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LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER IN LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION: A CHRONICLE OF TWO NEW DIFFERENT INITIATIVES ON LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN GASTEIZ, BASQUE COUNTRY

Abstract

Monolingual societies have rarely existed, but certainly will no longer exist in the future. Pannonia is not an exception and many languages are spoken in the region. The vast richness of languages throughout the world continues to be documented and is a source of pride for many activists and scholars. However, the hope for some languages is not all bright, as half of the languages are expected to disappear within a century. In that context, many (language) communities have started to develop, or have been developing, different levels of activism to reverse the situation. One of the regions involved in enthusiastic language activism is the Basque Country, where a minority language has suffered from aggressive policies for centuries and where newly-established languages are fighting to become as visible and as local as others. In this paper, two grass-root initiatives organized in the 2015-2016 school year and concerning minority languages, Basque revitalization and migrants' languages will be analyzed. The objective of this article is to share this experience with the Pannonia region or elsewhere, at the same time as to open up a discussion to discuss how these events, or any event of a similar nature, raises more issues in language planning. The response to these issues will be crucial if we are to maintain this rich language diversity.

Key words: Basque Country, grass-root activism, linguistic diversity, language planning

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Some more issues in language planning: a chronicle of two new different initiatives on linguistic diversity in Gasteiz, Basque Country.

Introduction

The Basque Country in Europe, like many regions in the world, has a very particular and rich linguistic reality, where minority languages are spoken (mainly Basque). There are two major languages of wider communication (Spanish and French) and, in addition to the growing presence of English, immigrant languages are becoming more visible and forming solid communities, which makes language maintenance relatively easy.

Due to the development of this new situation, old discourses on language ideologies and language planning have become outdated and there is a need to update the mindset of the Basque population. Hence, we have a situation in which some citizens champion the economic profit of ‘big’ languages, namely Spanish, French and English; some others argue that full attention must be given to Basque, being the autochthonous minority language spoken across borders; and finally, there is a growing urge to appreciate the linguistic repertoire of those who have come to the Basque Country in recent years.

However, due to some conflicts between locals and foreigners, usually the left-wing specter of the Basque Country (more Basque speaking than the right) has created a new discourse calling for the appreciation of both Basque and immigrant languages, adopting a ‘unity in diversity’ discourse, hoping as well that an inclusive society will achieve the revitalization of the Basque language.

In this paper, two initiatives carried out in the school-year 2015-2016 in Vitoria-Gasteiz (or merely using the Basque name Gasteiz to refer to it, which is the capital of the region known as the Basque Autonomous Community) and organized by pro-Basque activists will be analyzed. The author of this paper worked in both of them, and although ‘Hitz Adina Mintzo’ aimed to foster knowledge about the situation of other minority languages in the world, and ‘Anhitzak’ was a gathering to celebrate linguistic diversity, many similarities and special points of interest can be extracted. This paper is also written to share the linguistic situation of the Basque Country and the enthusiastic activism to revitalize the Basque language, which according to a previous work remains relatively unknown in the broad academic world (author, 2015: 238).

In other words, this paper aims to share the experience of organizing these initiatives, in addition to raising a discussion in order to improve and strengthen future events. Besides, the questions and issues shared might also be helpful to clarify some constraint in the field of language planning. We believe that language communities from the Pannonia region could benefit from some of the findings of this article it could be the beginning of a future collaboration between these two regions in the “periphery of Europe”. It is important to mention that Gasteiz and Basque Country share many aspects such as nationalism, language and political conflicts, populism and awareness of endangered languages. These similarities are the reason to publish in this reputed journal.

Theoretical framework

In order to understand the context of the two initiatives brought here, it will be useful to look briefly at the Basque Country first; language planning and policy next; and, to conclude, the specific situation of Gasteiz, the city where the events are occurring.

The Basque Country and its situation

After a long armed conflict in the Basque Country, a territory in the present day Northern Spain and Southern France, the situation is more stable now. In addition, the Northern Basque Country is articulating its own political entity within France. Note that the Basque Country is currently divided in two different states and three different regions: on the one hand, the Basque Autonomous Community (hereinafter, BAC) and Navarre in the south; and on the other hand, the Northern Basque Country. Pannonia is, in contrast, in a similar situation but only with a more acute division.

As for the language, the BAC is the only region where Basque is co-official and this is representative of the overall situation of the language, as Basque is being revitalized in the BAC, but the language is still undergoing a shift in the other two regions.

Taking into account the linguistic data of the BAC, whose capital is Gasteiz, we can observe that 36.4% of the population are bilinguals in Basque and Spanish; 19.3% can understand Basque and 44,3% is monolingual in Spanish (Basque Government, 2012, p. 18). Even though this data does not look very promising, the percentage of bilinguals in 1981 was 21.9%, and thus it could be

described as a relative success (Basque Government, 2012: 19). The role of the Basque immersion school, the public policies to strengthen the status and use of Basque, and the grassroots-activism have been key factors in this improvement.

However, the main issue is the low level of conversations being held in Euskara, as only 13.3% of them are entirely in Euskara (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2012: 2). This proportion remains stable even though the knowledge among the population is growing, which is due to the relatively small proportion of Basque speakers vis-à-vis Spanish or French speakers, the higher status of these two 'big' languages, and better competence in Spanish and/or French compared to Basque.

Apart from Basque, Spanish and French, a very interesting phenomenon is taking place in the Basque Country, as other languages are more and more spoken in the streets. For instance, in four years, the percentage of conversation being spoken in 'other languages' has increased from 2.6% to 3.7% (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2012: 2). Note that Pannonia has a greater linguistic diversity, as Central Europe and Balkans are known for being cross-roads and linguistic hotspots.

Language shift and language-planning: many ways to avoid 'the unavoidable'

Language shift is the process whereby speakers of a certain language stop using their language and switch to another one, which usually has a higher economic, social or political value (Fishman, 1991). In response to the disappearance of their language, many language communities commit themselves to language revitalization, which aims to modify the social setting affecting speakers' language choices (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006: 69). Modifying the status of a language and its use is part of language planning and policy (LPP).

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) described four traditional categories of LPP, namely Status planning, Corpus planning, Language-in-education (or acquisition) planning and Prestige planning.

We could also distinguish between two different types of LPP depending on their agency, bottom-up or top-down. Each of these has different implications, weaknesses and advantages, but authors like Kamwendo (2005) highlight that grass-root activities usually meet more acceptance and enthusiasm from citizens, who are ultimately responsible for implementing those policies.

Some level of LPP is necessary for the maintenance of our linguistic diversity, as ‘unsupported coexistence mostly [...] leads to minority languages dying’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000: 312). This quote applies equally to indigenous and immigrant minority languages.

There is a widespread concern regarding the detrimental effect that foreign languages could have on local minority languages (Barrieras, 2013: 8), and undoubtedly, this situation requires more perspectives and better strategies to manage diversity. However, there is an alternative discourse spreading in which the revitalization of the local language is claimed to be only possible with the appreciation of immigrant languages at the same time (Barrieras, 2013: 30-31): it is just a matter of changing mindsets.

In this respect, and despite the fact that Ruiz’s (1984) language-as-a-problem and language-as-a-right approaches are both still present, lately the language-as-a-resource approach is becoming more visible.

After all, when talking about Catalan, Welsh, Basque or whichever minority language one has in mind: ‘More diversity does not mean less Catalan, does not mean less integration, does not mean less cohesion. On the contrary!’ (Barrieras, 2013: 33).

In relation to the last paragraphs, various peoples or social groups suffering discrimination, endangerment or simply hardship, seek to connect to each other as a matter of solidarity. Solidarity between equals or peers, and in this case, solidarity between endangered language communities, seems to be vital for the maintenance and revitalization of these languages (Sarasua, 2015).

Vitoria-Gasteiz: ‘Green inside, Green outside’?

Gasteiz is the capital of the Basque Autonomous Community and is home to nearly 245,000 inhabitants (Eustat, 2015). Due to eco-friendly policies and its surrounding green areas, it was named the ‘European Green Capital’ in 2012. This designation was vital for the city in many aspects, and some actors took advantage of the situation to launch innovative initiatives. One of them was the Declaration of Linguistic Ecology, a failed attempt to draw attention to the link between green policies and sustainability of languages.

There are positive and negative signs for the sustainability of Basque in Gasteiz. On the one hand, the growth in knowledge has been outstanding. However, only 21.5% of the population can speak Basque, 19.6% understands

the language and 58.9% of the city is monolingual in Spanish (Eusko Jaurlaritza, 2013: 41). As for conversations observed in the street, 92.4% of them are being held in Spanish, 3.1% in Basque and 4.7% in migrant languages (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2012: 6).

More specifically, in the last two decades the amount of foreign inhabitants has grown and nowadays 9.6% of the population was born outside Spain (Eustat, 2016), in addition to thousands of people coming from Spain in the last five decades (30% of Gasteiz's current population, according to Bikuña, 2001).

This percentage of migrants is the biggest compared to the other Basque cities and the suspicion towards migrants and covert racism expressed by some sectors of the city was exploited by Javier Maroto, the mayor in the 2011-2015 term, in order to win a second term. A member of Partido Popular, the right-wing Spanish nationalist party, he conducted a very aggressive campaign against migrants and against the Basque nationalist left-wing party that was promoting an inclusive and welcoming approach to migrants. The atmosphere turned bitter and conflictive and fights, riots and insults went on for more than a year.

Aiming to soften the situation, to promote a 'colorful Gasteiz', and to achieve the electoral defeat of Maroto in the elections to be held in May 2015, the grass-root initiative 'Gora Gasteiz' (Let's go Gasteiz, in Basque) was announced. Intercultural and peaceful demonstrations, concerts, workshops and parties were organized altruistically until the end of the electoral campaign and this peaceful counter-attack created a unique atmosphere, as well as building a solid common ground for the post-electoral phase.

Maroto won the elections again and did so with more votes than last elections, but his hatred-based campaign made the rest of the parties ally to present an alternative mayor: Gorka Urtaran, from the center-right Basque nationalist party EAJ-PNV.

The name and affiliation of the new mayor was not that important; the crucial aspect was that the city experienced a radical change in its inhabitants and their ideologies: Gasteiz changed from being known as a rather conservative and dull city (González de Langarika, 2007) to a left-wing, participatory one.

‘Small is beautiful’: a brief analysis of two initiatives on linguistic diversity in the city of Gasteiz

Due to the amount of feed-back received by many attendants, scholars and activists from the Basque Country, I decided that sharing our experience with a wider audience would be valuable, especially in order to get feed-back from linguistic diversity activists and scholars all over the world (including Pannonia), and to encourage people to implement similar initiatives elsewhere.

The most meaningful aspects of both initiatives will be mentioned here, including their beginnings, issues they faced, thoughts on future editions, and other aspects. The objective is to provide a fair image of what happened in Gasteiz during the school-year 2015-2016.

Hitz Adina Mintzo: a seminar on minority languages

The Oihaneder Euskararen Etxea, the House of the Basque language, was launched in 2014 in Gasteiz, after decades campaigning for a space where the use of the Basque language would have been natural, a breathing space, quoting Fishman (1991: 58). The City Council decided to take full responsibility of the initiative and it sub-leased the building, provided the whole budget and set up the rules. The NGO who rallied for it was given funds equivalent to the salary of three officers, which were to be selected by them, and even though they would had certain freedom in their work, the rules of the City Council were strict. Besides, the building sub-leased was used for other purposes and initiatives, for instance, Montehermoso Art Space, which functioned only or predominantly in Spanish. Hence, and in the light of the limitations explained, it became almost impossible to offer a breathing space to the scattered Basque speakers of the city.

Anyway, the officers of Oihaneder offered this author the opportunity to organize something related to minority languages, given that the author had been trained in the Hans Rausing Endangered Language Program at SOAS University. I decided to propose a seminar on minority languages, each month inviting a speaker of a minority language, and trying, whenever possible, to do it in Basque or avoiding languages of wider communication. The name ‘Hitz Adina Mintzo’ was the chosen one, translated into English as ‘As many languages as there are words.’

The talks would be 1 hour 45 minutes long and the outline would be as follows:

- An introduction to the history, features, language family, sociolinguistic situation, etc. of the language (45 minutes)
- An open interview from the audience with whatever questions they had (30 minutes)
- A brief lesson to learn basic expressions and words in that language (15 minutes)

In addition, the following day we would offer a cultural event related to that language, for example, a music concert, film screening, documentaries, or poetry exhibition. The seminar was organized the third Wednesday and Thursday of each month, beginning in September and finishing in April. In May, we would organize *Udaberri Jaia* or the Spring Fest, a music festival of minority language music bands.

Besides, talks conducted in English were translated to Basque, lecturers would be paid enough to cover their journey and accommodation, extensive promotion of the events was carried out and all the talks and other news were uploaded to a blog.



Figure 1: Official poster of Hitz Adina Mintzo, announcing the events in fall 2015.

Each of the 'events' will be briefly analyzed below:

- September 2015: introductory talk

We invited Basque academic Andoni Barreña and Galician activist and writer Séchu Sendé to the first lecture. The first speaker talked about linguistic diversity worldwide and the reasons that languages disappear, whereas the second shared his experience in Galicia as well as performing a couple of language-related magic tricks. We wanted to have an informative but entertaining first talk and it was a great success; in fact, 50 people showed up, much more than we expected. Unfortunately, we did not promote the next event as much as this one and the result created concerns amongst the organizers.

- October 2015: Galician

Although we decided that Galician researcher Isaac Xubin would do his talk in Basque, he did not feel comfortable doing so and switched to Galician. We also invited Juan Vinagre, a Galician language-related Fala speaker from Southern Spain. Only 11 people showed up to the event, most of them friends with the organizers, and it was a serious disappointment.

As for the cultural event, the singer Ses performed a very energetic concert in front of a delighted audience. She showed great commitment and it was by far the best cultural event of Hitz Adina Mintzo.

- November 2015: Nawat (El Salvador)

With apparently less than 300 hundred speakers, it was a considerable success to invite the British linguist Alan R. King, based in the Basque Country. He was one of the creators of Nawat's first grammar, dictionary and language courses, so it was a pleasure to listen to him. In addition, we skyped with activists Werner (Colectivo Tzunejekat) and Paula, who dared to sing a few songs live. The attendance was acceptable (around 25 people) and the interaction with the audience was positive.

The cultural event turned to be a disaster, as we wanted to screen the documentary 'El Tigre y el Venado' about one of the few survivors of the Nawat massacre, but the sound quality was very poor, the Spanish of the main character could not be understood and the internet connection collapsed several times.

- December 2015: Welsh

We invited Irish sociolinguist Patrick Carlin, who was at that moment writing a book on LPP in Ireland, Wales and Scotland. He spoke fluent Basque, but it had been some years since he spoke Basque on a regular basis and in public, so in occasions he struggled with the language. He brilliantly conducted the language lesson section and the 30 people attending the event were very active.

As for the cultural event, Gai Toms performed a gig and the children choir 'Crescendo' sang 'Ymlaen, ymlaen,' as a way to appreciate what Welsh kids did for the Basque language some years ago¹. The concert was appealing, but apart from the parents of the singers in the choir (who obviously wanted to hear more than one song from them), not many people showed up.

- January 2016: Asturian

We intended to organize a special event as we arranged to bring a linguist (Xulio Viejo), an activist for language rights (Anxel Del Río) and an activist leader from a multidisciplinary NGO (Inaciu Galán). At the last moment Xulio withdrew due to a family issue and we had to change our plan, giving the part of Xulio to Inaciu. The talk was very vivid and enlightening and 35 people showed up, which was very inspiring for us. However, some of the attendants came from the local Asturian Association, whose attitudes were against the language.

The concert by the band Corzobeyos was also very dynamic and warm.

- February 2016: Tamazight

Catalonia-based writer Kaissa Ould Braham was the invited guest and spoke in a mixture of Catalan and Spanish, doing a great job of transmitting her passion and knowledge about the situation of the Amazigh people. She did not talk so much about the language, but the 35 people present that day were not bothered, as they interacted with Kaissa quite a lot. As in the screening of the documentary 'Arrhash', many Amazigh people attended the talk, which it was great to be a part of. The interesting documentary, which was on the use of chemical weapons by Spain during the colonial wars, however, did not attract many people to the event.

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIwd0vhj-bE>

- March 2016: Gascon

Again, 35 people came to the talk given by Franck Dolosor, a famous TV presenter from public Basque television. Even though he lacks training in linguistics and his only link to the language is a weak family kinship, he prepared the talk with great passion and his lecture was probably the best one in terms of energy and public's response.

As for the concert, not many people attended and the musicians did not really prepare the songs, as they later admitted.

- April 2016: Kurdish

We scheduled Kurdish last in the season as we knew that Basque people (especially Basque speakers) feel a unique connection with the Kurds. We invited Birgül Yılmaz from SOAS University and Teresa Pradera translated from English into Basque. Nevertheless, due to the over-offer of cultural events that week in the city (for example, three other events were happening in the same building at the same time) 'only' 23 people showed up to the talk, which was very clear, informational and enlightening. The organizers should have been more patient and maybe scheduled Kurdish for next year, as the lecturer had presented her thesis presented that week and did not have time to prepare her presentation carefully. The cultural event was a poetry exhibition by Birgül and translation of poetry into Basque by local poet Miren Díaz de Arkaia, but the organization was last-minute and hurried. Even though it did not turn out badly, it should have had been prepared with more time and attention. On top of that, this was the poorest cultural event in terms of attendance: there were only 8 people, and they did not stay for the whole exhibition.

- May 2016: Udaberri Jaia

This was the second Spring Fest organized by us and the first one was sincerely overwhelming: 2,000 people attended the three concerts and there was a massive response from the audience and musicians. This year, however, the budget decreased 50% and we only invited a well-known folk-rock band from Asturias (Dixebra) and a recently-started garage-punk band from Galicia (Terbutalina). The first concert had a good response, but the second one, being a more specific music genre, had much less audience. However, the atmosphere of the festival was good and both bands showed their delight to be there.

In the light of this review, many things would need to change to improve future editions of *Hitz Adina Mintzo*. First of all, we experienced irregular attendance, as we were only satisfied with the numbers of some of the talks and cultural events. We thought we were going to finish strongly with Kurdish, but the attendance in both events was a bit disappointing. In this respect, the most attended events were the languages with a big diaspora community in the city (Asturian and Tamazight, for example) or whenever a big figure came to talk (September and March). Besides, Gasteiz being a small city with a very rich cultural offer, it turned out to be demanding to attract people, even more so for two events in a row. Many potential attendants explained they would have loved to come, but their hectic life would not allow them.

Secondly, the coverage by the media was sufficient overall, especially by the local radios and magazines. However, the national media did not serve us so well. For instance, the Basque national newspaper did interview some lecturers, but forgot to mention the name of the seminar (*Hitz Adina Mintzo*), making it difficult to promote the event. The Basque TV did not give us any coverage whatsoever. On one day, the TV and members from almost all the political parties were following an event in a room next to us, but did not show any interest in what was happening some meters away.

Thirdly, and bearing in mind the ‘breathing space function’ of the building/initiative, the aim was to conduct everything or almost everything in Basque. We found two complications here: on the one hand, out of nine lecturers five presented in Basque (six considering the talk on Kurdish, which was translated). I would personally love to do these activities exclusively in Basque, aligning with the purpose of Oihaneder, but at the same time, I did not want to refuse to have interesting lecturers. On the other hand, we found that some people attended the talks hoping that it would have been in Spanish; but once they heard that it was Basque, they walked out of the room. Anyway, we also did something interesting by asking our non-Basque speaking lecturers to speak in their language. By doing so, dozens of people listened to Galician, Asturian and Catalan for almost two hours. The limitation is that they will not be able to understand Quechua or Fula, for example, due to the linguistic distance between Spanish and non-Iberian Romance languages.

Finally, it must be admitted that ‘*Hitz Adina Mintzo*’ was the most expensive initiative organized by Oihaneder. The House of the Basque language has an annual budget of 300,000€ and everything must be funded from that money, including the salaries of the three officers. ‘*Hitz Adina Mintzo*’ paid a considerable amount

of money towards the lecturers, musicians, sound technicians, promotion and many other costs; and the officers told me that they could not afford another year along the same lines.

Hence, the officers and I decided to change some aspects in order to strengthen this seminar:

- Get rid of the cultural event, in order to save money, have more time to organize the talk and be able to attract more people
- Sign a partnership with UEU (Basque Summer University) and the University of the Basque Country, according to which students attending Hitz Adina Mintzo would get a certificate for their résumé
- Organize another introductory talk at the University and take advantage of this to promote Hitz Adina Mintzo
- Adapt the costs and be more austere. For example, inviting Translation students to translate the talks in English or spending less in paper promotion

Based on these changes, the languages for the next school-year were already arranged in July 2016:

- September 2016: introductory talk by Carme Junyent
- October 2016: a selection of South American endangered languages, in collaboration with Garabide
- November 2016: Catalan by Jordi Serra
- December 2016: Aragonese by Iris Campos
- January 2017: Guernesiais by Julia Sallabank
- February 2017: Irish Gaelic by Patrick Carlin
- March 2017: Lenca by Alan R King
- April 2017: Hokkien by Tze Wei Sim

As I write these lines, the first five talks have already happened, and we are making good progress, albeit attendance is still too irregular.

Anhitzak: gathering languages and color together

As mentioned above, this one-day event was a celebration of linguistic diversity in Gasteiz, taking into account the revitalization of Basque in this context. Anhitzak is a play on words between the Basque words ‘diverse’ (*anitzak*) and ‘words’ (*hitzak*) and the event has to be contextualized within the social

conflict that erupted before the May 25th 2015 elections. This aforementioned clash between two radically different discourses on diversity and migration opened new scenarios for immigration and inclusiveness, but languages were neglected in this discussion until the city council of Gasteiz decided to sublease the project Anhitzak to Topagunea, the umbrella movement of pro Basque language organizations in the Basque Country

Within that partnership, the City Council provided the money, the image and the resources for the promotion of the event; Topagunea provided two part-time officers and hired two experienced activists in the sphere of linguistic diversity (Ruben Sánchez and this author, hereafter referred to as the technicians) and local NGOs were to contribute to promotion and the signing up of potential participants.

Ruben and my role was two-folded: on the one hand, being both from Gasteiz, be a link between the Council and Topagunea in whatever issue or duty they might have; and on the other, to contact key local actors so that between all of us could attract as many people as we could for the event.

Precisely speaking, the event was designed as follows:

- Presentation of the official video of Anhitzak, where families were recorded speaking in their mother tongue(s)
- An opening lecture by the mayor, who was able to become mayor with a pro-diversity message, despite being center-right
- A world-café on the importance of maintaining and valuing linguistic diversity. We placed the participants according to the language of their choosing, 10 tables in total. Each table would write their conclusions in a chalkboard and then, the Topagunea Four (i.e. the two permanent officers, Rubén and I) would publish these findings online.
- Games to learn few expressions in Basque, for example, ‘My name is Alimou, and yours?’
- A cultural event consisting of poetry recitals, traditional songs, open microphone to hear all the languages of the event, etc.

In December 2015, the date was set up for February 21st, International Mother Tongue Day, but soon after it was delayed by one week. A formal meeting was called in early January with all the actors involved, and a planning session was proposed. Everyone accepted their responsibilities and promised to work

according to their availability. However, due to orders from the Office of Basque of the City Council, the organization of the event was put on hold for more than two months; until they announced that the event would be held in three weeks. Nevertheless, the actors and technicians were quick enough to convince 102 people to come to the event and the Topagunea Four arranged all the requirements (musicians, conductor, sound-technician, translators, catering) with great speed. We required potential participants to sign up in advance, so that we could arrange the tables and materials according to the languages spoken by them.

Broadly speaking, the interaction between organizers and different key local actors was very rewarding, but three main conflicts arose between them. The first concerned 'Cáritas' vs 'Topagunea'. Cáritas is the main aid NGO in Spain and it was definitely one of the main assets of the event. They showed interest in helping out with the organization, but one month before the event, when we asked their permission to put their logo in the official poster, they withdrew, arguing that they would only work directly with the City Council, not with entities like Topagunea. On the other hand, and taking into account that Caritas is a Spanish Catholic Church-based statewide organization and Topagunea being a Basque Country-based entity, they might have thought that their help in Anhitzak could be orientated towards Basque nationalist goals and initiatives.

Secondly, the University of the Basque Country (EHU) has a considerable Philology Department in Gasteiz and the Dean promised that many people would join Anhitzak from EHU. However, nothing else was heard of them after the first meeting.

Third was the issue involving the Office of Equality and Co-Service of the City Council, another great asset for the success of the event. This was perhaps the most painful conflict with anyone involved, as two public services from the same government clashed. The Topagunea Four decided to translate the fliers into some immigrant languages, for example, English, French, Arabic and Tamazight. The head of the department furiously called the organizers threatening that they would stop helping the event unless we only published the fliers in Basque and Spanish. Their argument, which is understandable, was that translations should have been made to all the languages, not just some of them. The manner of the protest was too vehement and we honestly think that these threats were the Office's way to express their disappointment for being left out from key decisions regarding the event.



Picture 2: Official poster of Anhitzak. Apparently, the Arabic word was not what the organizers thought and Arabic speakers protested. Unfortunately, the posters were already visible all over the city.

After all the doubts regarding the organization of Anhitzak, April 16th finally arrived. Even though the event did not get a fair promotion in the media and despite the withdrawal of many attendants, 94 people showed up to the event in the end, a relative success taking into account the context.

The event ran smoothly, and overall, the atmosphere felt was as if something very unique, and as if something very special for community building was happening². However, some problems were observed that provide insightful comments.

For example, in the welcoming video³, many languages were displayed but apparently not Urdu. The Urdu speaking participants vehemently protested in front of everyone and especially to the Mayor, although they were later convinced somehow that they would have the opportunity to show their language in the concluding ceremony.

During the world cafes, the quality of the discussions in the tables was very different: in some tables they did not have time to write down the conclusions, as the discussion became engaging; in some others, the attendants were visibly bored and in some others, for example, women did not have the opportunity to participate as much as men.

In some cases, arguments fired up a bit when the discussion drove towards unexpected areas. For instance, a Chinese attendant threatened to leave when one of the officers asked him 'which Chinese do you speak'. His reply was

2 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DLIuDQBtEo> to watch a short video of the event

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lv00wo1Aw4>

‘What kind of question is that? There is only one Chinese language’. At other times, Spanish monolinguals showed little interest in learning more languages (included the local minoritized one, Basque)

Finally, the cultural exhibition was very warm and low-key, which was a good contrast to end the event. Right before finishing, attendants were given the opportunity to speak in their language in the open microphone, especially thinking about those who could not speak in their language during Anhitzak. It turned out to be hard to stop their desire to speak publicly, but it was a necessary decision, as we could hear other languages such as Catalan, Tagalog, Uzbek, Fula/Pulaar and so on.

After the event, the Office of Basque congratulated the volunteers and staff from Topagunea and Oihaneder Euskararen Etxea (the place where it took place, as in Hitz Adina Mintzo). They also showed their intention to organize Anhitzak every two years and plan something different related to linguistic diversity on the year in between.

Anhitzak in brief	Attendants	94 people 54 women	+ 34 kids	10 collaborators	Budget: 30.000€
Languages used in the World Cafe	Basque (2)	Spanish (2)	English	Arabic	Urdu
Portuguese	French	Wolof	Pula	More languages in the event	Tamazight
Tagalog	Hausa	Han	Kimbundu	Czech	German
Hungarian	Tamil	Kazakh	Japanese	Catalan	Italian
Galician	Welsh	Guarani	Georgian	Russian	Polish
Yoruba	Mandinka	Serer	Cape Verdean Creole		Spanish SL

Table 1. Anhitzak in a nutshell. Source: Author.

Brief discussion in the light of ‘Hitz Adina Mintzo’, ‘Anhitzak’ and Gasteiz’s context

After narrating the experience of organizing these two events, which were quite wide in their scope and objectives, some reflections will be shared. The aim of this section is to relate these two initiatives with some constraints of language

planning and language revitalization, as well as to look deeper into the Gasteiz's context.

Firstly, it should be clear that the situation and amount of human, economic and legal resources of the Basque language community in the BAC is quite unique. In a global context where most of the endangered languages are located in under-developed countries (Romaine, 2016), being able to organize these two events is quite privileged. In fact, some of the lecturers in Hitz Adina Mintzo and some other scholars have shown their surprise when they learned about these events. We could say that the main target of the two is prestige planning, as we were trying to 'modify the social settings' that cause this language shift. In order to improve minority languages' poor recognition and value, our initiatives put a strong emphasis on valuing linguistic diversity and softening the inherent negativity of being part of a minority. We think that, at least, this objective has been easily achieved. Perhaps, we could argue that prestige planning is, among the other type of planning, the easiest one, as it does not entail any strong commitment and radical consequences.

However, there is a related second aspect that might not have been covered, especially taking into account the urge of the Basque language to become a widely used language beyond some smaller urban and rural areas. In both cases, Euskara was chosen as either the 'hegemonic language' in Hitz Adina Mintzo or 'the language-for-integration' in Anhitzak. In the former, all the slides were translated to Basque, the knowledge of Euskara was prioritized when selecting potential speakers and speakers of Romance languages were asked to conduct their lectures on their language, and when not possible, Spanish or English lectures were translated to Basque. Nevertheless, we struggled to find speakers of minority languages who could also speak Basque and non-Basques showed their opposition when they learned that Hitz Adina Mintzo was only in Basque. As for Anhitzak, Basque was given more presence and many of the different games were orientated towards valuing, learning and using Basque. However, *de facto* vehicular language of this event was Spanish, as this is, currently, the predominant language in Gasteiz's daily life. Having said that, we wonder if this new discourse of 'Xish as a language-for-integration' or 'the creation of breathing spaces for Xish' are naïve statements and ideals, as in the end, the 'big' languages show their strength and occupy their position. Clearly, these two events did not meaningfully improve the use of the minoritized language.

During the last two years, many towns and neighborhoods in the Basque Country have attempted to modify the social settings of bilingual uneven

communities, encouraging Spanish monolinguals to develop some receptive knowledge of the language and asking them to carry out bilingual conversations. Examples like *'75 ordu euskaraz Agurainen'* ('75 hours in Basque at Agurain') and *'Egia Euskaraz'* ('Egia in Basque') proposed some alternatives not to systematically switch to Spanish, but they were limited in time. Next months will be important to observe whether these initiatives develop any further or not.

Thirdly, and going back to Kamwendo's thought on the agency of language planning, the experience we had with public institutions tells us that efforts should be made to strengthen grassroots activism, as it seems to attract more people and engages participation. However, we have observed that bottom-up activities must fight against three major burdens, namely time and money constraints, conflicts with other bottom-up actors and difficulties to reach a wider audience, for example, attracting people other than enthusiastic language activists.

NGOs and activists have innovative and meaningful ideas, but sometimes, they are unable to apply them in good conditions. For example, it was a great disappointment not to reach the Welsh audience with the video of a Basque choir singing in Welsh, as the Welsh did with us. We dreamed about 'returning the favor', but we failed to do it for many reasons already explained.

Besides, it seems to be quite discouraging to see fights between supposedly allied actors in activism, as it makes actors waste a great deal of energy and shows that precariousness, uncertainty and frictions among grass-root initiatives are detrimental. Activism needs a more sensitive approach to encourage participation and solidarity. In this sense, a better distribution of resources and sufficient funding for NGOs and activists will undoubtedly help.

And last but not least, these two initiatives were originated from a 'language-as-a-resource' approach, regarding language diversity as an advantage that needs to be valued, utilized and preserve. Over all, the response from the citizens of Gasteiz has been very positive. Besides, and bearing in mind that a xenophobic mayor was ousted from its position due to civic mobilization, there are some evidence to think that a new discourse where local minorities and migrants' groups work together might be emerging. However, everything that glitters is not gold and we have found that covert language ideologies may contradict our statements and perspectives. On the one hand, it would be interesting to look at Basque speakers' views on migrants, and to determine whether their support to different initiatives is instrumental (change the mayor) or intrinsic

(create a better world; revitalize all the languages; etc.). On the other hand, migrants attending these two events have also shown that their initial sympathy towards Basque and diversity in general could be mitigated by stronger beliefs. For instance, self-hatred feelings towards one's own language or celebration of monolingualism were observed in Anhitzak and Hitz Adina Mintzo.

The findings of this small article are not sufficient to generalize or make irrevocable statements, but some interesting thoughts and dilemmas for language planning have been shared.

Concluding remarks

As the work both historically and currently done for the Basque language is not that well-known outside the Basque Country, I have presented in this paper two initiatives that were organized in the same school year and in the same city, hoping that scholars and practitioners from Pannonia and elsewhere could learn from these experiences. Also, the author hopes to receive some feed-back from them, in order to improve future events.

In both cases, it was the first time organizing events of this nature, so we could argue that it was a great opportunity to raise a discussion on linguistic diversity and cooperation between different minorities. However, this paper has showed that both events could be improved in many aspects and time will decide whether the following editions of the events, if they are to be repeated, will be better organized. More importantly, it remains to be seen if these events will reach a wider audience in a more appealing manner.

Finally, some thoughts on the context of the events and some reflections based on the events have also been added, showing that 1) prestige planning could be relatively simple, comparing to other planning; 2) majority languages also 'find their way' to 'break into' initiatives initially aimed to revitalize a minority language or preserve linguistic diversity; 3) bottom-up planning could be more effective than top-down, but lack of resources and time hamper the results of these initiatives; and 4) activists and planners naïvely claim and celebrate linguistic diversity, attempting to gather migrants and local minority language speakers, but language ideologies seem to be more complicated than that.

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UČEĆI JEDNI OD DRUGIH U REVITALIZACIJI JEZIKA: KRONIKA DVIJE NOVE INICIJATIVE O JEZIČNOJ RAZNOLIKOSTI U GASTEIZU, BASKIJA.

Sažetak

Jednojezična društva su rijetko postojala u prošlosti, ali zasigurno više nikada neće postojati u budućnosti. Panonija nije iznimka. Mnogi se jezici koriste u regiji. Ogromno bogatstvo jezika diljem svijeta nastavlja se dokumentirati i biva izvorom ponosa mnogim aktivistima i učenjacima. Međutim, nada nije posve prisutna za neke jezike, budući da se očekuje nestanak polovice jezika unutar stoljeća. U tom kontekstu, mnoge (jezične) zajednice pokrenule su razvoj ili već neko vrijeme razvijaju različite razine aktivizma da bi obrnule situaciju. Jedna od regija uključena u entuzijastični jezični aktivizam je Baskija u kojoj manjinski jezik stoljećima pati od agresivnih politika i u kojoj se novostvoreni jezici bore da postanu vidljivi i lokalni. U ovom radu će se analizirati dvije inicijative koje se tiču manjinskih jezika organizirane u školskoj godini 2015-2016, Baskijska revitalizacija i migrantski jezici. Cilj članka je podijeliti ovo iskustvo s regijom Panonije i drugima, a u isto vrijeme i otvoriti raspravu o tim događajima ili bilo kojem događaju iste prirode koji postavljaju daljnja pitanja o planiranju jezika. Odgovor na ova pitanja bit će ključan ako želimo održati ovu bogatu jezičnu raznolikost.

Ključne riječi: Baskija, aktivizam, lingvistička raznolikost, planiranje jezika
Priznanja: *Uz iskrene zahvale Robbieju Penmanu i Juliji Sallabank čiji su pronicljivi komentari pomogli poboljšati ovaj članak.*