



Agency in muda processes: transforming subjectivities and linguistic practices in the Basque context

Jone Goirigolzarri-Garaizar¹ · Ane Ortega² · Estibaliz Amorrortu¹

Received: 30 July 2024 / Accepted: 14 February 2025 / Published online: 10 May 2025
© The Author(s) 2025

Abstract

The Basque revitalisation process is going through a crucial moment which has mobilised policy makers and language activists alike in efforts to boost the social use of the minority language. The great increase in the knowledge of Basque in the last 40 years has not been followed by a proportional increase in the use of the language. This has called for urgent action towards what has been termed in Basque sociolinguistics and grassroot movements as ‘activation’ in favour of Basque, a concept intimately related to the notion of linguistic *muda* (Pujolar & González, 2013), which refers to significant changes in an individual’s linguistic repertoire, also impacting in their social identity. The Participatory Action Research project discussed in this article attempts to contribute to the present challenges in the current revitalisation scenario in the Basque Country by studying processes of linguistic mudas of Basque university students. The study of mudas have proven an interesting angle from which to explore forms of agency through language. Indeed, developing agency has been crucial for participants to better understand their own subjectivities as speakers, unveil the unequal sociolinguistic order surrounding them, and make the move towards action in order to enact the changes they desired in their linguistic practices. In this article we will explore the different ways in which agency has revealed itself in our study. In doing so, we aim to shed some light on what it means to exercise agency from the perspective of speakers in contexts of ethnolinguistic minorisation.

Keywords Agency · Linguistic muda · Minority language revitalisation · Speakers’ activation · Basque language

✉ Jone Goirigolzarri-Garaizar
jone.goirigolzarri@deusto.es

Ane Ortega
aortegaet@gmail.com

Estibaliz Amorrortu
esti.amorrortu@deusto.es

¹ Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain

² Equiling Research Project, Getxo, Spain

The revitalisation of Basque at the crossroad: the challenge of speakers' activation and the key importance of mobilising agency

The Basque revitalisation process is going through a crucial moment which has mobilised policy makers and language activists alike in efforts to boost the social use of the minority language amongst those who know it. Since the revitalization of Basque began to take shape in the 1960s, the aim of the process has been twofold: on the one hand, to increase the number of Basque speakers and, on the other hand, to spread the use of Basque to new domains of social life. Regarding the first goal, the Basque case in the Basque Autonomous Community (henceforth BAC) –the territory in which the research project discussed in this article was conducted and where most advances in favour of the language have taken place– could be defined as a success story, as massive support of Basque medium-education by families has resulted in the near universalisation of its knowledge among the younger generations: today, in the BAC three quarters of young people aged 16 to 24 can speak Basque, and the projection foresees that by 2036 90% of the under 20s will know it (Basque Language Advisory Board, 2016). As far as the overall population is concerned, knowledge has increased from 24,7% in 1986 to 41% in 2016 (Basque Government, 2019).

This growth has led to a new sociolinguistic scenario, marked among other factors by the expansion of knowledge of Basque beyond the traditional heartland areas into traditionally Spanish speaking areas and new urban spaces, as well as by the diversification in speaker profiles. Among those it is remarkable the growth of 'new speakers',¹ defined as speakers with little or no home exposure to the language but who acquired it through Basque-medium immersion education or as adult learners: today more than half of young Basque speakers are 'new speakers' in this sense (Basque Government, 2019).

However, this sociolinguistic transformation and the increase in knowledge have not produced all the results that were expected, or at least hoped for, and signs of stagnation and even slowdown have been observed in recent years. The main source of alarm has been the use of Basque, which seems to be at an impasse (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2017). Amongst the possible reasons is the fact that many new speakers who have learnt Basque at school or in adult education are not incorporating the language in their everyday life (see Ortega et al., 2016 for a comprehensive study of new speakers in the BAC). This situation is not exclusive to the Basque context. The disjunction between levels of language acquisition and actual use extends across a wide range of minority language situations (see Ó Riagáin, 1997 for Irish; Williams

¹ Over the past decade, the phenomenon of 'new speakers' has gained significant attention and recognition across Europe, leading to a growing body of research within critically oriented sociolinguistics and language policy studies (see O'Rourke et al., 2015; Smith-Christmas et al., 2018; Soler & Darquennes, 2019). This growing attention has been promoted by the European research network created within the COST action entitled 'New Speakers in a multilingual Europe: Opportunities and challenges' (www.nspk.org.uk). Given the space constraints of this article, we are unable to explore the concept and the phenomenon in detail; therefore, we recommend consulting O'Rourke, Pujolar & Ramallo's 2015 article for an overview of the foundational work and debate.

& Morris, 2000 for Welsh; Dummore, 2018 for Gaelic; Galindo i Sole & Vila i Moreno, 2009 for Catalan, Casesnoves-Ferrer & Sankoff, 2004 for Valencian) and the discussion around how to transform competence into active language use is at the heart of many revitalization projects in Europe and beyond (see Ó Riagáin et al., 2008, Hornsby, 2015, O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2015, Pujolar & Puidgevall, 2015).

In the case in the Basque Country both public institutions and grassroots movements have called for urgent action towards what has been called speakers' 'activation', a folk term defined by Urla and Ramallo (2022: 3) as the 'process by which learners become active and habitual users of the minority language'. This term is not of course new in itself and has been used in other related fields such as second language acquisition (Sunderman & Kroll, 2006; Poarch & Van Hell, 2012; Choi & Nunan, 2018). Likewise, a broad body of work in sociology of language has also referred to the life moments in which this activation takes place but with different labels and theoretical nuances (see Ó Riagáin, 1997, Woolard, 2011, O'Rourke & Ramallo (2013). The folk term 'activation' as used in Basque sociolinguistics, is closely related to the notion of *muda*, coined by Pujolar and González (2013) within the prolific research on new speakers. According to the authors, *muda* refers to the specific biographical junctures (e.g. entering university, getting married, becoming a parent, starting a new job...) at which individuals enact significant changes in their linguistic repertoire.

The Participatory Action Research project discussed in this article converges with the goal and spirit of the current revitalisation scenario in the Basque Country and seeks to better understand the process of linguistic muda of Basque university students by creating conditions favourable to becoming habitual users of Basque and by accompanying these processes.

The research experience has led us to realise that although a certain level of competency is necessary to become an active speaker of a minority language, social, ideological, and contextual factors are also vital; and that in these circumstances developing agency has been crucial for participants to better understand their own subjectivities as speakers, unveil the unequal sociolinguistic order surrounding them, and make the move towards action in order to enact the changes they desire in their linguistic practices. In that sense, we agree with Pujolar (2019) when he states that the study of mudas proves an interesting angle from which to explore forms of agency through language, since it points towards the ways in which social actors develop strategies to query, reinterpret, redefine, or circumvent the social boundaries that structure their everyday experience. Likewise, the research project has allowed us to delve into the notion of agency and shed some light on what it means to exercise agency in contexts of ethnolinguistic minorisation from the perspective of speakers. This exploration builds on and closely engages with the discussions initiated in Linn & Dayán-Fernández's (2024) edited volume *Agency in the Peripheries of Language Revitalisation: Examining European Practices on the Ground*. Much like the case studies presented in the volume, we adopted an ethnographically informed research approach. We analysed our data inductively, looking at how agency emerged, and was mobilised and displayed by project participants on the ground, as suggested by Hernández and her associates (2025).

In the next section we will describe the main features of our research project. Then, in Section “[Our departing point: agency as transformative, reflexive, and situated](#)” we present some key traits or forms of agency which have been our starting point and have proven relevant in our data. In Section “[Exploring agency in our PAR project](#)” we discuss how agency has been displayed in our participants’ muda processes and the lessons learned from it. And finally, we will end up with some conclusions.

A participatory-action research project to promote linguistic mudas

As stated before, the data presented in this article comes from an ethnographically informed Participatory-Action Research project conducted with 22 volunteer university students, all of them wishing to increase the use of Basque in their daily lives. The aim of the project was to research muda processes in favour of Basque in highly Spanish-speaking contexts. The location chosen was Bilbao, a traditionally Spanish speaking city where, although nowadays 29% can speak Basque, the actual usage in the street is just 3.5% (Altuna et al., 2021).

The 22 undergraduate students came from the University of Deusto (UD) and Begoñako Andra Mari Teacher Training College (BAM), 14 girls and 8 boys in total. They were recruited with the help of faculty colleagues, who identified suitable candidates with the following characteristics: new speakers from the Bilbao Metropolitan Area willing to implement changes in their linguistic practices in order to become more active speakers of Basque. As well as this main targeted profile, a small number of students with other profiles were invited in for contrast: some students from Bilbao but who had acquired Basque in the family as a L1, and some students living in highly Basque-speaking areas near the city, who used mostly Basque in their everyday life. Regardless of their family language, all participants had attended Basque-medium education. Their experiences as Basque speakers varied, as well as their Basque-language use and their expectations and motivations to join the project.

The project was first designed as action-research, an approach that suited perfectly the general aim of studying the *how* of muda processes as they occur, as well as that of fostering transformation, following the principle that ‘the best way to understand and gain knowledge about any phenomenon is by trying to change it in its naturally occurring contexts’ (Lewin 1951, in Lawson et al., 2015: 5). Coherent with the transformational aim of the research, the project actively sought to provide the conditions for change, and indeed some of the activities involved opportunities to ‘rehearse’ change.

We soon understood that action-research required that we reflect on and re-define our role as researchers and those being researched, as well as our relationship with them. We understood that the students who took part in the project were the ones living the phenomenon under scrutiny and, when they embarked in the project, they were the clear protagonists of the processes they set into motion. As a result, participation became a core element in what became a Participatory

Action Research project (henceforth PAR) in which our participants were ‘co-researchers’ (Lawson et al., 2015). Parallely, we ‘senior researchers’ took the role of facilitators, in a relationship similar to what Mary Bucholtz and her associates (Bucholtz et al., 2016: 27) describe as *accompaniment*: ‘an ongoing, negotiated social process of learning to talk and work together, in which all participants contribute different forms of expertise and understanding and from which they benefit in different ways’. An *epistemic community* was created ad hoc for the purpose of the project. Following Estalella & Sánchez-Criado (2018), we understand an epistemic community as a knowledge-building community in which students and researchers all participated in the production of the very things under study.

Key to PAR is the combination of practice and reflective thinking, crucial for the acquisition of relevant situated knowledge, cogenerated by all participants involved in the project (Greenwood & Levin 2007; Lawson et al., 2015). We soon learned that the generation of relevant knowledge was to be understood, not just as new understandings of the sociolinguistic situation that conditioned or determined linguistic practices, but also as introspection towards a better understanding of ourselves as speakers of Basque. Thus, the development of strategies to overcome negative emotions and subjectivities, and to increase participants’ confidence and sense of control over their own situations (Greenwood & Levin 2007) was key, and group sessions sought to explore this aspect.

The study was designed as a flexible and open-ended project and lasted for the four years of the university degrees (2018–2021), with four encounters, which we have called the project’s four phases.

- During Phase 1 (March–May 2018), the participants engaged in different activities: a personal linguistic biography, ethnographic observations of linguistic practices at university and their own practices, and small challenges in which they had to increase their use of Basque. All these activities were followed by group sessions where they were able to share and reflect on their experiences and their feelings about them. In that sense, these dynamics became a space where they started to become aware of language-mediated inequalities based on the symbolic construction of the space of Bilbao, and their causes; co-researchers also reflected together about their own difficulties to use Basque more, and their emotions and subjectivities as Basque speakers; likewise, they started making changes in their practices to increase their Basque language use.
- In year 2, which we consider Phase 2, participants got involved in *Euskaraldia-11 days in Basque 2018*,² a biannual sociolinguistic exercise or social ‘challenge’ aimed at fostering change in linguistic habits in favour of Basque among

² Euskaraldia is held throughout the Basque Country. It is organised by a federation of activist organisations in favour of Basque, and supported by local public institutions and the Basque Government. The first edition in 2018 mobilised more than 200,000 people (Jauregi & Anduaga, 2019). For the 11 days the exercise lasts, people are encouraged to interact in Basque (by choosing between two roles, signalled by a pin worn in a visible place: Ahobizi (Lively Mouth) or Belarriprest (Ready Ear), that will be explained later. See: www.euskaraldia.eus).

citizens. During Euskaraldia participants continued to try the transformations that they had started in the previous year. Here personal diaries and interviews were carried out in order to help our co-researchers reflect and become aware of their experiences.

- Phase 3 (2020) involved interviews in pairs, with two objectives: as a follow up of their processes and to gather participants' thoughts on what aspects of the PAR project had helped them in their muda processes.
- What we call Phase 4 is the end-of-project session in June 2021, coinciding with the end of their university studies in year 4. In that session we shared with them the findings so far, performed some joined analysis, and worked together to draw conclusions. We also reflected on the aspects of the methodology that they considered most effective, as well as suggestions for further research.

As can be seen, data in this project is varied and includes the recording of group sessions, individual diaries, recorded messages, and ethnographic observation notes.

The most intense phase in terms of accompaniment and intervention was Phase 1, which set the basis for the work that came later; Phase 2-Euskaraldia was an intense experience for them, as they were immersed in a huge sociolinguistic exercise. In this article data from all phases of the project have been considered, as the longitudinal nature of it has crucially helped us to understand processes of agency in their complexity.

Our departing point: agency as transformative, reflexive, and situated

The literature on agency is very extensive and often controversial. The concept itself has a long history and has been examined and theorised from a range of disciplinary perspectives (for an overview see Rebughini, 2022). For some time now, the term has also been used profusely in language-related matters (see for example Ahearn, 2001, Bouchard & Glasgow, 2018, Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021, Linn & Dayan-Fernández 2024), although all too often this use has not been accompanied by explicit conceptualization or analysis. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the literature on agency in all its complexity (see Alonso & Goirigolzarri, in this volume); rather, in this section we will discuss theoretically some concepts related to types or forms of agency which geared our analysis in the framework of the objectives of the project. In particular, agency as transformative, reflective, and situated. We will next discuss how we understand these key notions.

As explained in Section “[A participatory-action research project to promote linguistic mudas](#)”, the goal of our PAR project was to study how muda processes in favour of Basque occur in a highly Spanish speaking sociolinguistic context by facilitating conditions for change. In that regard, our interest from the beginning was to study *transformative* agency. The transformative nature of agency is almost a given in the European sociological tradition, which understands agency as the ability of individuals to influence their contexts rather than merely react to them. In that sense,

agency has often been viewed as the ‘intention’ or the ‘capability’ of an individual to act, initiate, self-regulate, or make differences or changes in their situation (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021). Yet agency is rooted in power relations and in tensions between individuals and social structures and, therefore, many scholars (see Giddens, 1991, for example) have warned that agency is constrained by social structures, contexts, and circumstances. This is certainly the case in contexts of linguistic minorisation in which both minority language speakers and entire communities are deeply involved in the struggle to reverse language-mediated structural inequalities.

The second notion that we would like to discuss theoretically is that of *reflexivity*, considered a fundamental component of agency by many scholars, and one that has proven crucial in our own project. Giddens (1991) considers that an action becomes agency when it has a certain degree of ‘reflexive awareness’. And Archer (1996) understands reflexivity as the ‘internal conversation’ by which individuals reflect on the world around them and shape their subsequent actions. On our part, we understand reflexivity as what Bourdieu (1977) termed an ‘awakening consciousness’, which enables reflection on previously unthought norms, rules and habits, and may guide social inquiry and action.

This understanding of agency as both reflexive and transformative resonates well with Paulo Freire’s (2005) *conscientisation* framework, followed in the Equilibrating project and described in the Introduction to this Special Issue. *Conscientisation*, from *conscientização* in Portuguese, refers to an emancipatory pedagogical process by which people become aware of the oppressive sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and develop the ability to transform it. According to Freire, the conscientisation process is inseparable from liberation, and this liberation occurs through a radically transforming praxis, constituted by a dialogic relationship between reflection and action. The process described by Freire was helpful to identify phases in participants’ processes: as we will see in our data, in fact, some of our participants experienced a true process of conscientisation, which led them to action in one way or another. Having said that, although reflexivity can often lead to change, it is not inevitably transformative (Kerfoot, 2008). That is, reflecting on one’s situation might not automatically bring about changes on a practical level or on thinking, as we also found in our data.

The final notion that we would like to bring to the fore is the *situated* nature of agency, highlighted by Social Anthropology and clearly relevant to the ethnographic approach of our research project. Ahearn (2001: 112) defines agency as a ‘*socio-culturally mediated capacity to act*’ (our emphasis) that emerges out of the specific social, political, and cultural dynamics in a specific context and time. From this line of thought it follows that conceptions of agency may differ from society to society. That is why when referring to the situated character of agency it is important, not only to ask what agency means for theorists studying a particular phenomenon at a particular time and place, but what it means for the people with whom they are working (Ahearn, 2001) and how they put it into practice (Hernández-García et al., 2025). As we will see, we will make ample use of this idea in the analysis of our data.

Exploring agency in our PAR project

In this section we discuss how agency emerged in the course of our project, by looking at the experiences, trajectories, and discourses of our young co-researchers. As stated above, our focus and interest are forms of agency that are transformative towards the changes participants were hoping to make when they joined the project, that is, changes to incorporate the Basque language into their everyday linguistic practices and become more active speakers of Basque. As stated in the previous section, our starting point is a very broad understanding of agency, purposely trying to keep an open mind about what agency is and how it developed in our project, even questioning our own assumptions, and very much learning from our co-researchers. The section is organised around the most important themes or lessons from our data.

Reflexivity and critical awareness, a necessary step towards agency

As explained in the previous section, according to Freire's emancipatory pedagogy, becoming aware of one's sociocultural reality is key in the process of conscientisation towards inner transformations and changing the unjust social order. The link between agency and reflexivity has also been highlighted by Giddens (1991), when he states that action becomes agency when it carries reflexive awareness. Thus, the activities and discussions during the project actively sought to accompany participants in a process of reflection towards critical awareness about their sociolinguistic context as a first stage in their agency development. Our data show that all our participants became more aware of the factors that had an impact on their language practices, their self-perceptions as Basque speakers, and the social norms regarding the use of Basque in the spaces where they moved, among others.

Crucial to the interpretation of the data is the identification of two language-related dimensions of potential inequality in the Basque context: on the one hand, the minority status and low social presence of Basque in relation to Spanish, reflected in clear social norms that favour the use of Spanish among the young (certainly in traditionally Spanish-speaking areas), to the point that social punishment is often exercised if Basque is used in situations where it is not expected (or 'allowed'); on the other hand, different models of Basque speakerhood, indexed by Basque varieties and types of competence, some of which are considered more legitimate than others. As our previous research showed (Ortega et al, 2016, Urla et al., 2018), those speaking in the standard *Batua* may be considered as 'poor' speakers of Basque, while speaking a dialect is considered natural and even cool. Bearing in mind that the standard *Batua* is what new speakers learn, and that many native speakers come from highly Basque speaking areas and speak a dialectal form of Basque, we found that new speakers from areas such as Bilbao had a poor image of themselves as Basque speakers, resulting in great insecurity and with a direct impact on their linguistic practices.

In group discussions, participants corroborated these two dimensions of inequality, clearly showing that they affected them and were the source of many of their obstacles. Critical sociolinguistic awareness of the hierarchy between

Basque and Spanish as well as the unequal status of different types of Basque speakers were key to help them question and analyse their own situation in the light of this knowledge; and that in turn opened the door to ways to counteract the effect it had on them. We can see this process in Maider, a participant whose trajectory we will closely follow in this article because of her relevance to help us understand agency-related processes. Maider joined the project with a low self-esteem. Although she had a very good level of competence in Basque, having learned it in early immersion at school, she felt that she was not good enough if she compared herself with native speakers; she felt especially envious of the fact that native speakers often spoke a dialect, which she admired for its authenticity. (Here we can see the second dimension of inequality, as explained before, the one based on models of speakerhood that are not equally valued.) Following cooperative reflection in group discussions, she was able to dismantle those ideas, as shown in the next quotes: in the first one, she questions the native/non-native dichotomy based on the mother tongue of speakers, subversively claiming for herself the status of 'native' even if she did not learn Basque at home; in the second one, she shows that she does no longer consider her Basque any less than that of speakers from highly Basque speaking areas who speak the dialectal varieties she so envied before.

- (1) We may have learned Basque at school, but we are native speakers now, right? That's how I see it. In my view that [whether one is a native speaker, yes or no] has to be changed. A native speaker is not just the person who was born in a place like Gernika! [Gernika is a village in Basque heartland].
- (2) When talking about Basque I now have arguments to defend what I think. Now I wouldn't feel ashamed or any less in, say a village of Gipuzkoa [in a highly Basque speaking area, she means]. No way! I have arguments to defend myself [the way I am as a Basque speaker].

She referred to this transformation in her subjectivity as a 'liberation', which immediately gave way to a change in her practices, as will be seen later.

We noted that awareness development showed marked differences amongst participants: whilst the reflections of some remained on a rather individual level (what affects *me*, and how that makes *me* feel and act, without linking their difficulties to the social conditions, other participants went further and questioned the prevailing sociolinguistic order, bringing to the surface its unequal character. It has to be said that this kind of deep and far-reaching reflection has been much less among our participants. Excerpt 3 shows how Leire and Maider came to make these kinds of discoveries in a group discussion where young co-researchers and us senior researchers took part. They had observed that switching from Basque to Spanish in a conversation seemed normal and natural, while starting in Spanish and switching to Basque sounded odd (or it simply did not happen). Examine how they came to be able to explain why that was.

- (3)• Leire: There is this girl in class, we always speak in Basque together, but look what happened to me: we have this subject in Spanish and I was

thinking in this language and I said something to her in Spanish, I don't remember what, but it did not feel strange. But had it been the other way around, that we normally spoke in Spanish and that I said something to her in Basque, most probably it would have been more of a shock.

- Senior researcher: And why is that? What is different?
- Maider: Because Basque is not normalised in our society, at least not here where we live.

Because here Basque is a minority language.

This quote shows how the discussion of their experiences led these participants to understand that the reason for those very different linguistic practices was the unequal status of Basque in relation to Spanish.

Transformative agency

As mentioned before, the form of agency that interests us is one that is transformative and therefore involves some sort of change. In that regard, it is worth mentioning that not all participants performed change to the same extent. In the last phase of the project at the end of their university year 4, their trajectories and where they were at that point were very different. Participation in the project opened a door and gave them the opportunity to set a process in motion but then each followed their own path: whilst some experienced an internal transformation, a repositioning in their subjectivities as Basque speakers, but which did not have an apparent impact on their day to day language practices, others did transform their linguistic reality at different levels, and a few even went to try to have an impact on their social context.

Some participants became very ambitious in their desire to 'live in Basque' as much as they could, and felt sufficiently empowered to go as far as to transform the language of communication with their friends, even when they found some resistance on their part, as we can see in the following example, where Leire described the reaction of her friends when she decided to speak Basque to them. They were all Basque speakers but the language of communication amongst them was Spanish and she decided she wanted to change that, showing, as we will see, great resilience in the face of resistance from her friends.

- (4) Ufff. This girl, she's my friend, and she told me, 'Why are you speaking in Basque?'. And another one, 'I don't understand why you don't speak in Spanish, Leire'. And I said, 'I'll speak more slowly if you want, but I will not speak to you in Spanish'. And I persevered and then they said, 'Ok, all right then'. But at the beginning it was like, 'Speak in Spanish!'. And it was difficult but it is OK now. And perhaps before it hurt me, now much less so. I have become more proactive or perhaps it's just that I have matured.

Amongst those who performed major changes, some became conscious of their role as agents and embraced it. For example, there were those who became *Basque symbols* among their friends and acquaintances; and this image prompted others to spontaneously address them in Basque. But there were also those who consciously decided to be active transformative agents for others and to accompany others in their attempts to start using more Basque in their everyday lives. In that sense they took up the task of transforming the sociolinguistic reality around them and thus became language activists.

- (5) In this process [during the project] I have learned so much. Especially, in the beginning, the first steps to know ourselves and to accept what we feel. And that it is not bad to feel like this or like that, that it is normal. Unfortunately, we are the product of our society, but we have to learn to manage it. [...] And then, the next step, to become agents. Well, now I am going to be an agent for other people, I'm going to be their ally, I will be the one doing the accompaniment.

These examples are useful to illustrate the potential power of these processes once they are set in motion. However, not all participants made such dramatic changes and such radical transformations, and still, we learned to see there had been change in them. This forced us to review our 'prejudiced' assumptions of what transformation and indeed agency is, as discussed next.

Agency as situated in speakers' own goals and social circumstances

Our first impulse when interpreting differences in the changes performed by the participants was to attribute greater agency to greater changes. However, by closely working alongside these young people and getting to know them, we learned that we cannot measure agency by *quantity* in change, and that we need to look at it from the speaker's own goals and circumstances. In our data there is great diversity in the ambition of participants' objectives and desire for change, as well as in the nature of their transformative practices. We believe the analysis of these differences has helped us to better understand agency as situated in speakers' own goals and social context.

As we saw in the previous section, some participants made radical decisions towards change, even in difficult situations, but others geared their agentive capacity to concrete situations, spaces, or relationships. For example, some participants who were studying to become Primary teachers became very proactive in the use of Basque in the school environment during their School Internship, while keeping the rest of their lives linguistically untouched. This is the case of Lur, who became very motivated and highly empowered to use Basque in her work as a teacher in a Basque-medium school in a dominantly Spanish-speaking town, but who did not contemplate changing the language of communication with her boyfriend and friends. She explained to us how she now saw herself as a motivating model for her students, encouraging them to use Basque at school to the point that she even used Basque in the Spanish class for certain interactions.

- (6) I am [doing my Teaching Internship] in grade 3, Primary grade 3. [...] And, for instance, in the Spanish class I speak in Basque, they say, ‘Lur, we are in Spanish class. Why don’t you speak in Spanish?’ And I tell them, ‘No, I like speaking in Basque a lot’. And I continue talking in Basque, and some follow me.

Let us reflect on examples no. 2 and 6, as they force us researchers to look at speakers’ transformations according to their own goals and reflect on our own assumptions on what true agency is, or even our expectations for our young co-researchers: being Basque language activists ourselves, there is the danger to equate greater agency with greater changes. Can we say that Leire (excerpt no. 2), who made a great deal to transform the overall use of Basque in her life has greater agency than Lur (excerpt no. 6), who concentrated her efforts in the domains related to her job as a teacher? We need to consider that not everybody wanted to change their lives and live mainly in Basque, or just that there were circumstances they could not or perhaps did not wish to change.

Clearly the social circumstances in which participants operated had a clear impact on their capacity to act. We observed that some participants performing great changes may have had better conditions to do so because their environment was readier for a change, whilst others’ were more hostile to Basque. Some participants, for instance, Maider or Leire, moved in environments that were ideologically more pro-Basque and were involved in other types of social movements, such as feminism or left-wing political movements. The discourses of those participants showed more elaborate reflection, often using concepts related to minorisation, subalternity, citizenship, etc. They were the ones who, in fact, related their problems as Basque speakers to the social level, as mentioned above. This link between minority languages and broader social struggles is relatively common in contexts of ethnolinguistic minorisation. As many scholars have noted, contemporary European minority language activism has often been connected with wider waves of progressive identity politics and minority languages have even become a distinctive index of social struggle (see Urla, 2012; Harghindéguy & Cole, 2013, Heidemann, 2014; O’Rourke & Fernández-Dayan, 2024a).

Other participants, those who seemed to be less ambitious or who reported greater difficulties to make a difference in their environment, were the ones whose close context (family, neighbourhood or friends) was far from Basque culture and who were not involved in any social movement or struggle. Larraitz is a good example: she was studying to become a Primary teacher but, other than that, in her life she had little contact with Basque. After the work done during the project in year 1, she went through an interesting inner muda and repositioned herself when she discovered that ‘change was possible’, but also, as she put it, ‘I realise that the context I move in has an impact on the amount of Basque that I use’. She joined *Euskaraldia-11 days in Basque* enthusiastically but did not succeed in encouraging those around her to speak to her in Basque. However, there had been a change in her way of thinking and she was not effaced by the difficulties she experienced. In the follow-up sessions we had in years 3 and 4 she reported she still carried her *Euskaraldia* pin in a visible place so that people who knew Basque spoke to her in that language.

- (7) We never try to change our habits and, after the work we've done [in the project], we have tried to leave our comfort zone and have tried [to make changes.]. In my case, I have to say I have not succeeded, but perhaps two or three years ago I would not have even bothered to try. True that I have not succeeded, but as it was Euskaraldia... My friends were already fed up with me, but they put up with it [...] I did not succeed but I have abandoned my way of thinking and I am trying [to speak Basque, to get people to speak Basque to me].

In our data more or less favourable conditions for change were a real variable in how far our participants went in terms of the changes they made. As Rebughini (2022) pointed out, agency is dependent of a myriad of actors, and some participants were clearly more up against unfavourable circumstances than others. There were a few participants who seemed to achieve very little change in their linguistic practices, to the point that we wondered whether the project had been helpful to them at all. And we were certainly tempted to conclude that they had not developed any agency, not even to perform minimal changes. But listening to those participants who had seemingly achieved *nothing*, we learned that they felt they had, that they had changed, even if they felt they had a long way to go. Moreover, what we considered negligible changes seemed to be significant steps for them.

This takes us to the debate raised by Martínez (2019) on *who* is an agent. As she states, prejudicing who is 'an agent' and who is not has the danger of counting as agents only those 'normative subjects' who perform acts of defiance and change, with the great risk of making invisible types of action and types of agents that may in fact be relevant. At this point, we would like to bring to the fore a notion that helped us better understand the conflicts and challenges of our co-researchers, and that is the notion of 'agency from vulnerability' (see Martínez 2019 for an overview). According to this approach, persons acting from a position of vulnerability can perform forms of action that, although do not transform the oppressive system, make lives of the subjects a little more liveable (Gandarias 2019). According to Butler et al. (2017), vulnerability is in fact the condition of possibility that enable other forms of agency. All our participants began the project feeling linguistically vulnerable and insecure, and not exercising their linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2018) as they pleased. Observing their trajectories in relation to their circumstances and levels of sociolinguistic vulnerability enabled us to recognize alternative forms of agency that implied a repositioning and an empowering transformation in participants' subjectivities, even if they did not explicitly resist the unjust sociolinguistic situation or demonstrate an overtly proactive stance toward society. This is certainly the case of Larraitx (Excerpt. no. 7). The intersection between agency and vulnerability has been scarcely explored in contexts of ethno-linguistic minoritisation, nor have we examined it in sufficient depth in our research project to date. Such exploration would be highly valuable, as it could enable us to rethink both concepts and their theoretical boundaries, and contribute to the broader body of work on agency and vulnerability.

Finally, the research project has forced us to problematise the very concept of *transformation* itself, as this has both theoretical implications as well as practical

ones for the quest towards linguistic activation in the Basque revitalisation process. Group discussions showed that our participants had very different ideas about what using Basque actively was (for some it was ‘living in Basque’, for others it was having somebody to use it with, at least once a week). Likewise, we feel that *transformation* and *muda* need to be looked at in speakers’ own terms.

The collective dimension of agency

Even if the idea of gathering subjects in an epistemic community was part of the initial design of the project, we did so in order to better research speakers’ individual itineraries towards activation. Group discussions were seen as a tool, an effective strategy to foster a deeper understanding of the processes under scrutiny. However, we soon realised that ‘the group’ and the collective dimension was crucial in a number of ways.

Participants were not part of a Community of Practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992), nor did they (most of them) know each other previously; they joined the project because of their desire to speak more Basque in their everyday lives. In that sense, they came into the project as individuals and we as senior researchers were committed to accompany them in their *muda* process. However, the way the project developed showed us how important *peer* accompaniment was, not just as instrumental to produce new knowledge and to develop sociolinguistic critical awareness, but also to foster processes of transformation towards overcoming negative subjectivities and achieving greater empowerment. Analysis of data shows how this was done: showing empathy and sympathy, sharing experiences and strategies, signalling to the others that they were not alone and that they were together in this venture. This is well described by Maider, when she looks back to what she was like four years before and her development until today, a development she herself describes in terms of agency.

- (8) For me, clearly, to reflect together, to share experiences and feelings... because the truth is that we don’t talk a lot about Basque... And suddenly, that was a secure space where to say, ‘I feel ashamed [of my Basque]’, ‘I am afraid [to speak Basque]’ and things like that. And then, another thing, that activity we did, we were the protagonists of it. I don’t know what the right word is, but I felt a doer, an agent. When I started in this research project I felt very small, I was ashamed of speaking the standard Batua, I thought it was shit Basque. Very small. But through the project I understood that that is what I have. Before I thought I needed to learn the (Biscayan) dialect, but then I have discovered that with my Basque I can live very well, I changed in my head. The change I needed to do was not from the standard to the dialect but to accept and feel comfortable with my way of speaking Basque, the standard, that is my Basque. (...) I felt protected in the project. I felt like that, and I know the others [participants] felt the same.

The social dimension of agency became even clearer when participants joined *Euskaraldia-11 days in Basque* in Phase 2. *Euskaraldia* was a social exercise in the

whole of the Basque Country, in which for 11 days Basque speakers committed to speak in Basque in situations where they did not usually do it. For most of our co-researchers this experience meant a huge step forward: they felt part of something bigger, they felt they were not alone in their desire to speak in Basque, realised that by joining their forces with others amplified the results, they felt ‘legitimised’ to speak in Basque, and by joining the challenge they made discoveries about themselves as doers and felt empowered, capable and able. The following quote is from the interviews after Euskaraldia had finished. It is quite self-explanatory in the way it refers to the power of collective action:

- (9) Collective conscience and motivation are more powerful than individual one. [...] It is Euskaraldia and thus more people will try. Well, if it is we alone [individually] who take the decision [to speak in Basque], then it is much much harder. And I have seen this: as a collectivity we revendicate more, more than if we did it individually.

The experiences discussed above remain us that, although language revitalisation efforts can indeed be pursued individually, they are in essence collective in their nature. Some have noted (see May 2022 for a critique) that there is an overemphasis on the individual in some contemporary sociolinguistic work and call for a shift to bring the focus back to the collective (O’Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024a, b).

Agency as a becoming, vulnerable and unfinished

The discussion in Section “[Agency as situated in speakers’ own goals and social circumstances](#)” has shown that agency is not a property of the subject (some people *have* agency, others have not), but rather it is better explained as a *becoming*, a continuous process of construction through action (Rebughini, 2022). The unfinished character of agency is even more evident in sociolinguistic contexts where the minority language is not very present. This is certainly the case of Bilbao. None of our participants reported to have acted agentively constantly in time and space. Even those who developed great transformative agency, felt empowered, and performed a significant muda, said that they did not always succeed in speaking in Basque in all situations in which it was possible. In that sense, some participants have often referred to the ups and downs in their capacity to act, and that sometimes they felt strong and motivated, but other times less so, as Leire describes it next.

- (10) I would say that I have my ups and downs. Sometimes I have great commitment towards Basque, and I feel part of the Basque speaking world, and then, other times I am suddenly out. I would say that now I am on the up again, and becoming committed to Basque. But I’d say it goes in spurts.

So here is another lesson from our participants’ muda processes: agency is *vulnerable* itself. In a social context like Bilbao, where speaking in Basque is going against the unwritten sociolinguistic rule, opting for Basque has to be negotiated

in every single interaction; and this can be extremely tiring, as it requires effort and measuring forces each time. In this sociolinguistic reality is best explained by the notion of agency as relational more than individual, as proposed by the North American Sociological tradition –the result of human interactions in ongoing situations– and the agent as a becoming and not an essence; a continuous process of construction through action. As Pavlenko and Lantolf (2001) claim, agency is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around and with society at large (here comes again the collective dimension of agency). Similarly, gender studies, under the influence of the work of Judith Butler (1990), also conceptualise agency as a situated performativity in which identities and subjectivities are always becoming and in tension with external discourses and categorizations, as suggested by Leire in quote no. 10. In fact, we could argue that this understanding of agency echoes well with the experiences that we have described throughout the article.

Conclusions

The research project discussed in this article has allowed us to delve into the notion of agency and shed some light on what it means to develop and exercise agency in contexts of ethnolinguistic minorisation. We have corroborated that the study of *mudas* offers an interesting angle from which to explore forms of agency through language. In fact, the project has provided us with a deep and nuanced understanding of how agency develops in *muda* processes in favour of a minority language.

Our study has showed us the key importance of developing both critical sociolinguistic awareness and transformative and reflexive agency in order to change subjectivities and linguistic practices. Likewise, we have seen how this transformative and reflexive agency is not only instrumental to change one's own subjectivities and linguistic practices, but that it can also contribute to question and transform the sociolinguistic order surrounding the person.

Regarding the nature of agency, we have learnt that, in *muda* processes in favour of a minority language, agency is a process with no clear ending, with its ups and downs. Thus, it is not a state that speakers reach and in which they stay for ever. Quite the opposite, as the person develops in life, they experience moves in their capacity to act and in the strength they feel at different points. In this way, the longitudinal nature of our study has showed agency as unfinished and vulnerable.

With regards to the notion of transformative agency, as the project progressed we found ourselves in the need to question the very notion itself. We realised we tended to equate greater transformative agency with greater change. During the research project we learnt that we must understand transformation in speakers' own terms. Likewise, the research has showed us that in a sociolinguistic context like Bilbao, where social norms overwhelmingly favour the use of Spanish, making room for the use of Basque alone shows transformative agency –or as O'Rourke and Dayan-Fernández (2024c) describe it, a form of 'activist agency'– because it contributes to question the unequal sociolinguistic order.

Regarding the collective dimension of agency, we were initially interested in speaker's agency and participants individual itineraries towards activation. However, as the project developed the collective dimension of agency emerged as crucial to understand the muda processes in favour of Basque. The importance of the collective has been noted in different aspects. On the one hand, we have corroborated that agency is a social practice which is co-constructed and negotiated in interaction with others and within specific social conditions, more or less favourable to the minority language, and as such, a situated performativity in which identities and subjectivities are always interacting and in tension with external discourses and categorizations. On the other hand, the collective dimension of agency has also proven vital in its accompanying aspect. During the first phase of the project, in which an epistemic community was created ad hoc, peer accompaniment was instrumental to produce new knowledge and to develop sociolinguistic critical awareness, but also to foster and accompany process of transformation towards overcoming negative subjectivities and achieving greater empowerment. During the second phase of the project participants experienced the power of the collective in the huge sociolinguistic exercise of Euskaraldia in which they felt part of something bigger and realised that by joining forces they could really amplified the impact of the linguistic changes they desired. All this reminds us that every minority language revitalisation effort, whether individually or collectively pursued, is a social project in itself.

As a final consideration, we would like to underline the effectiveness of the PAR project to promote muda processes and enhance agency. According to participants, taken part in the project was key to get a better knowledge of themselves as speakers of Basque and of their sociolinguistic context, as well as to pursue changes in their linguistic practices. In that regard, we have confirmed that together with accompaniment, individual and collective reflection and the action element of the linguistic challenges participants went through (both key aspects in Freire's conscientisation process), were crucial in the process of linguistic muda of our participants.

Acknowledgements This article has been conducted within the framework of the I+D+I joint project "Critical linguistic awareness and speaker agency: action research for social equality (EquiLing)" (PID2019-105676RB-C42), as well as the subproject EquiLing-Basque "Sociolinguistic transformation processes in the Basque context: speaker, practices and agency" (PID2019-105676RB-C42/AEI/10.13039/501100011033). In addition, research has also benefited from "Euskal hiztun aktibo bilakatzen / Becoming active speakers of Basque (Hizkuntza Politika Sailburuordetza / Viceministry of Language Policy, Basque Government)" (2018-2025). Moreover, this article has benefited from discussion in the following research teams: Gobierno Vasco IT1425-22 and Gobierno Vasco IT1596-22. We want to deeply thank all participants who have taken part in this project as coresearchers.

Funding Open Access funding provided thanks to the CRUE-CSIC agreement with Springer Nature. This study was funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (Grant number PID2019-105676RB-C42/AEI/10.13039/501100011033) and the Viceministry of Language Policy, Basque Government (2018-2025).

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended

use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Ahearn, L. M. (2001). Language and agency. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30(1), 109–137. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.30.1.109>
- Altuna, O., Iñarra, M. & Basurto, A. (2021). *Measurement of Street Use of Languages. Basque Country, 2021*. Soziolinguistika Klusterra. <https://soziolinguistika.eus/eu/argitalpenak/measurement-of-the-street-use-of-languages-basque-country-2021/>
- Archer, M. (1996). Culture and agency. *Cambridge University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511557668>
- Basque Government (2019). *Sixth Sociolinguistic Survey 2016*. Eusko Jaurlaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia.
- Basque Language Advisory Board (2016). *¿Y a partir de ahora, qué? La sostenibilidad del desarrollo del euskera o “piedra que rueda no cría musgo”*. Eusko Jaurlaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia.
- Bouchard, J. & Glasgow, Gregory P. (Eds.). (2018). *Agency in Language Policy and Planning: Critical Inquiries*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429455834>
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). Outline of a theory of practice. *Cambridge University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812507>
- Bucholtz, M., Casillas, D.I. & Lee, J.S. (2016) Beyond Empowerment: Accompaniment and Sociolinguistic Justice in a Youth Research Program. In R. Lawson & D. Sayers, *Sociolinguistic Research: Application and Impact* (pp. 25–44). Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Butler, J., Gambetti, Z., & Sabsay, L. (2017). Vulnerability in resistance. *Duke University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11vc78r>
- Casesnoves-Ferrer, F., & Sankoff, D. (2004). The valencian revival: Why usage lags behind competence. *Language in Society*, 33(1), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740450403101X>
- Choi, J., & Nunan, D. (2018). Language learning and activation in and beyond the classroom. *Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1, 49.
- Dunmore, S. (2018). *Bilingual life after school: opportunity* (pp. 287–316). Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness.
- Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992). Think practically and look locally: language and gender as community-based practice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21(1), 461–490. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.21.100192.002333>
- Estalella, A. & Sánchez-Criado, T. (Eds.) (2018). *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography through Fieldwork Devices*. Berghahn. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw04cwb>
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Galindo i Solé, M., & Vila i Moreno, F. X. (2009). Factors explaining informal linguistic usage among Catalan schoolchildren: initial language, social networks, competence and vehicular language for teaching. *Noves. Revista de Sociolingüística*, 9 hivern, 1–15
- Gandarias, I. (2019). Resistir desde la vulnerabilidad: Narrativas de mujeres subsaharianas sobre su tránsito hacia Europa. *Papeles Del CEIC, International Journal on Collective Identity Research*, 1, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1387/pceic.19532>
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the late Modern Age*. Cambridge Polity Press.
- Greenwood, D. J. & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*. SAGE.
- Harguindéguy, J. B. P., & Cole, A. (2013). Ethnolinguistic mobilizations in Europe. *An Introduction. Regional & Federal Studies*, 23(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2012.754358>

- Heidemann, K. A. (2014). From 'seeing' opportunity: critical events, turning points and cross-national ethnolinguistic mobilization in the Basque Country. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 1(4), 347–374. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2015.1043742>
- Hernández-García, J.M.; Pujolar, J., Fernández-González, N. (2025). Approaching Agency from Fieldwork Experiences. Lessons for Critical Sociolinguistics. *International Journal of Sociology of Language*, 2025(291), 113–139. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2023-0080>.
- Hornsby, M. (2015). *Revitalizing minority languages: new speakers of Breton*. Springer.
- Jauregi, P. & Anduaga, U. (2019). Euskaraldia. *An analysis of the results. Territory of the Basque Language. 2018–2019*. Eusko Jaurilaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia.
- Kerfoot, C. (2008). Transforming identities and enacting agency: the discourses of participatory development in training South African Adult educators. *Journal of Education*, 45, 97–130.
- Lawson, H. A., Caringi, J., Pyles, L., Jurkowski, J., & Bozlak, C. (2015). *Participatory action research*. Oxford University Press.
- Liddicoat, A. J., & Taylor-Leech, K. (2021). Agency in language planning and policy. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 22(1–2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2020.1791533>
- Linn, M.S., & Dayán-Fernández, A. (Eds.). (2024). *Agency in the Peripheries of Language Revitalisation: Examining European Practices on the Ground*. Multilingual Matters.
- Martinez, M. (2019). Una (breve y no muy sistemática) aproximación a la noción de agencia desde la vulnerabilidad. *Papeles Del CEIC, International Journal on Collective Identity Research*, 1, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1387/peic.20616>
- Ó Riagáin, P. (1997). *Language Policy and Social Reproduction: The Irish Language: 1983–1993*. Oxford University Press.
- Ó Riagáin, P., Williams, G., Vila i Moreno, X. (2008) *Young People and Minority Languages: Language use outside the classroom*. Centre for Language and Communication Studies. Trinity College Dublin.
- O'Rourke, B., & Ramallo, F. (2013). Competing ideologies of linguistic authority amongst new speakers in contemporary galicia. *Language in Society*, 42(3), 287–305. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404513000249>
- O'Rourke, B., & Ramallo, F. (2015). Neofalantes as an active minority: understanding language practices and motivations for change amongst new speakers of galician. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231, 147–165. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0036>
- O'Rourke, B., Pujolar, J., & Ramallo, F. (2015). New speaker of minority languages: the challenging opportunity. Forward. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12675>
- O'Rourke, B., & Dayán-Fernández, A. (2024a). Language revitalization through a social movement lens: grassroots galician language activism. *Language Policy*, 23, 233–255. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-024-09687-6>
- O'Rourke, B., & Dayán-Fernández, A. (2024b). Discourses of solidarity and resistance in alternative linguistics spaces: galician improvised poetry as linguistic collective action. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12675>
- O'Rourke, B. & Dayán-Fernández, A. (2024c). Sowing the Seeds at Semente: Urban Breathing Spaces and New Speaker Agency. In Linn, & Dayán-Fernández, A. (Eds.). *Agency in the peripheries of language revitalisation: Examining European practices on the ground* (pp. 43–61). Multilingual Matters.
- Ortega, A., Amorrortu, E., Goirigolzarri-Garaizar, J., & Urla, J. (2016). *Los nuevos hablantes de euskera: experiencias, actitudes e identidades*. Universidad de Deusto.
- Pavlenko, A., & Lantolf, J. P. (2001). Second language learning as participation and the reconstruction of selves. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 155–177). Oxford University Press.
- Poarch, G. J., & Van Hell, J. G. (2012). Cross-language activation in children's speech production: evidence from second language learners, bilinguals, and trilinguals. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 111(3), 419–438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2011.09.008>
- Pujolar, J., & González, I. (2013). Linguistic 'Mudes' and the De-ethnization of language choice in catalonia. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(2), 138–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.720664>
- Pujolar, J., & Puigdevall, M. (2015). Linguistic mudes: How to become a new speaker in catalonia. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231, 167–187. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0037>

- Pujolar, J. (2019). Linguistic mudes: An exploration over the linguistic constitution of subjects. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2019(257), 165–189. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2019-2024>
- Rebughini, P. (2022). Agency. In P. Rebughini & E. Colombo. *Framing Social Theory* (pp. 22–38). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003203308-3>
- Smith-Christmas, C., Murchadha, N.Ó., Hornsby, M. & Moriarty, M. (Eds.). (2018). *New Speaker of Minority Languages. Linguistic Ideologies and Practices*. Palgrave Macmillan
- Soler, J., & Darquennes, J. (2019). Language policy and ‘new speakers’: An introduction to the thematic issue. *Language Policy*, 18(4), 467–473. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-018-9504-4>
- Soziolinguistika Klusterra (2017). Measurement of Street Use of Languages. Basque Country, 2016. <https://soziolinguistika.eus/files/erabilera-ing.pdf>.
- Stroud, C. (2018). Linguistic Citizenship. In L. Lim, C. Stroud & L. Wee, *The Multilingual Citizen: Towards a Politics of Language for Agency and Change* (pp. 17–39). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783099665-004>.
- Sunderman, G., & Kroll, J. F. (2006). First language activation during second language lexical processing: an investigation of lexical form, meaning, and grammatical class. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 28(3), 387–422. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263106060177>
- Urla, J. (2012). *Reclaiming Basque: Language, Nation, and Cultural Activism*. University of Nevada Press.
- Urla, J., Amorrortu, E., Ortega, A., & Goirigolzarri-Garaizar, J. (2018). Basque Standardization and the new speaker. Political praxis and the shifting dynamics of authority and value. In P. Lane, J. Costa, & H. De Korne (Eds.), *Standardizing Minority Languages. Competing Ideologies of Authority and Authenticity in the Global Periphery* (pp. 24–46). Routledge.
- Urla, J., & Ramallo, F. (2022). Activating new speakers: Rresearch among Spain’s historic linguistic minorities. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 43(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1987444>
- Williams, C. & Morris, D. (2000). *Language Planning and Language Use: Welsh in a Global Age*. University of Wales Press.
- Woolard, K. (2011). Is there linguistic life after high school? Longitudinal changes in the bilingual repertoire in metropolitan Barcelona. *Language in Society*, 40, 617–648.

Publisher’s Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Jone Goirigolzarri-Garaizar is a lecturer at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at the University of Deusto (Bilbao) and a member of the Deusto Social Values Research Team. Her research primarily focuses on the revitalization of the Basque language. Her areas of interest include language policies, language attitudes, and ideologies, particularly concerning new speakers and young populations. Currently, she is involved in a research project exploring the connections between sustainable development and minority language revitalization. Additionally, she is a member of the UNESCO Chair on World Language Heritage at the University of the Basque Country (<https://www.ehu.es/eu/web/mho-unesco-katedra/home>).

Anne Ortega (PhD in Sociolinguistics-London), has worked until very recently as a lecturer in the Department of Language and Literature Education of Bilbao’s Begoñako Andra Mari Teacher Training University College, in the field of multilingual education in minority language contexts. She is also a member of the UNESCO Chair on World Language Heritage of the University of the Basque Country (<https://www.ehu.es/eu/web/mhounesco-katedra/home>), and an active member of Garabide Elkarte (www.garabide.eus), an NGO that works on linguistic cooperation with indigenous communities involved in the revitalization of their languages. Her prime research area for the past 20 years has been in Basque sociolinguistics, especially in the field of attitudes and language ideologies, primarily in relation to new speakers of Basque.

Estibaliz Amorrortu holds a degree in Basque Philology from the University of Deusto and a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Southern California. She did her PhD thesis on attitudes towards Batua, the standard variety of Basque (2000). Today she teaches sociolinguistics at the Basque Language and Culture Degree at the University of Deusto. Her research interests include topics such as linguistic diversity, language practices and ideologies, muda processes in minority languages, and PAR research, among others. She is the principal investigator of a recent participatory study (“Critical Linguistic Awareness

and the Agency for Speakers: Action Research for Sociolinguistic Equality (EquiLing-Basq)”) aimed at facilitating the conditions for young Basque speakers to transform their linguistic practices to include Basque into their active repertoire.