

Mastering the King's Tongue. Language-Learning Dynamics among 18th-Century Basque Elites, a Context Proposal¹

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Abstract: Learning languages is a fundamental part of today's education. Was it so in the past? In this paper, we try to present a context to better understand language learning among certain Basque elites during the Early Modern period in Spain. These educational dynamics will be examined within a broader European and Hispanic milieu, with a perspective inspired by the Social History of Language. As a first approach to the topic, the aim of this study will be to examine the issue within its own terms, providing a context proposal that may help to avoid ongoing controversies and could foster further studies on the linguistic education of Basque elites or other sectors of society in Early Modern times. Bearing this objective in mind, we will sketch different aspects that, although may seem disconnected with each other, are linked by this general background. Testimonies of linguistic shifts, the social meaning of different accents, the identity of the creators of the Language Academies, some regional language uses in written or literary texts and, particularly some educative texts in Basque language will be analysed. Content: 1. Introduction: for a diachronic approach to (linguistic) education. 2. *Lingua regalis*: the adoption of Castilian language in the Hispanic Monarchy. 3. Who speaks what language? The adoption of Spanish by the peripheral elites. 4. Conclusions.

Keywords: Language learning; Social History of Language in Spain; Real Academia de la Lengua; national/regional language building; history of accents.

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1. Introduction: for a diachronic approach to (linguistic) education

A famous pamphlet printed in the region of Galicia, in Spain, in 1942 read as follows:

SPEAK PROPERLY.
Be a patriot – not a barbarian.
Be a gentleman and speak our official language, that is, Spanish. It is the patriotic thing.
Long live Spain, the discipline and Cervantes' language.
*Arriba España!!*²

Obviously, the context of this message is early Francoism. The pamphlet is especially significant in that it collates linguistic, literary and even civilizational nationalisms. After reading it, we may be tempted to think that linguistic confrontations and issues in Spain and elsewhere have always been expressed in similar terms³. However, this would be projecting an anachronistic notion of linguistic confrontation onto the past (Billing, 1995, pp. 13-36). In this regard, we should be cautious; a proper historical contextualization will show the convenience of a diachronic analysis that can improve our understanding of a linguistic phenomenon on its own milieu.

The present paper aims to sketch a context proposal for helping to understand language learning in the Spanish Monarchy in the Early Modern Age (symbolically 1492-1808). I will focus particularly on the Basque elites, but widening the lens whenever needed in order to put into a proper context different phenomena. As it is often the case with the history of language learning, the examples presented have counterparts in other countries and regions that may complement each other. Therefore, a kaleidoscopic approach is almost unavoidable at this first stage of the analysis. Although different historiographical researches provide hints, they are often found disseminated in very varied kinds of contributions or documents. These hints show a common reality that can be grasped in literary texts, archival information, particular letters... We will need to examine different sources and examples that, though may seem disconnected, address glimpses of a coherent linguistic reality. In sum, we hope to sketch a proposal of contextualization to better understand the linguistic attitudes and challenges of that time.

To that end, I shall start analysing the context of the emergence of a Spanish *lingua franca*, as well as the building of *regional languages*, and the social attitudes towards these phenomena. Attention will also be paid to the political and, especially, the social background of speakers. Alongside this first analysis, some hints regarding methods and priorities in language learning among the elites will arise. However, a proper study on these matters would require further and deeper analysis. Accordingly,

² «HABLE BIEN/ Sea patriota – no sea bárbaro/ Es de cumplido caballero que Ud. hable nuestro idioma oficial o sea el castellano. Es ser patriota/ Viva España y la disciplina y nuestro idioma cervantino/ ¡¡Arriba España!!». The pamphlet was published in La Coruña and is reproduced on the cover of Freitas (2008), who deals with it in pp. 378-379.

³ As pointed out by Salvador (1988, pp. 27-30, 65) and Sánchez (1991, pp. 123-124).

the present article aims to set up a proper historical context, so that anachronisms may be avoided in future specialised and thorough primary source based studies. Precisely for this reason, it is worth stressing the importance of understanding the meaning of language, and therefore language learning, in the past.

The Galician pamphlet which we started with was published during a period that can be considered the apogee of the nation-state, extending approximately between 1789 and 1945. During this period, languages were regarded as the exclusive heritage of specific peoples (Steinberg, 1994, pp. 204-208). Despite the wishes of the pamphlet's authors, however, this was not a natural state of being, but the result of a historical trajectory that crystallised in the late 18th century. A couple of moments, more or less symbolic but nevertheless determinative, converged in this construction.

First, in 1769, Johann Gottfried Herder argued for the social, mutable and irregular origins of language. This claim ran contrary to the hitherto predominant idea that language had a natural and divine origin, and was to become the touchstone of a certain German identity, developing an exclusive form of nationalism within the broader framework of German romanticism (Edwards, 1985, pp. 23-26).

The linguistic consequences of the French Revolution were relevant too. The reports issued by Bertrand Barère and Henri Grégoire in 1794, which aimed to expand the French language, can be considered the beginning of a systematic linguistic policy (De Certeau, Julia Revel, 2008). Viewed from a perspective that considered citizens an active part of the nation, language took a new role. Not only the language of a cultivated minority must be watched over, but also, and foremost, the language spoken by the whole population (Steinberg, 1994, p. 202).

The convergence of the German Romantic vision and French linguistic aspirations resulted in comprehensive linguistic policies. This is a clear trait of an ideology that legitimised the nation-state building in the 19th and 20th centuries⁴. Based on this approach, citizens were to be considered, exclusively, as members of a certain nation, thus creating a national cultural community based on a political one. Explained in a very simple way: Spanish people speak Spanish. The army, universal education and novel media played an important role in promoting the new linguistic conception of these *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2011).

Since we have ascribed the end-date of this process to about 1945, it would be logical to think about the pamphlet we started with as a swansong of this linguistic ideology, and in a way it was. From World War II onwards, emerging regional nationalisms and the crystallisation of supranational organisations undermined the hegemony of the nation-state and, as a consequence, regional dialects and languages gained new prominence. In this regard, we may mention the 1987 European Parliament resolution concerning linguistic minorities (Petschen, 1990, p. 37). In conclusion, the second half of the 20th century saw a new period in which a more nuanced relationship between the notions of language(s) and identity(ies) was accepted, and interest in a more heterogeneous linguistic reality increased.

⁴ This process deserves more space than I can give it here. The process which, as it is often the case, was not linear, requires several specialised studies. See Chappey (2013).

Perhaps influenced by this context, English historiography inaugurated a suggestive discipline known as Social History of Language. Peter Burke and Roy Porter proposed adding a social dimension to the study of the history of language, as well as a historical dimension to sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speech. In this way, they aimed to gain a better understanding of languages as cultural, social and identity artefacts (Burke and Porter, 1994, p. 17). This called for an entente between linguists and historians, with the understanding that the former possessed mechanisms and a theoretical toolbox that could be valuable to the latter in articulating their historical-social knowledge of language⁵. This initiative materialised in several works edited by Burke and Porter in the early 1990s, as well as some works by the former. These studies have laid out the foundations of the discipline, opening a wide range of possible studies⁶. The diachronic analysis of language learning can be one of them.

From my perspective, in doing so, historians are in a position to offer stimulating points of view on education as a changing historical process. Increasing our socio-historical understanding of the transmission of knowledge, we can determine what knowledge was being transferred, when, how, by whom and how it was appropriated⁷. In this regard, the linguistic patterns under scrutiny should better be contextualised within the framework of broader educational policies, ranging from fostering good manners to cultural knowledge and taste (Imízcoz and Esteban, 2017). The present article will focus on a very particular chapter of this History: we want to propose a context for understanding language education among Basque elites at the service of the Hispanic Monarchy. We should be conscious that the 15th-18th centuries present a linguistic reality that is very different to the previously described one. We may strive to understand the motivations behind, and difficulties and circumstances of, language learning for an elite that, despite occupying important positions in the Hispanic Monarchy, initially only spoke their mother tongue, Basque (Euskera), as the following examples will illustrate.

2. *Lingua regalis*: the adoption of Castilian language in the Hispanic Monarchy

Let us begin with an example: Pedro Agustín Girón y las Casas, born in San Sebastian in 1778. A prominent member of the Basque military aristocracy (he became the fourth Marquis of Amarillas and first Duke of Ahumada), when he wrote his memoirs he stated: «[I was] brought up as was customary in the country, and speaking close to no other language than Basque». He recalled, about when he was five: «When I arrived to Madrid, I did not understand a single word of Spanish»

⁵ For a useful introduction see Moreno (1998).

⁶ Despite the potential of the approach, historians seemed to neglect to capitalise on this impetus. The main milestones of the discipline remain Burke and Porter (1991 and 1995). Burke and Hsia (2010) take a similar approach to the history of translation. Works about linguistic plurality include Hasins and Sandrier (2007) and Dursteler (2012). For works that focus on a single language see Jenkins (1997) and Rjéoutskki, Offord and Argent, (2014).

⁷ For a historical and social perspective of learning processes see Imízcoz and Chaparro (2013).

(Imízcoz and Bermejo, 2016, p. 508). This anecdote perfectly illustrates that certain Basque elites needed to acquire the Spanish language. The example also challenges a common perception about nation-state and language: Girón's case belongs to a period before the intellectual construction of the former was developed. In this section, I shall examine this earlier reality from the point of view of the Social History of Language, but before doing so, I shall present a brief overview of the history of the discipline in Spain.

Although various studies have laid its foundations, Social History of Language has been paid little attention to by Spanish historiography. In the 1990s, François López (1996) highlighted the need of better understanding a social and cultural context of languages. In the mid-2000s, several works about the tongues spoken in Spain tried to present a comprehensive sociolinguistic perspective (Moreno, 2005; Echenique and Sánchez 2005) and, in the book edited by Rocío García and Jesús M^a Usunáriz (2006), various historians articulated the need to follow the trend set out by Burke and Porter. More recent studies have briefly analysed linguistic uses within the Hispanic Monarchy, both from a philological (García, 2011; Martínez, 2015; Echenique, 2016) and a historical perspectives (Gil, 2013; Esteban, 2015).

Concerning regional languages, substantial progress has been made in recent years. 1999 witnessed the publication of a book on the social history of Galician by Henrique Monteagudo, and two years later Joan Lluís Marfany (2001) published a work about Catalan which effectively undermined the clichés and anachronisms in which other historians had been mired. Concerning Euskera, although earlier works exist (Jimeno, 1999), I must emphasise the initiative of *Euskaltzaindia* (The Royal Academy of Basque Language), which has led suggestive approaches, such as a bibliographic review, a comprehensive compilation of 17th- and 18th-century sources and a thorough methodological work (Intxausti, 2011; Madariaga, 2014; Zalbide, Joly and Gardner, 2015). A recent volume, published by the Basque regional government, has also analysed the history of Euskera⁸.

Most of these works were produced by philologists, while historians have, to date, largely abstained from entering the field. In any case, cooperation between both disciplines is necessary, as historians can contribute with certain considerations⁹.

For instance, when the focus is on (what will become) a regional language, it is common for the analysis to emphasise its opposition with (what will become) the national language. This sort of approach risks presenting reality in excessively dualistic terms, stressing conflict and forgetting the potential presence of other languages – for instance Latin or Gascon were also spoken in the 16th century San Sebastian as well as Basque or Spanish (Jimeno, 2004, p. 139). In this regard, I think that referring to the social history of languages, in the plural, might be a more appropriate way to refer to the linguistic setting *in* a given region. I also believe it is more accurate to underline the «in», instead of «of», in order to avoid the implication that the connection between language and region is a natural one.

⁸ For the chronology we are interested in, read Urgell's chapter (2018).

⁹ As proven by the series of seminars *Por una historia social del lenguaje* (2013-2016), organised in Vitoria (UPV/EHU).

Obviously, the creation of a *royal language* (understood as the language used by the main government institutions in a kingdom) is also a historical process that needs to be analysed within its own particular setting. Where can we find the beginnings of this process? As demonstrated by suggestive literary studies, language in the Middle Ages was a very different affair to what it is today (Beltrán, 2005, pp. 28-29). As such, the strengthening of a Spanish royal language begins with the consolidation of a more united political entity in the Iberian Peninsula. Far from being a coincidence, this fact is highly symptomatic. The year 1492 was a key date in many ways for the Hispanic Monarchy's process of gaining power. Not only because of the conquest of the kingdom of Granada, the discovery of America or the expulsion of the Spanish Jews from the Peninsula, but also linguistically. This year witnessed the publication of Elio Antonio Nebrija's *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana*, the first grammar in vernacular Spanish or Castilian (Mar-Molinero, 2000, p. 20)¹⁰.

Being a «pure» heir of Latin was the propagandistic argument that helped an increasingly strong modern state such as Castile to adopt Spanish as an imperial language. But this process was not exclusive to that kingdom; all over Europe, the advantages of homogenising the language of the new modern administration were becoming more and more evident¹¹. At the same time, the nobility progressively interiorised the cultivated court language, concurring with the *civilising process* associated with the construction of the state. It is not coincidental that the German sociologist Norbert Elias emphasised that «...the linguistic form which (...) appears as courtly has in fact become the national usage» (Elias, 2000, pp. 92-97). As well as curtailing their violent, lascivious and gluttonous impulses, elites eventually accepted the court's new language habits, which were seen as a sign of superiority as culture became a mark of social distinction (Burke, 2004, p. 110). Therefore, the process of civilization recalls a wide educational agenda that certain elites of all over the kingdom were eager to follow.

From that moment onwards, the geographical and social differences between those who spoke Spanish and those who did not (because they spoke a different language or a specific variety of Spanish), became sharper, leading to diglossia¹². Each community had its own language; historical examples abound. The humanist writer Juan de Valdés recorded certain differences in court language in 1535: «Vulgar people say *yantar*, whereas court people say *comer*» [to eat] (Moreno, 1998, p. 71), clearly expressing that there was a linguistic distance between different social strata. These differences widened over time and all over Europe: by 1636 Jean Louis

¹⁰ This grammar, it is worth stressing, was not the basis for the construction of a codified language. Martínez (2015, 52) examines what seemed a much more tortuous process as shows that Nebrija's book was not re-edited until the 18th century. Therefore, the importance of the original date of publication seems largely symbolic.

¹¹ Obviously, the «king's language» must be understood broadly. Many monarchs spoke several languages, and others had to learn the language of their kingdom. In Spain, Charles V, Philip V and Joseph I, and some of their closest advisors, had to do so. For the general linguistic process, see Lázaro (1985, p. 146) and Grillo (1989, p. 2).

¹² The term «diglossia» was coined in 1959 by Charles Ferguson in an influential article. The meaning of the term has evolved over time, as shown by Fishman (1982, pp. 23-36) and Moreno (1998, pp. 225-237).

Balzac was arguing that anything other than the language spoken at the French court was a sign of barbarism (Grillo, 1989, p. 175). In his dictionary, published in 1786, the basque-born Jesuit Esteban Terreros stated that Castilian was divided into eight languages, namely the «culti-latino», the language of picaresque, the gypsies' jargon, the vulgar or rustic, the provincial, the poetic, that used by elderly people and «That which we call Castilian», which was the subject of his dictionary (San Vicente, 1996, p. 599). Peasants, fishermen, women, merchants and so on, all had their own linguistic register reflecting the social characteristics of a group; that is, *sociolects*: «linguistic hierarchies mirrored social ones» (Moreno, 1998, p. 48; Burke, 2004, pp. 29-32). As the 17th century humanist Gonzalo Correas explained:

... languages present differences, outside provincial dialects. According to the age and social status: rustic; popular; urban; aristocratic and courtly; the historian's; the old man's; the preacher's; the infant's; the woman's; and the man's; all under a universal Language, with its nerve and phrasing; and each of these languages suits its speaker (Monteagudo, 1999, p. 174)¹³.

3. Who speaks what language? The adoption of Spanish by the peripheral elites

What language did everyone speak in a world in which linguistic diversity seems to have been the norm? In order to illustrate the complexity of the situation, we may recall an anecdote concerning Charles V (I of Spain between 1518-1556), according to which he spoke to God in Spanish, to his court in Italian, to the ladies in French and to his horse in German¹⁴. More than to the linguistic dexterity of the emperor, the story points to the linguistic setting of the time, in which different languages coexisted naturally (Burke, 2004, p. 28). As such, Social History of Language has asked the following key question: who spoke in what language, to whom, where, what for and how?

Although linguists are aware that different groups spoke different varieties of the same language, enough attention to the social composition of these groups may not have been paid, leading some researchers to provide a too static image of this phenomenon as a result. We believe that this gap that can be overcome by social historians using the inspiring question mentioned above¹⁵. Who was interested in adopting the court language? Who was not? Who did not care, and until when? Bringing the geographical and the social variables together, we shall examine the

¹³ The original quotation: «...una lengua tiene algunas diferencias, fuera de los dialectos particulares a provincias, conforme a las edades, calidades y estados de sus naturales: de rústico, de vulgo, de ciudad, de la gente más granada y de la Corte, del Historiador, del anciano y del Predicador, y aun de la menor edad, de mujer y varones; y que todas estas abraza la Lengua universal debajo de su propiedad, nervio y frase; y a cada uno le está bien su lengua».

¹⁴ It is even said that the emperor learned Basque from his physician, his confessor and one priest of his Court (Madariaga, 2008, p. 252).

¹⁵ A brief but stimulating vindication of the need to focus on the social actors of language can be found in Peña (1997, pp. 149-155).

relationship between those parameters and the different languages spoken in the Monarchy.

For the attorney Eugenio Salazar the Hispanic court in the late 16th century attracted «foreign people from different nations» who, despite communicating in Spanish, greeted each other [«I kiss your hand»] in their mother tongues:

...*beso la mano de vuestra merced*; others say: *beso as maos a vosa mercé*; others: *agur xaona orduan çagoçala*; others: *bon giorno, mi ricommando a la signoria vostra*; others: *musieur, je me recommande à vostre bonne grace*; others: *Got berliena huberlib den gudemdag*; others: *gutmara gad boe...* (Salazar, 1866, pp. 2-3).

People from all over the Monarchy converged on the court. A cosmopolitan space reminiscent of Charles V's alleged linguistic abilities. Nebrija himself claimed, in 1492, that his grammar would bring great advantages, because it could be used to learn Spanish by: «people from Biscay, Navarre, France, Italy and all others that have some business to attend to in Spain, and need to learn our language» (Petschen, 1990, pp. 109-110). The absence of an explicit mention to Catalan speakers from this list seems significant: could this be explained because of the still recent unification of Castile and Aragon? And why include a kingdom not yet annexed as Navarre? I guess a deep study of the elites of the time can give us some answers. In any case, the Crown of Aragon was also to undergo a similar process, as demonstrated by the Aragonese attorney Gonzalo García de Santa María, who had claimed a few years earlier that «in all places is the court language considered by all the best and most outstanding» (Monteagudo, 1999, p. 155).

However, even after the basics of this *outstanding* language were acquired, its use had to be perfected. Popular lexical uses needed to be polished and a more formal style cultivated, while ensuring that the most correct syntactic, morphological and phonological variations were employed (Moreno, 1998, pp. 20-30; Isasi y Ramírez, 2013). Peripheral elites needed to learn to speak the king's language, a difficult process that would surely devolve into a wide range of accents. Sociolinguists have pointed out that accents are significant social markers; people would try very hard to mask the fact that the socially accepted language was not natural to them (Weinreich, 1974, pp. 167-168). Language teachers in 17th-century London, for example, insisted that they taught the correct language varieties, pointing out the bad Italian accent of those taught by Piemontese or Grisonese teachers, or the incorrect French accent of Gascons and Normans. However, some Normans «that hath [sic] seen the world', [men] of some quality», could be an exception to the rule (Gallagher, in press).

Is it possible to think of a social history of accents? A richly suggestive statement by P. Burke (2004, p. 110) claimed that the military aristocracy learnt the habits of the court, losing their local accents and loyalties at the same time. Although more work is needed in this regard, some ready examples are available; the Galician Benedictine monk Martín Sarmiento, writing about the inhabitants of 18th-century Madrid, declared that speakers could be told apart «based on their accent, phrase,

pronunciation and voice», complaining that people only made fun of the Galician accent (Monteagudo, 1999, pp. 241, 259, 273).

Accents, however regarded, reflect migratory trends and, especially, the fact that incipient modern states were attracting peripheral groups, be they Irish, Breton or Basque, who, by putting themselves at the service of the Crown and its administration, managed to climb the social and political ladder. The feeling of belonging to the state elite is made clear by a fictional story published in the Milanese journal *Il Caffé*, in 1765: the manager of a cafe asks a customer where he is from, because he cannot make out his accent. The young man, indignant, tells the manager that he is *Italian* (Steinberg, 1994, pp. 200-201). A story like this, emphasising the multiplicity of accents and also the alleged existence of a neutral one, may reveal a change in political mentalities. Standard vernacular forms expressed the ideology of certain elites that were not only distancing themselves from the Classical (Latin) tradition, but also from the popular cultures and dialects of their regions of origin (Burke, 2004, pp. 97-102).

These actors, so closely linked with the construction of the state, established the cultivated and courtly versions of the language through the creation of academic institutions, for instance in Florence (1583), Paris (1635), Madrid (1713), Copenhagen (1742), Lisbon (1779), Moscow (1783), Stockholm (1786)... (Burke, 2004, p. 90). In the Hispanic Monarchy, the foundation of the Real Academia Española (RAE) can be understood as part of the reforms by which the new Bourbon dynasty (established in 1700) tried to centralise and concentrate power around the king, also with respect to culture (Oliván and Sáez, 2004, pp. 130-131). The identity of the members of the Academia is significant: the institution was constituted by the members of a reformist group close to the Crown, rather than by expert linguists (Nava, 1987). In fact, «The founder was from Navarre, the censor from Catalonia and some academy members had spent more time in Italy than in Spain, while the king that authorised the project never ceased speaking French» (Lodares 2002, p. 89). The peripheral origin of the academicians was pointed out long ago, and was fully in line with Philip V's other policies such as administration, where a considerable peripheral elites entered to serve. According to Lázaro Carreter (1985, p. 179) «men from the periphery of Spain, not Castilians, were the most steadfast champions of the national language». Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, Martín Sarmiento, Gregorio Mayans, Juan Pablo Forner, Antonio Company, Gaspar Melchor Jovellanos... all of them culturally or politically involved with the Monarchy.

Alongside the standardisation of Spanish, we should not forget the undermining of non-Castilian languages. Galician, Asturian, Aragonese, Basque and Catalan had been the most affected by this process (San Vicente, 1996, 626). This is another Europe-wide phenomenon. In England and France in the 17th and 18th centuries, regional languages, often associated with rebellion and Catholicism, were labelled as barbarous. Meaningfully, by the 18th century *vulgarity* came to replace *barbarity* as reflected in the *Art of Speaking*, published in 1708 in England, which referred to «the depraved language of the common people» (Grillo, 1989, pp. 174-175). Whether barbarous or vulgar, the prestige of dialectal variants – distanced from the «official» language socially and/or geographically – seemed to be questioned.

Prestige is a complex concept, but it is obvious that the status of a certain variant was directly related to the recognition its speakers lent to it (Moreno, 1990, pp. 174-198). It seems obvious that the «state-court» elite bestowed prestige to the codified language that they spoke, but what about the other languages and varieties? Were they scorned by these peripheral political and intellectual elites? This seems to be the case concerning the Basque accent or certain of its characteristic linguistic mistakes, reproduced in literature from the baroque comedies of the 15th century to the 19th century compositions. Some verses penned by the Basque literatus Pablo de Jérica are very illustrative. In them, a drunk man from Biscay is lunging at a clock and committing obvious syntactical mistakes: «Your noises of me make fun?/I your breaking/guts on this day» (De Jérica, 1987, pp. 36-38)¹⁶.

However, the use of Euskera is attested in the form of ritual greetings in the exchange of correspondence between members of these elites (Angulo, 1995, p. 162). The salutations are not merely folkloric or nostalgic gestures: using a language that few people spoke could be very useful. For instance, Euskera was ideal for Basques living among foreigners to send codified messages to one another. Dialects, which were especially distinct during this period, also guaranteed that the sender of a message was who he claimed to be: language facilitated trust¹⁷. Indeed, another potential avenue of enquiry for the Social History of Language is dialectal variety. People at the time were conscious of the dialectal richness of the language and its relevance in order to reach out to the lower classes. This is especially noticeable in the evangelizing missions of the time. The Jesuit Julien Manoir learnt Breton in order to preach in Brittany (Ó Ciosáin, 2010, pp. 138-139), as did the Basque members of his order who, by cultivating the literary language and travelling through different provinces in the course of their pious missions, were particularly aware of dialectal variations between these regions and printed different books for each of them. According to the Jesuit Agustín Cardaberaz «The habit is for each to speak their own dialect»¹⁸.

Anyway, learning or using a language did not have a merely instrumental purpose, such as possession of a secret code or indoctrination of the populace. The San Sebastian-born aristocrat Pedro Agustín Girón, to whom we have referred earlier, shows a clearly emotional component when he blamed his «mother for letting me forget Basque, my mother tongue (...) her wish for me to speak Spanish led her to this mistake (...) which I have regretted all my life» (Imízcoz and Bermejo, 2016, p. 508). The attachment that some of these court elites displayed for their native tongue -whether for emotional reasons or political-ideological motivations, or both- drove them to lead relevant initiatives. Father Sarmiento was a steadfast defender of Galician, and Jovellanos wished to found an academy of Asturian (VV.AA., 2002, pp. 16-70); the Valencian notary Carles Ros published numerous linguistic works

¹⁶ «tu me burlar con ruidos?/pues yo te dejar molidos/los tripas en este día».

¹⁷ For example, among merchants, see De Otazu and Díaz de Durana (2008, pp. 128-130).

¹⁸ «Bacoitzac bere Dialecto, edo Izquerari jarraitu ondo: Oitura, Usu, ta Cosstumbrea ala da» (Cardaberaz, 1761, p. 13). The boundary between language(s) and dialect(s) is, in itself, a suggestive field of study. It should be notice that these religious publications could contribute to establishing a dialectal *koine*, being as they were focusing on certain groups of speakers located in a certain region.

(Guardiola i Savall, 2003); the Enlightened *Societat Maonesa* undertook a series of translations into Catalan (Paredes, 1999); and, the Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País promoted the use of Euskera (Esteban, 2018, pp. 241-244).

Therefore, peripheral elites were sensitive to the need to cultivate and use their regional languages. In that context we can understand the Basque exiled in London Pablo Mendibil blaming to the «damned ring» that the teacher used to put on a student for speaking Basque in class. The one who spoke that language would receive the ring and, at the end of the day, he would be punished (Llorens, 1979, pp. 250-252). Although he was writing in the 1820's, in 1772 we find an anonymous Basque who writes to the main enlightened institution of the Country in a similar vein, blaming that at elementary schools Euskera was neglected. Different prohibitions and punishments have been recorded for Basque-speaking children at school during the 18th century. This pedagogic method was well known all over Europe as a tool of language learning, preventing children from talking in their native tongue in order to acquire the other one. However, we should avoid seeing this as a mere imposition. The described punishments would be requested by the parents of the children, as they were interested in them perfecting a language without which no political career was possible. Those same parents were part of the enlightened elites who founded the creation of these public schools at their native towns to fulfil an educational gap. With all that, at some cases, the use of Basque as a teaching language has been proved, mainly for the Christian doctrine explanations, but also for some courtesy rudiments or readings (De Benito, 1994; Alberdi and Aragón, 2005; Imízcoz, 2013; Esteban 2018, pp. 242, 464).

This, far from being a contradictory position, reveals that both aims were complementary (even if it could create tensions inside the elites regarding their priorities). This is how the iron master José Pablo Ulíbarri saw it: according to his testimony, children in his native village, Oquendo, were taught in Spanish and Euskera in different schools. Those going to the Spanish school were those whose plans included emigration to rule the Monarchy over «land and sea» (Ulíbarri, 1975, no number). Because of the inheritance system and a certain tradition, the Basque elite's families had a lasting strategy. While most of the sons went abroad to serve the monarchy, one, normally the elder, remained at their ancient and noble main house. The contact between the two worlds, the local and the global, was quotidian to them. So, those groups whose sights were on life at court did not neglect their native territories, with which they instead kept close ties. Particularly those who physically remained in them, who finished becoming valuable and esteemed intermediaries between their native communities and the kingdom and its institutions (Herbosa, 1992).

Yet, for those who cut all ties with their regions of origin, this was a one-way trip. The famous Colonel of the Royal Spanish Army and man of letters José de Cadalso (whose grandfather, from Biscay, could only speak Euskera, and whose father learnt Spanish in Bilbao) was a native Spanish speaker, learning English and French during his youth. This is a good example of the process of *language shift* that took place in some families. However, the linguistic attitudes of the elites varied broadly. Coming back to those who remained or returned to their communities, they kept or dust off their mother tongue, not only to communicate with peasants but also

for literary purposes. Some of their recreational texts were written for the exclusive consumption of Basque aristocrats, such as the plays in Euskera written by the Count of Peñaflores (1764) and Joaquín Alcívar (1772) (Artola & Chaparro, 2013).

It seems to be in a similar milieu where a couple of extraordinary educative texts in Basque language were produced, showing that certain children of the elites used that language at their first formative steps. The first one is based on a popular school handbook published in 1798 and spread all over Spain. One of its chapters, had been translated into Basque in what seems to be the oldest scholar text in that language that, by the way, seems to be written in a scholar notebook. The translation is addressing the good manners and behaviour to be learned by children (Esteban, 2017). The second text is a compilation of fables, the *Good Tales* (Ipui Onac). Published in 1804, the book joined a series of fables of classic authors like Paedrus, Aesop, La Fontaine and of some Spanish enlightened writers (Esteban, 2018, pp. 247-253). Even though they were written in Basque, the topics of these writings seem to have been preparing the children to have certain kinds of knowledge that would be useful for their later promotion into administrative, military, merchant or clergy careers in the Spanish Monarchy and, foremost, for their proper performance as local notables.

In this regard, we may wonder about the communities of origin. How did they experience this linguistic transformation? It is to be assumed that speakers of a standardised and prestigious language were proud to learn it. But, what about the rest? Reactions to these developments varied broadly. Just as with the Galicians who could not express themselves flawlessly in Castilian, the Basque Jesuit Manuel Larramendi gives a relevant testimony. He was professor at the University of Salamanca and confessor of the Queen Mother Maria Ana of Neuburg and author of the trilingual dictionary Spanish-Euskera-Latin, the basis of the literary use of the Basque tongue, in 1745. As he recalls: «In long conversations in Spanish, the Basques always let something slip that reveals their origin. Castilians laugh at this lightly, while Basques blush for no reason» (Larramendi, 1745). In another work, he presents the other side of the coin: that of the Basques who, having studied abroad, return home to realise that they can hardly speak with their compatriots, becoming foreigners in their own land (Larramendi, 2010).

The Jesuit did not criticise the learning of Spanish *per se*, but the fact that aristocrats focused their attention excessively outside their community, not only concerning language, but also with the adoption of court habits¹⁹. The permeability of provincial elites to these habits led to their becoming distanced from their communities of origin. Whereas during the *Ancien Régime* both cultural realities had been complementary, the gap was to widen in the 19th century. This fracture, which was soon to take on a political dimension, is reflected in a pamphlet published during the liberal triennium (1820-1823), in which a caricatured Basque is presented with recourse to old linguistic clichés: «Be damned the Constitution: if I know where that devil go, me break head (his) and remains take to Madril[sic.]» (Anonymous, 1820, pp. 6-7)²⁰.

¹⁹ As pointed out by Achón (2018).

²⁰ «milla arrayúa el Constitución: si saber a donde andar ese diabru elerromper el cabeza, elos

4. Conclusions

The topic of language learning goes much further than the specific field that relates to the Basque elites at the service of the Hispanic Monarchy. The range of possible approaches is very wide. We may focus on the formal aspects of learning, teaching and textbooks²¹; the learning for missionary or administrative purposes in amerindian languages (Aguirre, 2006; Cunill, 2018); or the more or less forced learning of languages during periods of foreign military occupations (Hantraye, 2005). We may also take a less formal approach, focusing on variants of the same language, such as the development of rhetorical registers that differ from older uses (Elliott, 1994, pp. 44-51) or the emergence of new political terminologies (Fernández, 2010, pp. 138-140). We can go even further. From the outset, Social History of Language has understood that language cannot be separated from the act of communication; the ensemble of signs which had a direct bearing on the content of spoken or written messages (Porter, 1991, pp. 5-7; Achón, Arrieta and Imízcoz, 2016). The topic is, therefore, very broad, as are its chronological and geographical limits, which amply transcend those we have chosen for our case study.

In this article, I have tried to offer a hypothetical frame where, in my view, we can better contextualise, culturally and historically, language learning during the Early Modern Age. We had especially shown examples regarding Basque elites in the Hispanic Monarchy, but locating them within this wider context. Very different sources provide information that awaits for an exhaustive approach: private letters, manuscript essays, published books, archival documentation... we had just sketched different hints that can offer rich information for a history of language learning and habits. So far, we can sum up some final thoughts to comprehend this proposed context.

In order to understand what the learning of languages meant during this period, we have had to present the linguistic attitudes of the age and their evolution over time. We have seen that the Hispanic Monarchy was inhabited by a rich mix of linguistic communities. Philip IV's (reigned 1621-1640) private library reflects this, including over 2000 volumes in Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Catalan, Valencian, Basque, Nahuatl and Chinese (Bouza, 2010, pp. 270-271). In my opinion, this library is the perfect illustration of the linguistic expression of the Hispanic Monarchy; a group of communities which were united, but not assimilated (Elliott, 1992).

Was this plurality compatible with decrees that homogenised the language used in administration? It is true that, anachronistically considered, some of these decrees can be interpreted as the imposition of a «national» language (Burke, 2004, pp. 70-76), and that some Crown officials appear, judging by what they have left in writing, to have had certain restraining linguistic attitudes (Esteban, in press). Much work is still

ondaquines llevar yo al Madri».

²¹ For Spanish learning in the Early Modern Age see Martín and Nevado (2009). It would also be compelling to examine the learning of foreign languages in Spain, following the stimulating example of John Gallagher (in press), who has studied over 300 conversation textbooks published in England in the Early Modern Age.

to be done, although my impression remains that, during the Early Modern Age, this restrictive legislation was directed at certain minorities. In this regard, two political attitudes to language, one more restrained and the other more comprehensive, may be attested. The former attitudes are characteristic of the *Ancien Régime*, but they were indeed wielded against minorities, and any broader effects they may have had were unintended. The latter attitudes are more recent; they were more thoroughly and consciously planned to have a broader effect upon the population.

As such, a setting in which accents were the expression of linguistic plurality evolved into one in which a single variety began gaining the upper hand over the rest. The court was the point where different communities (including the Basques) converged; they had to learn the king's language in order to climb socially, and they transmitted it to their kinsfolk and close acquaintances in their places of origin as part of a cultural capital considered worthy of adoption. Although some local elites kept their regional language, little-by-little they seemed to adopt the language sponsored by the monarchy and forget others. During the 19th century, the combination of emotional and political factors analysed at the beginning of the article directed policies of linguistic homogenisation towards the whole population. Soon, symptoms of exclusion began appearing. In the early 19th century, the Basque writer Juan Ignacio Iztueta regretted that young men from his region travelled away to learn Spanish and forgot Euskera in the process, even going so far as to tell the lower orders to stop speaking a language of «savages» (Iztueta, 1824, p. 27).

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