Migrant Learners of Basque as New Speakers: Language Authenticity and Belonging

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Abstract: Language issues related to identity negotiation in minoritised language contexts, including those related to the category of “new speakers”, have often been studied in relation to local language dichotomies and national populations. This paper will examine identity construction among migrant learners of Basque from outside of Spain, looking at migrants as a diverse population and as a particular group of new speakers of Basque. By analysing the ways in which migrant learners position themselves as (not) belonging to “Basqueness” as a group identity, it points to the underlying language ideologies that guide language and identity categories, such as native Basque speakers or new speakers, within the essentialising and non-essentialising ideological influences. It will aim to answer how migrants employ identity categories or contest their use in discourse and establish the extent of the relation between perceived linguistic competence in Basque, the use of Basque by migrants and the ideologies of authenticity, legitimacy and ownership. The methodology applied is ethnographically oriented and linguistic data analysis is performed through a thematic discourse analysis.

Keywords: Basque language; new speakers; migration; identity; language ideologies

1. Introduction

Globalisation has brought about a significant change in the sociolinguistic aspects of societies due to the ever increasing numbers and patterns of transnational mobility of people, a phenomenon defined by Vertovec (2007) as superdiversity. Increasing diversity in migratory patterns, numbers of migrants and forms of technologically mediated communication are also starting to be visible in spaces that could normally be considered peripheral to this phenomenon (Wang et al. 2014). For example, spaces within established political states, which, typically, have been previously associated with local minoritised vs. state or global language dichotomies and political struggles for autonomy, have also opened themselves up to an increased influx of migrants. The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) could be considered as one of such spaces. While perhaps this increase in numbers of migrants to the BAC is not as high as in other communities of Spain\(^1\), it, nevertheless, impacts the use and acquisition of Basque within the region. It does so not just in terms of statistical numbers of speakers but also at the level of language ideologies and local group identity.

Language is understood here as resources, formed by any communicative means (linguistic, semiotic, sociocultural) that form a repertoire (Gumperz 1972) and whose sets are “language-ideologically associated with a language, as a unit” (Blommaert 2013). Migration brings with itself increased contact and linkages between various linguistic repertoires, belonging not only to Basque and Spanish, but also migrant (first) languages, which would otherwise be unlikely to result in contact. New forms of contact lead to the creation of new types of communicative practices connected to the acquisition of hybrid (code-switching), partial (incomplete repertoires, partial competence in a language) and new linguistic resources (emerging vocabulary or styles), enriching the repertoires of migrants, but also to the acquisition and re-definition of language ideologies by migrants. These could, for example, be related to the ownership and authenticity of speakers, and the types of identities...
associated with the acquired resources. In migratory contexts, the linguistic performance of identity, i.e., the way in which we assume temporary roles in discourse (Bucholtz and Hall 2005) through the use of linguistic resources, can be multifaceted and each type of resources used may have different language ideological impact depending on the space and scale (Collins et al. 2009) in which they are put to use.

This paper focuses on the space-scale of the Basque Autonomous Community of Spain (BAC) to analyse the ways in which migrant learners signal their belonging to the group identity of “Basqueness”, or are other-ascribed as such, through the notion of “positioning” (Jaffe 2009) in discourse and interaction. The analysis evolves around, but does not limit itself to, instances of use of Basque resources and how these are mobilised to signal identity positionings. This paper aims to discover the role of Basque language resources in the construction of individual identities on the ingroup vs. outgroup axis with relation to the group identity of “Basqueness”. It seeks to answer what the underlying language ideologies behind such positionings are and the extent to which they guide identity categories assumed by or ascribed to migrant learners, such as Basque speaker, migrant or new speaker. It studies how migrants employ these identity categories or contest them and establish the extent of the relation between perceived linguistic competence in Basque, the use of Basque by migrants and the ideologies of authenticity (Coupland 2010), legitimacy and language ownership (Sallabank and Marquis 2018) that very often underline the identity of a (new) language speaker. The analysis allows the determination of, on a macro level, the role that Basque language resources play in defining “Basqueness” and the identity categories applied in discourse and language policies addressed to migrant learners of Basque.

The analysis was carried out using transcribed data collected in a linguistic ethnographic study that took place in 2013 over the period of one teaching semester (3 months) and, for the most part, comprised classroom observations of two groups of students on the Aisa Basque language course for migrants. The students were adults of various ages (ranging from high school students to retirees) and first language and national backgrounds (mainly from Latin America—27 participants (Peru, Colombia); Europe (Germany, Poland, France); and Africa (Morocco)). The data were analysed using discourse analytical methods and content analysis of interactional data for the purpose of identifying language ideologies, especially those of speaker authenticity, legitimacy and ownership. Data were also collected via ethnographic semi-structured interviews with 63 migrant Basque learners from various language and national backgrounds and several places of residence in the BAC. The data set also incorporates additional data used for the purpose of triangulation, such as policy documents and language promotional materials directed at migrants. Further details regarding methodology are explained in Section 3.

As this paper shows in the analysis in Section 4, “Basqueness” turned out to be defined in migrant policies and in the classroom discourse as a group identity separate from “Spanishness” and, as such, was also stated by migrant learners as one of the reasons for learning Basque. This separate group identity was very often underscored by the presence of Basque resources in the space-time scales of the BAC, but also by their use to migrants and by migrant learners. This use and the importance of language in group identity construction were highlighted by the identity categories that contained Basque language labels, such as Euskaldun or Euskaldunberria (Ortega et al. 2015). “Basqueness” is also represented as moving away from the traditionally essentialising, conventional forms of authenticity (Jaffe 2016), which consider legitimacy on the basis of full native-like language repertoires, to incorporate language ownership and “new speaker” identities as based on partial or mixed language resources. Such attempts can be seen in the analysis of policy and institutional documents that try to incorporate migrant learners into the group of potential “new speakers” of Basque based on incomplete language repertoires. Migrant learners adopt the new speaker identity at times as a sign of integration into “Basqueness”. Nevertheless, this integration is still often projected in essentialist terms and implies the use of full Basque repertoire and fluency as a speaker. This issue is, however,
approached somewhat differently when it comes to economic integration. Basic level students, for example, rather than assuming that full resource ownership of the language is the only kind of economically valuable repertoire, see partial resources as a vehicle for economic advantage and, in this way, redefine the essentialising ideologies around the ownership of language. Proficient Basque speakers see the economic value of Basque language in a similar way, pushing the “nativeness” qualities to the background.

The move away from the essentialising ideological basis of defining language and its speakers, from one language–one nation ideologies and from the ownership of full language repertoires, as well as the fact that migrant learners address this move in their own positioning in discourse, leads to a redefinition of “Basqueness” as a group identity. It is an attempt at making this group identity more inclusive and fluid, in line with the more superdiverse and non-essentialising conceptualisations of identity and belonging. In this way, the policies addressed to migrants also endorse migrant learners as potential new speakers. However, while migrant learners indeed see the policy attempts and initiatives such as Basque language courses as a potential path to integration, their accounts also show that old conventional ideologies can prevail in discourse positionings, and full repertoire speakers of Basque are often assumed by them as a model for inclusion in the authentic Basque identity.

2. Theoretical Perspectives on Identity and Language: Essentialising and Non-Essentialising Ideologies in the Construction of (New) Speakers

Languages are intrinsically linked to identity, in that our use of language can define us as members of different communities of practice (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2018, p. 97). With a variety of language resources in our possession comes a range of forms of social identification. However, especially in situations of migration and mobility, certain forms of multilingualism and linguistic resources can be evaluated “as assets, whereas others are deemed problematic” depending on who uses them and in what context (Horner and Dailey-O’Cain 2019, p. 2).

Linguistic resources used by a particular speaker are also indexically linked with certain identity categories (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Silverstein (1992) states that such links related to indexical processes are the vehicles for (language) ideologies to reveal themselves in discourse. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994, p. 55) define ideologies as linking the communicative signs, such as language resources, with the social meanings attached to them (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, p. 55). Ideologies become embedded in and reproduced through consistent cultural and discursive practices (Godley et al. 2007; Razfar and Rumenapp 2012). This happens through indexicality, in that linguistic forms become associated with particular social meanings or social categories (ethnicity, class), which then leads to the rationalisation and systematisation of such associations (Silverstein 1992; Milroy 2004). The use (or lack thereof) of particular linguistic forms or linguistic resources and possession of particular linguistic repertoires can then (in)validate certain speaker identities. This may pose potential problems, especially for migrant speakers, as they navigate both the new social spaces they enter and between old and new linguistic resources available to them. For example, newly acquired language resources in Batua—standard Basque—used by migrants might be indexically linked to certain social class or to non-native speaker categories, which, in turn, might render migrants self-projected or other-ascribed positioning as non-legitimate speakers in certain contexts.

Gal and Irvine (1995) distinguish three ideological processes, through which ideologies surge and persist in discourse: iconicity, recursiveness and erasure. Iconicity is a process that leads to the transformation of the linguistic features that index social groups or activities into apparent iconic representations of them, “as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent essence” (Irvine and Gal 2000, p. 37). For example, the ideology behind the concept of native speaker renders this speaker type iconically as the model that possesses an institutionally approved, correct repertoire and model language resources, such as a native accent. Recursiveness “involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (Gal and
Irvine 1995). The opposing processes and qualities become projected from one level to another, creating further oppositions. In the Basque context, for instance, the ideology behind the attitudes towards the learning of Basque as a difficult language or as a less useful language within the BAC is prevalent among those considered native to the Basque space and it becomes projected onto migrants’ attitudes—an example contradictory to this recursive projection is discussed in data extract 10. Finally, erasure occurs when ideology “renders some persons, activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible” (Gal and Irvine 1995). The erasure of iconic native speaker qualities can appear when (proficient) migrant speakers and their resources in Basque are put in an economic context where they become professional assets, as in extract 10.

To signal their identification through language and to show their relationship with a given identity label, speakers use “moment-by-moment choices” also known as “positioning” choices, which put them in relation to a given identity category at any moment in the interaction (Johnstone 2007, p. 51). Positioning reflects the interlocutors’ momentary projections of identity categories through either: affective—how speakers project themselves emotionally; or epistemic stances—conveying the degree of the speaker’s certainty about their propositions, i.e., their degree of knowledge (Jaffe 2009, p. 7; Johnstone 2007, p. 51). In this way, arriving at a particular identity is seen more as a process, rather than a predefined category assumption.

In fact, such temporary positioning choices point to the fact that identities are not only constructed in discourse and interaction, but are also negotiated (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004, p. 1) as speakers try to assume or contest available identity categories. The kinds of identity categories available to speakers at hand, their significance, and the way in which language resources are linked to particular positionings are constructed and mediated through (language) ideologies. Ideologies present in a given context restrain the set of available speaker positionings in the interactive negotiation process. This is particularly visible in multilingual settings in which the different ideologies of language restrict the varieties that can be spoken by what kinds of speakers and in what context (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004, p. 1), meaning that the forms of identity available, for example to migrants, might be different depending on the sociocultural space they enter, and these forms may be challenged or contested (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004, p. 3). For example, ideologies of authenticity may make migrant learner accents that do not belong to the traditionally authorised varieties of Basque (such as varieties of Basque from the area of Gipuzkoa) appear less likely as belonging to full repertoire owners or native speakers of Basque and, therefore, not authentic as speakers of Basque. However, Pavlenko and Blackledge also point out that negotiation can be carried out in other, more diverse ways, such as “invention and use of new linguistic varieties” or forms of talk, “second language learning, literacy learning, appropriation of new rhetorical strategies and creation of new identity narratives” (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004, p. 23).

Regardless of the language means used to realise identity positionings, the way that any language resources are perceived and projected in language attitudes, language ideologies and between interlocutors is inseparable from political arrangements and relations of power (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). These have been particularly influential in minoritised language contexts. Jaffe (2007, 2001) proposed that previously, discourses related to minority language revitalisation tended to reproduce and circulate the hegemonic, essentialising nation-state ideologies when it came to representing language and identity. Essentialising ideologies treat attributes of groups as their inherent characteristics (Bucholtz 2003); thus, the essentialising conceptualisation of language and identity sees them as unproblematically fixed together (Jaffe 2007). In the case of nation-state political organisation, these categories would often equate language with nationality, national territory and native speakerism of the national language. Such a bounded definition on fixed characteristics does not permit for an easy account of identity of speakers with varying repertoires, be it multilingual, new, semi-speakers or indeed migrant learners.
However, Jaffe (2001) also suggested that there has been a considerable shift in how identity and language are perceived in minoritised language spaces. Essentialising categories give way to plural and heterogeneous forms of language and identity (Jaffe 2001). For Heller et al. (2014), “the old (essentialising) ideologies treating language as representing the worldview of the national community and consistent with the boundaries of the nation-state institution [do not get erased]” (Heller et al. 2014, p. 563), but they become amplified to include other forms of identity, capital, language and speakers. Seeing that minoritised language discourses are shifting to non-essentialising ones, they allow for the inclusion of other forms of identity and language resources that index them.

Non-essentialising discourses treat language as repertoires of resources that often take truncated, hybrid, partial forms, which is especially significant in new social circumstances of globalisation, migration, multiple power relations and indexicalities, ideological plurality and multilingualism (Blommaert and Rampton 2011, pp. 4, 5). Similarly, discourses which previously tied minoritised languages to some form of community now tend to include their role in other global and economic processes, such as commodification (Budach et al. 2003). Commodification is a process whereby the language resources of a person, which are also indexical of the communicative skills of that person, are treated as marketable goods (Heller 2010). Concepts such as “nation” or “community”, by which the traditional economy and social life were organised, and which were traditionally essentialised, have been increasingly becoming more complex, especially in the context of global migration, but also in the context of the transnational, new economy of the tertiary sector and its globalised nature, where the linguistic resources that people possess are constantly (re)evaluated to adjust to the symbolic economy of a given time and space (Heller 2007).

Following the non-essentialising perception of language, under such circumstances, it constitutes a set of social resources with uneven values attached to them and with uneven distribution (Heller 2007). What value is attached to particular resources and who has access to these resources are socially determined.

Non-essentialising discourses around language and identity would also allow for an amplification of “new speaker” identity category. The original folk and academic definition of “new speaker” stems from minoritised language contexts in Spain, where it is used to signify a person brought up speaking Spanish (the majority language) who “makes a conscious decision to adopt the (minoritised) language” and become the speaker of that language (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2018, p. 93). However, O’Rourke and Ramallo emphasize that who can be defined as new speaker varies from context to context (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2018). For example, Sallabank and Marquis (2018) point out that on the Island of Guernsey, the new speakers of Giernesiei have often not had any previous contact with the language and have a varying degree of proficiency. Therefore, the criteria for “new speakerness” would also include the fact whether a speaker is engaging with the speaker community and to what extent the “new” language becomes incorporated into the “new speaker’s” life (Sallabank and Marquis 2018).

To address this, in her research on Corsica, Jaffe (2015) proposes a set of criteria that might be mobilised when studying the particularity of contexts in which someone can become a new speaker. These include such items as level of competence and metalinguistic competence, frequency and type of use of the minoritised language, as well as self-identification and other attributions of the new speaker category (Jaffe 2015). Through linguistic ethnographic methods, it is then possible to identify and analyse what kinds of competence “count as sufficient” and how these are evaluated and by whom in order for new speaker identities to be valid in a given context (Jaffe 2015, p. 26). Judgments related to competence might also be made in relation to different language forms and varieties, such as the “old” varieties normally considered more authentic vs. the new standard forms introduced in the minoritised language revitalisation process (Jaffe 2015). Certain language resources that pertain to these different varieties can be socially loaded to index varying forms of competence and identities, which could, in turn, be placed on the axis of authenticity, modernity vs. past (Jaffe 2015). Similar issues arise when considering the use
of minoritised language by “new speakers”: the frequency, domains of use and their social weight (Jaffe 2015). The issues related to language competence and use have a direct impact on identification and ascription of speaker identity, especially that related to language ownership, leading to questions of who can be considered to be a legitimate speaker of the minoritised language (O’Rourke 2011).

Non-essentialising ideologies that guide the understanding of group identity and the role of minoritised languages in this identity would allow for the extension of new speaker category to new types of speakers and positionings, as well as to include new kinds of diversities and superdiversities, which simultaneously engage with many social frames and ideologies related to authenticity (Jaffe 2016). Such ideological treatment would redefine ideologies of authenticity and language ownership, by allowing for new types of positioning in the process of negotiation.

3. Methodology

As indicated in the introduction, the data analysis methodology and data collection methods used in this paper are ethnographically oriented. Adopting an ethnographic perspective (taking into account Green and Bloome’s typology (Green and Bloome 1997), and using “ethnographic tools” allowed the emic perspective on identity positionings and language ideologies to be explored best, as language ethnography lends itself as especially valuable in the contexts of sites which are heavily invested with language ideologies (Creese 2008, p. 235).

All data came from a set of data collected for a PhD research project conducted between 2012 and 2017. The data collection took place over four months in 2013 in the BAC. The interactional and observational data were mainly collected in Vitoria-Gasteiz. In addition, for the purposes of data triangulation, the data included several additional sources, such as official policy documents (for example: Plan de acción para la promoción del Euskera (Plan of Action for the Promotion of Basque) (Consejo Asesor del Euskera 2012) (ESEP)), language campaigns and language exhibitions (such as “Badu Bada”3), and promotional materials related to Basque courses for migrants that were distributed by the local authorities.

The interactional classroom data came from two different basic level Basque language courses for migrant learners called Aisa4, which were organised by the Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council. Each observed group had classes three times a week for two hours. The recordings of classroom interactions started in week 3 in the morning group and in week 5 in the evening group, together constituting 52 h of recordings. The morning class had 16 students, while the evening class had 15 students at the beginning; however, only around 10 students were attending regularly. This might have been caused by the late teaching hours of the class (8 p.m.–10 p.m.). Most students in that class were also active job seekers and they often dropped out of language classes when a job opportunity arose.

The further interview data came from several regions within the BAC (Getxo near Bilbao, San Sebastián and close by townships among them) in which migrants participated in Basque language courses, either in Euskaltekis (Basque language schools for adults) or in locally organised Aisa courses. The original PhD project data constituted interviews with 63 participants in the three different provinces of the BAC. A total of 29 participants were interviewed in Vitoria-Gasteiz, out of which 22 participants were current students on the Aisa course. All participants were of various nationalities, both first-language Spanish speakers and not; coming from Europe (Germany, France, Poland), Asia (China, Pakistan), Latin America (El Salvador, Honduras, Uruguay, Colombia) and Africa (mainly Morocco). The lengths of stay in the BAC of the participants varied significantly, from new arrivals to people who had lived in the region for a few decades; similarly, they constituted a sample of various ages, from young participants (45), middle-aged (17) and one retiree5. There were 25 males and 38 females.

The interviews conducted with the participants were semi-structured. The topics raised included the reasons for migrating to the BAC and for studying Basque, perceptions
of Basque language use and speakers of Basque within the area of residence, perceptions of Basque language speaking spaces, as well as questions regarding ideas about integration, other perceptions of migrants and their own identity as Basque speakers. Some interviews were conducted individually (26), others (9) in small groups of between 2 and 10 participants.

The selection of the extracts was carried out by considering thematic categories, related to the following themes: belonging and defining the space of “Basqueness”, authenticity of speakers, varieties, spaces, self and other identification as Basque speaker, Basque person or migrant or language resources in terms of commodities. These were then grouped into those that reflected essentialising and non-essentialising (Bucholtz 2003; Jaffe 2007) understanding of language, speakers and identity.

For the purpose of this paper, themes which particularly focused on identity projection through positioning in relation to new and migrant speaker categories, language ownership and to the perceptions of “Basqueness” as a category of belonging, were selected as most significant.

4. Analysis
4.1. Language Ownership and (New) Speakerism in Basque Language Policy and Language Promotional Materials

There exist various documents released by the Basque Government which take into account the role of migrants in Basque language revitalisation and the role of Basque in integration. For example, the most recent Plan de acción para la promoción del Euskera (Plan of Action for the Promotion of Basque) introduced in 2012 recognises the role of migrant learners as a vehicle and new actors in the revitalisation process in the following statement:

[“To bring Basque and its contexts closer to immigrants is a suitable way to ease their broad and rewarding integration, as well as to bring Basque closer to the environments of use that are demographically dynamic. In the future, if the migratory movements remain on the increase as demonstrated until now, migrants’ competence in Basque will have a lot to say about the general health of the language.”]

This inclusion of migrants as a group of potential learners of Basque suggests that policy makers see them as a target group that is significant in the efforts for increasing the number of speakers of Basque in the area. In turn, this group of potential new speakers would benefit from a “rewarding integration”, meaning that the understanding of integration here is a cultural one, based on language as an emblem of group identity. This resembles the “old”, conventional, essentialising ideologies (Jaffe 2007) within the minoritised language spaces, which defined group identity solely through cultural items, as symbolic and intrinsic to that identity. In light of essentialism, speaking Basque would imply belonging to “Basqueness”, also separating it from “Spanishness”.

The reference to the “health of the language” presupposes a positive role of migrants in the increase in numbers of speakers and in the use of Basque. While there is no mention of whether migrants are supposed to acquire full competence in Basque or just partial resources, the use of the noun “health” would imply that any factor contributing to the increase in use or acquisition of Basque is desirable. This approach would be in line with the shift to include non-essentialising ideological influences in minoritised language revitalisation discourses (Jaffe 2007). Similarly, the reference to migrant populations as “demographically dynamic” areas is in line with the understanding of group identity as plural, changing and encompassing variety. In this vein, the “dynamics” of that group could also mean the dynamism of language repertoires, not necessarily encompassing full sets of language resources and model repertoires in the traditional understanding of language and native speakerism (Doerr 2009). In this way, migrants could be included in the group identity of “Basqueness” as new speakers with incomplete repertoires. It is thus evident that in language policy related to migrants, old and new sets of ideological influences are at play, and the traditional social categories are mixed with the emerging,
superdiverse ones, allowing for a dynamic, yet ambiguous understanding of “Basqueness” as a group identity.

The above policy document provides a framework for local policies and actions in relation to Basque revitalisation. The Aisa courses for migrants were also one of the outputs of this plan adapted by various local authorities and the overall design of the course was overlooked by HABE. When looking at the promotional material available that describes Aisa courses as Basque language provision for migrants, it is noticeable that similar juxtaposition of essentialising and non-essentialising ideologies is present, making the construction of group identity and the role of migrants in this construction also ambiguous. The courses are described similarly in many local areas where they took place, perhaps as the design and curriculum is universal and prescribed from policy agents from above (top-down) (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997). Nevertheless, the local initiatives often created their own “entextualisations” (Blommaert 2005) of these descriptions, turning those into a form of a promotional/ informative genre for the migrant audience.

The below material (Extract 1) comes from Getxo (a suburb area of Bilbao) and is an attempt at producing the information about all Basque courses available in the area, including the Aisa course, in the genre of advertising. This entextualisation of the course description presents yet another example of the mixed ideological influences on the representation of the group identity of “Basqueness”, the way migrants are positioned in relation to this identity and their role as new actors and new speakers in language promotional actions. The juxtaposition between the old and new, essentialising and non-essentialising language ideologies is visible not only in the way that migrants are positioned in the text, but also in the form and genre the information about Basque language courses is conveyed.

**Extract 1.** Basque language course promotional leaflet produced by Getxo City Council.
The courses are presented in a leaflet, which is bilingual and displayed in various semiotic modes, being multimodal (Dressman 2019): it combines visual images, various fonts, text sizes, colours and background images. Each course is presented on a separate page of the leaflet with an accompanying image: smiling people who are seemingly enjoying each other’s company. These, along with other features of this text, such as slogans/mottos, descriptions of various courses as separate products, the City Council—the provider of the tuition—as a producer, euskaltegis\(^9\) as product sellers, are what Cook (2001) enlists as components of advertising. Each product is also accompanied by a particular slogan, reflecting the ideological components that were also evidenced in the interactional data collected. For example, ‘En tiempos de crisis… invierte en euskara!’ [‘In times of crisis… invest in Basque!’] points to the economic advantages that Basque could bring to new speakers or acquirers of the product; or ‘Donde hay Euskera, hay alegría.’ [Where there is Basque, there is happiness.] suggests a rewarding experience and satisfaction from acquiring Basque resources and potentially from becoming a new Basque speaker. The representation of Basque as a product and the placement of language within the advertising genre shows that language is understood here firstly as a commodity
(Heller 2010)—a tangible product that can be invested in for profit and added value for the speaker, be it socially or economically; and secondly, as a set of resources that can be acquired in any form, rather than as an inherited native-like quality, in line with the non-essentialising understanding of language.

The page of the leaflet containing the description of the Aisa course is trilingual, as it includes English. This aims to acknowledge the multilingual reality of the BAC, but also positions Basque on the same level as a global language when juxtaposed not only with Spanish. The image on the page with the Aisa course is also one containing a photograph of “foreign looking” people, holding each other’s arms in an embrace. It is pointing to the idea of integration between locals and migrants, as it represents a visible contrast between the stereotypical photographs of the residents of the Basque space and the inclusion of a stereotypical “outsider”. The image also goes in line with the one-line description of the Aisa course, in English being summarised as the ‘linguistic welcome course for immigrants.’ The Basque and Spanish versions are slightly longer:

**Extract 2.**

‘Euskarari eta euskal kulturari buruzko oinarrizko ikastaroa etorkinentzat’

[‘Basic course on Basque language and culture for immigrants’]

‘Curso básico de euskera y cultura básica para nuevos y nuevas Getxotarras’

[‘A basic course of Basque language and culture for new residents of Getxo’]

The different translations of this short description provide slightly different positioning of migrants. The Basque and English versions refer to migrants as immigrants explicitly. This could infer positioning them outside of “Basqueness” as a group identity, raising a sense of foreignness towards the place where these courses are offered and where Basque is spoken. In contrast, the Spanish text calls prospective participants ‘nuevos y nuevas Getxotarras’, where Getxotarra is a label in Basque, referring to those who live in the city of Getxo. This is a more inclusive stance construction, projecting prospective course participants as people who can identify themselves with Getxo, even if the adjective “new” is indicating their recent residency in the city and a parallel to the term new speaker. The use of the Basque term is also significant in itself, suggesting an attribution of some form of “Basque” identity indexed by a Basque, rather than a Spanish or English label. “Getxotarra” might also be a term that the “newcomers” might have come across before. This varying attribution of labels in the different language versions shows an attempt to avoid essentialist indexical links and to construct a more inclusive stance, where “Getxotarra” could be inclusive of partial resources that migrants would acquire in the Aisa courses.

This inclusiveness of partial resources is also illustrated in further description of the purpose of the course:

**Extract 3.**

“Curso básico que tiene como objetivo que las personas inmigrantes conozcan la sociedad vasca y den los primeros pasos en el aprendizaje del euskera.”

[‘A basic course whose objective is that immigrants get to know Basque society and make first steps in the learning of Basque’]

suggesting that resources essentially considered as basic could be of an added value for integration through “getting to know Basque society”; and in the way the leaflet finishes, with the following motto:

**Extract 4.**

‘EUSKARAK MUNDU BERRI BAT ZABALDUKO DIZU’

‘El euskera te abrirá un mundo nuevo!’

[‘Basque language will open a new world for you!’]
(like the world). This exploration, according to the slogan, provides migrants with a new way of understanding group identity and perhaps also new ways of positioning and identification with that identity. On the other hand, the motto also creates the idea that Basque society and culture are “world-sized”, resembling the imagery of superdiversity, globalisation and multiculturalism and, at the same time, separates it from “Spanishness”.

4.2. New Speakerism and Language Ownership in Classroom Interaction: When Will We Be New Speakers?

As was demonstrated in the institutional discourse textual data above, the positioning of migrants in relation to the group identity of “Basqueness” and the role of Basque language resources in the inclusion of migrants in this identity was guided by both essentialising and non-essentialising language ideologies. Such intertwining of various ideological influences might suggest an attempt at a redefinition of traditional discourses and a changing approach to group identity, as well as to language revitalisation, in order to meet the growing demands of diversity. Such a redefinition, however, was not void of the old discursive ideologies that define language and speakers. The below sections provide an analysis of the interactional data (classroom and interviews), which shows how these redefinitions of new speakers of Basque and positioning of migrants in relation to “Basqueness” are received by migrant learners and how they, in turn, position themselves in interactional discourse.

The following extract comes from Aisa class observations in the morning group in Vitoria-Gasteiz. The teacher introduces the suffix -duna to the class and explains its meaning (in Basque indicating “to have”). This gives him an opportunity to introduce the commonly used label for a Basque speaker euskalduna which stands for “someone who has Basque” (Amorrortu-Gómez 2003). This label has often been explored in previous research, including studies dealing with the concept of “new speaker” (Ortega et al. 2015). In the below extract, it is used by the Basque language teacher (T) to show to the migrant students (S1, S2, S13, Sts) of Basque how this label can be applied to them:

Extract 5.

1. T: ok. euskalduna. do you see? ‘duna’ is ‘that has’. ‘that has’. bizarduna eta euskalduna. That has Basque. that speaks it. yes?

( . . . )

2. S2: ah . . . euskalduna.

3. T: if you speak this language (.) you become euskaldunak↑

4. S2: aha yes! (.) great!

5. T: automatically. eh? it’s a different conception of things, eh?

6. S2: euskaldunak.

7. T: if you speak English(.) you are not English.

8. S2: no.

9. S13: no.

10. S1: no.

11. T: if you speak I dont know(.) Polish for example(.) you are not Polish. if you speak Basque (...) euskalduna zara.

( . . . )

T: it was difficult for me. eh? in Bilbao I was at a tavern. because that’s where you learn Basque. eh? quite a lot.

12. Sts: (Laughter)

13. T: I was with my glass and (.) my friends from Bilbao said (.) ‘zu euskalduna zara’ ‘eta zi (.) ez ez ni katalan naiz.’ ‘[you are Basque ‘and I: no, I am Catalan]’

14. Sts: (laughter)

15. T: and you know the topic of (incomprehensible) ‘eta Katalan naiz.’[’and I am Catalan] (.) ’ez. Euskalduna.’ [’no. Basque’]
16. T: ‘ez. Katalan. no?’ ['no. Catalan. ‘]
17. Sts: (laughter)
18. T: until I learned (.)that well(.) they were adopting me, right?
19. Sts: (laughter)
20. S2: and me?

(...) I will be euskalduna? (...)

21. T: izan. [to be] The verb to be. izango naiz. [ I will be] ni euskalduna izango naiz. [I will be a Basque speaker/ I will be Basque.]
22. S2: uhm.
23. T: bai? esukaldun berria. gu euskaldun berria gara. [ yes? New Basque speakers. You will be new Basque speakers] New euskaldun. eta euskaldun zaharrak. [ and old Basque speakers] euskaldun zaharrak (..) [ old Basque speakers] the natives (.) the indigenous (.) eh?
24. T: euskaldun zaharra. euskladun berria. baina euskaldunak. ados? [old Basque speakers. new Basque spekers. But both Basque speakers, right?]
25. S2: uhm. yeah.
26. T: and there is a polemic here too (.) eh?
27. S2: yes yes.
28. T: if you are from here and you don’t know Basque (..) ez zara euskalduna. [you are not Basque]
29. S1: ez euskalduna? [not Basque?]
30. T: if you are from here (.) born in the Basque Country or wherever(.) in Euskal Herria(.

eh? and no (.) you are not(.) you don’t speak Basque ez zara euskalduna (.) ados? (.) [you are not Basque, right?]
T: it is (.) a linguistic emphasis (.).ok? yes? oso ondo. ( ... ) [very well]

The above extract provides an example of “language ideological restratification” (Wang et al. 2014)—meaning a shift in the way that power asymmetries impact on the way that language ideologies are established and maintained. The teacher (T) evokes a very well established hierarchy of ideologically informed identities, in turns 1 and 23. The labels for these identity categories are commonly associated with certain linguistic practices and resources: Euskaldunberri or new speakers of Basque, ideologically marked as less authentic speakers of a standard variety of Basque—Batua; and Euskaldun zaharrak—speakers ideologically marked as more authentic, those who learned Basque through the means of generational transmission and speak local varieties of Basque (Ortega et al. 2015). In this particular sequence, these labels are applied to learners of Basque on a basic level language course, with very limited Basque language resources. Such a use might be considered unusual, hence regarded as evidence for the restratification of ideological hierarchy within the established power dynamics, as the teacher positions migrant learners on the same level as those speakers with Basque resources who are local to the BAC and who correspond to the local dichotomies behind the labels used. This would suggest that the old, established ideological set is being rewritten to look at language and speakerism in light of non-essentialising ideologies, in which any kind of resources can be used to be identified as Euskalduna. This idea is also supported by the teacher’s turn 28, where Basque identity is only defined by the possession of Basque language resources and this is also how it becomes authenticated. While the teacher is a person in authority in the setting of the classroom, and such a setting can be considered a singular context, the teacher also certifies his statements by evoking his personal experience as a Basque language learner and in this sense, it gives him more authority or authenticity to ascribe the euskalduna identity label to migrant students. Similarly, this proposition is also in line with the language ideological
premises of the course: for migrants to get to know Basque society, integrate and to become new speakers.

The way these labels are taken up by students in the extract is twofold. Student S2 subscribes to this ideological restratification, but her turns are not void of the old, traditionally understood ideologies. S2 constructs a new identity stance based on the possession of partial Basque language resources in turn 20. However, her turn presupposes her future speaking of Basque; she is specifically asking the teacher to provide her with the translation of the sentence ‘I will be a Basque speaker’. This would suggest that the traditional essentialising ideologies still prevail in her understanding of speakerism, as for this student, the identity of belonging to Basqueness as based on language can only be realised with more resources that she will have acquired in the future. Marquez Reiter and Martin Rojo (2019, p. 3) propose that migrants, as new speakers of a language, and in the process of identity negotiation, “despite questioning and contesting the very norms by which they are judged”, follow these established norms to be able to participate fully in the local social practices—understanding such process as integration. The question posed in this extract by speaker S2 is somewhat a projection of the acceptance of these existing norms represented by the euskalduna labels. The student takes on the existing labels, through her question, the use of the future tense and the repetition of euskalduna, positioning herself as a future Basque speaker—a taking up of the existing group identities as well as subscribing to the dichotomies between new and old speakers.

4.3. Appropriation of Euskalduna Identity in Other Contexts

The positioning in alignment to the identity label euskalduna by migrant learners of the Aisa course also happened in other contexts. For example, the following extract from a field note that I took down after an interview with a morning Aisa course participant in Vitoria-Gasteiz from Senegal, who had spent a couple of months in the BAC, shows a direct response to the teacher’s suggestion presented earlier:

Extract 6.

I asked S4 why he was wearing a txapela (a Basque beret). He replied: ‘ahora que somos vascos’ and smiled.

He also provided an explanation of how this clothing item came into his possession:

Extract 7.

S4: because before I met my wife there was a guy from the Basque Country that had come to my island and he gave me a txapela (…) And he told me that it was from the Basque Country and that they spoke a different language from from (…)

Here, S4 adheres to the euskalduna label through the use of clothing (or other personal items), which is one of the ways in which we can project stance vis à vis an identity (Cook 2008). Thus, while the adherence to the euskalduna label is not explicitly language based, S4, when he refers to the previous extract taken from classroom observation data, takes on the identity of Basques or euskaldunas overtly: ‘now that we are Basque’. The pronoun “we” points to the students on the course and suggests a reference to what the teacher demonstrated in class, that partial resources acquired by language learners in the classroom also validate this identity. In this example, it also becomes evident that the power relations and the dichotomy between the two linguistic resources present in the BAC were known to S4 and, therefore, his act of projecting his identity as part of euskalduna is also more prominent.

4.4. “Basqueness” and Language Ownership in Instrumental Attitudes

While the above examples showed how partial Basque language resources can be used to negotiate belonging to group identity as well as claims to language ownership and speakerism in certain contexts, it is also important to note that both partial and advanced
resources were also used to claim ownership or identify oneself with “Basqueness” in professional contexts, in contexts of seeing language as added value (Duchêne and Heller 2012) or economic and personal advantages that Basque resources could bring. In such situations, migrant learners who positioned themselves as speakers or Basque language resources owners did so through showing an advantage over those who could be understood as native speakers in a traditional sense, or in “old” essentialising discourses. Traditionally, “native speakers”, especially in contexts of language revitalisation, are “treated as only legitimate speaker(s) and (…) the custodians of a privileged language identity” (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2018, p. 98). According to Jaffe (2015, p. 23), they are seen as ‘the unmarked “old/traditional” and “authentic” speaker(s)’. However, with the extension of the concept of new speakers towards newcomers to the traditionally native Basque space or even speakers who acquired Basque resources in other spaces, the definition of a minoritised language speaker is extended to include new types of speakers as well as non-essentialising notions of repertoires and ownership. These characteristics of authenticity and legitimacy become erased (Gal and Irvine 1995) when language competence, understood as having some Basque resources, is stressed by migrant learners, especially so, when opposed to those who could be positioned as Basques—those traditionally and essentially belonging to the Basque space through birth or through exposure to banal (Billig 1995) cultural and national artefacts, including language.

Together with Higham, I argued that minoritised languages such as Welsh and Basque are regarded by migrants as having a growing economic value (Augustyniak and Higham 2019), where migrants see language learning also in terms of profit (Duchêne and Heller 2012). Additionally, partial resources were used to represent profit when Basque was seen as an additional value to products and services, such as websites, or to people, for example, in job seeking (for data examples, see Augustyniak and Higham 2019). Such partial resources, even when considered a professional asset, were used to represent belonging and negotiate identification with “Basqueness”. In the below example, which comes from an interview with a middle-aged Aisa student from Colombia, who had been in the BAC for 14 years and who attended the evening class in Vitoria-Gasteiz, the student states her motivations behind learning Basque as instrumental:

Extract 8.

1. Int: Why did you decide to learn Basque?
2. R4: Because it called my attention a lot (.) because I like it (.) and because my partner is Euskalduna and I want to share with him the speaking of Basque (.) and most of all because of work ( . . . ) because us (.) the temporary employees we have to have notions of Euskera (.) even if it is just basic level
3. ( . . . )
4. Int: Do you think they are giving more importance to it now?
5. R4: yes (.) because even in terms of work (.) perhaps you will have more chances ( . . . )
6. Int: Do you think that knowing Basque can help you in finding a better job (.) and in things like this? Because you had said to me that for now it is an obligation?
7. R4: no (.) it is not because I have an obligation (.) it is because I think that knowing Basque (.) I will have more opportunities for a job( ) I can find a better job in principle ( . . . )

R4 sees the instrumental value of even partial resources as increasing her job prospects and as helping her achieve a better economic status. However, she also states that she has personal reasons to learn Basque. These personal reasons and personal views on culture and politics led her to position herself as belonging to the group identity of “Basqueness”:
Extract 9.

1. Int: Do you think you will stay here?
2. R4: My goal is to stay here (.) I already have my partner here (.) I have my family here (.)
3. ( . . . )
4. Int: as you know here there are some people who say that they would like this region to be independent from the Spanish state ( . . . ) and you think . . .
5. R4: yes, I would like it to be independent ( . . . ) the politics of the Basque Country is really well defined (.) and I think it has some very convincing ideas (.) I would like us to be independent ( . . . )

The above example illustrates that some migrant learners, indeed, feel integrated, as her use of first person plural form of the object pronoun “us” in turn 5 indicates12, and can in some context position themselves as belonging to “Basqueness”. Even though, in this example, R4’s positioning of belonging is not necessarily expressed through reference to Basque language resources, but rather through her emphasis on the opposition between “Basqueness” and “Spanishness”, the added value that Basque language brings is also stressed. In the interview, R4 emphasised the added professional value of Basque several times, seeing basic level resources as advantageous in professional contexts, independently of the quality of “nativeness” or “native speakerness”. In this way, she appropriated the language, showing that any kind of ownership can bring profit or added value.

Such understanding of the role of language resources and motivation for learning Basque is in line with non-essentialising ideological influences. They manifest themselves especially when “native speakerism” is pushed to the background and language ownership is assumed or granted to other types of speakers. It is also especially visible among migrant Basque language speakers with advanced or extended repertoires in Basque. The following extracts come from an interview conducted with three Polish participants in Vitoria-Gasteiz, who studied Basque as part of their degree as well as in special courses in Barneetegi (Basque language teaching centres). PM spent 9 years in the BAC, PN and PP—5 years. Each of them declared a high degree of proficiency in Basque. As this was a group interview and flowed quite freely, I have only included the participants’ comments:

Extract 10.

1. PM: not to mention that knowing Basque makes it easier to get a job ( . . . ) all three of us have qualifications (.) appropriate qualifications
2. ( . . . )
3. I think we are well integrated here (.) because we have both languages on a good level (.) because we can participate (.) starting from cultural events to almost everything in reality (.)
4. PN: yeah (.) if one does not know Basque then half of this reality is non-existent to you
5. ( . . . )
6. PP: So (.) for example people who say that in Vitoria you don’t need to speak Basque (.) that you just don’t (.) but then they miss an opportunity (.) a great job (.) well paid (.) in something that they would like to work in (.) and there is no chance that they sit down being 30 years old (.) and learn Basque (.) because they think that English is more important (.) I need to understand this
7. ( . . . )
8. PM: sometimes it happens (.) because there is a problem with the new Basques (.) who at some point in their life learnt Basque (.) and they have no one to speak to (.) because their friends are Spanish speaking (.) their family is Spanish speaking (.) and they have such habits that they have nowhere to use Basque(.) it once happened to me in a shop ( . . . ) I am going to the till
and I switched to Spanish and the lady said to me (.) no (. ) I would like to use Basque (.) I go to Euskaltegi and I am learning numbers in Basque (.) and tell me if I said it right ( . . . )

In the above comments from all three participants, it is exemplified how migrant speakers see Basque as a professional asset that adds value to the person who seeks employment. PM’s turn number 3 also explicitly indicates that, thanks to Basque resources, all three participants are well integrated culturally and position themselves as part of “Basqueness”. Both levels of motivation—pride and profit—are thus visible. Additionally, the advantage over those who are natives to the Basque space is emphasised. PP in turn number 6 suggests that the essentialising link between being Basque and speaking Basque is often non-attainable by those traditionally associated with “Basqueness”, which gives an advantage of extra economic assets to migrant speakers of Basque. Similarly, in PM’s turn (8), migrant speakers are exemplified as model speakers for other learners—in this specific case, non-migrant learners or those who could be considered autochthonous new speakers. In this way, the expertise of migrants is presented as an added value and the essentialising qualities associated with native speakerism or nativeness give way, in the process of erasure (Gal and Irvine 1995), to other forms of speakerism; namely, proficient New Speakers of Basque with no essentialist ties to the space or group identity become included in this space as experts. They also assume the identity of experts to some extent when in turn 1, PM confirms that they all have appropriate qualifications, which would confirm their expert roles. It is also notable that the assumption of these roles takes place in the contexts where Basque represents instrumental value, such as doing shopping or looking for a job.

The instrumental value of Basque resources, whether partial or not, is demonstrated to be of importance to migrant learners and can lead to the assumption of various speaker identities. While the positioning with regard to “Basqueness” or with regard to Euskalduna identity is based on other premises than the instrumental or added value of Basque language resources, other types of speaker identity surge as prominent. Similarly, contexts of economic advantage or added value seem to invalidate the authenticity and legitimacy as essentially linked with native speakerism. This authenticates other forms of language and repertoires, allowing for a non-essentialist view of identity and speakerism where other types of speakers, such as migrant speakers, are included as legitimate or even expert speakers.

5. Conclusions

In all contexts of analysis presented in this paper, be it in policy discourses and discourses included in language promotional materials, classroom interaction or the interview context which evoked the added value of Basque language resources, essentialising and non-essentialising discourses and ideologies are at play when it comes to the defining and redefining of group identity of “Basqueness” and the role of language in this identity. Similar ideological influences are visible when it comes to migrant learners’ self- and other-positioning as belonging to “Basqueness” or belonging to other categories, such as speakers and new speakers. The old, essentialising ideologies seem to be visible, especially when “Basqueness” is represented as a separate identity to “Spanishness” in language promotional materials, but also in classroom and interview interaction. The role of language in this group identity is also often represented in essentialising terms as strictly and uniquely bound with the space and native speaker authentic qualities. Similarly, essentialising ideologies are prominent when established speaker identity labels of euskalduna are referred to in classroom discourses that provide predefined examples of what language ownership means within each identity category.

However, it is also evident in the data that non-essentialising discourses come into light and redefine these traditionally understood categories of identity, allowing for inclusion of migrants as potential new speakers of Basque or extending the discourses on language ownership to new types of speakers, resources and repertoires. One such type
is the possession of only partial resources in Basque, as it appears that even a basic level language course is promoted to migrant learners as a cultural asset, allowing for possible identity negotiation as belonging to the Basque space. Migrants in some instances also self-identified with the Basque space on the basis of possession of only partial language resources. Moreover, in contexts where migrant learners already self-identified with “Basqueness” through other means than language or not necessarily evoked the euskalduna identity label in their positioning, but at the same time saw Basque language as an added value, for example, in the form of a professional or economic asset, the non-essentialising influences allowed for a devaluation of native speakerness. Similarly, they allowed for the breaking up with traditional understanding of language ideologies of legitimacy, authenticity and for moving away from treating nativeness as a natural, perfect model for imitation. When considered as an added value, partial Basque resources also represented an economic advantage in professional contexts. However, more importantly, when compared to those who belong to the Basque space in essentialising terms, migrant proficient Basque speakers could have been identified and also self-identified as experts and took ownership of the language, pushing the native Basque or native Basque speaker characteristics to the background.

The intertwining of these two ideological sets also shows that an authentic Basque (new) speaker identity is context-dependent and arrived at in the process of identity negotiation (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004) in the moment and context of speaking. This is because other ascribed authentic speaker identities or labels, such as euskalduna, in the classroom discourse needed to be validated or taken up by the migrant learners, or actively sought after by purchasers of the course as in the Getxo leaflet example. Similarly, self-ascribed new speaker identities or attempts at taking ownership or expertise of the language were also negotiated, and particularly so in the context of juxtaposition with the old, established authentic speaker qualities. While the old essentialising ideologies influence the contextual authentic identity construction, the non-essentialising elements that are present in discourses that represent “Basqueness” to migrants and in migrant discourses about “Basqueness” are what allows for a redefinition of categories of speakers and language ownership to include more diverse approaches to types of speakers, language repertoires and resources. It allows for a definition of group identity that is more flexible in its approach towards new speakers, authenticity and language ownership, as, for example, in extracts 9 and 10, where R4 emphasised the validity of partial Basque resources as a professional asset, or where speakers PM, PN and PP took up the role of experts in professional and utilitarian contexts. While migrant learners see Basque language learning in terms of integration on a social level, the fact that Basque language also represents an economic and professional asset in many cases could be emphasised in policy discourses, in this way also incorporating migrants in new speakerness on the profit or instrumental level, contributing to a more rewarding language revitalisation and migrant integration at the same time. Perhaps putting more emphasis on language as an economic asset, in addition to the integration aspect of policies, could be yet one more way in which migrants could be incorporated into the redefinition of the new speaker identity as well as of reemphasising the role of fluid and multifaceted identity in the larger process of language revitalisation.

Funding: This research was funded by the University of Southampton, Archival Studentship 2012.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Southampton (protocol code ERGO: 7569 in 2013).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy reasons.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.
Notes
1 According to the official bulletin issued by Ikuspegi in 2020 (Ikuspegi 2020)—Basque Migration Observatory, the migrant population of the BAC is increasing, from 8.4% in 2013 when data were collected, through 9% in 2017 to 10.9% in 2020.
2 Words associated with different dialects, accents, language varieties, registers, genres, etc. (Blommaert 2013) language-ideologically associated with Basque.
3 Literally meaning: ‘If it has, it is’—referring to language speakers. The exhibition is also virtual and can be accessed at: www.badubada.com. [accessed on 10 December 2020].
4 Literally meaning: easy.
5 As not all participants wanted to disclose their exact age, they were grouped into three categories: young (up to 40 years of age), middle-aged (40 to retirement) and retirees.
6 For a more comprehensive review of policies and their implications on language and integration, see also Augustyniak and Higham (2019).
7 “Acercar el euskera a la población inmigrante es una forma muy apropiada de propiciar su integración amplia y enriquecedora y de llevar el euskera a ámbitos de uso demográficamente dinámicos. En el futuro, si los movimientos migratorios mantienen el crecimiento mostrado hasta ahora, la competencia en euskera de los inmigrants tendrá mucho que decir en la salud general de la lengua.”
8 Helduen Alfabetatze eta Berreuskalduntzerako Erakundea (Institution for Adults Alphabetization and Revasconization) created in 1981.
9 Basque language schools for adults.
10 ‘-tarra’ is a suffix with the meaning ‘coming from’ (Laka 1996, p. 26).
11 Eng: “Now that we are Basque”.
12 In Spanish the use of the first person plural verb “seamos”.

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