



Challenging Minority Language Isolation: Translanguaging in a Trilingual School in the Basque Country

Oihana Leonet, Jasone Cenoz & Durk Gorter

To cite this article: Oihana Leonet, Jasone Cenoz & Durk Gorter (2017) Challenging Minority Language Isolation: Translanguaging in a Trilingual School in the Basque Country, Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 16:4, 216-227, DOI: [10.1080/15348458.2017.1328281](https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2017.1328281)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2017.1328281>



© Oihana Leonet, Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter



Published online: 02 Aug 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 9915



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 23 View citing articles [↗](#)



Challenging Minority Language Isolation: Translanguaging in a Trilingual School in the Basque Country

Oihana Leonet ^a, Jasone Cenoz ^a, and Durk Gorter ^{a,b}

^aUniversity of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU; ^bIkerbasque Basque Foundation for Science

ABSTRACT

Learning two or more languages at school is quite common all over Europe, but languages are often isolated from each other. This pedagogical practice is in contrast to the way multilingual speakers use their whole linguistic repertoire when communicating in social contexts. These multilingual solitudes are challenged when translanguaging pedagogies are used and multilingual students are allowed to use the resources in their linguistic repertoire. The specific focus of this article is to examine translanguaging as a pedagogical tool as related to a context wherein Basque is the main language of instruction, but a minority language in society. The article reports the characteristics of a pedagogical intervention based on translanguaging, which aims at developing language awareness, metalinguistic awareness, and communicative and academic competences in Basque, Spanish, and English. Our findings show that pedagogical translanguaging can be compatible with the maintenance and development of a minority language.

KEYWORDS

Basque; English; metalinguistic awareness; multilingual education; Spanish; translanguaging

The Charter for Regional or Minority languages adopted in 1992 by the Council of Europe defines these languages as “languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state’s population and [are] different from the official language(s) of that state” (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 2). This special issue contains two reports on translanguaging practices in schools in two European contexts in which a regional minority language is used as a language of instruction: the Basque Country and Wales. Both minority languages are considered to be “unique” because these languages are spoken only in specific regions without being the dominant language of any state (Extra & Gorter, 2008). This is a different situation from that of the German language in Belgium or the Croatian language in Italy because these languages are a minority in one state but the official dominant language in another.

The situation of regional minority languages such as Basque in education shares some characteristics with other situations of minority-language education in other contexts such as the United States. At the same time, Basque education also has characteristics associated with learning languages of high status or languages of wider communication (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). Basque has legal and institutional support and its use as the main language of instruction is widespread both for speakers who have Basque as a home language and for majority-language speakers who speak Spanish at home. This means that education through the medium of the minority language is at the same time a maintenance program for speakers of the minority language and an immersion program for speakers of the majority language. Basque speakers are not economically disadvantaged compared to majority-language speakers and are fluent in the majority language, Spanish (Gorter, Zenotz, Etxague, & Cenoz, 2014).

The aim of this article is to explore the way translanguaging can offer learning opportunities in a multilingual school in which the use of the Basque language is promoted along with competences in

CONTACT Prof. Jasone Cenoz  jasone.cenoz@ehu.eus  Faculty of Education, Philosophy and Anthropology, University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU, Tolosa Hiribidea 70, Donostia-San Sebastian, 20018 Spain.

© Oihana Leonet, Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Spanish and English. The context of Basque education will be described and then a specific project based on pedagogical uses of translanguaging will be discussed as related to the protection and development of the Basque language.

Reinforcing the Basque language through schooling

The Basque language is a non-Indo-European language and is linguistically distant from the Romance languages it has contact with: Spanish and French. Basque is spoken north and south of the Pyrenees in France and Spain, but in this article the focus is on the context in which Basque is in contact with Spanish in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) in Spain. According to the most recent sociolinguistic survey conducted in 2016, 33.9% of the population in the BAC is bilingual in Basque and Spanish and the rest have either receptive competence in Basque (19.1%) or do not speak Basque at all (47%) (Basque Government, 2016a). The Basque language was widely spoken in most parts of the Basque Country and in neighboring areas in the Middle Ages, but since then the territory where Basque is spoken has shrunk as the result of many centuries of contact with Romance languages (Cenoz, 2008, 2009).

The Basque language suffered a further retreat in the 20th century and it was banned from public domain for several decades during Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975). Industrialization, the development of the mass media, and increased mobility of the population have also influenced the decline of the minority language.

Political and social changes at the end of the 20th century have fostered the revitalization of Basque in the BAC and contributed significantly to the increase in the number of Bascophones in recent years. In fact, the percentage of fluent speakers of Basque has increased from 24% in 1991 to 33.9% in 2016 (Basque Government, 2016a). This increase is due to a large extent to the educational system. Today, Basque is the main language of instruction in the BAC at all levels of primary and secondary education. Students with Basque as the home language have Basque as the medium of instruction, and also most students with Spanish as the home language have Basque as the medium of instruction for all or some school subjects. Basque-medium education is an option and there are different reasons for Spanish-speaking parents to decide on this program for their children. Some parents may feel that speaking Basque is part of Basque identity and, even if Basque has been lost in the family, they would like their children to speak it. In other cases, there are practical reasons such as the usefulness of Basque in the labour market.

Nowadays, according to the 2016 sociolinguistic survey, 50% of the Basque-speaking population in the BAC has Basque as a first language, 13.2% are early bilinguals with both Basque and Spanish as first languages and 36.8% are speakers of Basque as a second or additional language (Basque Government, 2016a). This high percentage of speakers of Basque as a second or additional language has resulted in a more heterogeneous Basque-speaking community and different multilingual identities (Ortega, Urla, Amorrortu, Goirigolzarri, & Uranga, 2015). In fact, there has been a change from the idea of having a monolithic Basque identity to complex multilingual identities (Basque Government, 2016b).

Basque L1 speakers are fluent in Spanish because Spanish is widely used in society and it is also studied as a school subject. Spanish L1 students who follow partial or total immersion programs in Basque acquire a high level of competence in receptive skills in Basque, but there is some concern about their productive skills and their extensive use of Spanish instead of Basque (Gorter et al., 2014).

The sociolinguistic situation of the BAC is complex and globalization has had an important influence, so English is becoming important at school and in the labour market. The teaching of English is introduced in kindergarten, and it is becoming quite common for schools to offer one subject through the medium of English. French is also taught as an optional subject in secondary school. In recent years, multilingualism in the BAC has increased because of immigration, which reached 8.6% of the population at the beginning of 2016 (Ikuspegi, 2016). Some of the immigrant students in Basque schools speak Spanish because they come from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, but the arrival of speakers of other languages creates a challenge for the school system that already has at least three languages.

Basque has extensively been used as the language of instruction for over 30 years but being a minority language Basque-medium education has faced a number of challenges (Zalbide & Cenoz, 2008). Important steps have been taken in the development of teaching material in Basque for all the school subjects. Teaching materials for minority languages such as Basque have a very limited market compared to majority languages. An additional problem is that Basque had a weak tradition as an academic language because it was used mainly in the private domain. New terms have been coined and specialized dictionaries have been published to provide the necessary terminology. Another challenge up to recently was the availability of qualified teachers. Young Basque-speaking teachers in recent years have the possibility of completing their studies through the medium of Basque, but this was not the case in previous years when the language of instruction was only Spanish.

Basque faces new challenges due to the increasing contact with different languages, and this new situation is often felt as threatening for Basque. Basque has survived through many centuries by being an isolated language. Nowadays, many speakers of Basque are more fluent in Spanish than Basque and all speakers of Basque in the BAC have at least three languages in their school curriculum. As we will see in the next section, the traditional ideologies of language separation at school have been questioned, and translanguaging provides new opportunities for multilinguals. The way these new trends can be combined with the maintenance and promotion of Basque will be discussed in the context of a translanguaging school project.

Ideologies of language separation and translanguaging in the Basque context

As has already been said, Basque-medium education has an enormous influence on the number of Basque speakers. As the result of a strong policy of maintenance and revitalization, the percentage of young people (16 to 24 years old) living in the BAC who are fluent in Basque increased from 25% in 1991 to 71.4% in 2016 (Basque Government, 2016a). Basque-medium education has been traditionally based on an ideology of isolation and language separation to protect the minority language. Fishman (1967) considered diglossia, understood as functional differentiation, as the key for language maintenance. However, diglossia is seen in a negative way in the Basque Country and the developments in Basque-language revitalization are seen as moving away from diglossia (Elosua, 2016). For over 30 years the aim has been *normalization*, and this term has been defined as the social process aimed at maintaining Basque among its speakers, teaching Basque and using it so that Basque becomes the common language in social interactions (Zalbide, 1998). The idea of normalization is to some extent the opposite of diglossia because it aims at extending the use of Basque to formal and informal, oral and written interactions, and to all functions in society. In the past, there was a diglossic situation with Spanish (or French in the northern Basque Country) being used for high-level functions and Basque being restricted to more-informal, private interaction. Nowadays, Basque can be used in all sectors (institutions, media, health, business), and it is a language of instruction for all studies at the university. Most students take the university entrance exam in Basque, and there are doctoral theses written in Basque in different scientific areas.

The situation of Basque has improved regarding the number of speakers and its use for different functions, but being a minority language in its own territory, there is still considerable concern about its future because speakers of Basque in the BAC often use more Spanish than Basque in everyday interaction. According to the 2016 sociolinguistic survey, only 13.4% of the population in the BAC uses Basque more often than Spanish and 7.1% uses Basque as much as Spanish. The rest of the population uses Basque less often than Spanish or uses no Basque at all. The situation of Basque-Spanish bilingualism in the BAC is quite different from that of many other situations such as English-Spanish bilingualism in the United States. The minority language, Basque, has an official status, and it is stronger in education than the majority language, Spanish. In spite of this, many students who have had Basque as the language of instruction use Spanish for personal interaction because they are more fluent in Spanish than Basque and at the same time because Spanish is the majority language in society.

Taking into account the weak situation of Basque in society, schools have traditionally set hard boundaries between Basque and Spanish in order to protect Basque. All teachers and students in Basque-

medium education are bilingual, and Basque is the medium of instruction and the designated language in the classroom except in the English language arts and Spanish language arts classes. Even though Basque-medium instruction is quite different from immersion programs in Canada and two-way immersion programs in the United States, Basque-medium instruction shares with many of these programs what Cummins calls “two solitudes” assumption, keeping the languages rigidly separate (Cummins, 2008).

In spite of the separation, spontaneous translanguaging occurs both at school and outside school because it is a natural phenomenon among bilinguals. As García and Li Wei (2015) explain, “There is abundant empirical evidence that in all classrooms with bilingual learners, teachers and students move between ‘languages’ naturally to teach and learn” (p. 57). Arocena, Cenoz, and Gorter (2015) conducted a study comparing teachers’ beliefs in the BAC and Friesland and reported that Basque teachers are worried about spontaneous translanguaging because it can weaken the Basque language. Translanguaging in this context is not usually seen as empowering the minority language and its speakers by legitimating their practices but as empowering the majority language and its speakers by reinforcing the use of Spanish at the expense of Basque (see also Cenoz & Gorter, 2017).

In this article, the focus is on *pedagogical translanguaging* (also called designed classroom or intentional translanguaging), understood as planned instructional strategies used with a pedagogical purpose. Pedagogical translanguaging in the context of Basque-medium education aims at using the resources students have as emergent multilinguals when developing their competences in different languages. It is based on *focus on multilingualism*, an approach that goes against the “two solitudes” and is based on three dimensions: the multilingual speaker, the whole linguistic repertoire, and the social context (see Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, 2014). This approach considers students as multilinguals who can use elements from their linguistic repertoire in different social contexts. It reinforces the learning processes by using the whole linguistic repertoire rather than avoiding the knowledge multilinguals have because of their own linguistic and educational background. Pedagogical translanguaging has also been developed in other contexts even if the term translanguaging is not used in all cases. Jones (this volume) explains the way translanguaging works in English-Welsh bilingual education wherein both languages are used in the same class (see also Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). Cummins (2007) refers to “bilingual instruction strategies” when advocating for the use of translation or comparison of cognate terms across languages. García and Kano (2014) reported that the use of bilingual texts and translanguaging pedagogies contributed to the development of metalinguistic awareness.

Using a more specific focus on vocabulary development and morphological awareness, Lyster, Quiroga, and Ballinger (2013) reported the benefits of developing morphological awareness by comparing compounds and derivation in English and French in Canada. Arteagoitia and Howard (2015) found advantages when students worked with cognates to develop reading comprehension in the context of English-Spanish bilingualism in the United States. Pedagogical translanguaging has also been used for the development of discourse competences. The relationship between writing texts in different languages and its implications for teaching has been highlighted in different contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Escamilla et al., 2013).

Translanguaging pedagogies are based on using elements from the whole linguistic repertoire multilingual students have at their disposal instead of asking them to behave like monolinguals. This would make sense particularly in the context of Basque-medium education wherein all students have at least three languages in the curriculum at all levels of education. At the same time, Basque-medium education aims at developing and reinforcing the minority language. The well-established tradition of isolating Basque without allowing the use of Spanish in class is challenged by introducing translanguaging pedagogies. In the rest of the article we present an intervention based on pedagogical translanguaging that allows emergent multilinguals to use their own linguistic and communicative resources to develop multilingual competence. The focus will be on the possible effect of this intervention on the maintenance and development of the Basque language as perceived by the teachers and the school coordinator who implemented the intervention. Taking into account the language separation policy of the school and the

need to protect Basque, one of the main concerns teachers had was the possible negative impact of translanguaging on the minority language. The research question we intend to answer is the following: *Will a pedagogical intervention based on translanguaging be compatible with the maintenance and revitalization of Basque?*

A pedagogical intervention based on translanguaging

The pedagogical intervention reported in this article is part of a larger project that aims at developing students' language awareness and metalinguistic awareness through pedagogical translanguaging. The intervention was implemented in one public school located in an industrial region, which has over 600 students and about 60 teachers divided over preprimary and primary education. The majority of students belong to lower and middle socioeconomic classes. The school is part of the Amara Berri system (García, 2015), a pedagogical system with its own special characteristics and which is used in a network of 19 schools. Some of the characteristics of this system include the organization of the space of the classroom into four or five areas where students work in groups and change to a different area every few weeks. Another characteristic is that students of two different grades are combined in the same group in each of the classes with the idea of creating a more diverse and richer environment for learning. Before the intervention took place, general information about the school and specific information about the content and teaching methodology used in the three language arts classes (Basque, Spanish, and English) was gathered. Those educational documents were analyzed and teachers and school managers were interviewed. In addition, several classes were observed to see how "Amara Berri" system methodology works.

The intervention took place in the 5th and 6th grades of Primary Education during the Basque, Spanish, and English language arts classes. The first languages of the participating students ($N = 63$) were Spanish (51.9%), Basque (21.2%), or both (26.9%). Since this is a Basque-medium instruction school, all other subjects were in Basque. In each of the three language classrooms, the space was divided into four "areas," and the students worked most of the time in a group of 5 or 6 members in one of the areas. Within each of the language arts classes, the aims, learning activities, and materials of each area are different, and each group of students rotates so that all students complete the whole syllabus. The intervention took place in two of the four areas in each of the three language arts classes. Therefore, there were a total six groups using the translanguaging pedagogies at the same time. Students worked using translanguaging materials in these six areas—that is, translanguaging pedagogies were used by half of the class in the three classes during Basque, Spanish, and English language arts. The rest of the class continued to use the usual school materials. As students at this school change areas every four weeks, during the 16 weeks of the intervention all the students in the three classes were in the six "areas" using translanguaging pedagogies.

Translanguaging materials included planned and sequenced activities that combined two or three languages and highlighted similarities and differences between them. As the Amara Berri system is based on group work and not on frontal teaching, the materials were developed for autonomous work and specific instructions on how to use the materials were written in the teacher's booklet. The aim was to develop language awareness about multilingualism, the Basque language, and metalinguistic awareness by using the students' resources in their whole linguistic repertoire. Two examples follow:

Example 1. Linguistic landscape in your town

This activity aims at developing language awareness about the use of different languages in the linguistic landscape of the town in which the school is located and metalinguistic awareness about the use of compounds and derivatives in the linguistic landscape. Students are shown some pictures of the linguistic landscape, and they also take their own pictures and discuss the languages that are found in the language signs in their town and the languages they use themselves in different oral and written group activities. In order to develop metalinguistic awareness, they analyze some of the shops and compare them in the three languages. The word *loredenda*, which is in Basque in one of the

pictures is a compound of *lore + denda*, and the students compared it to the English *flower + shop*, which has the same elements but realized that the Spanish translation *floristería* is different. Another picture shows the Basque *liburudenda*, which can be compared to the English *bookshop* but is different from the Spanish *librería*. They also learn that *librería* is a false friend of *library*.

Example 2. Writing in three languages

This activity aims at reinforcing the skills to write narrative texts in Basque, Spanish, and English. The structure of a narrative text is explained in Basque and examples are given for students to identify the different parts in Basque. Then they have to write their own story in Basque (about 200 words) and later a different story in Spanish (200 words) and a shorter story including the same elements in English (about 100 words). The idea is that students realize that they can use the same organization of the narrative text they have learned in Basque when writing a story in Spanish or English, and at the same time they have to be aware that the grammar, vocabulary, and spelling is specific for each of the languages.

The translanguaging pedagogical intervention was quite different from the language separation practices teachers usually do in their classes. It implies using the three languages in the language arts classes where only one language had been used before. The three languages were used in the three language arts classes, so the idea was that the total amount of exposure to each of the languages would be approximately the same as before, but the translanguaging pedagogies would allow students to use their multilingual resources.

Teachers' feedback

To answer our research question, teachers' feedback on the development of Basque was considered very important. The school was open to the intervention, but the purposeful use of three languages in the same language arts class was new for the teachers. Individual guided interviews and a focus group discussion were carried out with the three language teachers that took part in the intervention. Two of the teachers (T1 and T2) taught Basque and Spanish while the 3rd teacher (T3) taught English. The three teachers had a long teaching experience, and they had been working at that school for more than 10 years. The three of them were fluent in Basque and Spanish, but there were some differences in their fluency in English. T3 had the highest level, followed by T1, and T2 explained that her level of English was very low. The school coordinator of the translanguaging intervention, who was also very experienced, participated in the focus-group discussion as well.

The three individual interviews with each of the teachers lasted between 32 minutes and 46 minutes. The focus-group discussion lasted 65 minutes. All participants signed an informed consent form. The interviews and focus-group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed identifying different themes. In this article, we focus on the themes related to the Basque language which were: (a) translanguaging and the development of the Basque language; (b) softening boundaries between languages; and (c) translanguaging and the prestige of Basque. The first theme refers to the general assessment of the intervention and the concern about the use of Basque at school. The second theme refers to the innovation of using the three languages in each of the language arts classes, where so far the designated languages had been used. The third theme refers to relative prestige of Basque as compared to the two other languages.

The extracts we present below come from both the interviews and the focus-group discussion.

Translanguaging and the development of the Basque language

In Extract 1, we can see that T1 values the pedagogical intervention as very positive. In general, the teachers suggest that students responded positively to the translanguaging intervention and that the pedagogical project was successful.

Extract 1 (interview)

T1: Nik ez dut ikusten arazorik, euskara maila ez da baxatu ... nik ez dut ikusi atzerapenik eta beno euskararen egin diren lanak eta ariketak eta ondo egon dira. Amaieran ia txosten osoa egin ahal izan dugu, askoz ere

erraztasun eta segurtasun gehiagoz. Eurek esaten dute hiztegia ikasteko balio diela, eta testuak ekoizteko ere bai. Nik uste dut ordena gehiagoz eta testuak ekoizteko. *[I do not think there is any problem, the level of Basque has not gone down ... I do not think there is a delay, the work and exercises they did in Basque are good. At the end, we could almost complete the whole module, in a much easier and confident way. They say that it helps them to learn vocabulary, and to write text as well. I think that they organise the text better.]*

It is interesting to see that T1 reports the benefits of the translanguaging pedagogical intervention on vocabulary and writing. It looks as if the reinforcement of the vocabulary and discourse skills by using all the languages in the students' repertoire has been positive for Basque.

The other two teachers also provided positive feedback even though they were not as specific about the possible effect on Basque as T1. In extract 2, T2 says that the idea of relating languages is fine, but T3 in extract 3 goes further and says that using more than one language is fine. T3 is the English language teacher, and as students are less fluent in English than in Basque or Spanish, it seems that she was using these languages in the English language arts class already, before the intervention.

Extract 2 (interview)

T2: ... proposatzen duen ideia hori hizkuntzak interrelazionatuta egotea eta ba interesgarria ere bai iruditu zait. *[The idea of relating languages to each other I found very interesting.]*

Extract 3 (interview)

T3: Nik beti ikusi dut ondo hizkuntza bat baina gehiago gelan erabiltzea. *[I always think it is good to use more than one language in the classroom.]*

The school coordinator also gives a positive explanation that the translanguaging pedagogical intervention can contribute to the development of metalinguistic awareness, and T1 agrees with her, as shown in Extract 4:

Extract 4 (focus group)

Coord: ... Eta gero niri hitz antolatzaileen ariketak iruditzen zaizkit hiru hizkuntzetan eukitzea, laguntza hori oso aberasgarria. *[I think that having exercises with words in the three languages is helpful and rich.]*

T1: sistematikoki lantzeak uste dut lagundu diela. *[To work in a systematic way helps.]*

Coord: loturak egiten. *[Making connections.]*

T1: Bai, era logikoan erabiltzen. *[And using them in a logical way.]*

Softening boundaries between languages

During the intervention, boundaries between the three languages were softened and translanguaging activities in Basque, Spanish, and English were used in the three language arts classes. In the following extract, teachers discussed the use of Spanish in the Basque language arts classes, and they show different views:

Extract 5 (focus group)

T2: Euskarako ikasgaian gaztelaniaz egin behar dutenean albistea niri gertatu zait gaztelaniaz hasten zarela horri buruz hitz egiten; eta orduan ba niretzako hori oso arrotza da eta ez zait asko gustatzen ze euskarako departamentuan beti ba euskaraz egiteko eta ... Eta orduan, horrekin pasatzen ginen batzuetan errazago gaztelarara. *[When they have to prepare a piece of news in Spanish for the Basque subject what happened was that I also started to speak Spanish. That is very strange for me and I don't like it because in the Basque department we speak Basque. With this we tended to switch to Spanish more easily.]*

T1: Nik ez dut ikusten arazo handirik L1en erdaraz ariketak sartzeko, ze egun horretan egiten dute gaztelaniaz eta gero pasatzen dira. Eta beno, ikusi dut L2an euskara gehiago egin dugula lehen baino. Agian galdu duguna saio batik bestetik irabazi egin dugu. *[I didn't have problems to include exercises in Spanish in the Basque class; they use Spanish and go on in Basque. I have seen that in the Spanish class they do more Basque than before. What we lose in one class we gain in the other.]*

T3: Nik ere berdin. Idazterakoan, libre sentitzen direnean, beti euskaraz. Hau da, ez zegoenean zehaztuta ingelesez egin behar zela, euskaraz egin dute. Eta haien artean ere euskaraz [I agree. When writing they feel free to use the language and they use Basque. When it was not said that it had to be English they used Basque and they used Basque among them as well.]

As we can see, T2 is not at ease when students use some Spanish in the Basque class, but according to T1, the amount of Spanish used in the Basque class was compensated by the use of Basque in the Spanish class. T3 thinks that students use Basque as the default language and she accepts the use of Basque in the English class. There does not seem to be a problem with using Basque in the Spanish class, but the main issue is the use of Spanish in the Basque class. T2 explains her position in extract 6.

Extract 6 (interview)

T2: ... eske gaztelanian ez dut jokutzen berdin. Gaztelaniari kentzen diot espazioa eta kontzientea naiz horretaz. Pentsatzen dut hizkuntza biak ez dutela maila bera. [I do not behave in the same way when it is Spanish. I am taking space away from Spanish in the Spanish class and I'm aware of that. I think that both languages are not at the same level.]

T2 highlights the asymmetry between Basque and Spanish and has no problem having less space for Spanish in the Spanish class but changing the space designed for Basque is seen as more problematic.

During the focus-group interview there was the idea of the need to reinforce Basque more than the other languages. When the researcher asked about the need to reinforce the other two languages the answers were negative.

Extract 7 (focus group)

R: Euskarari indar gehiago eman behar diogu behintzat irteera aldetik. Gaztelararen erabilera gehiago behar da? [Therefore, we have to reinforce Basque more from the beginning. Do we need to do the same with Spanish?]

T1: ez <no>

T2: ez <no>

R: eta ingelesarena? <And English?>

T1-T2-T3 and Coord: ez <no>

The teachers expressed an overall concern about the limited use of Basque by students outside the school—the spoken language in particular. They see the necessity to reinforce it at school, as noted by the coordinator in the next extract.

Extract 8 (focus group)

Coord: ... guk idatzizko komunikazioa bermatzen dugu baina ahozko komunikazioa nik uste euskaraz indartu beharko genukeela. Ni konturatu naiz elkarrizketa naturala zelan dauden erdaldunduta ze umeez ez dute eduki aukerarik espontaneoki aritzeko, jario hori ez dute euskaraz. [We work on written communication but I think that we should reinforce oral communication in Basque. I have realized that their natural communication is in Spanish because children have not had the opportunity to use Basque spontaneously, they do not have that fluency in Basque.]

Translanguaging and the prestige of Basque

The translanguaging pedagogical intervention also aimed at contributing to the maintenance and revitalization of Basque and a way to do that was through the development of language awareness

about the situation of Basque. In the following extracts we see how the translanguaging pedagogical intervention is regarded as positive to increase the prestige of the Basque language. T2 suggests that as Basque, Spanish and English were treated at the same level, the minority language was given more status during the intervention while it does not have that status in society.

Extract 9 (interview)

T2: Nik uste dut bai izan dela aukera euskarari emateko garrantzi gehiago. Adibidez, esketxak, telebistako programan. Ba hor pentsatu dute horretaz ... zu euskalduna bazara eta besteak ulertzen badu euskaraz, ba zuk jarraitu ahal duzu euskaraz ... Kanpoan balorazioa euskararena ez doa gorantz baina ingelesarena bai. Orduan, haiek hori xurgatzen dute. Horregatik, holako analisiek iruditu zait lagundu dutela. *[I think that it has been an opportunity to value Basque more. For example, in the sketches at TV programs. They think, if you are Basque and if the other one understands Basque, you can go on speaking Basque. The external value of Basque is not going up and it is the opposite with the value of English. They are aware of that situation. That's why I found that these activities helped.]*

T1 also states that language awareness activities contributed to have Basque at the same level as other languages.

Extract 10 (focus group)

T1: ba igual batzuei lagundu die hizkuntzak era sistematikoan eta antolatuan batera ikusteak. Aber, kategoria gehiago, prestigio gehiago duten bi hizkuntzekin. Ikasle batzuentzat euskara da eskola mailan bakarrik erabiltzen duten hizkuntza eta eurentzat prestigio gehiago daukate besteek. Eta orduan, ikustea horrela parekatuta, niretzat eman dio bere garrantzia. *[Perhaps it has been helpful for some students to see the languages together in a systematic and organised way. Languages with higher level, higher prestige ... Some students only use Basque at school and the other languages are more prestigious for them. Therefore, when seeing them at the same level, I think it has given importance to Basque.]*

Discussion

Multilingual approaches and translanguaging pedagogies based on the use of the whole linguistic repertoire can provide better opportunities to improve communicative abilities because they use the resources that multilingual speakers have in their linguistic repertoire (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Li Wei, 2015). It can be said that translanguaging pedagogies go along with the way multilingual speakers use their own resources in communication rather than swimming against the tide by separating languages. Multilingual education can have different combinations of languages and different aims. The concept of translanguaging was developed in Wales, in a context in which education is important in the maintenance and revitalization of Welsh, a minority language (Jones, this issue; Lewis et al., 2012).

The translanguaging pedagogical intervention carried out in one school in the BAC is related to “Welsh” translanguaging but it expands translanguaging to three languages and focuses on the development of metalinguistic and language awareness. Translanguaging pedagogies are used in a range of activities to develop vocabulary, reading comprehension, or writing (see also Arteagoitia & Howard, 2015; Cummins, 2007; Escamilla et al., 2013; Lyster et al., 2013).

It could be questioned if pedagogical translanguaging is valuable for all multilinguals with different language competences. Pedagogical translanguaging aims at providing students with strategies to perceive cross-linguistic similarities, and it promotes the use of previous linguistic and nonlinguistic knowledge across languages, even in the case of less advanced language learners. In all cases a suitable didactic intervention based on pedagogical translanguaging needs to be purposefully adapted to the context and to the students’ language profile.

Taking into account the effort of Basque education to maintain and revitalize the use of Basque, the intervention carried out in the Basque context took into consideration the situation of the Basque language and was carefully designed so as to be pedagogically planned and allowing for spaces to use the Basque language.

Teachers' feedback shows that there is a general concern about weakening Basque although there are individual differences among the teachers about the possible risks of translanguaging. Teachers consider that translanguaging pedagogies can be a rich experience for developing metalinguistic awareness, but at the same time they feel that Basque should be reinforced more than other languages. Working with three languages simultaneously may have contributed to breaking away from some beliefs about students' language practices, but the need for spaces to reinforce Basque is strongly felt by the teachers.

An interesting finding was the high value of language awareness activities about Basque and other languages for the prestige of the Basque language. Even though Basque is an official language and the main language in education students are aware of its minority status, the fact that Basque was given the same status as the other languages in the pedagogical intervention was seen as positive.

The study reported here has some limitations because the intervention was carried out in a single school, and our data are limited to teachers' feedback. In spite of these limitations, the teachers' and coordinator's feedback indicates that a pedagogical intervention based on translanguaging can be compatible with the maintenance and revitalization of Basque. However, an implementation in this context or in similar contexts, in which education plays a major role in the revitalization of a minority language, needs to meet some specific conditions:

- (1) The implementation of translanguaging pedagogies needs to be tailor-made for specific contexts taking into account the languages used in the wider social context of the school and the aims of the school regarding multilingual competences.
- (2) Translanguaging pedagogies can be compatible with the maintenance and revitalization of minority languages. However, these pedagogies have to be sustainable, not only by allowing spaces for the minority languages, but also by giving full support to the minority language when using translanguaging pedagogies so as to compensate for its relatively weaker sociolinguistic situation. Activities that promote language awareness are excellent scenarios for working with sociolinguistic concepts with students and for promoting the use of the minority language. The activity "linguistic landscape of your town" presented as an example above gave teachers the opportunity to work on the minority language through very concrete examples that were suitable for primary education children. Even though the activity was designed for the Spanish as a subject class, the minority language was promoted within a space that was usually allocated for only the majority language. Similarly, the minority language can be used to make activities accessible during the English-as-a-foreign-language subject class, in which the students' linguistic competence is significantly lower.
- (3) Monolingual ideologies are well established in most schools and therefore translanguaging pedagogies need to be introduced gradually and adapted to the school pedagogies and their learning outcomes should be evaluated.

These three general criteria are the result of the experience obtained during the design, implementation, and evaluation of trilingual pedagogical experience in which the boundaries between languages were softened. They intend to offer guidance for future educational projects and research that seek to break with pre-established monolingual ideologies and that at the same time face the challenge of revitalizing and promoting a minority language in a multilingual context.

Funding

This work was supported by the MINECO/FEDER [grant number EDU2015-63967-R] and the Basque Government [grant number DREAM IT-714-13; UFI 11/54].

ORCID

Oihana Leonet  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8801-5455>

Jasone Cenoz  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9000-7510>

Durk Gorter  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8379-558X>

References

- Arocena, E., Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2015). Teachers' beliefs in multilingual education in the Basque Country and in Friesland. *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*, 3, 169–193. doi:10.1075/jicb.3.2.01aro
- Arteagoitia, I., & Howard, E. R. (2015). The role of the native language in the literacy development of Latino students in the U.S. In J. Cenoz & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Multilingual education: Between language learning and translanguaging* (pp. 89–115). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Basque Government. (2016a). VI. Inkesta Soziolinguistikoa Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoa [6. The Sociolinguistic Survey of the Basque Autonomous Community]. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Government. Retrieved from http://www.euskara.euskadi.eus/contenidos/nota_prensa/vi_inkesta_sozioling_2016/eu_def/adjuntos/vi_inkesta_eu.pdf
- Basque Government. (2016b). *Eta hemendik aurrera zer?* [And from here onwards, what?] Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Government. Retrieved from http://www.euskara.euskadi.eus/contenidos/noticia/eta_hemendik/eu_def/adjuntos/Eta%20hemendik%20aurrera%20zer_2016-05-03.pdf
- Cenoz, J. (2008). Achievements and challenges in bilingual and multilingual education in the Basque Country. *Aila Review*, 21, 13–30.
- Cenoz, J. (2009). *Towards multilingual education*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2008). Applied linguistics and the use of minority languages in education. *Aila Review*, 21, 5–12.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2011). Focus on multilingualism: A study of trilingual writing. *Modern Language Journal*, 95, 356–369. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01206.x
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2014). Focus on multilingualism as an approach in educational contexts. In A. Blackledge & A. Creese (Eds.), *Heteroglossia as practice and pedagogy* (pp. 239–254). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Multilingual education: Between language learning and translanguaging*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017). Minority languages and sustainable translanguaging: Threat or opportunity? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1–12. doi:10.1080/01434632.2017.1284855
- Council of Europe. (1992). *European charter for regional or minority languages*. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe. Retrieved from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/default_en.asp
- Cummins, J. (2007). Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 221–240.
- Cummins, J. (2008). Teaching for transfer: Challenging the two solitudes assumption in bilingual education. In J. Cummins & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (2nd ed.) Volume 5. *Bilingual education* (pp. 65–75). New York, NY: Springer.
- Elosua, P. (2016). Minority language revitalization and educational assessment: Do language-related factors impact performance? *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20, 212–228. doi:10.1111/josl.12176
- Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., Butvilofsky, S., Sparrow, W., Soltero-González, L., Ruiz-Figueroa, O., & Escamilla, M. (2013). *Biliteracy from the start: Literacy squared in action*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon.
- Extra, G., & Gorter, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Multilingual Europe: Facts and policies*. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.
- Fishman, J. (1967). Bilingualism with and without diglossia; Diglossia with and without bilingualism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 23, 29–38. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.1967.tb00573.x
- García, O., & Kano, N. (2014). Translanguaging as process and pedagogy: Developing the English writing of Japanese students in the U.S. In J. Conteh & G. Meier (Eds.), *The multilingual turn in languages education: Opportunities and challenges* (pp. 258–277). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- García, O., & Li Wei. (2015). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- García, R. J. (2015). Re: Sistema “Amara Berri” [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://blogs.elpais.com/escuelas-en-red/2015/09/sistema-amara-berri.html>
- Gorter, D., Zenotz, V., Etxague, X., & Cenoz, J. (2014). Multilingualism and European minority languages: The case of Basque. In D. Gorter, V. Zenotz, & J. Cenoz (Eds.), *Minority languages and multilingual education: Bridging the local and the global* (pp. 278–301). Berlin, Germany: Springer.
- Ikuspegi-Observatorio Vasco de inmigración. (2016). *Panorámica de la Inmigración*, 62. Leioa: Ikuspegi. Retrieved from <http://www.ikuspegi.eus/documentos/panoramicas/es/panoramica62casOK.pdf>

- Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational Research and Evaluation: An International Journal on Theory and Practice*, 18, 641–654. doi:[10.1080/13803611.2012.718488](https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2012.718488)
- Lyster, R., Quiroga, J., & Ballinger, S. (2013). The effects of biliteracy instruction on morphological awareness. *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*, 1, 169–197. doi:[10.1075/jicb.1.2.02lys](https://doi.org/10.1075/jicb.1.2.02lys)
- Ortega, A., Urla, J., Amorrortu, E., Goirigolzarri, J., & Uranga, B. (2015). Basque linguistic identity among new speakers of Basque. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231, 85–105. doi:[10.1515/ijsl-2014-0033](https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0033)
- Zalbide, M. (1998). Normalización lingüística y escolaridad: Un informe desde la sala de máquinas. *Revista Internacional De Estudios Vascos*, 43(2), 355–424.
- Zalbide, M., & Cenoz, J. (2008). Bilingual education in the Basque autonomous community: Achievements and challenges. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 21, 5–20. doi:[10.2167/lcc339.0](https://doi.org/10.2167/lcc339.0)