



English language learning and motivation

Attitudes towards Basque, Spanish and English in the Basque Country: a cross-sectional study

Itxaso Gurrutxaga Etxeberria

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Supervisor: David Lasagabaster

Department of English, German and Translation and Interpretation Studies

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Abstract

English is considered to be the current *lingua franca* due to its global status. Several factors such as prestige and its widespread use have enabled English to become one of the most spoken languages in the world. Whilst presenting a threat to minority languages, the process of globalisation tends towards a connection amongst various nations through the form of a global language. However, it also creates contexts in which more than one language are in contact. Such is the case of Spain and the Basque Country specifically, where at least three different languages are in contact and share the linguistic landscape. Having this in mind, the research carried out in this paper intends to analyse the attitudes of students towards these three languages in contact; Basque, Spanish and English. For that purpose, a study has been carried out amongst 67 high school students of Urola ikastola in Azpeitia through a questionnaire. The findings show a very positive attitude towards Basque (97%) followed by English (44%) and finally Spanish (18%). It is also worth mentioning that the three languages have obtained very low percentages concerning unfavourable attitudes, which is a positive outcome. However, I would highlight the fact that although English has in overall positive results, some items of the questionnaire have attained quite negative views as it is the case with the use of English as means of instruction. Most students would not agree to be taught in English. This may present a difficulty in the implementation of CLIL (Content and language integrated learning) in the future due to students' reluctance towards the foreign language. In order to avoid this, it is important to make students aware of the fact that the minority, majority or the foreign languages are not exclusive but rather complementary. For this purpose, special attention should be placed in the attitudinal component of the school curriculum. Language awareness activities could be included in educational programs in order to raise consciousness about the different languages in contact at school and discuss possible attitudes towards them.

Key words: ELF (English as a *lingua franca*), language attitudes in the Basque Country, three languages in contact, minority language.

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1. Introduction

English is globally known to be the current global *lingua franca*. As Crystal (2003) clarifies, language gains a global prestige when other countries tacitly accept its special status. This recognition is more evident in countries that have large percentages of native speakers of that language. Nevertheless, the popularity of a language is determined by a large number of factors and is not uniquely dependent on the number of mother tongue speakers. We could define the official language of a country as the one used in certain areas of a community such as the government, the law courts, media and the educational system; there often exists a second language that is predominantly taught in schools as a foreign language, and gains popularity through its ability to connect the population to the media and culture of this second language. This is often the case with English, which nowadays is broadly taught in a wide array of countries. In fact, in over 100 countries English has become the language for this domain; some examples include China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil (Crystal, 2003).

As Graddol (1997, 2000) explains, British colonial expansion together with economic, technological and cultural development, spread the English language and its number of speakers, making it possible to identify at least three different levels of English proficiency: (i) first language (L1) speakers who are native, that is, 375 million; (ii) second language speakers for whom English is a second or additional language, 375 million; and lastly, (iii) speakers who have learned English as a foreign language, over 750 million. Consequently, Graddol (1997, 2000) suggests that the combination of all three estimates of populations sums up to a global count of about 1500 to 2000 million speakers, with a clear shift of the language gravity centre from native to non- native speakers.

Whilst presenting a threat to minority languages, the process of globalisation tends towards a connection amongst various nations through the form of a global language. But the adoption of a language over another one does not necessarily mean replacement in all the cases. Yet, the subordination of those languages could be due to several factors, such as the prestige attached to the language or the population size (Galloway & Rose, 2015). However,

Crystal (2003) states that, a language becomes global due to the power of its speakers rather than the number of them. Latin can be a good example of this, as it became broadly used throughout the Roman Empire not due to the sheer volume of its speakers, but because of the political and military influence that they exercised on the conquered people. Similarly, it can be argued that this mechanism is what gives English its global status.

Therefore, due to the diversity of languages in Europe and specifically in Spain, where several languages coexist with the majority language and share co-official status, the aim of this paper is to analyse the diverse attitudes that students adopt towards more than two languages in contact. For that purpose, a study has been carried out amongst high school students of a mainly Basque-speaking community. However, firstly the context of linguistic diversity and multilingual contexts will be reviewed together with the scrutiny of the effect that foreign languages exert in such environments. On that account, first the function of a global language, English in this case, will be examined together with its role as *lingua franca*. After that, background about language attitudes will be introduced followed by the explanation of the current situation of the linguistic landscape and the education system in the Basque Country. Once the context is clear, the study will be explained together with the obtained results. To finish with, a discussion and the general conclusions about the study will be added to later end with some pedagogical implications.

2. English as a lingua franca

For several centuries people have had the necessity to use a *lingua franca*, as this would surely ease communication in many contexts. Technology of modern communication and air transportation started growing significantly, which facilitated people's mobility between countries and created the necessity to communicate both in real life and through a written medium (Crystal, 2003).

The development of English as a *lingua franca* plays an important role both in economic and academic fields, as the need for communication between countries has grown considerably in the business environment. In fact, the modern interconnectedness of

international trade has strong consequences on the demand for multilingualism (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Likewise, in the context of international politics, mutual intelligibility depends vastly on the training of translators, which entails a social cost that could be minimized if the political elite were united by a common tongue (Crystal, 2003). Moreover, the adoption of a *lingua franca* in the political sphere would contribute to a more sophisticated scale of equitable opportunities concerning global justice, as it could enable the rich and the poor, the powerful and powerless to communicate beyond the linguistic boundaries and national borders (Van Parijjs, 2011, cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015).

In the academic context, a commonly used language provides its speakers with an indispensable academic tool that facilitates exchange of information, enriching all communicating parties, and assisting the development of a shared academic culture that is propagated within a single language medium and very speedily (Altbach, 2007). This reduces the obstacle of access to information, contributing to the wider spread of general knowledge and scientific discoveries (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

However, regarding the downsides of globalisation, as Galloway & Rose (2015) state, the existence of one solely dominant language could encourage exclusiveness of a linguistic class and advantageous positions for individuals whose mother tongue is English. Hence, native speakers of such language would be privileged against those for whom English is second or foreign language, also causing complacency in the learning of other languages. This line of reasoning leads to the prioritization of languages based on their popularity, hinting towards the dispensability of locally spoken languages.

When a predominant language gains popularity in other countries, a grammatical transformation of the indigenous language is likely to be accompanied by a cultural and social alteration in the subjugated community, since “language has no independent existence” (Crystal, 2003, p.7). This shows how, apart from being a system of signs and symbols, language develops interdependently to its speakers’ perception and usage as well as cultural and social practices. (Preece, 2016). As human beings are social creatures, it is crucial for us to be and feel identified with certain groups in the community. Thus, a sense of community

can emerge from the conviction that all of its members share some of the same concepts; however, this does not guarantee that the linguistic system is used homogeneously by all the individuals within the society. As a result, the globalisation of a language exerts its power by limiting the diversity of thoughts and enriching of the culture through language. This is when communities that are being dominated in an endangering situation become minority languages.

Likewise, if we consider language to be a symbol of culture or identity, it is inevitable to argue that the wide spread of the English language has brought with it the expansion of the Western, more specifically, the American culture (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Yet, the impact that a foreign language, culture and identity can have in local communities is difficult to assess, as Eastman and Reese (1981, cited in Edwards, 1984) suggest, it is not always the case that ethnic identity coincides with the language used.

2.1 Is English a killer language?

Some argue in English's defence that there have been languages such as Spanish which have caused much more language death by replacing indigenous languages of South America and other countries (Spolsky, 2004 cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015); while English has managed to live alongside them. Furthermore, Mufwene (2002, cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015) states that it is not languages that kill each other, but speakers do. Several factors such as the prestige attached to a language can favour or not the survival of it making its speakers more or less eager to make it endure.

Others, like Graddol (2007, cited in Jenkins, 2009) though, argue that although the English language may not be a direct responsible for the threat to global diversity, it contributes to the processes of economic globalisation, which may indirectly cause lesser-used languages to disappear. However, many countries still preserve their linguistic diversity despite the continuous threat that a global language may cause.

3. Multilingual contexts

Neither globalisation nor multilingualism are recent phenomena and there are several historical records that prove its early presence; a recognised example of it could be the linguistic landscape after the Norman Conquest in 1066 where “English was the language of the majority of the population, but Norman French was the language of the ruling class, and Latin was the language of record keeping and the Church” (Cenoz, 2013, p.3). Nevertheless, the features of how multilingualism was conceived in the past and in the present are different in a number of respects. Unlike in the past, multilingualism has no geographical limits or borders in the present days due to its more global nature that allows instantaneous communication via technological advances of the 21st century. Moreover, in contrast with the past, multilingualism is no longer associated with certain social divisions, and it has been spread across social classes, professions or activities (Cenoz, 2013).

As Cenoz (2013, p.4) argues, nowadays, “globalisation has increased the value of multilingualism” due to the importance that has been attached to speaking different languages. Not only has speaking English become of high esteem but being able to defend ourselves in various languages has lately been considered as a competitive skill that ensures good communicative abilities.

Concerning education, multilingualism plays an important role in using and valuing more than one language. Besides, it also promotes intercultural attitudes as it makes possible to recognise the understanding and sharing of different experiences and cultures. Moreover, it could also be considered inclusive as the knowledge the students bring to class would be the starting point, making their participation significant in a local, national or even global scenario (Hornberger, 2009). As a result, it is important to understand that languages are situated in social spaces and contexts. “Planning for any one language in a particular social space necessarily entails planning for all languages and social influences in that space” (Hornberger, 2009, p.201), especially in the case of endangered languages where its affluence could depend on the other languages in the same context. Yet, as Jessner (2008) suggests, in the European framework, the application of monolingual norms to multilingual contexts

prevails, despite the labours of the European Union to avoid it by fostering plurilingualism or individual multilingualism.

Therefore, given the growing significance that multilingualism has gained in modern society, several approaches to define it have been made. However, multilingualism is not an easy phenomenon to define as it can be studied from several perspectives. For example, it could be defined as “anyone who can communicate in more than one language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)” (Li, 2008, p.4 cited in Cenoz, 2013, p.5). In addition, multilingualism can refer to the ability of an individual to communicate but also to the use of languages in society. Individuals that live in a multilingual society are more likely to speak more than one language compared to those who live in a monolingual context. Nonetheless, as a result of the rising spread of English it is nowadays possible to find individuals that learn or have learned this global language and live in traditionally monolingual areas. Conversely, as a possible result of the dominance of English, it is also common to encounter monolingual speakers in places that have a high level of language diversity because of immigration. However, areas where regional or minority languages are spoken as well as border areas have traditionally had the most numerous multilingual population (Cenoz, 2013). These might have stemmed from large-scale immigration in the case of non-indigenous minorities, where there is naturally a diversity of variations of language competence. On top of that, countries might or might not have been prepared to deal with the legal aspect of immigrants’ practices of language, culture or even religion. Subsequently, some of the communities tend to get involved into mainstream society while others remain attached to their own values and linguistic conventions.

In the case of indigenous linguistic minorities though, those whose language is autochthonous, as it is the case with the Basque language, which belongs to a particular minority area and is not spoken elsewhere, tend to belong to distinct ethnic groups that are characterised usually for their strong sense of identity and loyalty to their language as well as their ethnic homeland. Many are the cases of minority languages that are being maintained by their speakers’ community and identity loyalty despite the pressure of the coexisting majority language (Cenoz, 2013). For instance, the unequal relationship between the Basque

and Spanish languages, in spite of the fact that both languages are considered official, can be set to demonstrate this survival attitude of minority languages in this matter. As a matter of fact, we could consider the attitude of the speakers to be essential not only for the conservation of that language but also for the reinforcement of the same.

4. Attitudes towards language

Several definitions of the word ‘attitude’ have conventionally been put forward as it is considered by many to be one of the most characteristic and essential concepts of social psychology. Sarnoff (1970, cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015, p.174) defines an attitude as “a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects”. Owing to the fact of the recognised difficulties when examining the reasons for human behaviour, what is clear is that as Dörnyei (2001, cited in Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006, p.9) states, “the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it and the effort expended on it” may be influential factors with regard to language survival. However, it is undeniable that the diverse linguistic landscapes that surround languages nowadays impulse individuals to value them as a significant part of society. In areas where different languages are in contact, people understand from a very early age the position or role that each one of them fulfils in their lives (Lasagabaster, 2005). Cognitive, affective and behavioural components have been identified as major contributing factors concerning the possible distinctive attitudes towards languages. That is to say, attitudes can be influenced by cognitive factors, as they would involve convictions about the world; affective, as they may require an emotional response, as well as being determinants of behavioural aspects. Therefore, attitudes towards languages could be highly influenced by positive or negative experiences of individuals (Galloway & Rose, 2015). As concluded by Spolsky (1969, cited in Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006) and later by Gardner (1985, cited in Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006), one of the most essential factors affecting language learning is the “learner’s positive attitudes towards the linguistic cultural community of the target language” (p.13).

Languages and its variations are thus subject to stigmatization as norms in cultural and social groups appraise them in accordance to convictions of history, politics and prevailing

stereotypes. Hence, evaluations and judgements of this kind establish hierarchical patterns among languages that have later influence on the way languages are learned. Moreover, some languages or even accents might be considered more prestigious than others due to the institutional support they receive. Therefore, we could argue that attitudes can also impinge on a political level (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

In the case of English, it is undeniably seen as a prestigious language among non-native speakers that have interiorised it as a stereotypical ‘standard’ language. Non-native speakers can at some point “feel that their own first language and cultural background is a hindrance to integrating into the target culture” (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p.175) and thus feel discriminated over their English-speaking ability. Nonetheless, even English speakers that have a different dialect from the ‘standard’ can face discrimination, reaffirming the impact of the process of standardisation on attitudes towards language. Additionally, stereotypes can further contribute to these inequalities as some English accents are more valued than others due to their status. As reported on a survey on the BBC News website, accents of Liverpool or Birmingham, which correspond to cities with high percentages of working class population, in contrast to American accents, were not considered as sign of success (‘Regional Accents “Bad for Trade”’, BBC, 2005, cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015).

Apart from that, familiarity with English may also have an effect on how we perceive the language. In recent years this has been an easy task for English due to its more global status as ELF (English as a Lingua Franca). Not only does direct contact with the language or the country cause this effect but also the indirect contact, as exposure to cultural products such as films, series, books or music nowadays is very high. Another topic is the level of expertise that each individual can have in a language and how this affects attitudes. Baker (1992, cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015, p.177) indicates that indeed there is correlation between the ability in a language and the attitude towards it. Gardner (1985, cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015) also corroborates this view by saying that: “the higher the achievement, proficiency, and ability in a language, the more favourable is the attitude”. Motivation and self-confidence have a say in this matter as well, as the learning environment and speaker’s previous experiences with the language can have important implications when shaping attitudes

towards languages. Furthermore, contact between different languages is sometimes discouraged as it could be the case if there is an extensive use of the target language to the exclusion of the other languages, which may be caused by learners or even teachers (Kelly, 2015). However, it is important to mention that attitudes are not static and that with the continuous spread of ELF worldwide, attitudes towards English might very easily be subject to change as well (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

5. Language context in the Basque Country

As Lasagabaster (2005) points out, a recurrent concern in society these days is the struggle and desire to maintain minority languages and at the same time learn foreign languages. This brings up to the question of how different languages in contact are used in diverse social contexts and how do they behave according to their functions. In order to answer this question, it is first necessary to know what the linguistic situation of the different languages in contact is and which favourable or unfavourable attitudes are predominant. Therefore, in the Basque context it is important to examine the situation of the minority language (Basque) which shares co-official status with Spanish. Besides, the prevalence of English as the dominant foreign language in education may also have a considerable effect in language attitudes on the Basque country.

The history of the Basque language is a clear exemplification of the power struggle that occurs when political interests and global trends affect the development of the native language of a contained community. Currently Basque dwells in a complex, competitive linguistic environment as it coexists with Spanish, being both official languages, and English, which is predominantly taught as a foreign language. However, since languages are not completely equal in political or social status, Basque strives for survival due to its low applicability in foreign contexts and its decreasing usage amongst speakers even within the country. Basque has not always received equivalent treatment, as was the case during Francisco Franco's dictatorship, in which Basque was devastatingly denatured, since it was banned from schools, causing people to lose proficiency in the language and limiting its use to the native community and to the private sphere. However, the current situation is different

and data shows that, due to the active collaboration and intervention of the Basque Government, 83% of primary school children and 65% of secondary school children are presently being taught through the Basque language (Jasone Cenoz & Durk Gorter, 2006). Moreover, according to the VI sociolinguistic survey (2016) and concerning the evolution of the Basque language over the last 25 years, there has been an increment of 212.000 Basque speakers compared to data collected in 1991 (24.1% versus 33.9%). Still, the community of monolingual Spanish speakers leads the list with 877.00 speakers (47%) in the CAE.

Besides, an impact has been observed due to the shift of Basque speakers taking into account data from 1991 when compared to the one in 2011 as “Basque native speakers were the majority in all age groups, but two decades later new speakers represented more than half of the 60% of Basque speakers in the 16–24 age range” (Lasagabaster, 2017, p.585). This increase, according to Lasagabaster (2017) has been mainly a result of the bilingual models that are available in the Basque education system that range from; (i) Model A: a program in which Spanish is the first language of students, having Basque taught only as a subject (usually 3-4 hours per week) (ii) Model B: where both Basque and Spanish are used as means of instruction (iii) Model D: in which Basque is the main language of instruction and Spanish is only taught as a subject (usually 4 hours per week). Choosing one model or the other depends vastly in parents’ choice, at least in the early age of the students’ academic life. For this reason, not only does it matter the attitude towards language that students have, but also the one that the adult community shares as they may be directly influencing their children’s behaviour towards languages.

Turning on to the study and having already mentioned how education in the Basque Country is structured, my study intends to analyse and determine the role that English plays in the diverse attitudes that students harbour towards the different languages in contact in the Basque educational system and answer questions such as; Do the students have positive attitudes towards the minority language?

6. The study

This study was completed in the Basque Country, which is one of the smallest autonomous communities (2.175.819 inhabitants) out of the 17 that make up Spain. Urola Ikastola B.H.I is a secondary education school located in Gipuzkoa, a province where according to the Basque Institute of Statistics (Eustat, 2016) 398.260 out of 694.196 (57%) of the population is Basque speaker. Besides, the mother tongue of 10.999 out of 14.818 (74%) (Eustat, 2016) of the population of Azpeitia, the town where the study took place, is Basque. Therefore, taking into account the high percentage of Basque speakers that this region has, the reason behind engaging particularly these high school students for this research lays in the fact that it would be interesting to analyse attitudes of young speakers of a minority language, as it is the case with Basque, and examine how they deal and share the varied linguistic landscape with two other languages; Spanish and English.

6.1 Participants

The participants in the study were 67 high school students studying for A levels. Although all the students were completing their last year of high school in Urola Ikastola, Azpeitia, some of the students came from towns nearby such as Zestoa (9 kms away). The age of the subjects was between 17 (76%) and 18 (24%) years old. Regarding their specialisation, the students belonged either to the social or natural science groups and they were divided in 3 different classrooms; (i) only natural science students, (ii) only social science students (iii) mixed group with students from both specialisations. Concerning gender, there were more female (58%) than male (42%) students. The distribution of the participants depending on their mother tongue can be separated amongst participants whose mother tongue is Basque (93%), which were clearly the majority, and those who have both Spanish and Basque as L1, which were only 4 (7%). Last but not least, it has to be said that these students are all enrolled in Model D and thus, have completed their studies mainly in Basque.

6.2 Instrument

The students completed a questionnaire based on Baker's (1992) and Lasagabaster and Huguet (2007). The questionnaires were completed in class and only in English as part of research in an English studies degree.

6.3 Procedure

The questionnaire (see the Appendix) utilised to gather the data can be divided into three main parts. The first one dealt with questions related to personal information, such as age, sex, course or L1. In the second section participants answered questions concerning the proficiency in the three languages in contact, rating them from 1= 'none' to 4= 'very good' command of the language. Besides, they were invited to answer questions regarding the age in which they started leaning each language, how often they watched TV/ the Web/ blogs in English, as well as information about their hometown. They were also asked about the language mostly employed when establishing relations with their family and friends. The final section collected data about language attitudes by means of the same ten items on a five-point Likert scale for each of the three languages under scrutiny: Basque, Spanish and English. The attitudes towards the three languages in the last part of the questionnaire were codified in the following way (following the procedure used by Lasagabaster and Huguet, 2007): the option *Strongly Agree* (SA) was recorded as 100, the option *Agree* (A) as 75, *Neither Agree Nor Disagree* (NAND) as 50, *Disagree* (D) as 25 and *Strongly Disagree* (SD) as 0. Once the results were codified, the average for the ten items related to each language was obtained as well as the average of each item in the case of English, which allowed us to distinguish three categories: (i) the first one was made up of *Unfavourable attitudes*, that is to say, those between 0.000 and 33.3333; (ii) the second category comprised *Neutral attitudes*, for those whose scores were between 33.334 and 66.666; (iii) the third one consisted of those students who held *Favourable attitudes*, i.e. those between 66.667 and 100.000. In this way, we had at our disposal a *quantitative* variable (the average score for the ten items) which could also be used as *qualitative* (depending on their favourable, neutral or unfavourable attitudes).

7. Results

Results show that regarding the proficiency of the students in the three languages in contact, most of them claim to have a very good command of Basque and Spanish respectively, while in the case of English more people mark their level as ‘good’ or ‘very little’ fluency. This would further support the statement of Cenoz (1991, cited in Huguet & Lasagabaster, 2007) and Lasagabaster (1998, cited in Huguet & Lasagabaster, 2007) that point out the poor command of English among Basque students at preuniversity level. Apart from that, there were students with basic knowledge of Chinese, French and German, although they all correspond to a foreign language in fourth position after Basque, Spanish and English.

In general, the high command of Basque attained by the students at this age over the other languages corresponds to the fact that nearly all of them (93%) were in contact with the language since they were born, as they consider Basque to be their mother tongue. Besides, the vast majority of them use Basque in their daily lives with their families, friends or in general in their hometown, which they also define as a Basque-speaking community unanimously. Results indicate that some people do use Spanish for the matters mentioned above, but none of those students claims to have both Spanish and Basque as mother tongue. As a result, we might consider this to be an influence of modern technology or even inheritance of Spanish-speaking parents that can usually be classified as immigrants. In this case, it would be highly possible that these parents, not having completely mastered the Basque language, use Spanish at home.

Added to that the preponderant position of Basque and Spanish is even more vibrant when students are asked how often they watch tv, use the Web, etc. in English. Most of the results show that they use English in this context 3 to 5 times a week or even less, but this could be common considering the strength of English language media in present days. As for their visiting an English-speaking country, those who have enjoyed this experience represent 49% of the students whereas those who have not are 51%.

When analysing the attitudes towards the three languages in contact, the positive results outstand in the case of Basque that has obtained 94% (see Figure 7.1) of favourable attitudes in contrast to Spanish whose results indicate only 18% (see Figure 7.2) even less than the foreign language, English, whose positive results ascend to 44% (See Figure 7.3). It is worth mentioning however that the unfavourable attitudes towards the three languages are very rare, which is undoubtedly a positive result. In order to analyse this in more depth we are first going to concentrate on the three languages individually.

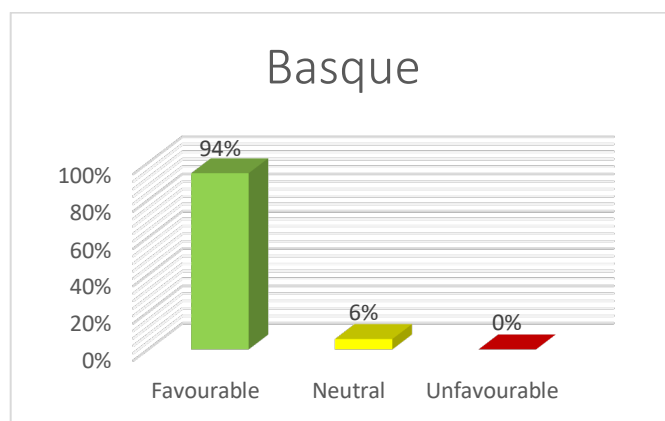


Figure 7.1 Attitudes towards Basque

Concerning Basque, as it is obvious from Figure 7.1, the first thing that draws our attention is the high number of favourable attitudes that students have towards this language. 62 out of 67 students show positive feelings towards the minority language which would correspond to the 94% of the sample. The rest belongs to the category of neutral attitudes (6%) which corresponds to 5 students. The fact that there are no unfavourable attitudes does not come as a surprise due to the fact that, as I have mentioned above, the close contact with the language as main means of communication and the values that these students associate with it influence these results positively. Another factor that may have influenced this is the linguistic Model D employed by the High School in the educational process of these teenagers. In addition, the item that got the most positive response from the students states that Basque should be taught to all pupils in the Basque Country (97%), whereas most of them think that there are more useful languages to learn than Basque, stating they do not agree with the fifth statement (See Appendix 1) in the questionnaire (31%). Despite this,

Basque is considered in the Basque Country as a necessary requisite in order to find a job, although it is not considered to be an easy language to learn even by its own speakers.

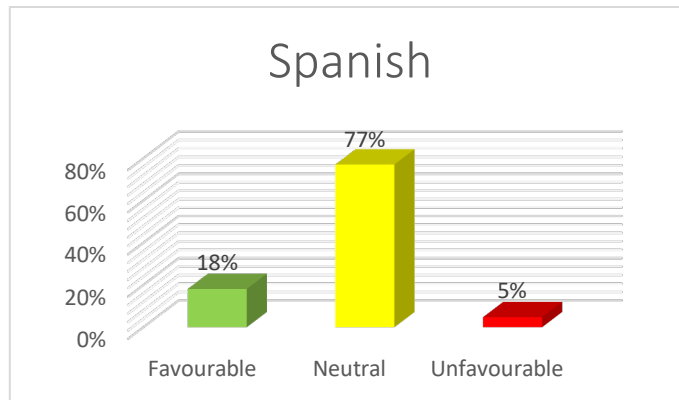


Figure 7.2 Attitudes towards Spanish

As for results regarding Spanish, there is a clear shift from positive to neutral attitudes, which comprise 77%, corresponding to 51 students. Most of the students therefore do not prefer to be taught in Spanish although they do think that it is a useful language to learn, probably due to its majority status in Spain. Focusing on the other variables, it is worth pointing out that compared to the other languages, Spanish gets the highest percentage for unfavourable attitudes (5%) in contrast to 0% of Basque and 3% of English, but it is still a very low percentage. In any case, it has to be taken into account that the location where the study was carried out is amongst the areas where most Basque-speaking population lives in the BAC.

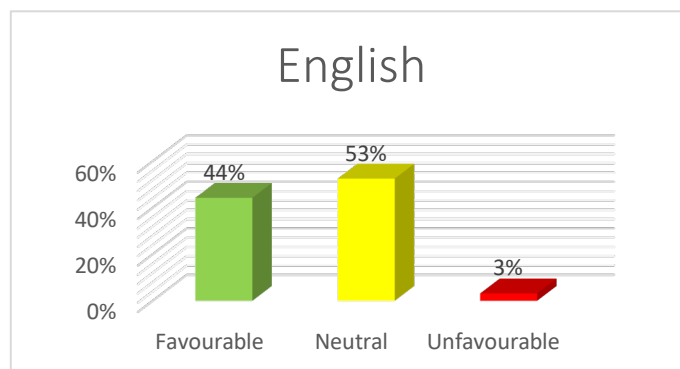


Figure 7.3 Attitudes towards English

With respect to English, the gap between favourable and neutral attitudes is not as big. Yet, the neutral mood prevails with the highest percentage (53%). It is worth mentioning that the 3% of unfavourable attitudes relates to only 7 students. Yet, it is mentionable the high percentage English obtained regarding favourable attitudes. These results differ from the ones found by Huguet & Lasagabaster (2007) who observed in their study a higher percentage of favourable feelings towards Spanish rather than English. However, in the case of English, as the main language object of study, the items of the questionnaire will be examined more thoroughly in the next paragraphs in order to analyse the predominant attitudes more exhaustively.

Table 7.4 Attitudes towards each item regarding English

<i>Items</i>	<i>Average</i>
1. English should be taught to all pupils in the Basque Country.	79,85
2. English is a language worth learning.	77,99
3. I like hearing English spoken.	69,40
4. Learning English enriches my cultural knowledge.	66,79
5. I like speaking English.	56,34
6. There are not more useful languages to learn than English.	56,34
7. If I have children I would like them to be English speakers regardless of other languages they may know.	54,85
8. English is an easy language to learn.	54,10
9. English is vital to our identity and culture	38,81
10. I prefer to be taught in English	29,33

Table 7.4 shows a more detailed information about each item. These items are arranged in a specific order so that they show the participants' means from the highest score to the lowest, that is, from the most favourable to the least favourable attitudes.

With this in mind, we find the statement that English should be taught to all pupils in the Basque Country leading the list, followed by the fact that they mostly believe that English is a language worth learning. In this matter, English obtains better results than Spanish,

probably owing to the globalised status of this language and the usefulness and prestige that these students add to it as well as the fact that students could probably take Spanish for granted. When referring to hearing English spoken the predominant attitude is positive. Similarly, students feel that Learning English enriches their cultural knowledge as they are able to have contact with a completely different culture from which they can extract useful information for their daily lives.

When it comes to speaking English, numbers drop slightly and show a rather neutral attitude towards it. The overall lack of good command or fluency amongst students may cause sometimes to be in an uncomfortable position where they cannot express themselves as well as in the minority language in this case. This may cause frustration on several occasions making them feel even demotivated. Students do think that there are more useful languages to learn rather than only English and more, taking into account the sociocultural frame in the Basque country and the implication the Basque language has in every aspect of the daily live. Whereas they state that if they ever have children they would like them to be English speakers regardless of other languages they may know, one would have expected a higher means taking into account the role English currently has as a global *lingua franca*.

Concerning the difficulty of learning English, most of them claim that English is not a very easy language to learn but the attitude towards it maintains its neutral position. At the end of the list we find the most controversial topics where attitudes towards English get the most negative. Students do not consider English to be vital to their identity and culture which seems a comprehensible point if we consider the values and loyalty related to the minority language. This reason alongside the reputation of English as possible language killer may make students feel reluctant to insert English more actively in their lives. Besides, the findings illustrate that the most negative aspect of it all is related to education as they do not support the idea of being taught in English. This reaction may be caused in a great part due to the habits of learning that students adopt which are located in the comfort zone of studying mainly in Basque (Model D).

8. Discussion

The main objective of this paper is to analyse the attitudes of high school students towards three languages in contact and the factors that influence them. For this purpose, first of all we are going to focus on the impact that the minority language, although mother tongue of nearly most students, has on this linguistic landscape. The data shows that the students' command of this language is perceived by themselves to be high in proficiency. On top of that the results demonstrate a very favourable attitude towards the Basque language. Conversely, although the proficiency in English of the same students is not as high as their mother tongue or even Spanish, the findings reveal a high percentage (see Figure 7.3) of positive attitudinal stances towards English. However, we cannot uphold the same results concerning Spanish.

The data indicates a significant fall in the favourable attitudes towards Spanish. This decadent path may still be present in the contexts with less than 100,000 inhabitants where Basque is the predominant language since the majority of students with Basque as L1 are less proficient in Spanish. In those cases, as Huguet & Lasagabaster (2007) propose, there would be a need to improve attitudes towards Spanish in the areas that present rejection towards the majority language. In these areas, Spanish might be conceived as the language that was inflicted on the Basque population in the decades of the dictatorship (1939-1975). Therefore, the fact that the Basque language had to coexist in a second level shadowed by Spanish created a strong sense of duty amongst the Basque population to revive the language. This may be one of the factors that influences the high percentage of favourable attitudes towards Basque language as a sign of our identity as Basque, as well as the importance attached to the folklore and culture very closely linked to the minority language. As a result, it could be argued that "instruction in Spanish has experimented a very important decline while the use of Basque as the medium of instruction is attracting an increasing number of students" (Turell, 2001, p.99).

On the other hand, if we consider the relationship with the foreign language, the fact that English does not have such presence yet in the Basque Country should be considered. It is true that English is taught at school as the main foreign language, yet, the proficiency

achieved by students in the BAC is not high. Therefore, the substantial need for the mastery of English in the present years and in order to improve students' competence of this language, several projects of introducing English in kindergarten or intensifying the exposure to English at a later age have been carried out in the BAC. In general terms, this early introduction is said to have been positively welcomed by parents, teachers and even schoolchildren (Cenoz, 2000). Indeed, most students in the study assert having started learning English when they were 5/6 years old.

Moving on, as we can appreciate from the results obtained in the study, most of the participants agreed that English should be taught to all pupils in the BAC. By contrast, the majority of them would not prefer to be taught in English. In account of this, it has been argued that the different status of Basque and English could also have some implications. The main concern lays in the fact that English and its extended use in education might be seen as a threat for the advances in education that the Basque language has lately accomplished (Cenoz, 2000). As stated by Hornberger (2003), it could be argued that in most educational systems due to the unequal power relationships across languages, it would be easier to learn dominant languages at school, making it difficult to foster one's literacy in a minority language. However, studies carried out in this subject have demonstrated that an early exposure of children to English does not adversely affect their acquisition of Basque or Spanish (Cenoz, 2000). What is more, it is suggested that there is a positive relation between high levels of bilingualism due to the Model D in education and the higher levels of proficiency in English (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Lasagabaster, 1997, cited in Cenoz, 2000). Likewise, Jessner (2008) states that in several circumstances, students that have contact with two or more languages can be in an advantageous position since not only does their language knowledge improve, but also the cognitive and sociopragmatic development in case certain level of proficiency is achieved. In that case, skills such as "heightened level of metalinguistic awareness, creative or divergent thinking, communicative sensitivity and further language learning" (Jessner, 2008, p.29) could be additionally developed.

Following the idea of language loyalty and sense of identity, students do not consider English to be vital to their identity or culture, although they do agree more with the fact that a better understanding and command of English may enrich their cultural knowledge. Although Basque people in general may already feel a special affection towards their language, it is inevitable for students to feel that learning or speaking a global language can open new doors to their understanding of the world. This may happen because the process of learning a language is similarly linked to the study of grammatical functions as well as cultural values and traditions of a certain language as “language can be considered the verbal or written expression of culture” and “it is used to maintain and convey culture, cultural identity and cultural ties” (Hanemann & Scarpino, 2016, p.8).

As findings illustrate, the participants do not see English as the only useful language, as in their context, a chiefly Basque-speaking community, the minority language serves as a leading means of communication. Besides that, the geographical location of the BAC allows other languages to have influence as it is the case with French. Due to the proximity to the French border, this language has long prevailed as the main foreign language in the BAC until English overcame it (Turell, 2001). Therefore, inhabitants of the BAC may still perceive the idea that the usefulness of other languages such as French is, although in a lower level, as beneficial and convenient as English.

To finish with, it is worth noting that although the attitudes towards speaking or hearing English spoken are quite positive amongst the participants, they do mostly disagree with the idea that English is an easy language to learn. This frustration and difficulty attached to the language might also create demotivation when it comes to learning English. If we consider motivation to be a key factor in the learning of the language, there should be programs and projects in the educational context in order to stimulate and encourage students to learn English.

9. Conclusion

In this paper I have conducted a study in order to analyse the different attitudes that high school students had towards three languages in contact in a mainly Basque speaking context. Evidence seemed to indicate that positive attitudes towards Basque are predominant amongst 17/18-year-old students in Azpeitia, followed by English and then Spanish. Data also showed that although attitudes towards English are chiefly positive, there may be several matters that should not be eluded. On this account, it is worth mentioning that findings suggest a negative attitude of students towards being taught in English. This promotes rather an alarming stance for the future implementation of CLIL mentioned above as students might feel reluctant to participate in such programme. Nevertheless, I have argued that there are studies that prove any lack of negative influence of learning a foreign language in the use of the mother tongue. What is more, it benefits the students by providing them with tools to better manage the difficulty of learning another language as well as helping them improve cognitive aptitudes.

As a result, it is worth highlighting the need to make students aware of the fact that the minority, majority or the foreign languages are not exclusive but rather complementary. For this purpose, special attention should be placed in the attitudinal component of the school curriculum. As a possible future teacher, this study has helped me value not only the importance of the awareness of the linguistic context that surrounds us but also the need to tackle linguistic tensions in multilingual contexts.

Regarding future implications I would also suggest more research should be carried out in this area in other regions of the BAC. My study mainly comprises of students that live in the province with the highest Basque speaking population of the BAC. Therefore, I see the necessity to examine this topic in the rest of the provinces of the BAC in order to have a more universal picture of the actual situation concerning attitudes towards Basque, Spanish and English in the BAC.

10. Pedagogical implications

As mentioned in the last paragraphs, a greater effort needs to be made in the academic framework regarding multilingualism in the BAC. The reluctant attitude that Basque speakers sometimes adopt towards foreign languages may be understandable; even more so when dealing with a global language like English. However, several measures could be embraced in order to shape this direction without affecting the already existing cultural values and sense of identity of the minority language.

As Hanemann & Scarpino (2016) propose, “there is an ample evidence that use of the first or home language of learners as the language of instruction has a positive impact on learning” (p.8). They follow by saying that teaching and learning through the mother tongue eases access to literacy as well as the ability to read and write in other languages (e.g. Brock-Utne, 2000; Goody and Bennett, 2001; Heugh, 2003; Hornberger, 2003; Ouane, 2003; Grin, 2005; Ouane and Glanz, 2011; cited in (Hanemann & Scarpino, 2016).

Language awareness activities could be included in educational programs in order to raise consciousness about the different languages in contact at school and discuss possible attitudes towards them. This could help moderate feelings of inferiority of those students that have the minority language as L1. Similarly, students could better comprehend the place each language has in the linguistic landscape they live in. In addition, talking about the different characteristics of each language might make students realise languages share a lot of features and that they have several qualities in common. Although a lot of work would have to be done in order to create linguistic tolerance, it is important to enable students with tools that will allow them to work on their own feelings towards languages in order to help maintain Europe’s linguistic and cultural diversity (Huguet & Lasagabaster, 2007).

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE: Language attitudes in multilingual contexts



I am a student in 4th year of English Studies and I would like to ask you to help me by answering the following questions in a survey conducted for a final dissertation of the University of the Basque Country, to better understand the thoughts and beliefs of learners of English in the Basque country. This questionnaire is not a test so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and you do not even have to write your name on it. We are interested in your personal opinion. The results of this survey will be used only for research purposes so please give your answers sincerely, as only this will ensure the success of this project. Thank you very much for your help.

1. Age :
2. Course :
3. Gender : Male___ Female___ Other (Specify)_____ (Please put an `X` in the right place)
4. Mother Tongue : ___ Basque
 ___ Spanish
 ___ Basque and Spanish
 ___ Other (Specify): _____
5. In the following section I would like you to answer some questions by simply giving marks from 1 to 4. (1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Good, 4 = Very good)

For example, if your Basque is `very good`, your English `good` and you can speak no Chinese `None`, write this:

	<i>Basque</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Chinese</i>
<i>General proficiency</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>

Please put one (and only one) number in each box and do not leave out any of them in the first three columns. If you know another language, please put numbers in the `Other` columns after specifying the language.

In your opinion what is your language proficiency in...?

	Basque	Spanish	English	Other (Specify)
General proficiency				
Reading				
Writing				
Speaking				
Listening				

6. I started learning Basque at the age of _____
7. I started learning Spanish at the age of _____
8. I started learning English at the age of _____
9. Have you ever been to an English speaking country? Yes ___ No ___
10. My hometown is mainly a : ___ Basque-speaking community
 ___ Spanish-speaking community
11. How often do you watch TV/ the Web/ blogs/ etc. in English?
 ___ Never ___ 3 to 5 times a week
 ___ Once/twice a week ___ Daily

12. Now I would like to know which language you speak to the following people. Please put an 'X' in the box which best expresses your situation

For example, if you always speak in Spanish with your family, put an 'X' in the last box:

	<i>Always in Basque</i>	<i>In Basque more than Spanish</i>	<i>In Basque and Spanish equally</i>	<i>In Spanish more than Basque</i>	<i>Always in Spanish</i>
<i>1. Family</i>					X

In which language do **YOU** speak to the following people? Choose one answer:

	<i>Always in Basque</i>	<i>In Basque more than Spanish</i>	<i>In Basque and Spanish equally</i>	<i>In Spanish more than Basque</i>	<i>Always in Spanish</i>
1. Home (Family)					
2. Friends in school					
3. Friends outside school					
4. In general in my hometown					

13. Here are some statements about **Basque**. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as honest as possible. Answer with ONE of the following:

SA = Strongly Agree (Circle SA)

A = Agree (Circle A)

NAND = Neither Agree Nor Disagree (Circle NAND)

D = Disagree (Circle D)

SD = Strongly Disagree (Circle SD)

1. I like hearing Basque spoken.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
2. Basque should be taught to all pupils in the Basque Country...	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
3. I like speaking Basque.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
4. Basque is an easy language to learn.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
5. There are not more useful languages to learn than Basque.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
6. I prefer to be taught in Basque	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
7. Learning Basque enriches my cultural knowledge.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
8. Basque is vital to our identity and culture.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
9. Basque is a language worth learning.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
10. If I have children, I would like them to be Basque speakers regardless of other languages they may know.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD

Here are some statements about **Spanish**. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as honest as possible. Answer with ONE of the following:

SA = Strongly Agree (Circle SA)

A = Agree (Circle A)

NAND = Neither Agree Nor Disagree (Circle NAND)

D = Disagree (Circle D)

SD = Strongly Disagree (Circle SD)

1. I like hearing Spanish spoken.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
2. Spanish should be taught to all pupils in the Basque Country..	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
3. I like speaking Spanish	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
4. Spanish is an easy language to learn.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
5. There are not more useful languages to learn than Spanish	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
6. I prefer to be taught in Spanish	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
7. Learning Spanish enriches my cultural knowledge.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
8. Spanish is vital to our identity and culture.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
9. Spanish is a language worth learning.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
10. If I have children, I would like them to b Spanish speakers regardless of other languages they may know.....	SA	A	NAND	D	SD

Here are some statements about **English**. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as honest as possible. Answer with ONE of the following:

SA = Strongly Agree (Circle **SA**)

A = Agree (Circle **A**)

NAND = Neither Agree Nor Disagree (Circle **NAND**)

D = Disagree (Circle **D**)

SD = Strongly Disagree (Circle **SD**)

- | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|------|---|----|
| 1. I like hearing English spoken..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 2. English should be taught to all pupils in the Basque Country..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 3. I like speaking English | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 4. English is an easy language to learn..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 5. There are not more useful languages to learn than English..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 6. I prefer to be taught in English..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 7. Learning English enriches my cultural knowledge..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 8. English is vital to our identity and culture..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 9. English is a language worth learning..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |
| 10. If I have children, I would like them to be English speakers
regardless of other languages they may know..... | SA | A | NAND | D | SD |