



**Arnasguneak hizkuntza
gutxituen biziberritzean.**
Nazioarteko konferentzia

**Territories of higher speaker
density in minoritised
language communities.**
International Conference

2025eko urriaren 16 eta 17a
Azpeitia, Euskal Herria



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**Zer dira eta zer ez dira
arnasguneak? Zergatik dira
garrantzitsuak?**
9-26. or.

**What are and what are not
breathing spaces? Why are they
important?**
157-175. or.

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2. What are and what are not breathing spaces? Why are they important?

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Editor's note:

Mikel Zalbide has been a leading figure in the introduction, definition and dissemination of the concept of 'arnasgune' or breathing spaces in Basque sociolinguistics, both through his direct relationship with Joshua A. Fishman and his work, and as a result of his professional activities, research and reflections regarding the revitalisation of the Basque language. The debates and knowledge that emerged from the International Conference on the topic—and its related publication—were built upon foundations laid by Mikel Zalbide. Consequently, during the sessions held in Azpeitia (the Basque Country) on 16 and 17 October 2025, a video interview summarising Zalbide's perspective on breathing spaces was shown (<https://vimeo.com/1127291981>). In light of the above, in this publication, we have decided to include some passages from an explanatory article written by the author on the concept of breathing spaces.

Issue number 110 of the Bat Soziolinguistika journal was a special issue focusing on this specific topic. The issue featured an article by Zalbide entitled 'Arnasguneak. Etorkizuneko erronkak' [Breathing spaces. Future challenges], in which he outlined the main characteristics of the concept¹.

What follows are some selected passages from the aforementioned article. Those who wish to read the work in its entirety should refer to the original text. Being well aware that publishing fragments provides only a partial view yet guided by the principle of respecting the literal text of the original, we have chosen to reproduce the following three sections as they stand. The three sections are as follows:

- I. What is a breathing space?
- II. What is not a breathing space, either partially or fully?
- III. Why are breathing spaces so important for the revitalisation of the Basque language?

1. Zalbide, Mikel (2019). Arnasguneak. Etorkizuneko Erronkak. *Bat Soziolinguistika*, 110(1), 11–78 [Sociolinguistics Cluster]. <https://bat.sociolinguistika.eus/produktua/bat-110-2019-1-arnasguneak-etorkizuneko-erronkak/>

I. What is a breathing space, in general?

In his well-known work *Reversing Language Shift*, Joshua A. Fishman (1991: 58) briefly mentions the idea of a ‘physical breathing space’ or *arnasgunea* in Basque (Zalbide, 2001)². As a first approximation, a breathing space can be defined as a ‘demographically concentrated space where Xish can be on its own turf, predominant and unharassed’. In other words, and referring specifically to our context, a breathing space is somewhere:

- With a high demographic concentration of Basque speakers: all or most of the population can speak Basque, and in particular, *all or most people habitually speak Basque among themselves on a daily basis*.
- A clear majority of everyday conversations are held in Basque, and this predominance is not questioned: ‘predominant and unharassed’. Simply put, the local population communicates in Basque. It is a living social norm, as widespread as wearing a swimsuit or bikini, but not a bra and knickers, on La Concha beach in Donostia-San Sebastian³. This is both a common and, for some reason, unbreakable norm. The same occurs in breathing spaces, where the use of Basque by locals to speak about all manner of everyday issues is the dominant norm.
- Thanks to this clear predominance of Basque in common, everyday speech, *inhabitants’ mother tongue is transmitted from generation to generation without any significant language shift*. As a result of this transmission, *the chain of the language’s centuries-long existence remains uninterrupted in breathing spaces*. And, moreover, despite the risks that may exist, *this intergenerational chain of transmission any significant language shift*.
- The bases for everyday verbal interactions are well-known in terms of the principal areas of activity and relational networks: the home, the local neighbourhood, out on the street and with friends, in bars and shops, at

2. The term ‘breathing space’ has been applied also in other academic fields. In medicine, for instance, it is used in works on allergies (see, for example, Gregg Mitman’s *Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes*. Yale University Press). This application is not directly related to what we mean when we talk about breathing spaces. Here, we are not referring to medical health, but rather to the idea developed by Joshua A. Fishman in the field of sociology of language, specifically in reference to revitalising weakened languages.

3. This rule is not absolute. There are, of course, women who sunbathe or swim topless (not many, but some). Nor is it a rule that always existed and will continue to exist forever. Social norms change periodically. But for as long as they remain unchanged, they are the norm: we are all aware of the social norms in effect in our specific place and time, and generally, most of us adhere to them in our daily lives. Ultimately, a social norm remains a ‘norm’ for as long as it persists.

church and in the town square, at leisure and sports centres, at school, and (when possible) in the workplace. If Basque is the predominant language spoken in these areas, then we are in what can be referred to as a *full breathing space*. However, when Basque predominance starts to falter, then the area ceases being a *full breathing space* and becomes an *affected breathing space* instead. If the faltering continues and the drop in Basque use becomes significant, then the area ceases being a *breathing space* altogether.

Let us reiterate here (because this is a fundamental point): from a demolinguistic perspective, Basque is 'lord and master' in Basque breathing spaces. In addition to being able to speak Basque, all or most of the population residing in breathing spaces (either because they were born there or moved there later for personal or work-related reasons) *live in Basque and conduct their everyday business in that language*. These speakers feel 'at home' in the breathing space, which offers them a 'safe' geo-territorial area in which to speak Basque in their everyday interactions. It is a place where Basque speakers coexist in Basque with other Basque speakers; a space in which Basque is clearly 'lord and master'. Breathing spaces are not places in which language is a source of conflict; they are not normally a source of sociolinguistic problems. No one from either inside or outside the community forces them to speak Basque in their everyday lives. It is simply the prevailing social norm; it is what is considered normal. Moreover, generally speaking, no one from outside the community harasses or attacks them because they choose to live their lives in Basque. Children, teenagers and young people acquire the language spoken by their parents fully and proficiently⁴. Although the internal structure of the language and their manner of expression may vary, children, young people and working-age adults primarily speak Basque, using the language routinely with family members, friends and other residents in their everyday conversations⁵.

This has clear consequences for the future, since, statistically speaking, most young people in the village choose a fellow Basque-speaker as their partner and settle either in the village itself or in a nearby breathing space to form a Basque-

4. As mentioned previously, Nancy Dorian has made a wonderful contribution to this topic.

5. The influence of language contact is generally growing stronger in breathing spaces. In addition to Spanish words, many expressions are also being adopted by younger generations living in these areas. This phenomenon should be considered within a broader perspective. For example, during the years Elena Mendizabal and I spent studying in Zerain (see the *Xaguarte* magazine from that period), the vocabulary of the under-60 generation in relation to the rural world was notably poorer than that of their over-70 counterparts. However, despite being increasingly influenced by Spanish, most adults and young people in Zerain still speak to each other in Basque. It is this dominance configuration that matters here.

speaking family, and it is this establishment of Basque-speaking families that guarantees the continuity of the language community, which must be renewed from generation to generation. Friendships and the social life of the village (as well as, as far as possible, the workplace) make it possible for these speakers to live their lives in Basque. Furthermore, thanks to this continued dominance of the Basque language⁶, there is no widespread shift from Basque to Spanish in Basque breathing spaces⁷. And complete language loss is even rarer⁸. Intergenerational continuity is more securely guaranteed there than anywhere else.

In short, in terms of everyday communications, what is normal in healthy language communities is normal in breathing spaces. The *intergenerational transmission* of the mother tongue is the primary mechanism of linguistic survival. This is one of the main sociolinguistic characteristics that every healthy language community shares in comparison to their weakened counterparts. Indeed, it is the main characteristic for many. The *intergenerational transmission* of Basque is sounder in Basque breathing spaces than anywhere else. This is a fundamental characteristic that, from a geo-territorial perspective, only occurs in breathing spaces. Children living in breathing spaces learn Basque naturally, without any special arrangements, often understanding and, above all, speaking fluently before even starting school. Whether they be monolingual or bilingual speakers, all or most children in these areas are (comparatively) Basque speakers. Even without Basque-medium schooling (and with Spanish-medium schooling), breathing spaces have survived for generations. But we still need to be cautious. It is true that, these days, schools are a great help: a) children spend a significant portion of their day (around 16%) speaking and listening to Basque with their teachers and classmates; b) unlike before, children learn to read and write in Basque; c) in addition to the informal-intimate registers of the Basque that is spoken locally in their town or village, they also learn to use the formal variant of the language; d) they also learn other languages (Spanish and, to some extent, English) (see Zalbide 2016). Unlike before, the school system nowadays is supportive. Supportive, and, in this new society in which we live, very necessary. However, schools alone do

6. We recall here the concept of 'dominance configuration' as it is used in the field of sociolinguistics (not the psycholinguistic concept developed by Uriel Weinreich in 1953). See, for example, Fishman, Joshua A., Robert L. Cooper, Roxana Ma, et al., 1968: *Bilingualism in the Barrio (The measurement and description of language dominance in Bilinguals)*. For a more local perspective, see, for example, Zalbide 2009 and 2016.

7. When we talk about a widespread change in language, we are referring here to what is known as *Sprachverschiebung* in German, *language shift* in English and *desplazamiento lingüístico* in Spanish. For a local perspective, see, for example, Zalbide 2001, 2002 and 2016.

8. Regarding technical terminology and the conceptual work derived from it, see, for example, the German concept of *Sprachverlust* and, above all, the English term *language loss* with its many synonyms. From a more gradual perspective, we could also refer to (among others) *language attrition*, *language obsolescence*, *language loss* and *language death*.

not guarantee the future of the language, not even in breathing spaces⁹. The broad spectrum of everyday ordinary language use¹⁰ is, always and everywhere, the dominant norm in healthy language communities. This is the normal pathway of continuity for all the world's vital and robust languages, which are passed on from generation to generation and, barring serious disruptions, endure down the centuries. Maintaining this pathway of continuity has a clear set of priorities: first, the weakened language must be kept alive and then the entire weakened community of speakers must be revitalised. Breathing spaces are, in the opinion of several experts (see, especially, S. Altube¹¹ and J. Fishman for a combination of both local and global perspectives), the principal starting point and strongest support for any successful attempt at revitalising a weakened language. The loss of these spaces greatly hinders recovery (not to mention revitalisation).

Other characteristics. Full and affected breathing spaces

The elements outlined above define what true breathing spaces are. But could anything more be said about them? What are these breathing spaces like, here and now? We believe that the following circumstances should be added to the previous definition and explanation.

- a) Rather than *mere social-functional or purely virtual* areas, breathing spaces are *geo-territorial environments*; they are neighbourhoods, villages, towns, inter-municipal areas and, sometimes (albeit increasingly rarely), entire regions in which people conduct their everyday business and live their lives in Basque (totally or principally).

9. This rather bleak conclusion coincides with several confirmed events around the world. Take the case of Slovenian speakers residing in Styria, Austria for example. Using the *Diffusionsphysik* method, K. Prochazka and G. Vogl, from the University of Vienna, recently concluded that 'the simulation shows that other habitat conditions (the language of schools, and in parishes) are of minor influence' (emphasis added). Source: K. Prochazka and G. Vogl, 2017: Quantifying the driving factors for language shift in a bilingual region. PNAS 114(17), DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1617252114. See also Eva Obermüller: 'Welche Sprache in Schulen oder Gemeinden offiziell gesprochen wurde, hatte zumindest laut den Berechnungen kaum Einfluss auf die Entwicklung' (emphasis added). Source: Eva Obermüller, 'Warum Sprachen verschwinden'. science.ORF.at (published 14 March 2017). This bleak conclusion about the poor results of school-based maintenance or revitalisation sessions for the weakened language is consistent with the most elaborate theories of language shift. See, among others, Fishman's repeated remarks on the limited influence of schools: see Fishman 1991 (an earlier paper on the subject is available in Basque: Fishman 1990).

10. This is especially true for children and young people in relation to the language they speak at home, in their local neighbourhood, among friends, in the park, on the street, at school, when playing sport and in the audiovisual contents they view. For adults, we must also add the workplace and in their increasingly broader networks of relationships, both face-to-face and online.

11. See, in particular, the following key articles: 'La vida del euskera' and 'Más sobre la vida del euskera' (more details in the References section).

- b) Basque breathing spaces are small or very small in terms of population and, in general, fairly peripheral in terms of their territorial location. No capital city or indeed any city with more than 50,000 inhabitants has been a Basque breathing space for some time now. There is one main town: Azpeitia, which is currently by far the largest of all the Basque language breathing spaces.
- c) Most breathing spaces are located in Gipuzkoa, although there are also some in Bizkaia and Navarre. However, outside these areas, very few towns are breathing spaces, and those that are hold a fairly dubious status (in Araba-Álava we could perhaps talk about Aramaio, and in the Northern Basque Country, the Baigorri area may be considered as such).
- d) However, these breathing spaces are 'islands' nowadays, meaning that there is no broad breathing space extending from Bizkaia to Navarre with Gipuzkoa in the middle. From the 19th century onwards, the fragmentation of strong Basque-speaking areas gradually spread and is now practically complete, mainly as the result of an intense language shift: the most populated cities (capital cities), large industrial centres, main railway and road links and administrative hubs were the first to shift towards Spanish across large regions that until then had been breathing spaces¹², thereby turning the remaining breathing spaces into marginal areas from a geo-territorial perspective also.

The fact that in some areas people live their daily lives 'totally or mainly' in Basque does not in any way mean that the entire geo-territorial extent of the Basque-speaking community (Basque-speaking towns, the Basque-speaking region in general) is divided into two, with *breathing spaces* on the one side and the neighbourhoods, towns and regions that are *not breathing spaces* on the other. The sociolinguistic map of recent decades has become increasingly more complex than this. From those areas in which Basque is most prevalent to those in which Spanish is (almost) the only language spoken there is a long *continuum*, and it is along that continuum that most Basque speakers live. To summarise, at one end of the continuum (occupying a very small space) are those areas in which Basque is most prevalent. We can call this *the Basque-speaking end*.

However, even though they are all located at the same end, not all breathing spaces are the same. They are not all identical; nor indeed are they all 'strongholds

12. According to Eguren, during the mid-19th century, most of Gipuzkoa was a breathing space. Eguren's rigorous description should nevertheless be compared with other accounts.

of the Basque language'. Even within the most Basque-speaking end of the geo-territorial continuum there is a clear internal differentiation; a clear *sub-continuum*. Not all breathing spaces offer Basque the same level of protection. There is a difference between one breathing space and another. The word *breathing space* is insufficient in some cases; it is a weak term, especially when it comes to highlighting the (increasingly evident) differences that exist between one breathing space and another.

Instead of dividing them into two or three different categories, we could easily divide them into four or more, depending on the type of internal variability taken into consideration. For the moment, however, we do not see the advantage in conducting more sophisticated studies, so we will analyse the current (and evident) changing and complex reality of Basque breathing spaces using two (or three) different divisions.

II. What are not breathing spaces, either partially or fully?

II.1. Basque-speaking municipalities are not always breathing spaces

These two terms (*Basque-speaking municipality* and *breathing space*) can be and quite often are used together, but they are not synonyms. In terms of both their theoretical formulation and their practical application, they are two different things. Although we frequently use them together, in both everyday language and more elaborate explanations, they are not always the same. To our mind, the main differences between the two are as follows.

- a) They have different operational definitions. Basque-speaking municipalities are identified on the basis of the linguistic competence of their citizens: is the majority of the population able to speak Basque? A specific percentage is defined, establishing the minimum threshold (let's assume 80%) for operationally determining whether or not a municipality can be classed as 'Basque-speaking'¹³. However, the operational definition of what a Basque-speaking municipality is does not explicitly take into consideration whether or not all or most citizens actually speak Basque in their daily lives. Clearly, Basque knowledge (i.e. being *able* to speak the language) and use (*actually* speaking it on a regular basis) are closely

13. In our opinion, Iñaki Lurrebaso's work in this field offers the clearest definition, and the one most readily available for practical application.

linked, since citizens (all or the vast majority at least) must have a good knowledge of the language in order to speak it amongst themselves. However, being able to speak Basque does not necessarily lead to people actually using it, either orally or (especially) in written form. It is citizens' everyday language habits that determine whether or not a municipality or area is considered a breathing space. The key question to be answered is: in the town's social life, is Basque spoken, exclusively or predominantly at least, at home, in the neighbourhood, on the street and among friends? If the answer is yes, then that municipality or area is considered a breathing space; if the answer is no, then it is not. Saying 'maybe most of the time they don't speak it, but they do know how to speak it' is not enough. For an area to be a breathing space, the (vast) majority of the population must express themselves in Basque, although not necessarily everywhere or all the time, nor in every interaction regardless of who the other person is¹⁴. However, it must be the main language of communication in the principal places, situations and relational networks that make up the daily life of the town. And most of all, the people living there must actually *speak* Basque¹⁵.

- b) *Basque-speaking municipalities* are 'municipalities' (in terms of size) insofar as they are defined as such. *Breathing spaces* may also be 'municipalities' in terms of size, but they do not necessarily have to be. They may be larger¹⁶. Take, for example, the central and lower Urola area (from Azpeitia to Zumaia), or the Leiza-Areso-Berastegi-Eldua(in)-Berrobi area. Or they may be smaller, although here we do not have a clear and simple example. For instance, do the Etxano-Duda-Epaltza-Alakao-Arrinda neighbourhoods of Amorebieta count as a breathing space?

14. When a Spanish-speaker comes to the municipality (as a tourist, or to spend the day), for example, people talk to them in Spanish. This does not necessarily upset the everyday language habits of the local population. However, if many Spanish-speakers come often (filling the village bars, squares and playgrounds, or even settling down there), then it is another story.

15. It is worth remembering that written interactions are also increasingly prevalent, especially among younger generations. Consequently, written interactions are fast becoming part of basic everyday communications, although there is still a significant difference between the two. Many Basque speakers read the paper in Spanish. And many more choose to read official or work-related documents in that language.

16. Assuming Eguren's assessment is not entirely inaccurate, 150 years ago large swathes of Gipuzkoa were breathing spaces, almost the whole province in fact, excluding the capital and some other towns. A vibrant Basque-speaking continuum still exists around Izarraitz and Hernio, extending well beyond the official municipal boundaries. The same is true also in several small villages located in the vicinity of the Aizkorri-Aloña mountain range.

- c) Although in most cases the term Basque-speaking municipality is used in a descriptive sense, it sometimes adopts a more dynamic perspective, particularly when it is used to analyse whether the percentage of people who can speak Basque is increasing, remaining the same or decreasing. In contrast, since it focuses exclusively on ordinary, everyday use, the conceptual development of breathing space is oriented towards determining whether this normal, everyday use is being transmitted or lost.

In short, the operational definition of what a Basque-speaking municipality is stems primarily from a demolinguistic analysis of linguistic competence, or in other words, what percentage of inhabitants are able to speak Basque, and how that percentage changes across age groups. This is usually the main subject under study. In contrast, the theoretical elements of language sociology on which the concept of breathing space is grounded are as follows: a) common everyday language use and, as a consequence of this general use, b) the intergenerational transmission and continuity of these language habits. *Basque-speaking municipalities* have a different operational definition and a different practical application. Therefore, all *breathing spaces* are *Basque-speaking municipalities* (or neighbourhoods or districts), but not all *Basque-speaking municipalities* are (here and now) *breathing spaces*.

The fact that they are two different things does not mean they are always very different or indeed incompatible. As will be explained later, in reality, *Basque-speaking municipalities* and *breathing spaces* are, in many cases, very similar to each other. However, they are not the same thing and, in some cases, there is a considerable difference between them.

II.2. Breathing spaces are not ‘places where most Basque speakers live’

In terms of population, most breathing spaces are small (or very small). Consequently, most Basque speakers (more than three-quarters in fact) do not live in breathing spaces. Moreover, most of those who express themselves more often in Basque than in Spanish (or as frequently in Basque as in Spanish) in their everyday lives do not live in breathing spaces. Those who do live in breathing spaces are, therefore, clearly in the minority within the entire linguistic-competence-based language community.

Language revitalisation cannot, therefore, be limited to breathing spaces. This said, despite being secondary or peripheral in terms of numbers, breathing

spaces are nevertheless central elements in the revitalisation process, not from the demolinguiistic-quantitative perspective of linguistic competence, but from two other perspectives: a) the predominance of Basque in everyday language habits, and b) the complete intergenerational transmission of a dense group of speakers.

The special importance of breathing spaces does not merely lie in the percentage of inhabitants who ‘can speak’ Basque, but rather in the high concentration of actual speakers and the ‘traditional social habits’ that result in Basque being the prevalent language spoken in everyday interactions, along with the guarantee of intergenerational transmission and continuity. Most of those who know how to speak Basque do not live in breathing spaces, not by any stretch of the imagination. However, those who do live in them are the ones who have the most vibrant, healthy and therefore most readily transmitted Basque-language practice. See, a little later, what S. Altube and J. A. Fishman have said about this.

II.3. Several instances (including some intense Basque strongholds) where Basque is prominent¹⁷ but which are not, by definition, breathing spaces

The following instances or strongholds cannot, by definition, be considered *breathing spaces*: a) the Basque-language school network (mainly the D model), university departments or Basque language schools for adults; b) Basque-language media: *Euskadi Irratia*, *Euskal Telebista*, *Berria*, *Argia*, *Herria*, etc.; c) bilingual government departments, Basque Language Services, etc.; d) certain initiatives aimed at fostering cultural consumption in Basque: Basque book and record fairs, Basque theatre plays, singing and dance groups, etc.; e) Basque language associations and initiatives designed to promote the Basque language: *Kilometroak*, *Korrika*, etc. These places or events are not *breathing spaces*, since most people involved in them live outside them for most of the year, and spend most of their time outside them. The extensive and continuous networks of relationships that channel the everyday language habits of these speakers are primarily located outside these instances. Moreover, in every healthy language community, the long chain of intergenerational language transmission (lasting 35 to 40 years) is based on, materialises in, is nourished by, complements and develops in broader and more fundamental spheres of activity than these venues.

17. What do we mean here by prominent? We mean sometimes predominant, and occasionally complete/absolute.

In environments in which Spanish is predominant (and sometimes clearly dominant) in daily life (usually out in the street), some of the instances and venues mentioned above may become Basque strongholds. This is particularly true of the school system in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (and, to a certain extent, in Navarre and the Northern Basque Country also). These venues are undoubtedly of considerable importance in the Basque revitalisation process. Indeed, they are vital (each in its own field and to its own extent) to keeping many groups of Basque speakers alive and significantly strengthening their everyday networks of interaction. These strongholds (particularly the school system and other social-functional environments) often constitute valuable components of breathing spaces and other similar areas. Both individually and collectively, they are a valuable source of help in the process of recovering a weakened language. However, not all such examples (even strongholds) are breathing spaces. They are not the primary source, the independent and permanent foundation, of everyday language habits¹⁸. They are not areas that span generations, where those in a certain age range are very prominent and others weak or insignificant. They are not a guarantee of intergenerational continuity and transmission. Breathing spaces are, to a considerable degree at least, all these things¹⁹; other places and settings (even language strongholds) are not. Although these social-functional venues and settings may occasionally become strongholds for the language, they do not constitute the broad and permanent basis of everyday language, much less a guarantee of intergenerational transmission. To our mind, referring to these venues or settings as ‘social-functional breathing spaces’ is unnecessarily confusing. In our view, applying the label ‘breathing spaces’ to other social-functional venues and settings, while disregarding the features that define breathing spaces—everyday language practices, high speaker density, a geo-territorial basis, dense internal networks, and, consequently, the capacity for full intergenerational transmission—ultimately dilutes the concept itself. III. Why are breathing spaces so important to the Basque revitalisation process?

We have already mentioned that, in terms of population, most (almost all) breathing spaces are small. This is not without its consequences, since demolinguistic analyses clearly demonstrate that most Basque speakers today

18. Let us consider the strongest and most widespread instance of a stronghold of this kind: the school system. Most students learn to speak outside the classroom, generally before even starting school (at home and with their families, in their local neighbourhood and playgrounds, with friends, while playing, etc.). Moreover, generally until the age of 16 or 18, or even later for those who go to university), they also spend most of their waking hours outside of school. And outside of school hours, the weight and influence of extracurricular life are particularly important.

19. This has been the case for generations and centuries. And it continues to be the case today, so long as they have not been affected too much.

live outside these breathing spaces²⁰. Most centres for promoting Basque cultural activities are also located outside breathing spaces: the main bilingual administrative departments, Basque-language media outlets and publishing houses, most university buildings and research centres, Basque-language theatre and music groups, etc. Most of these are found outside Basque breathing spaces. In many ways, breathing spaces are a marginal phenomenon, not a hotbed of social innovation.

Given that they are small, few in number and located on the margins, why then are they so important? Should not ambitious Basque cultural initiatives focus instead on the areas in which the majority of Basque speakers live? Namely capital cities and the ever-expanding conurbations that are the hallmark of the 21st century? Would it not be more reasonable to focus on the majority, and to leave those small, scattered geo-territorial environments (which, even in the best of cases, are in decline) and the needs and aspirations of their citizens for a later date? We do not believe it would. And this is why:

- a) 'Normal' everyday Basque, the language most similar to that spoken by normal speakers living in healthy language communities, exists **there** (in the breathing spaces) in full force. Or more precisely, it exists in full force, or at its strongest at least, there and often **only there**. **There**, Basque is spoken, exclusively or primarily, at home and in the street, among friends and in bars, in the different neighbourhoods and in the town square, at school and in the town hall. Basque is the predominant language (or at least the predominant spoken language) in the broader social environment (festive celebrations and community work, at church and in children's playgrounds, at cultural activities, political debates, sporting events and improvised Basque verse meetings). It's also present (partially) in the workplace, more often than anywhere else.
- b) People who live in breathing spaces speak Basque without any oddities or exceptions, both in the breathing space itself and in various settings within it. They speak Basque effortlessly, with no reward, self-censorship or sacrifice. They speak Basque simply because they are talking. Why? Because of the following unwritten social norm: 'this is how it is done here.' Local social norms dictate that 'this is how it should be done' in these areas. For as long as a social norm remains in effect, it is more decisive than many laws, and this norm, which is the key to the survival

20. Not only that: many breathing space residents 'live outside the breathing space' to some degree, since more and more work elsewhere, do most of their shopping elsewhere, do their A-levels (or equivalent), vocational training or university degree elsewhere, engage in leisure activities elsewhere, etc.

of the language, is only currently in effect in breathing spaces. Outside them, with the exception of certain areas within the social-functional space (such as, for example, the Basque-medium schooling system in capital cities and towns in which Spanish is the predominant language), this social norm is fractured, weak and often non-existent. In breathing spaces, the social norm that dictates that people should 'speak Basque' in the principal domains of their daily life (at home, in their neighbourhood, with their family and friends, in the town square and bars, at church and in the town hall²¹, during break time at school, in the *pelota* court, during local festivals and at funerals) remains in force, either fully or partially²².

- c) Breathing spaces demonstrate that the Basque-speaking community, which conducts everyday interactions in the Basque language, is alive and well in these areas. This is clearly visible to anyone. This vitality of everyday interactions in Basque is highly respected by Basque speakers and enthusiasts, as well as by many from outside this world (both locals and foreigners)²³. Being able to demonstrate that there is indeed a geo-territorial area in which Basque speakers live their lives in Basque is fundamental to the future of the Basque-speaking community. Breathing spaces demonstrate most clearly what it means to live 'normally' in Basque. If we want to ensure language normalisation, it is in these spaces that we find the type of Basque that is the most similar to the normal, everyday language of a healthy language community. It is there that we can obtain the most benefit from Basque promotion, especially in terms of action, with minimal additional costs and minimal criticism²⁴.
- d) Breathing spaces are a cradle for highly fluent Basque speakers. They are sources for speakers capable of eloquently and fluently expressing the joys and fears of daily life, talking about their hopes and sorrows, recounting the events and happenings of their informal, intimate environments and telling stories and anecdotes. This is often a fundamental basis for developing more formal and sophisticated language

21. We refer to conversations between citizens and municipal officials or staff, not a specific written action by the few employees that work there. Although it has rarely become the overriding norm, it should be noted that in practice, written administrative work in Basque is gaining ground in various areas.

22. In healthy language communities, these everyday interactions take place, entirely or primarily, orally rather than in writing.

23. It is another matter entirely to claim that something existed once (sometimes not so long ago) and that we want to make sure it exists again in the future. We Basque enthusiasts have every right to pursue our dream, but it is 'something else entirely'. The Spanish-speaking world immediately recognises the difference between the two.

24. Regarding "incidental" Basque-language promotion, see also Zalvide 2007.

skills. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Basque professionals (either themselves or their parents) come from breathing spaces. Even though most of these professionals have gone out into the world, having grown up in a breathing space is hugely helpful for them when it comes to using the Basque language with ease, agility and elegance. Breathing spaces are a breeding ground for eloquent Basque-speakers. And this is a highly prized ‘treasure’ for a language community whose language is seriously weakened²⁵.

- e) Basque is the predominant language of communication in Basque breathing spaces. Spanish also has its place (it is losing ground in schools, but gaining ground in the workplace, tourism, audiovisual content, etc.). But although Spanish is increasingly present, Basque remains the normal language of communication in everyday interactions. It is either the sole language used, ‘lord and master’ or, more and more often, just predominant. But be careful: the term ‘just predominant’ may be misleading; it means that, at the local or regional level, Basque is the predominant language of everyday communications. **But it is only predominant in that specific field.**
- f) In the child-youth-adult chain, which extends from birth to around 35-40 years of age, the shift from Basque to Spanish is not occurring to any great extent in Basque breathing spaces. Barring mass migrations or other serious disruptions, intergenerational transmission is assured in breathing spaces.

In short, at the collective level, breathing spaces are closer to a healthy state than any other geo-territorial environment or population segment. In them, Basque is not in perfect health, but it is certainly healthier than anywhere else. That is why it is so vital, why it is so important and indispensable to maintain this predominance of the Basque language in the breathing spaces as much as possible. A weakened language community can recover; a dead one cannot. At most a dead community can be revived, never revitalised. Bringing something that has died back to life in the everyday language of speakers is much harder than revitalising what is weakened.

25. Although other foreign experts (Weinreich 1953, Gal 1979 and 1995; Riehl 2006; Knipf-Komlósi 2011, etc.) are also worthy of consideration, we believe it is worth carefully examining the research carried out by Nancy Dorian, as it provides insight into the extent and nature of this ‘treasure’: see Dorian 1981, 1992 [1989], 2010, and 2014. And closer to home, see again Seber Altube (Altube 1920, 1929–1930, 1933, and 1936). For a deeper understanding of Altube’s contribution, see, among others, Josemari Velez de Mendizabal (1979 and 2000).

This is nothing new. We are basically repeating what many experts, from both abroad and within our community, have said before. Let us briefly examine what these experts (those we deem most representative) have said on this matter.

What experts from home and abroad have to say about the importance of breathing spaces

Experts from both home and abroad have attempted to answer the following questions: 1) For a weakened language to ‘recover’ its strength, what is needed above all? 2) If, in a language community, only a few speakers continue to transmit their language from generation to generation, where should one begin to rebuild that community? Let us take these questions in turn.

- 1) *For a weakened language to ‘recover’ its strength, what is needed above all?* This question has been answered in many different ways²⁶ (for a brief overview of these answers, see, for example, Zalbide [2002]). In order to explore the fundamental aspects of this diversity, we will focus here on two experts, one from abroad and one from closer to home. They are by no means the only ones. They are, however, two authors who have spoken clearly and forcefully about the main elements that should be considered when attempting to revitalise a weakened language and who, in general, have served as a benchmark for many other experts. In terms of explanations provided by those outside the Basque Country, we refer to the words of Joshua A. Fishman; in terms of explanations provided from those closer to home, we refer to Seber Altube.

In relation to priority fields, in *Reversing Language Shift*, Joshua A. Fishman repeatedly claims the following: ‘the fulcrum of the GIDS scale is commonly²⁷ stage 6’ (Fishman, 2001, p. 467). We know what ‘Stage 6’ is: ‘The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community: the basis of mother-tongue transmission’

26. One possible answer is, undoubtedly, the one referred to by Altube in 1933:

‘A good Basque patriot (...) once said in a rant what I transcribe below: «Give me my freedom, however little Basque there is in it, and in a few years, Basque will become strong, sturdy, resilient, alive. And do you know what is needed to work this miracle? A dictionary and a Basque grammar». This idea has deep roots; see, for example, the passage with gaps in that Sabino Arana read in Hendaye in 1901 (Zalbide et al., 2003: XVI-XIX). It is evident that it was Sabino himself who, on that very day, asserted the need to propose a feasible alternative given the infeasibility of that path. Knipf-Komlósi, Elisabeth, 2011: ‘Wandel im Wortschatz der Minderheitensprache. Am Beispiel des Deutschen in Ungarn’. *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* – Beihefte (ZDL-B) Band 145. Budapest.

27. The term *commonly* refers to the most frequent actions necessary for improving the social situation of weakened languages. Fishman clearly states that the aforementioned ‘fulcrum’ may be different ‘for particular languages vis-à-vis particular functions that are being targeted in particular cases.’ (Fishman, 2001, p. 467)

(Fishman, 2001, p. 467). In other words, Basque must be the predominant language in the home and family, in the local neighbourhood and on the street, in social activities and in the broader life of the town or village, used by both the elderly and the young in their everyday interactions. In the case of weakened language communities such as ours, ensuring these fields of action is the fulcrum on which all else depends.

Looking to our specific situation, what is needed for Basque to recover and flourish? Seber Altube answered this question some ninety years ago by examining, analysing and developing²⁸ the views of several of his or his predecessors' contemporaries: 'For a language to recover, it is necessary that a compact and fairly numerous population use it fully as their own intimate and native tongue. A spoken language mainly spreads through natural expansion based on oral transmission (today it is also necessary for it to be supported by artificial or educational means), which necessarily requires the existence, we repeat, of centres or hubs of a certain size and compact formation (...) in which the language lives and reaches its full, vibrant and deeply rooted potential.' (Altube, 1936, p. 73) (Our italics. For a summary of his ideas, see Zalbide, 2016). Earlier, in the preamble to the passage cited above, Altube states the following: 'Speaking the language as the language of the family is (...) the most effective or decisive way of ensuring all members learn it perfectly; this learning is then complemented and consolidated by daily use in the streets, squares and other meeting places, among people from the same town who speak the same language' (Altube, 1933, p. 305).

Clearly, Altube and Fishman were on the same page²⁹. There is one clear chronological difference between them, however: S. Altube outlined his theory almost 60 years before J. A. Fishman (and S. Arana did so twenty-odd years before him). One day we will have to address the issue of pre-war language sociology head-on³⁰ to properly assess the lights and shadows of Basque-language activism as they deserve and determine where they fit into the literature from an international perspective.

- 2) *If, in a language community, only a few speakers continue to transmit their language from generation to generation, where should one begin to rebuild that community?*

28. Meanwhile, although it is often forgotten, Sabino Arana also delivered a powerful address in Hendaye in 1901. Some of his ideas are worth analysing. See Zalbide, 2015.

29. Not only in relation to this issue. But that is a topic for another time.

30. Attempts have been made to do this. See, for example, José Manuel Odriozola's *Gerraurreko gizarte-hizkuntzalaritza*, published in 1992.

Should the revitalisation effort focus more on the increasingly numerous groups of speakers (and the environments in which they live) who have turned away from their former practice and shifted to Spanish, or on the more compact (and increasingly smaller) groups of speakers who speak Basque in their everyday lives? Obviously, the best thing to do would be to work on 'all fronts at the same time' (if possible), using whichever method is deemed most appropriate in each situation. To the best of our knowledge, no one would disagree with this 'all out' approach. However, priorities are paramount in any human endeavour, be it individual or collective: 'Do not bite off more than you can chew' is the golden rule everywhere. In other words, we are often forced to choose a specific path, simply because we cannot do everything we would like. And when it is impossible to do everything, saying 'everything is good' is as useless as it is short-sighted. Knowing this, how should we define the priorities for the Basque revitalisation process? When we cannot do 'everything' we would like for a weakened language, where should our efforts be focused?

Joshua A. Fishman says the following³¹:

An early **start before inter-generational mother-tongue transmission has ceased** to occur is worth more than tons of sage advice. **It is better and easier to foster informal life when it still exists. It is the hardest thing to create afterwards.** It is very hard to create, to program that which is essentially not programmed or programmable. At best, you can program situations that might facilitate it (Fishman, 2007 [1996]).

(Bold type added by us).

In short, without undervaluing or denying the importance of other revitalisation actions, the most effective endeavour, according to Fishman, is to work to keep the living alive. 'It is better and easier.'

What does Altube have to say about this? Here is his explanation:

It will be necessary to ensure, with **paramount** concern, **the preservation** (...) **of the** sacred fire of **Basque in populations of a certain size** in which **it still remains alive**, since they constitute the last bastions of defence, the last foundations for a possible future expansion (Altube, 1936, p. 73 [translation by the editors]).

(Bold type added by us).

31. This is not the first time Fishman addressed this topic directly. However, due to its brevity and clarity, it is a good choice here.

There are many differences and nuances between these two points of view, of course³². But the fundamental ideas are very similar: it is best to start with a compact group of active Basque speakers who express themselves in Basque in their everyday interactions. And today, the strongest and most vibrant geo-territorial environments within Fishman's 'intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community' sphere of action are breathing spaces, since only here do we find (wholly or predominantly) Altube's 'compact population (...) (who) use it fully as their own intimate and native tongue.' Therefore, according to both Fishman and Altube, breathing spaces should be a clear priority in the Basque language revitalisation effort.

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32. Altube's 'populations of a certain size' should not be dismissed outright, but nor should it be taken out of proportion. The situation regarding normal, everyday use of Basque has worsened notably since 1933–36, and we should avoid imposing restrictions of this kind on breathing spaces, since if we did, we would be left only with Azeitia. Furthermore, who said that the Basque spoken every day in the smallest villages is less important, of less value, than the Basque spoken on the streets of Azeitia? Demolinguistics is always important: If we had a dozen or so Azeitia-type breathing spaces today, then Basque would be a thousand times healthier. But we do not; we do not have even half a dozen. But even if we take demolinguistics fully into account, dwelling on what we lack will not get us anywhere.

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2. Zer dira eta zer ez dira arnaseguneak? Zergatik dira garrantzitsuak?

Mikel Zalvide (Euskaltzaindia)

Editoreen oharra

Arnasegune kontzeptua euskal soziolinguistikara ekarri, definitu eta zabalpena emateko lanetan ageriko bidegile izan da Mikel Zalvide. Fishmanen lanak eta egile horrekin izandako zuzeneko harremanak izan ditu horretarako oinarri, alde batetik. Eta, bestetik, euskararen indarberritzeari lotutako jardura profesionala, ikerketa-ibilbidea eta hausnarketa. Gaiari buruzko Nazioarteko Konferentzia eta hari lotutako argitalpenaren baitan eraikitako eztabaida eta ezagutza Mikel Zalvidek ezarritako zimentuen gainean sortutakoa izan da. Horregatik, 2025eko urriaren 16an eta 17an Azpeitian (Euskal Herria) egindako saioetan Zalvidek arnaseguneen inguruan duen ikuspegia laburbiltzen duen bideo-elkarrizketa hedatu zen (<https://vimeo.com/1127291981>). Eta, horregatik ere, esku artean duzun argitalpen honetan egile horrek arnaseguneen ideia azaltzeko idatzitako artikulua argigarri baten zenbait pasarte jasotzea beharrezko ikusi da.

Bat Soziolinguistika Aldizkariaren 110. zenbakia gaiari buruzko monografikoa izan zen. Bertan, besteak beste, Zalvidek arnasegune kontzeptuaren ezaugarri nagusiak xehatu zituen «Arnaseguneak. Etorkizuneko erronkak» izeneko artikuluan¹.

Jarraian dakarkiguna aipatutako artikulutik hautatutako pasarte batzuk dira. Lana bere osotasunean eta xehetasunean ezagutzeko borondatea duenak jatorrizko aldaerara jotzea du biderik zuzenena. Kasu honetan, zatiak erauzteak berekin dakarren ikuspegi partzialaz jakitun, baina jatorrizkoari aldaketarik ez egiteko irizpideak gidatuta, hiru atal bere horretan ekartzea hobetsi da. Honakoak dira, hain zuzen ere, artikulutik hartutako hiru atalak:

- I. Zer da arnasegunea, oro har?
- II. Zer ez dira arnasegune, partez edo osoz?
- III. Zergatik dira arnaseguneak hain garrantzitsu, euskara indarberritzeko?

1. Zalvide, Mikel (2019). Arnaseguneak. Etorkizuneko Erronkak. *Bat Soziolinguistika aldizkaria*, 110(1), 11-78. <https://bat.soziolinguistika.eus/produktua/bat-110-2019-1-arnaseguneak-etorkizuneko-erronkak/>

I. Zer da arnasgunea, oro har?

Joshua A. Fishman-ek (1991, 58. or.) bere *Reversing Language Shift* ezagunean «physical breathing space» aipatzen du une batez: «breathing space»² horren itzulpena da *arnasgunea* (Zalbide, 2001). Lehen hurbilketa moduan, «demographically concentrated space where Xish can be on its own turf, predominant and unharassed». Hots, eta gureraren etorriz,

- Euskal kontzentrazio demografiko handia du arnasguneak: euskaraz dakite bertako herritar guztiek edo gehienek eta, bereziki, *eguneroko mintzajardun arruntean herritar guztiak edo gehienak euskaraz ari izaten dira beren artean, arnasgune barruan.*
- Eguneroko mintzajardun arruntak euskararen aldeko nagusitasun-moldaera argia du bertan, eta nagusitasun hori ez da eztabaidatzen: «predominant and unharassed». Euskaraz egiten da hor, besterik gabe. Gizarte-araua bizia da hori: Donostiako Kontxan bainu-jantzia edo bikiniak, ez ordea sostena eta kuleroa, janzteak bezain arau zabal³. Arau zabal eta, zergatik ez dakigula baina ondo kontuan dugularik, haustezin. Gauza bera gertatzen da arnasguneetan: bertakoek bertakoekin, hitzez eta ohiko solasgai bizi-pizgarriez, euskaraz jardutea arau nagusi da ingurumen horietan.
- Eguneroko mintzajardun arruntean euskarak ageri duen nagusitasun gotor horri eskerrak, bertako *biztanleen ama-hizkuntza belaunez belaun transmititzen da* arnasgunean, *mintzaldaketa ohargarririk gabe*. Transmisio horri eskerrak, *hizkuntzaren mendez mendeko iraupen-katea ez da arnasgunean eteten*. Arriskuak arrisku, euskarazko nagusitasun-moldaerari eusten zaion artean *belaunez belaun transmisio-katea ez dago galzori bizian*.
- Eguneroko mintzajardun arruntak oinarri *ezagunak* ditu, jardun-gune eta harreman-sare nagusiei dagokienez: etxea eta auzoa, kalea eta lagunartea,

2. Jakintza-esparru zabalagoetan ere aurkitu izan du *Breathing Space* terminoak aplikazio akademikorik. Medikuntza-alorrean, alergia kontuei buruzko lanetan, ikus adibidez Gregg Mitman-en 2007ko *Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes*. Yale University Press. Aplikazio horrek ez du gure arnasgune-kontzeptuarekin lotura zuzenik. Joshua A. Fishman-ek hizkuntza-soziologiaren sailean, ahuldutako hizkuntzak indarberritzeko saioen atalean, sortutako formulazioak ari gara hemen, ez osasun medikoaren alorrekoak.

3. Arau hori ez da erabatekoa: badira noski eguzkia edo bainua goiko pieza gabe hartzen duten emakumezkoak: gutxi(ago), baina badira. Ez da «betidaniko» araua ere, ez eta «betirakoa». Gizarte-arauak aldatu egiten dira aldian behin. Aldatzen ez diren artean arau dira ordea: guztiok dakigu leku eta aldi jakineko norma soziala zein den eta, oro har, norma horretara biltzen gara gehienok gure eguneroko jardunean. Laburbilduz: gizarte-araua «arau» da, bizirik dirauen artean.

taberna eta denda, eliza eta herriko plaza, aisialdia eta kirol-gunea, eskola eta (ahal den heinean) lan-esparrua. Horietan euskara nagusi baldin bada, *arnasmune betean* gaude. Aldiz, hortik herrenka hastean *arnasmune bete* izateari uzten zaio, *arnasmune erasan* bihurtuz. Erasate-lan hori areagotu egiten bada nabarmen, horren ondorioz sortzen den moldaera berria ez da *arnasmune*.

Berririo esango dugu, funtsezko kontua baita hau: demolinguistika aldetik jaun eta jabe da euskara arnasmunean. Euskaraz jakiteaz gainera *euskaraz ari izaten dira*, *eguneroko mintzajardun arruntari dagokionez*, jaiotzaz edo geroko etorreraz (ezkontzaz, lanbidez,..) bertan bizi diren herritar guztiak edo gehienak. Hiztun horiek «bere kabian» sentitzen dira arnasmunean: euskarazko jardun arruntari dagokionez esparru geoterritorial «segurua» dute arnasmunea. Euskaldunak euskaldunekin herri-giroan euskaraz bizi diren lekua, euskara «etxeko nagusi» sentitzen den eremua. Inork behartu, xaxatu edo eraso gabe bizi dira bertan euskaraz. Arnasmunea ez dute hizkuntzagatiko gatazka-leku; besterentzat ere ez da, normalean, aparteko arazo-iturri soziolinguistiko. Barruko edo kanpoko inork ez ditu eguneroko jardun arruntan euskaraz egitera behartzen. Hori esijitzen du gizarte-arau zabal den normak, hori da normala. Era berean, eta oro har, kanpokoek ez dituzte xaxatzen edo erasotzen herrian euskaraz bizi direlako. Bertako haurrek, neska-mutilek eta gaztetxoek bere osoan (aski era betean) eskuratzen dute gurasoen hizkuntza⁴. Darabilten hizkera-modu horren barne-osaera eta beren mintzagaitasun-moldea aldatuz doaz hainbatean, baina bertako neska-mutilek, gazteek eta sasoikoek euskaraz egiten dute beren artean nagusiki: etxekoekin, lagunekin eta herritarrekin euskaraz bizi dira normalean, hitzezko jardun arruntari dagokionez⁵.

Aurrera begirako ondorio argiak ditu gertakari horrek, estatistikoki: a) bikote euskalduna egiten dute bertako gazte gehienek eta, horrela, herrian bertan (edo inguruko beste arnasmuneren batean) asentatuz euskal familia sortzen dute maiz: hiztun-elkartearen jarraipen-bermea, belaunez belaun eguneratu beharrekoa, da familia-giro euskalduna sortze hori. Herriko lagunarteak eta gizarte-bizitzak (eta, ahal dela, lan-esparruak) zurkaiztu egiten du euskarazko jardun-gune hori.

4. Ekarpen zoragarriak eginik ditu gai honetaz, inoiz aipatu izan dugunez, Nancy Dorian-ek.

5. Hizkuntza-ukipenaren eragina indartuz doa arnasmuneetan ere, oro har. Erdal hitzez gainera esamolde asko eta asko etxekotzen ari dira herriko gazte(txo)enean artean. Are perspektiba zabalagoan koka liteke fenomeno hori. Zerainen Elena Mendizabalek eta biok zenbait urtez egin genuen azteraldiaren argitan (ikus urte haietako *Xaguarde* aldizkaria), (orduko) 60 urtetik beherako belaunaldiak galera nabarmena ageri zuen 70 urtetik gorakoan aldean, baserri-munduari loturiko hitz-altxorrari dagokionez. Erdarak gero eta nabarmenago erasanik ere, ordea, euskaraz egiten dute beren artean Zeraingo heldu eta gazte gehienek. Nagusitasun-moldaera hori da kontua, hemen axola diguna.

b) Euskararen nagusitasun-moldaera⁶ argi horri eskerrak, arnasgunean ez dago *eus > erd* mintzaldaketa⁷ zabalik. Are gutxiago galera osoa⁸. Belaunez belauneko jarraipena inon baino seguruago bermaturik dago hor.

Eguneroko mintzajardun arruntari dagokionez, hortaz, osasun oneko hiztun-elkarteetan normal dena normal da arnasgunean. Ama-hizkuntzaren *belaunez belauneko jarraipena* da osasun oneko hizkuntza bizien iraupen-bide nagusia. Hori da osasun oneko hiztun-elkarte orok ahuldutako hiztun-elkarteen aurrez aurre duen bereizgarri soziolinguistiko nagusietarikoa: hainbatentzat nagusia. Ama-hizkuntzaren *belaunez belauneko jarraipena* sendo dago gure arnasguneetan: beste inon baino sendoago. Funtsezko ezaugarria da hori: perspektiba geoterritorialari dagokionez arnasguneetan bakarrik gertatzen zaigun ezaugarria. Aparteko antolamendurik gabe ikasten dute arnasguneetako haurrek euskaraz egiten. Eskolara joan aurretik euskaldun trebe izan ohi dira: jakitez eta, batez ere, egitez trebe. Jakitez elebakar edo euskal-elebidun; egitez guztiak edo gehienak euskaldun (konparatiboki) garbi. Euskal eskolarik gabe, are erdal eskolaz, *belaunez belaun* eta menderik mende euskaraz bizi izan dira. Orain ere gutxi fio. Lagungarri ederra dute gaur egun, hori bai, eskola: a) egunaren zati ohargarria (% 16 inguru) euskaraz betetzen dute neska-mutilek, maisu-maistrekin eta eskolagunekin; b) euskaraz irakurtzen eta idazten ikasten dute, lehen ez bezala; c) herriko euskararen erregistro informal-intimoez gainera hizkuntzaren aldaera jaso-formalaz baliatzen ikasten dute hainbatean; d) erdara (gaztelania eta, partez, ingelesa) ikasten dute orobat (ik. Zalbide, 2016). Lehen ez bezala, alde dute orain eskola. Alde eta, gizarte berri honetan, oso beharrezko. Hizkuntzaren geroa ez du ordea, arnasguneetan ere, batez ere eskolak bermatzen⁹. Mintzajardun arruntaren

6. Hizkuntza-soziologiaren alorreko «dominance configuration» delakoa (ez Uriel Weinreich-en 1953ko formulazio psikolinguistikoa) dugu hemen gogoan. Ikus, adibidez, Fishman, Joshua A., Robert L. Cooper, Roxana Ma etab., 1968: *Bilingualism in the Barrio (The measurement and description of language dominance in Bilinguals)*. Bertako perspektibatik ikus, adibidez, Zalbide 2009 eta 2016.

7. Alemanezko *Sprachverschiebung*, ingelesezko *language shift* edota gaztelaniazko *desplazamiento lingüístico* dugu gogoan, *luze-zabaleko mintzaldaketa-z* dihardugunean. Bertako perspektibatik ikus adibidez Zalbide 2001, 2002 eta 2016.

8. Terminologia teknikoari, eta hartatik eratortzen den kontzeptu-lanketari dagokionez ikus, adibidez, alemanezko *Sprachverlust* eta, batez ere, ingelesezko *language loss* bere (zati-)sinonimo ugariekin: perspektiba gradual batetik hor daude, besteak beste, *language attrition*, *language obsolescence*, *language loss* eta *language death*.

9. Bat dator ondorio etsi hori mundu zabaleko hainbat gertaera konprobatuekin. Austriako Estirian bizi diren esloveno-hiztunen kasuaz, esate baterako, Vienako unibertsitateko K. Prochazka-k eta G. Vogl-ek ondorio hau ateratu dute berrikitan, *Diffusionsphysik* delakotik hartutako metodoaz: «The simulation shows that other habitat conditions (the language of schools, and in parishes) are of minor influence» (azpimarra gurea). Iturria: K. Prochazka-k eta G. Vogl, 2017: Quantifying the driving factors for language shift in a bilingual region. PNAS 114(17), DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1617252114. Ikus orobat Eva Obermüller: «Welche Sprache in Schulen oder Gemeinden offiziell gesprochen wurde, hatte zumindest laut den Berechnungen kaum Einfluss auf die Entwicklung» (azpimarra gurea). Iturria: Eva Obermüller, «Warum Sprachen verschwinden».

eguneroko erabilera-espektro zabala¹⁰ da, beti eta nonahi, osasun oneko hiztun-elkarteetan arau nagusi. Hori da munduko hizkuntza bizi-sendo guztien jarraipen-bide normala, belaunez belaun bere buruari eusten diona eta, eten-urratze larririk ezean, menderik mende irauten duena. Jarraipen-bide horri sendo eusteak lehentasun argia du, ahuldutako hizkuntza bizirik gordetzeko eta, hortik abiatuz, ahuldutako hiztun-elkartea bere osoan indarberritzeko. Gune horiek dira, hainbat adituren ustean (ikus bereziki, bertako eta mundu zabaleko perspektibak uztartuz, S. Altube¹¹ eta J. Fishman), ahuldutako hizkuntza indarberritzeko saio arrakastatsu ororen abiaburu nagusia eta sostengu gotorrena. Ingurumen horiek galtzen badira, askoz zailagoa da handik aurrerako biziberritze-saioa.

Beste zenbait ezaugarri. Arnagune beteak eta erasanak

Goiko elementuek definitzen dute aski zorrotz arnaguneak zer diren. Ezer gehiago esan al liteke horretaz? Nolakoak dira arnaguneak, hemen eta orain? Honako zertzelada hauek erantsi behar zaizkio, gure ustez, goiko definizio- eta azalpen-saioari.

- a) *Ingurumen geoterritorialak, ez soziofuntzionalak edo birtual hutsak*, dira arnaguneak: eguneroko mintzajardun arruntean (erabat edo batez ere) euskaraz bizi diren auzoak, herrixkak, herriak, herriarteak eta, inoiz (gero eta bakanago), eskualde osoak.
- b) Biztanle-kopuruz txikiak edo oso txikiak dira arnaguneak, eta lurralde-antolamenduaren aldetik aski periferikoak oro har. Hiribururik edota 50.000 biztanletik gorako hiririk ez dago, aspaldian, arnaguneen sailean. Herribururik bai: Azpeitia da gaur egun, askogatik gainera, herriburuen artean arnagunerik handiena.
- c) Gipuzkoan daude, egungo egunean, arnagune gehienak; Bizkai-Nafarroetan ere badira zenbait, dena den. Aldiz hortik kanpora oso herri gutxi dira arnagune, eta gutxiok ere aski duda-mudazko dira (Araban Aramaio?, Iparraldean Baigorri ingurua?).

science.ORG.at (2017ko martxoaren 14an argitara emana). Ahuldutako hizkuntza eskola bidez bizirik eusteko edo indarberritzeko saioen emaitza ahularen ondorio etsi hori bat dator, orobat, mintzaldaketari buruzko teorizazio-saio landuenekin. Ikus horretaz, besteak beste, Fishman-ek eskolaren eragin mugatuari buruz behin eta berrito esandakoak: ikus Fishman 1991 (artikulu horren aurrekaria euskaraz ere bada: Fishman 1990).

10. Umetan eta gazte(txo)tan batez ere etxean, auzoan, lagunartean, parkean, kalean, eskolan, kirolgintzan eta ikus-entzunezko zabalbideetan. Helduaroan, horrezaz gainera, lan-munduan eta harreman-sare gero eta zabal-ugariagoetan, aurrez aurre edo birtualki.

11. Ikus, batez ere, funtsezko artikulu hauek: «La vida del euskera» eta «Más sobre la vida del euskera», zehaztapenak bibliografia atalean.

- d) Arnasguneak «irla» edo «uharte» bihurturik daude egungo egunean: ez dago Bizkaitik Nafarroara hedatzen den arnasgune zabalik, Gipuzkoa erdian harturik. XIX. mendetik aurrera zabalduz joandako, eta egungo egunean ia erabat buruturiko, mintzaldaketa biziaren ondorio da euskal mintza-esparru gotorraren zatikatze hori: jende gehien bizi den hiri(buru)ak, industria-gune handi(en)ak, trenbide- eta karretera-lotune nagusiak eta administrazio-gune operatiboak erdaldundu ziren lehenik, ordura arte arnasgune izandako eskualde zabaletan¹², eta bazter-fenomeno bihurtuz joan ziren horregatik, perspektiba geoterritorialetik ere, arnasguneak.

Eguneroko bizimodu arruntean «erabat edo nagusiki» euskaraz egite horrek ez du esan nahi, inondik inora, euskal hiztun-elkartearen espazio geoterritorial osoa (euskal hiztun-herria, horren arabera Euskal herria) bitan banatzen denik: batetik *arnasguneak*, bestetik *arnasgune* ez diren auzoak, herriak eta eskualdeak. Formulazio dikotomiko hori baino ondotoz bihurriagoa da azken hamarkadotako mapa soziolinguistikoa. Arnasgune gotorrenetik hasita (ia) erdara hutsezko mintza-esparrura bidean *continuum* luzea dago, eta tarte-bitarte luze horretan bizi gara euskaldun gehienok. Beraz, eta labur bilduz, *continuum* horren punta-mutur batean, ez tarte-bitarte luzean, daude arnasguneak: punta-muturrik euskaldunenean.

Punta-mutur batean egonik ere, arnasgune guztiak ez dira zeharo uniforme, molde bakarreko eta berdinean; guztiak ez dira, bereziki, «euskal gotorleku huts». Euskaltasun handieneko ingurumen geoterritorial horretan ere barne-bereizbide argia dago: azpi-*continuum* nabaria. Guztiak ez dira gotortasun-maila bereko. Aldea dago arnasgune batzuetatik besteetara. Arnasgune hitza ez da, horregatik, zenbaitetan aski: termino ahula da, batez ere, arnasgune batzuetatik besteetara dagoen (gero eta nabariagoko) aldea gordin markatu behar denean.

Bitan edo hirutan banatu ordeztu edo gehiagotan ere sailkatu litezke arnasguneak, segun zer barne-aldakortasun mota aztertu nahi den. Oraingoz ez diegu irabazi handirik ikusten sofistikazio handiagoko azterbideei: biko eta hiruko banaketaz analizatuko dugu beraz, gaurkoan, arnasguneen egungo (eta begien bistako) errealitate aldakor-komplexua.

12. Gipuzkoan, Eguren aintzakotzat hartu behar bada, arnasgune genuen Gipuzkoa gehiena XIX. mendearen erdialdean. Badago motiborik, halere, Egurenen deskribapen zorrotza beste zenbait testigantzarekin konparatu behar izateko.

II. Zer ez dira arnasmune, partez edo osoz?

II.1. Udalerrri euskaldunak ez dira, beti eta nonahi, arnasmune

Gauza biak batera joan litezke, eta maiz samar hala gertatzen da, baina ez dira baliokide huts. Bi gauza dira, formulazio teorikoz zein aplikazio praktikoz, *arnasmuneak* eta *udalerrri euskaldunak*. Bateratsu erabili ohi ditugu maiz, hizkera arruntean eta azalpen landuagoetan, baina bata eta bestea ez dira gauza bera, beti eta nonahi. Ondoko puntuotan daude, gure ustez, bien arteko berezitasun nagusiak.

- a) Definizio operatibo berezia dute, hasteko, batak eta besteak. Udalerrri euskaldunak identifikatzeko orduan herritarren mintzagaitasuna hartzen da oinarri: herritar gehienek ba al dakite euskaraz? Gutxieneko langa ezartzen duen portzentaje jakina definitzen da hor, operatiboki, *udalerrri euskaldun bai* ala *udalerrri euskaldun ez* erabakitzeke: demagun % 80ko langa¹³. Herritar guztiek edo gehienek beren artean euskaraz egiten duten ala ez, aldiz, ez da *udalerrri euskaldunen* definizio operatiboan espresuki kontuan hartzen: bistan da euskaraz jakitea eta euskaraz egitea ez dabiltzala arras urruti, herritarrek (guztiek edo gehien-gehienek) euskaraz jakin behar baitute beren artean euskaraz egiteko. Euskaraz jakiteak ez du, ordea, euskaraz egitea ondorioztatzen: ez ahoz eta ez, bereziki, idatziz. Herritarren eguneroko mintzajardun arruntak erabakitzen du, aldiz, ingurumen geoterritorial bat *arnasmune* den ala ez: etxean eta auzoan, kalean eta lagunartean, bertako gizarte-bizitzan oro har euskaraz egiten al da, erabat edo nagusiki? Baiezkotan, ingurumen hori *arnasmunea* da; bestela ez. «Gehienetan ez dute egiten, konforme, baina jakin badakite» esateak ez du balio. Herritar (gehienek) gehienek egin behar dute euskaraz, arnasmune izateko: ez ezinbestean nonahi eta noiznahi, ez interakzio guzti-guztietan nornahi delarik ere solaskidea¹⁴.

13. Iñaki Lurrebasoren lana da honetan guztian, gure ustez, definizioz argiena eta aplikazio-ahalmenez lagungarriena.

14. Erdaldun bat herrira etortzen denean (turista moduan, egun pasa), esate baterako, erdaraz egiten zaio. Horrek ez du, ezinbestean, eguneroko mintzajardun arrunta itzulipurdikatzen. Besterik da erdaldun asko sarri (herriko tabernak, plaza-ingurua eta are bertako jolas-parkeak zabal okupatuz, zer esanik ez bertara bizi izatera) etortzen direnean.

Bai, ordea, eguneroko mintzajardun arruntaren ohiko leku, situazio eta harreman-sare nagusietan. Batez ere hitzez egin behar dute euskaraz¹⁵.

- b) *Udalerri euskaldunak* «udalerri» dira neurriz, berez eta ezinbestean: halaxe definiturik daude. *Arnasguneak* ere «udalerri» izan litezke neurri-hedaduraz, baina ez dute ezinbestean udalerri izan beharrik. Hortik gorako neurria ere izan lezakete arnasguneek¹⁶: demagun Urolako erdi- eta behealde gehiena (Azpeitia ingurutik Zumaia aldera), edota Leitzza-Areso-Berastegi-Eldua(in)-Berrobi herri-sorta. Udalerri-mailatik beherako neurri-hedadura duen ingurumena ere izan liteke arnasgune, horren adibide seguru eta errazik eskueran ez daukagun arren: Amorebietako Etxano-Duda-Epaltza-Alakao-Arrinda auzoaldea baliagarri ote da ikuspegi hori argitzeko?
- c) Gehienetan deskriptiboa bada ere udalerri euskaldunen ikuspegia, perspektiba zinetikorik ere izaten du hainbatean: euskaraz dakitenen portzentajea gora doan, bere hartan dirauen ala behera datorren analizatzen da maiz, halakoetan. Aldiz, bere ardatza eguneroko jarduera arrunta duenez beste aztergai honetan zentratzen da arnasguneen kontzeptu-lanketa: eguneroko jarduera arrunt hori belaunez belaun sendo transmititzen ari den, ala galduz doan.

Labur bilduz: hizkuntza-gaitasunean zentratutako analisi demolinguistikotik abiatzen da nagusiki udalerri euskaldunen definizio operatiboa; bertako biztanle guztietatik zenbatek euskaraz dakien, eta portzentaje hori adin-taldez talde nola bilakatzen ari den: hori izaten da bere aztergai nagusia. Hizkuntza-soziologiaren elementu teoriko hauetan oinarritzen da nagusiki, aldiz, «arnasgune» kontzeptua: a) eguneroko mintzajardun arruntan eta, mintzajardun zabal-nagusi horren ondorioz, b) jarduera horren belaunez belauneko jarraipenean. *Udalerri euskaldunek* bestelako definizio operatiboa dute, eta bestelako aplikazio praktikoa. Horregatik, *arnasgune* guztiak *udalerri* (edo auzo zein eskualde) *euskaldun* dira baina *udalerri euskaldun* guztiak ez dira, hemen eta orain, *arnasgune*.

Bi gauza izateak ez du esan nahi arras diferente eta bateraezin direnik. Besterik erakusten digu errealitateak: aurrerago azalduko denez *udalerri*

15. Idatzizko interakzioa indartuz doa, dena den, belaunaldi gazteenetan batez ere. Idatzizko interakzioa ere eguneroko jardun arruntaren sailera hurbiltzen ari da beraz, hori dela medio. Alde handia dago ordea, oraindik, plano bien artean. Erdarazko «periodikua leituz ilustratzen da» orain ere, maiz aski, herriar euskaldun asko. Zer esanik ez dokumentazio ofiziala edo lan-esparrukoa tarteko direnean.

16. Garai batean, duela 150 urteko Gipuzkoan, Eguren-en aitormena erabat oker ez badabil, eskualde osoak genituen arnasgune: ia probintzia osoa, hiriburua eta zenbait herriburu alde batera utzita. Oraindik ere antzematen da izarraitzen eta Hernioren gerri-bueltan euskal giro bizi(ago)ko *continuum* bat, udalerri hutsetik harantzago doana. Baita Aizkorri-Aloña mendikatearen inguruko hainbat herri(xka)tan ere.

euskaldunak eta *arnasguneak* ez dabilta, hainbat kasutan, elkarrengandik batere urruti. Baina ez dira gauza bera eta, zenbait kasutan, tarte handia dago batetik bestera.

II.2. Arnasguneak ez dira «euskaldun gehienak bizi diren lekua»

Biztanlez txiki dira arnasguneak: gehienak oso txiki. Txikitasun hori dela medio, euskaldun gehienok (euskaraz dakigunon hiru laurdenak baino gehiago) ez gara arnasguneetan bizi. Egunean zehar erdaraz baino maizago (edo erdaraz bezain maiz) euskaraz egiten dugun hiztun gehienok ere ez gara, antza, arnasguneetan bizi. Arnasguneak aski elementu sekundario dira, beraz, mintzagaitasunean oinarrituriko hiztun-elkarte osoaren kopuru-perspektiba hutsetik. Hizkuntza indarberritzeko saioa ezin da hortaz, inola ere, arnasguneetara mugatu. Baina kontuz: kopuruz sekundario edo periferiko izanik ere, zentral-zentralak dira arnasguneak. Zentraltasun hori ez dago gaitasun linguistikoaaren plano demolinguistiko-kuantitatiboan, beste bi puntuotan baizik: a) eguneroko mintzajardun arruntaren euskal nagusitasunean, eta b) hiztun-multzo trinkoen belaunez belauneko transmisio betean.

Kontzentrazio demografiko handiaren eta «betidaniko gizarte-ohitura»-ren eraginez eguneroko mintzajardun arruntan euskara hain bizi egoteak eta mintzajardun horren belaunez belauneko jarraipen-bermeak, ez euskaraz «dakiten» hiztunen kopuru-portzentaje hutsak, ematen die arnasguneei aparteko garrantzia. Euskaraz dakien jende gehiena ez da, urrundik ere, arnasguneetan bizi. Bertan bizi direnek dute ordea, askogatik, euskarazko jarduna bizien, osasuntsuen eta, horrenbestez, gerora transmitigarrien. Ikus, aurreraxeago, S. Altubek eta J. A. Fishman-ek horretaz esandakoa.

II.3. Euskarak presentzia nabarmena¹⁷ duen hainbat instantzia (tartezen zenbait gotorleku) ez da, definizioz, *arnasgune*

Ondoko instantzia edo gotorleku hauek ez dira, eta definizioz ezin dira izan, *arnasgune*: a) euskarazko eskola-sarea (nagusiki D eredukoa), euskarazko unibertsitate-atalak eta euskaltegiak; b) euskarazko komunikabideak: *Euskadi Irratia*, *Euskal Telebista*, *Berria*, *Argia*, *Herria* etab.; c) Herri Aginteetako atal elebidunak, Euskara Zerbitzuak etab.; d) euskarazko kultura-kontsumora

17. Zer da, hemen eta orain, nabarmena?: zenbaitetan nagusia, inoiz erabatekoa.

bideratutako hainbat ekimen: euskal liburu- eta disko-azokak, euskal antzerki-, kantu- eta dantza-taldeak, etab.; e) euskaltzale-elkarteak eta euskararen aldeko ekimenak: *Kilometroak*, *Korrika* etab. Instantzia horiek ez dira *arnasgune*: herriko biztanle guztien multzo nagusia hortik kanpora bizi da urtean zehar, eguneko ordu gehienetan; hiztun horien eguneroko mintzajardun arrunta bideratzen duten harreman-sare zabal-etengabeak instantzia horietatik kanpora daude nagusiki; hizkuntzaren belaunez belauneko jarraipenaren kate luzea (35-40 urtera artekoa) instantzia horiek baino jardun-gune zabal eta basikoagoetan oinarritzen, hezurramitzen, elikatzen, osatzen eta garatzen da hiztun-elkarte osasuntsu orotan.

Eguneroko bizimoduan erdara nagusi (zenbaitetan jaun eta jabe) den ingurumenetan (normalean kale-giroan) euskal gotorleku izatera iristen da goiko instantzia horietariko zenbait: horrelakoa da, bereziki, EAEko (eta, zein bere neurrian, Nafarroako eta Iparraldeko) eskola-mundua. Garrantzi ohargarria dute instantzia horiek, dudarik apurrena ez dago horretan, euskara indarberritzeko. Ezin baztertuzkoak dira, bakoitza bere alorrean eta bere heinean, euskal hiztun-talde askori bizirik eusteko eta beren eguneroko harreman-sareak nabarmen indartzeko. Arnasgune gehienen eta bestelako ingurumen askoren osagai sendo eta balios dira hortaz, sarri, gotorleku horiek; hala dira, bereziki, eskola-esparrua eta beste zenbait ingurumen soziofuntzional. Lagungarri ederrak ditugu hortaz gotorlekuok, banaka zein taldean harturik, ahuldutako hizkuntza indarberritzeko orduan. Baina instantzia guztiok (tartean gotorleku nagusiok) ez dira arnasgune, eta ezin dira izan. Ez dira eguneroko mintzajardun arruntaren iturburu nagusi, oinarri beregain eta iraunkor¹⁸. Ez dira belaunarte osoa bere baitan duten biziguneak: adin-tarte jakineko kideak oso gailen dira bertan, eta bestelakoak ahul edo hutsal. Ez dira belaunez belauneko jarraipenaren berme-iturri. Arnasguneak badira hori guztia, hein ohargarrian¹⁹; beste instantziok (are gotorleku sendoenok) ez. Instantzia soziofuntzional horiek gotorleku izatera iristen badira ere zenbaitetan, instantziok ez dira eguneroko mintzajardun arruntaren oinarri zabal eta iraunkor; are gutxiago belaunez belauneko jarraipenaren berme-iturri beregain. Instantzia edo gotorleku horiek «arnasgune soziofuntzional» bailiran azaltzea, nahasmendua sortzea da gure ustez. Arnasguneek hain berea eta hain

18. Demagun gotorleku-instantzia indartsu eta zabalduena: eskola-mundua. Eskolatik kanpora (maizenik eskolara joan aurretik) ikasten dute ikasle gehienek hitz egiten (etxean eta familiaretan, auzoan eta haur-parkean, lagunartean eta jolasean,...). Are gehiago: (oro har 16 edo 18 urtera arte, unibertsitate bidetik doazenek are beranduago arte) irauten duen eskola-aldi luzean ere eskolatik kanpora pasatzen dituzte esna-ordu gehienak (askogatik gehienak). Eskola-aldia amaitutakoan, are nabarmenagoa da eskolaz kanpoko bizimoduaren pisua eta eragina.

19. Hala izan dira belaunez belaun eta menderik mende. Orain ere halatsu dira, aski erasanik ez dauden heinean.

noraezekoa duten eguneroko mintzajardun arruntaz, hiztun horien kontzentrazio demografikoaz, hartarako oinarri geoterritorialaz, ingurumen horretako barne-sare trinkoez eta, hori guztia dela medio, ama-hizkuntzaren belaunez belaun transmititzeko ahalmen beteaz ahazturik bestelako instantzia soziofuntzional horiei «arnasmune» deitzea kontzeptuaren jatorrizko adiera, orain ere behar-beharrezkoa, desnaturalizatzea da.

III. Zergatik dira arnasmuneak hain garrantzitsu, euskara indarberritzeko?

Esana dugu dagoeneko, populazio-espektroari dagokionez herri-herririka txikiak direla arnasmune gehienak, ia guztiak. Baditu horrek, hemen eta orain, bere ondorioak: demolinguistikazko analisiek argi erakusten dutenez, euskaldun gehienok arnasmuneetatik kanpora bizi gara egungo egunean²⁰. Euskalgintzaren aktibazio-gune gehienak arnasmuneetatik kanpora daude orobat: administrazio-atal elebidun nagusiak, euskarazko komunikabideak, argitaletxeak, unibertsitate-erakin eta ikergune gehienak, antzerki- eta musika-talde euskaldunak... horiek eta beste hainbat arnasmuneetatik kanpora daude oro har. Alde askotatik bazter-fenomenoa dira arnasmuneak, ez gizarte-bizitzaren berrikuntza-habi.

Txikiak, gutxi eta bazter-girokoak izanik, zergatik dira hain garrantzitsu? Euskalgintza sendo-asmozkoak ez ote luke euskaldun gehienon habitat nagusietan, XXI. mendearen euskarri diren hiriburu eta konurbazio gero eta zabalagoetan, zentratu behar? Ez ote da zentzuzkoago gehiengoari kasu egitea, hoberenean ere gainbehera datozen ingurumen geoterritorial txiki-zipriztindu horiek, eta bertako herritarren beharrak eta gogoak gero(xeago)ko uztea? Ezezkoan gaude. Hona zergatik:

- a) Eguneroko euskal mintzamolde «normala», osasun oneko hiztun-elkarteen mintzajardun arruntaren antzekoena, **hor** (arnasmuneetan) dago indar betean. Indar betean edo, zehazkiago esanik indarrak beteenean: askotan **hor bakarrik**. Euskaraz egiten da **hor**, erabat edo nagusiki, etxean eta kalean, lagunartean eta tabernan, auzoan eta herriko plazan, eskolan eta udaletxean. Euskara da nagusi, hitzez behintzat, gizarte-giro zabalean (jai-ospakizun eta auzolan, elizkizun eta parkeko jolasaldi, kultura-ekimen eta eztabaida politiko, kirol eta bertso-saio). Lanean ere bai partez, inon baino maizago.

20. Hori bakarrik ez: arnasmuneetako herritar asko «arnasmunetik kanpora» bizi da hein ohargarri batez: gero eta «arnasmunetar» gehiagok handik kanpora egiten du lan; kanpoan egiten ditu orobat erosketa gehienak, kanpoan egiten bere Batxilergo-, Lanbide Heziketa zein unibertsitate-ikasketak, handik kanpora burutzen aisialdiko hainbat ekimen, eta abar.

- b) Arnasguneetan bizi den jendeak bitxitasun-seinalerik edo salbuespen-markarik gabe egiten du euskaraz, bertan eta arnasgune horren hainbat ingurutan. Aparteko esfortzu, ordain-sari, autozentsura edo sakrifiziorik gabe egiten du euskaraz, hitzez ari delarik. Zergatik? Inon idatzi gabeko gizarte-arau honegatik: «hemen horrela egiten da». Ingurumen horietan «horrela egitea» agintzen du bertako gizarte-arauak. Indarrean dirauen artean, lege asko baino erabakigarriago da gizarte-arau edo norma sozial hori. Hizkuntzaren bizi-iraupenerako giltzarri den arau hori arnasguneetan bakarrik daukagu bizirik. Arnasguneetatik kanpora, espazio soziofuntzionalaren esparru jakinetan izan ezik (demagun erdara nagusi den hiriburu, hiri eta herrietako D ereduko irakasleen jarduna, eskola esparruan) aski zartaturik, indargabeturik eta maiz galdurik, dago norma sozial hori. Arnasguneetan bizirik dago, erabat edo hein handi batean, eguneroko bizimoduaren espazio nagusietan (etxean, auzoan, familian, lagunartean, plazan eta tabernan, mezetan eta udaletxean²¹, eskolako jolaslekuan eta frontoian, herriko festetan eta ezkontza-hiletetan,..) hitzez ari garelarik²² «euskaraz egitea» agintzen duen bertako gizarte-araua.
- c) Euskal hiztun-elkarte beregaina, eguneroko jardun arrunta euskaraz bideratzen duena, ingurumen horietan bizi-bizirik dagoela erakusten dute arnasguneek. Argi antzematen du hori edonork. Errespetu handia eragiten du euskarazko jardun arruntaren berezko bizitasun horrek, bai euskaltzaleon eta bai euskaltzale ez diren (bertako zein kanpoko) askoren artean²³. Euskaldunok euskaraz bizi garen espazio geoterritorialik izan badela erakustea funtsezko eginbeharra da, euskal hiztun-elkarteak etorkizunik izango badu. Arnasguneek azaltzen dute argien, euskaraz «normal» bizitzea zer den. Hizkuntza-normalkuntzaren bila bagabiltza, arnasgune horietan gaude osasun oneko hiztun-elkarteen eguneroko mintzajardun normaletik hurbilen. Gain-kostu txikienaz eta kritika-bide murritzenaz hor atera dakioke euskalgintzari, *bide batez* jardunik²⁴ batez ere, etekinik hoberena.

21. Herritarren eta udaleko arduradunen edo zerbitzarien arteko hizketaz ari gara, ez bertako langile apurren idatzizko jardun espezifikoaz. Arau nagusi izatera gutxitan iritsi den arren, bide batez esanik, idatzizko jardunean indartuz doa euskarazko administrazio-lana hainbat arnasguneetan.

22. Hitzez, ez idatziz, bideratzen dira hizkuntza (hots, hiztun-elkarte) osasuntsuetan eguneroko mintzajardun arruntaren interakzio horiek, erabat edo nagusiki.

23. Besterik da, oso, inoiz (zenbaitetan ez hain aspaldi) halakorik izanik dela eta bihar-etzi berriro ere halakorik izan ledin nahi dugula erreibindikatzeko. Eskubide oso-oso dugu euskaltzaleok gure amets hori erreibindikatzeko, baina «beste gauza bat» da hori. Erdal munduak lehen begi-kolpean antzematen du bien arteko aldea.

24. «Bide batezko» euskalgintzaren inguruan, ikus, orobat, Zalbide 2007.

- d) Euskaldun garbien sorgune oparoa da arnasgunea. Eguneroko bizi-pozak eta beldur-gorrotoak, esperantzak eta atsekabeak, bizi-giro informal-intimoaren gertaerak, pasadizoak eta gora-beherak aparteko graziaz eta hitz-etorri onez azaltzeko gai diren hiztun beteen sorburu eta agergune dira arnasguneak. Funtsezko oinarri izan ohi da hori, hizkuntza formal-landuaren garapen-lanerako ere. Ez da batere harritzekoa, hortaz, euskal profesional asko (beraiek edo beren gurasoak) arnasguneetatik etortzea. Bizi izatera kalera jaitsi badira ere profesional horietariko gehienak, arnasguneen *background* horretatik datorkie euskal hizkuntzaz airoso, zalu eta dotore baliatzeko doai aparta. Hitz-etorri oneko euskaldun trebe landuen harrobi dira arnasguneak. Altxor preziatua da hori, oso, ahuldutako hiztun-elkarteontzat²⁵.
- e) Eguneroko mintzajardun arruntean, euskara da arnasguneetan nagusi. Bere lekua du hor ere erdarak (eskolan atzera egin du, baina aurrera doa lan-esparruan, turismoan, ikus-entzunezkoen kontsumoan,..). Erdara (gero eta nabarmenago) hor egonik ere, euskarazko mintzajardun arrunta da arnasguneetan nagusi: mintzabide bakar, jaun eta jabe edo, gero eta maizago, soil-soilik nagusi. Kontuz: «soil-soilik nagusi» esatea distraigarri gerta liteke: eguneroko mintzajardun arruntari dagokionez hor bakarrik da euskara, herri edo eskualde mailan, nagusi. **Hor bakarrik.**
- f) Haur-gazte-helduen katean, jaiotzatik hasi eta 35-40 urtera arteko ibilbide luze-bihurrian, *eusk* > *erd* mintzaldaketarik ez da arnasguneetan luze-zabal gertatzen ari. Migrazio bortitzik edo bestelako eten-urratze larririk gertatzen ez den artean, hortaz, belaunez belauneko transmisioa segurtaturik dago arnasguneetan.

Labur bilduz: osasun-egoera onetik beste edozein ingurumen geoterritorial edo populazio-segmentu baino hurbilago daude arnasguneak, plano kolektiboari dagokionez. Osasun bete-betean ez, baina beste inon baino osasuntsuago bai. Horregatik da hain noraezeko, horregatik da hain zentral eta ezin alboratuzko, arnasguneetako nagusitasun-moldaera horri indar betean (ahalik eta indarrik beteanean) eustea. Ahuldutako hiztun-taldea indarberritu liteke, hildakoa ez. Hildakoa biziberritu egin liteke gehienik, ez indarberritu. Hiztunen eguneroko mintzajardun arruntean hilik dagoena biziberritzea askoz lan zailagoa da, ordea, ahulduta dagoena indarberritzea baino.

25. Atzerriko beste hainbat aditu (Weinreich 1953, Gal 1979 eta 1995; Riehl 2006; Knipf-Komlósi 2011 etab.) oso kontuan hartzekoak direlarik ere, Nancy Dorian-en ikerlanei arreta biziz begiratzea komeni da gure ustez «altxor» horren zenbatekoaz eta nolakoaz argi jabetzeko: ikus Dorian 1981, 1992 [1989], 2010 eta 2014. Etxekoetan hor dugu, berriro ere, Seber Altube (Altube 1920, 1929-1930, 1933 eta 1936). Altuberen ekarpenaz egoki jabetzeko ikus, besteren artean, Josemari Velez de Mendizabal 1979 eta 2000).

Ez gara ezer berririk esaten ari. Kanpoko eta etxeko hainbat adituk esandakoa errepikatzen ari gara funtsean. Ikus dezagun, laburzki, aditu horiek (horietariko zenbaitek, gure ustez adierazgarrienek) gai honetaz zer esan duten.

Arnasguneen garrantziaz kanpoko eta etxeko zenbait adituk esandakoa

Ondoko galdera hauei erantzuten saiatu izan den aditurik bada, kanpoan zein etxean: 1) ahuldutako hizkuntza indarberritu eta «bere onera» ekarri ahal izateko, zer behar da batez ere? 2) hiztun-elkarte batean hiztun batzuek baizik jarraitzen ez badute beren hizkuntza belaunez belaun transmititzen, nondik komeni da hiztun-elkarte hori berregiten hastea? Goazen atalez atal.

- 1) *Ahuldutako hizkuntza indarberritu eta «bere onera» ekarri ahal izateko, zer behar da batez ere?* Era askotako erantzunak eman izan zaizkio galdera honi²⁶: erantzun horien errepaso arin bat nahi duenak ikus beza, adibidez, Zalbide 2002. Aniztasun horretatik funtsezko planteamenduetara hurbildu nahirik, kanpoko eta etxeko aditu bi aukeratuko ditugu gaurkoan. Ez dira inondik inora bakarrak. Bai, ordea, ahuldutako hizkuntzak indarberritzeko orduan kontuan izan beharreko elementu nagusiez aski argi eta ozen mintzatu izan direnak eta, oro har, beste aditu askoren bide-erakusle gertatu direnak. Kanpokoen azalpenetan Joshua A. Fishman-en hitzak izango ditugu gogoan, eta etxekoetan Seber Altube hartuko dugu aipagai.

Kanpokoen artean honela mintzatu izan da Joshua A. Fishman, behin eta berriz, bere *Reversing Language Shift* edo HINBE-saioaren lehentasun-gunea azaltzerakoan: «the fulcrum²⁷ of the GIDS scale is commonly²⁸ stage 6» (Fishman, 2001, 467. or.). Bere «Stage 6» hori badakigu zein den:

26. Erantzun posible horietariko bat da, dudarik gabe, Altubek 1933an aipatzen duen hau: «Un buen patriota vasco (...) decía en una perorata lo que transcribo a continuación: “emoidazube neuri azkatasuna, euzkerearen azterrenik bape eztaukadala be, ta urte gitxi-barru euzkerea biurtuko dautzuben sendo-sendo, zindo-zindo, indartsu, bixirik. ¿Bakixube zer biar dodan mirari ori egiteko? Iztegi bat (*diccionario* bat) eta euskal-izti bat (*gramática* bat)”. Erro sakonak ditu ikusmolde horrek: ikus, adibidez, Sabino Aranak 1901ean Hendaian irakurritako hitzaldian egileak puntu-hutsunez emandako pasartea (Zalbide etab., 2003: XVI-XIX). Bistan da, nolana ere, Sabino bera izan zela, egun hartan bertan gainera, bide hori ezinezkoa izanik alternatiba egingarria planteatu beharra aldarrikatu zuena. Knipf-Komlósi, Elisabeth, 2011: «Wandel im Wortschatz der Minderheitensprache. Am Beispiel des Deutschen in Ungarn». *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik – Beihefte (ZDL-B)* Band 145. Budapest.

27. Adiera ezaguna du *fulcrum*, *fulcro* horrek: *gatzelaniaz sostén, puntal, punto de apoyo de la palanca*. Euskaraz *euskarria*.

28. Ahuldutako hizkuntzen maizeneko gizarte-egoera hobetzeko beharrian nagusiez mintzo da *commonly* horren bidez. Garbi dio, horrekin batera, *fulcrum* hori beste zerbait izan litekeela «for particular languages vis-à-vis particular functions that are being targeted in particular cases» (Fishman, 2001: 467).

«The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community: the basis of mother-tongue transmission» (Fishman, 2001, 467. or.). Hots: etxean eta familian, auzoan eta kalean, giza arteko jardunean eta herri-bizitza zabalean nagusi izan behar du euskarak, zaharren eta gazteen artean nagusi, eguneroko mintzajardunari dagozkionetan. Gurea bezain ahul dauden hiztun-elkarteen kasuan jardun-esparru multzo hori segurtatzea da gainerako saioen euskarri nagusia.

Gatozen etxeko aditura: euskara indarberritu eta «bere onera» ekarri ahal izateko zer behar da batez ere? Bere aurreko edota bere garaiko hainbat herritarren iritzi-azalpenak landuz, sakonduz eta garatuz²⁹ erantzun hau emanik dio galdera horri Seber Altubek, duela laurogeita hamar urte inguru: «Para la restauración de un idioma, es necesario que una población compacta y bastante numerosa lo use íntegramente como habla propia e íntima suya. La propagación del lenguaje hablado se opera principalmente por expansión natural mediante el contagio oral (hoy es necesario además que vaya apoyada por medios artificiales o docentes), lo cual requiere indispensablemente la existencia, repetimos, de focos o centros de irradiación de cierto volumen y formación compacta (..) en los que viva el idioma a expandir su vida plena, lozana y arraigada» (Altube, 1936, 73. or.). (Letrakera etzana gurea. Bere ikusmoldearen sintesi-saiorako ikus Zalbide, 2016). Lehendik esana zuen Altubek, goiko pasarte horren atariko, beste hau: «la práctica familiar es (...) el medio eficaz o decisivo para el aprendizaje perfecto de un idioma, aprendizaje que se complementa y se consolida con el uso diario en las calles, plazas y demás lugares de reunión entre gentes de pueblo que hablan el mismo idioma» (Altube, 1933, 305. or.).

Bistan da aski elkarren eskutik ibiliak ditugula Altube eta Fishman, puntu honetan³⁰. Alde kronologiko argi batekin, halere: J. A. Fishman-ek baino ia 60 urte lehenago azaldu zuen bere ikuspegia S. Altubek (eta are hogeitaka urte lehenago S. Aranak). Egunen batean aurrez aurre heldu beharko zaio gerra aurreko hizkuntza-soziologiaren gai horri³¹, euskalgintzaren argi-ilunak nazioarteko perspektiban egoki kokatu eta zuzen baloratu ahal izateko.

- 2) Hiztun-elkarte batean hiztun batzuek baizik jarraitzen ez badute beren hizkuntza belaez belaez transmititzen, nondik komeni da hiztun-elkarte hori berregiten hastea?

29. Tartean, errazegi ahazten bada ere, Sabino Aranaren 1901ean Hedaian egindako hitzaldi sendoa eta haren ildotiko zenbait esaldi. Ikus Zalbide 2015.

30. Puntu honetan bakarrik ez. Beste gai bat da hori, dena den, eta oraingoz bere horretan utziko dugu.

31. Bada horretaz kontuan hartzeko saiorki: ikus bereziki Jose Manuel Odriozolaren 1992ko Gerraurreko gizarte-hizkuntzalaritza.

- 3) Eguneroko jardun arruntean beren «betiko mintzoa» alde batera utzi eta erdal hizkuntza nagusira mintzaldatu diren hiztun-talde gero eta ugariagoetatik (eta talde horiek bizi diren ingurumenetatik) ekin behar zaio bereziki indarberritze-saioari, ala eguneroko jardun arruntean euskaraz diharduen (gero eta urriagoko) hiztun-multzo trinkoenetatik? Bistan da «leku guztietatik ekitea» dela irtenbide hoberena, ahal izanez gero, kasuan kasuko indartze-bidea aplikatuz han-hemen. Inork ez du, dakigularik, orotariko bide gihartsu hori gaitzetsi eta gaitzesten. Lehentasunak lehentasun dira ordea edozein giza-jardunetan, banaka zein taldean: «Quien mucho abarca poco aprieta» urrezko arau da edonon. Hots, bide bat hartu behar izaten da maiz, guztia egin ezin delako sarri. Guzti-guztia egin ezin denean «guztia ona da» esatea itsu bezain antzu da. Hori horrela dela jakinik, non dago euskalgintzaren lehentasun-oinarria? Ahuldutako hizkuntzaren alde egin nahirik «gauza guztiak» egin ezin direnean, zer da hobe?

Hona Joshua A. Fishman-ek zer dioen³²:

An early **start before inter-generational mother-tongue transmission has ceased** to occur is worth more than tons of sage advice. **It is better and easier to foster informal life when it still exists. It is the hardest thing to create afterwards.** It is very hard to create, to program that which is essentially not programmed or programmable. At best, you can program situations that might facilitate it (Fishman, 2007 [1996]).

(Beltxezko letrakera etzana gurea).

Labur bilduz: indarberritze-saioen beste hainbat eginbehar ukatu edo gutxietsi gabe, bizirik dagoenari bizirik eustea da, Fishman-en esanean, eginkizunik artezena. «It is better and easier».

Zer dio honetaz Altubek? Hona bere azalpena:

Será necesario que cuidemos, con preocupación **primordial, la conservación** (..) **del** fuego sagrado del **euskera en las poblaciones** de alguna importancia **en que** aún **permanece vivo**, pues constituyen los últimos reductos de defensa, las últimas bases para una posible expansión futura (Altube, 1936, 73. or.).

(Beltxezko letrakera etzana gurea).

32. Ez da hori aldi bakarra, Fishman-ek gai honi aurrez aurre heldu izan diona. Bere laburrean aski argia da ordea, eta oraingoz honetara mugatuko gara.

Alde eta ñabardura asko antzeman litezke bien artean, jakina³³. Aldeak alde eta ñabardurak ñabardura, funtsezko ikuspegi-ardatza oso antzekoa dute ordea biek: eguneroko jardun arruntean euskaraz diharduen hiztun-multzo trinkotik (nahiago bada: trinkoenetatik) abiatzea komeni da. Arnasguneak ditugu askogatik, egungo egunean, Fishman-en «intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community» jardungune-esparrua sendoen eta biziaren duten ingurumen geoterritorialak. Arnasguneetan bakarrik daukagu egungo egunean, erabat edo nagusiki, Altuberen «población compacta (...) (que) lo use íntegramente como habla propia e íntima suya». Euskara indarberritzeko saioetan lehentasun argikoak dira hortaz, Fishman-en eta Altuberen esanean, arnasguneak.

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33. Altuberen «poblaciones de alguna importancia» hori ez genuke besterik gabe gutxietsi behar. Neurritz kanpora atera ere ez: egoerak okerrera egin da nabarmen 1933–36tik, eguneroko mintzajardun arruntaren esparruan, eta arnasguneetan ez dugu halako mugarik ezarri. Ezarriko bagenu, Azpeiti hutsarekin geratzeko arriskua genuke. Nork esan du, gainera, herri-herrixka txikiagoetako euskal mintzajardun bizijatorra Azpeitiko kalekoa baino hutsalagoa, intentsitate-balioz apalagoa, denik? Demolinguistika beti da garrantzitsu: Azpeiti moduko dozena t'erdi arnasgune bagenitu egungo egunean, mila bider osasuntsuago legoke gaur euskara. Ez ditugu, ordea: ez dozena t'erdi, ez hamar eta ez bost. Demolinguistika oso aintzakotzat harturik ere, alferrik da negar-zotinkako bide itsuetan barrera abiatzea.

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