 2 of this paper discusses the speech community and reviews some relevant aspects of the history of *Batua*; §3 discusses methodology; and §4 presents and discusses the results.

## 2 The Speech Community: Oiartzun and Its Languages

### 2.1 Oiartzun

Oiartzun is located in the northeastern corner of Gipuzkoa along the Gipuzkoa-Navarre border (see Map 1).



Table 1 shows that Oiartzun is similar to other towns in the greater Donostia

area in terms of economic activity. However, Oiartzun differs from most other towns around Donostia, including its immediate neighbors Errenteria and Lezo, in that industrialization came much later to Oiartzun, and immigration has been relatively light. Persons born outside the Basque Autonomous Community account for only 7% of Oiartzun's population, but 25% of the population of more heavily-industrialized Errenteria (Basque Statistical Office 1996). Partly as a result of its late industrialization and light immigration, Oiartzun has remained heavily Basque-speaking. Table 2 shows that the percent of the population reporting Basque as mother tongue and the language spoken at home is much higher in Oiartzun than in the Greater Donostia Area, or in Gipuzkoa as a whole.

	Total	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Services
Gipuzkoa	233,028 (100%)	5956 (3%)	79,603 (34%)	16,371 (7%)	131,098 (56%)
Greater Donostia Area	106,349 (100%)	1892 (2%)	26,843 (25%)	7212 (7%)	70,402 (66%)
Oiartzun	3416 (100%)	144 (4%)	906 (27%)	352 (10%)	2014 (59%)

Table 1. Employed population aged 16 and over by economic sector.  
(Source: Basque Statistical Office 1996.)

	Total	Mother Tongue			
		Basque	Spanish	Both	Other
Basque Country	2,098,055 (100%)	425,524 (20%)	1,554,312 (74%)	84,182 (4%)	34,037 (2%)
Gipuzkoa	676,208 (100%)	261,312 (39%)	364,115 (53%)	40,272 (6%)	10,509 (2%)
Oiartzun	8,878 (100%)	6,022 (67%)	2,269 (26%)	495 (6%)	92 (1%)

Table 2. Population by mother tongue. (Basque Statistical Office 1996.)

## 2.2 The Introduction of *Batua*

The development of a literary standard had been a goal of Basque language planners since the birth of *Euskaltzaindia* (The Basque Language Academy) in 1918. *Euskaltzaindia*'s development of *Batua* was interrupted by the civil war (1936-1939) and the Franquist dictatorship, but resumed in the late 1950's and 1960's. In 1964, *Euskaltzaindia* published a standard orthography for *Batua*, and since then it has gradually developed syntactic, morpho-

logical and (more recently) phonological norms to serve as a standard. These norms mainly come from the most central dialect, Gipuzkoan, but include contributions from all dialects, especially the Northern Basque dialects Lapurdian and Low Navarran. Today, *Batua* is used in most print publications including a Basque-language daily newspaper *Berria*. In addition, *Batua* is used on most of the region's Basque-language television and radio stations, including broadcasts by the Basque government's radio and television network, EITB, founded in 1982 (see also Urla (1995)).

More importantly, *Batua* is taught in all government-run Basque-medium schooling, and in the overwhelming majority of private Basque-medium schools. Today, most primary and secondary education students in Oiartzun attend Hautzaro, the local *ikastola* (private, Basque-medium school) founded clandestinely during the waning years of the Franquist dictatorship. During the 1980's, Oiartzun's other school, a public school, also began offering Basque-medium instruction, and today the overwhelming majority of students in Oiartzun's two schools are enrolled in Basque-medium programs. The remainder is enrolled in bilingual programs in which both Basque and Spanish are used as the medium of instruction. No students are enrolled in exclusively Spanish-medium programs (informant data. cf. Basque Statistical Office 1996).

Hence, except for the handful of young Oiartzuarrans who attend non-Basque-medium schools outside Oiartzun, all younger speakers have received considerable exposure to *Batua* through these two schools (and media). Moreover, because *Batua* has only been introduced in the last thirty years, local speakers' exposure to it varies by age. All of the younger speakers in the present study (20-30 years old), but none of the middle-aged and older speakers (over 40), received *Batua*-medium primary and secondary instruction. These social changes suggest the possibility that use of *Batua* as a classroom language will influence students' speech outside the classroom, and hence shape the development of the local dialect over time.

Indeed, the possibility that *Batua*'s use in the classroom shapes young people's non-classroom speech is part of the popular local discourse about language. When I commented to informants and other locals that young people seemed to speak very differently from older people, several people explained the difference in terms of the use of *Batua* in the classroom (and in the media). For example, in one interview, a younger speaker (speaker 4), made the observation in (1).

- (1) 'We speak much, um like more *Batua*-like.' (Speaker 4, 20's)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Guk askoz# e hola batuago hitz iten dugu[...]. The Basque examples are

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Data Collection

The data used in this paper come from two corpora. The first corpus was collected in sociolinguistic interviews conducted by me in July and August of 2001. Two aspects of the interview context are likely to have favored the use of standard forms. First, while certain standard measures were taken to elicit the vernacular (see below), the formal nature of the interview context often tends to favor more self-conscious, formal forms and disfavors the vernacular (Labov 1972: chapter 3). Recent work on language attitudes in the Southern Basque Country suggests that *Batua* has come to be seen by many speakers as the appropriate variety for formal contexts (Amorrortu 2000:164-172). This stands to reason given that *Batua* is the variety used in the overwhelming majority of Basque-language media and Basque-medium schools. Consequently, younger speakers, most of whom have been educated in *Batua*, may have accommodated the interviewer to some degree using standard *Batua* forms.

Older and middle-aged speakers, who are generally much less familiar with *Batua*, may have converged using the regional standard, Gipuzkoan, which until 30 years ago served as a *de facto* Basque standard. This prediction is in keeping with comments by informants. One informant remarked that Oiartzuarrans often considered Beterri Basque (an area of Gipuzkoa) to be “cleaner” sounding than the local dialect, and that when people try to speak more clearly, they often used Gipuzkoan forms. The local features examined here were carefully chosen to ensure orthogonality between Gipuzkoan and *Batua* forms in order to distinguish the influence on the local speech of these two varieties. The dialectal distribution of these features is discussed below.

Second, the fact that the interviews were conducted by the author—a non-native speaker of Basque, and a non-member of the community—may also have favored more careful speech (Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994). Several comments by participants during the interviews suggest that they were conscious that the interviewer was a non-native speaker. For example, one speaker offered a repair for a colloquial expression meaning ‘free’ (*musutruk*): “without charging anything” (“*ezer kobratu gabe*”). Another speaker interrupted a narrative describing collection of a local shrub, gorse, (*otea*) to ask, “Do you know what it is?” Because gorse is abundant in the

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given in standard orthography. The symbol ‘#’ marks pauses, and ‘x’ marks inaudible material.

Basque Country, it seems unlikely that this question would have been posed to a native-speaking community member.

Two measures were taken during the interviews to encourage participants to use the vernacular. First, the interviewer used local dialectal forms to the extent possible during the interviews. The purpose of this was to signal to participants that the interviewer was familiar with the local dialect, and also to help establish an informal mood for the interview. Second, whenever possible, informants were interviewed in pairs or with another community member present and participating. Eight of the twelve participants who provided data for this study were interviewed in pairs or with another community member present; the remaining four were interviewed one-on-one by the author. The fact that the interview situation varies across speakers introduces a different methodological problem since the effect of the interview situation is not constant for all speakers. Differences in data among speakers may partially reflect differences in the interview situation rather than the effects of the independent social and linguistic variables of principal concern. To address the problem of a non-community member interviewer, tokens were coded for interview-type in multivariate analysis.

Participants were recruited with a view toward creating an even distribution of speakers across sex and age groups. Table 3 shows that a relatively even distribution of participants by age and sex was achieved.

Speaker	Sex	Age	Interview type
1	M	41	Other community member present
2	F	81	Alone
3	M	67	Other community member present
4	F	20	Pair
5	M	25	Pair
6	M	51	Alone
7	F	75	Other community member present
8	F	87	Other community member present
9	M	60	Alone
10	M	49	Alone
11	F	20	Pair
12	M	24	Pair

Table 3: Participants

The second corpus consists of data collected in sociolinguistic interviews with 24 community members and native speakers of the local dialect, from October 2003 through July 2004. In order to better elicit the vernacular, I

enlisted two native speaking community members to conduct the interviews, although I was present during the interviews. Again, participants were recruited with a view toward creating an even distribution of speakers across sex and age groups. Table 4 below shows that this was largely achieved.

Speaker	Sex	Age	Speaker	Sex	Age
I	F	41	XIII	F	29
II	F	20	XIV	M	42
III	F	84	XV	F	83
IV	F	21	XVI	M	26
V	M	63	XVII	M	75
VI	M	26	XVIII	F	22
VII	M	42	XIX	F	70
VIII	M	25	XX	M	20
IX	F	82	XXI	M	43
X	M	40	XXII	F	20
XI	M	62	XXIII	F	41
XII	F	47	XXIV	M	66

Table 4: Participants, Corpus 2

Participants in both corpora were told that the purpose of the study was to learn about language and local life in Oiartzun and that the interview itself would focus on these topics. The interview questions were organized into the following modules: childhood, local life and traditions, personal experiences, goals/aspirations, language and background/biographic information. However, since the goal of the interview was to elicit maximally unself-conscious speech, the interviewer did not interrupt participants when they occasionally strayed from the interview topics to issues that held greater interest for them.

The data were analyzed using the variable rule applications Goldvarb, version 2.0 and Goldvarb 2001, version 1.0.2.13. Results of these analyses are presented in §4.

### 3.2 Selection of Variables

While Oiartzun belongs to the province of Gipuzkoa, its dialect is historically closer to High Navarran than Gipuzkoan (see Map 1). Nevertheless, much recent dialectological and sociolinguistic work suggests that in Oiartzun and neighboring towns along the Gipuzkoan/High Navarran dialect boundary, High Navarran features are gradually being replaced by Gipuzkoan features (Zuazo 1997, Olano 2000, Haddican 2003). The variables ex-

amined in this paper were carefully chosen to distinguish the effects of this process of change from those of principal concern in this paper: the influence of *Batua* on local speech. In particular, the morphological and lexical features examined here are characteristic of both the local dialect and Gipuzkoan, but *not* *Batua*. Hence, processes of dialect alternation between local forms and the erstwhile Gipuzkoan standard are orthogonal to participants' use of these forms. Table 5 summarizes the dialectal distribution of these features. (The formal nature of these elements is described in §4.)

	Local dialect	Gipuzkoan	<i>Batua</i>
<i>baino</i> 'but'	Yes	Yes	No
participial affix doubling	Yes	Yes	No
Pleonastic <i>-an</i>	Yes	Yes	No
<i>t</i> -palatalization	Yes	Yes	No

Table 5: Dialectal distribution of three features

## 4 Data and Discussion

### 4.1 The Spread of Standard Features in Local Speech

*baino* vs. *baina*. In the local dialect, the conjunction akin to English 'but' is rendered alternatively as [ba'.ño] [bi'.ño] or [mi'.ño]. In the standard, this element is /ba'.ña/.

Age group	Women	Men
Older (60-87)	0/108 (0%)	0/59 (0%)
Middle-aged (41-51)	0/14 (0%)	0/85 (0%)
Young (20-25)	1/35 (3%)	4/50 (8%)

Table 6: Use of /ba'.ña/; by age group and sex (Corpus 1)

The only participants who use *baina* in the present data are the young speakers, and they use it very little (6%). That they use it at all would seem to follow from the fact that, unlike the speakers in the two older groups, the young speakers have received *Batua*-medium primary and secondary instruction.

**Participial affix doubling.** Main verbs in Basque may bear one of three participial markers. For a closed class of verbs this marker is standardly *-n*. This class includes *iza-n*, 'have, be,' Aux, and *ego-n* 'be-loc,' as shown in (2). However, in Oiartzun and a handful of neighboring towns, this participial affix appears to double in certain environments. The open class affix *-tu*

may affix to the verb+n/-i on certain state and activity verbs, including *iza-n* (bc/have, Aux), *ego-n* (loc. cop), and *bizi* 'live', as in (3).

(2) *Batua*

ez nuen arazorik iza-n  
Neg Aux problem have-PART.

(3) *Oiartzun Basque*

ez nuen arazorik iza-n-du  
Neg Aux problem have-PART.-PART  
'I didn't have problems.'

Age group	Frequency	Weights
Older (60-87)	61/66 92%	.65
Middle-aged (41-51)	40/44 90%	.60
Young (20-25)	18/33 54%	.15

Table 7: (Nonstandard) *-tu* affixation on *egon/izan* by age group (Corpus 1)  
Overall tendency: .87, N=143, p=.00. Age group was the only factor group selected.  
Other factor groups not selected were verb type, sex and interview type.

Although the token set for *-tu* affixation is limited (N=143), the data in Table 7 suggest support for the hypothesis of change in progress: younger speakers strongly disfavor non-standard forms (.15), while middle-aged and older speakers favor the non-standard form (.60 and .65 respectively.) Again, this age distribution is unsurprising in view of the fact that all of the younger speakers in Corpus 1 received *Batua*-medium primary and secondary instruction, while none of the middle-aged and older speakers did.

**t-palatalization.** *Oiartzun*'s dialect like many other Gipuzkoan and Bizkaian dialects has the following palatalization rule.

(4) /t, n, l/ → [ç, ɲ, ʎ]/i, j\_\_ V, #

This paper focuses only on palatalization of /t/. Palatalization of /n/ and /l/ is nearly categorical in local speech across age groups and registers and thus does not bear on the questions pursued here. In addition, t-palatalization is constrained both morphologically and phonologically; significant variation is limited to palatalization in onset position in monomorphemes, and across certain morpheme boundaries, namely with absolutive plural markers, and with the aspectual markers *-tu* and *-ten*. This paper, then, only considers palatalization of /t/ in these environments.

Age group	Frequency		Weights
Older (60-87)	126/155	81%	.64
Middle-aged (41-51)	90/130	69%	.48
Young (20-25)	48/77	62%	.26

Table 8: /t/-palatalization by age group (Corpus 1)

Overall tendency: .79, N=362, p=.00. Factor groups selected (in order) were morphological environment and age. Factor groups not selected were sex and interview type.

Table 8 shows that, as in the case of *-tu* affixation, younger speakers show the lowest factor weights for non-standard forms: older speakers favor palatalization (.64) followed by middle-aged speakers (.48) and finally young speakers (.26). While the low factor weights for young speakers are expected in light of the discussion in §2, the sharp difference between middle-aged and older speakers is more surprising. Unlike the youngest age group, these speakers attended Spanish-medium schools, not Basque-medium ones, and grew up without exposure to extensive Basque-medium television and radio. These data, however, would seem to suggest that, despite the fact that all of these speakers were adults (over 20) by the time the promulgation of *Batua* began in earnest, contact with the standard has left its mark on their vernacular. Nevertheless, the fact that, in the case of *-tu* affixation (Table 7), middle-aged speakers do not show appreciably lower factor weights than their elders is mysterious from the perspective of this suggestion. No insight into this problem can be offered at this time.

The data on *bainolbaina*, *t*-palatalization and *-tu* affixation provide strong support for the hypothesis of change in progress as a consequence of the introduction of *Batua*. In all three cases, younger speakers show higher frequencies of standard forms than their elders. This change seems likely to be driven in large part by prescriptive brute force, i.e. standard language ideology, particularly through Basque-medium schooling (Milroy and Milroy 1990). *Batua* was not primarily intended as a replacement for local dialects, but rather to complement them as a written standard and for inter-dialectal communication. Nevertheless, dialect speakers often view *Batua* as more objectively "correct" than their own dialect (Urla 1987:313, 318).

Evidence from participants' metalinguistic comments in sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic interviews supports this view. In particular, several middle-aged and older participants complained that their *Batua*-knowing children and grandchildren often corrected their dialectal forms.

## (5) Speaker I (40's)

"Yes, home xx, well I eat it a lot. They [speak] cleaner. And, well, on the verb and everything, they [the verbs she uses] have incredible mistakes."

[A few seconds later:] "They say 'Jeez, mom, it's not said like that. You should say it like this and not like that.'"<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the notion that *Batua* is "better" than the local dialect seems to be reinforced by the fact that many middle-aged and older speakers of Oiartzuera and of other local dialects (Urla 1987:313-314) tend to have a low opinion of their own dialect as suggested by Speaker I's comments in (6).

## (6) Speaker I (40's)

"The fame that we Oiartzun-ers have always had, 'Jeez, it's, it's that your language is [Spanish:] so coarse.'"<sup>5</sup>

These facts suggest that the prescriptive influence of Basque-medium education is likely to be a principal force driving this change. The present data are unable to shed any light on the extent to which this ideology may be connected to class/status distinctions as suggested by Urla (1987:311-326). (See also Amorrortu (2000) who argues explicitly against the notion that standard vs. dialect differences index class/status distinctions as in other well-studied contexts (Labov 1972: chapters 4 and 5).)

## 4.2 The Emergence of a Gender Distinction

Several authors have discussed differences between men and women in the Basque Country the use of certain features (Echeverria 2000, Amonarriz 1995, Hernández 2002). Historically, for example, women tended toward a higher prestige Spanish variety, while men tended toward Basque. Similarly, in many areas of the Basque Country, men tend to use allocutive agreement much more than women. Use of allocutive vs. non-allocutive agreement marks familiarity with the addressee in a way comparable to T vs. V pronouns, respectively. In view of this literature, Echeverria (2000) suggests that use of prestige/formal vs. solidarity/informal forms in Basque is broadly gender-patterned in a way frequently reported in sociolinguistic literature in

<sup>4</sup>"Bai nik etxeko xx pos, jan itten dutela nik # beaiek garbiago #eta bueno adi t-zan ta zea, izaten dute izugarrizko akats[ak]... [a few seconds later] esaten dute 'jo, am! hori ez da hola esaten'#in ber zenuke hau esan ta hua ez san.'"

<sup>5</sup>"Oiartzuarrak beti izan dugun fama 'jo es, eske zuen hizkuntza da mas basto.'"

western contexts: women tend toward prestige forms and men, informal forms (Gal 1979, Labov 1972; also James 1996). A thorough treatment of these gender ideologies is beyond the scope of this paper. However, what is relevant about this literature for the purpose of the present discussion, is that it suggests an account of an emerging sex difference in the use of *t*-palatalization, illustrated in Table 9.

	Men		Women	
	Absolutive* Plural markers	Aspectual** morphemes	Absolutive* Plural markers	Aspectual** morphemes
Older (60+)	56/56 (100%)	109/113 (96%)	69/69 (100%)	104/108 (96%)
Middle-aged (40-50)	59/85 (69%)	61/120 (51%)	28/35 (80%)	57/98 (58%)
Younger (20-30)	109/111 (98%)	86/155 (55%)	74/88 (84%)	44/185 (24%)

Table 9: /t/-palatalization by age group and sex (Corpus 2)

\*The gender difference for absolutive plural markers for the youngest age group is significant at  $p < .001$  ( $\chi^2 = 13.19$ ). This difference is not significant at  $p = .05$  for the middle-aged group or for the oldest age group.

\*\*The gender difference for aspectual morphemes for the youngest age group is significant at  $p < .001$  ( $\chi^2 = 35.89$ ). This difference is not significant at  $p = .05$  for the middle-aged group ( $\chi^2 = 1.17$ ) or for the oldest age group.

Table 9 shows frequencies of *t*-palatalization by age group and sex in two different morphological environments. (No multivariate analysis of the data in Corpus 2 is available at this time.) The data show that for the youngest age group *only*, the difference between men and women in frequency of palatalization is significant for both absolutive plural markers and aspectual morphemes. These data, then, suggest that as *Batua* emerges as a standard, it is taking on the job of marking gender as at the level of opposition between Spanish and Basque, and allocutive and non-allocutive agreement. In terms of Gal and Irvine's (1995) work, these data suggest that this gender difference is recurring at the level of opposition between *Batua* and the local dialect (Echeverria 2000). Again, this is expected from the perspective of the hypothesis of standardization in progress.

### 4.3 Standardization in Progress?

From the perspective of a strong Labovian approach to language change—namely, that the motor cause of *all* linguistic change is social—the

apparent time data presented here call for an ideological account of these processes of change. Moreover, the emerging sex difference discussed above suggests that *Batua* is influencing the local dialect in ways expected of a standard. These data, then, would seem to suggest that local speakers are coming to perceive *Batua* as a standard. This analysis is further supported by speakers' metalinguistic comments regarding *Batua*.

Nevertheless, the results of a recent matched experiment study by Amorrortu (2000) are problematic for this approach. In a study with Basque-speaking college undergraduates, Amorrortu found that respondents rated Bizkaian and Gipuzkoan dialectal guises (see Map 1) higher than *Batua* guises for "solidarity" attributes, as expected from the perspective of the hypothesis of standardization in progress. However, surprisingly, respondents failed to give significantly higher prestige scores to *Batua* guises than to dialectal guises (p. 152). How exactly Amorrortu's prestige-component results might be reconciled with the present apparent time variation data will remain a topic for further research. Nevertheless, the fact that Amorrortu's respondents rated dialectal guises higher than *Batua* guises in the solidarity dimension suggests some evidence in favor of an emerging H-L distinction between *Batua* and local dialects. This evidence is consonant with the apparent-time data presented here.

## 5 Conclusions

This paper presents data from sociolinguistic and ethnographic interviews collected in the Basque town of Oiartzun. The data presented here provide strong apparent time evidence that *Batua* does bear on language variation and change in Oiartzun Basque in ways expected of a standard. In particular, for three variables examined here—one lexical, one morphological, and one phonological—younger speakers show lower rates of nonstandard forms than middle-aged and older speakers. The speed of these processes of change is perhaps surprising: within a single generation of its broad promulgation, *Batua* has begun to reshape the dialect in important ways.

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