

## Word-initial and intervocalic aspiration loss in Northern Basque

This poster will report work in progress which has two main aims: (1) to identify a developing contact-induced sound change in Basque —the loss of aspiration in word-initial position and intervocalic contexts in Northern varieties— age being the independent variable in oral data collected from Basque speakers, and (2) to examine alternative patterns which may be indicative of change in the future.

Language variation can mark stable class differences or stable sex differences in communities, but it can also indicate instability and change. When it marks change, the primary social correlate is age (Chambers 2002), and the change reveals itself prototypically in a pattern whereby some minor variant in the speech of the oldest generation occurs with greater frequency in the middle generation and with still greater frequency in the youngest generation. If the incoming variant truly represents a linguistic change (Labov 1994, Trudgill 1974), as opposed to an ephemeral innovation as for some slang expressions or an age-graded change, it will be marked by increasing frequency down the age scale.

We will consider the applicability of these concepts to data emerging from Measuring the rhythm of Basque varieties and Norantz: contact des langues et variation linguistique. Création d'un observatoire des nouveaux parlers basques projects\*, in which we explore with the Praat speech analyzing program the aspiration of the recorded speech. We will focus on three age groups: youngs (- 30), middle-aged (40-60) and octogenarians (+70) from the provinces of Lapurdi, Low Navarre and Zuberoa (France). All of the informants have the Basque language as their mother tongue and home language, but the older ones received education only in French language and use French in formal (and often informal) situations, in oral and in written communication. The data come from recorded interviews—individual as well as in-group— held in Basque, and from specific questionnaires and word lists. A sample of data is analysed in detail in light of the Natural Phonology framework (Hurch 1988), in order to determine whether or not the linguistic features favouring change can be found.

### References

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