

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Heteroglossic management in Instagram: Emerging ideological dynamics among Basque youth

Agurtzane Elordui 

Basque Language and Communication,
Faculty of Social Sciences and
Communication, University of the Basque
Country, Campus of Leioa, Leioa, Bizkaia,
Spain

Correspondence

Agurtzane Elordui, Basque Language and
Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences
and Communication, University of the
Basque Country, Campus of Leioa, Bizkaia
48940, Spain.

Email: agurtzane.elordui@ehu.eus

Funding information

University of the Basque Country and
Department of Culture and Language
Policy of the Basque Government, Grants
for University-Business-Society Research
Projects 2023, US 23/15

Abstract

In this paper, I explore the monolingual and polylingual stylistic behaviors on Instagram among Basque native young people within the project Gaztesare. By means of an in-depth qualitative study, I try to explain in which sense such monolingual and polylingual behaviors or styles are socially significant signs of difference (Gal & Irvine, 2019). The study reveals that those styles are organized in an axis of differentiation (Gal, 2016; Gal & Irvine, 2019) that takes the contrasting monolingual and polylingual styles as iconic representations linked to different personhoods or person-types. The participants of the study consider them tools to shape and create contrasting voices that interilluminate each other in different contexts on Instagram. The study also informs about new ideological dynamics among these young people. In fact, the most innovative results in this study are about the enregisterment of the polylingual style I study. It is becoming an exclusive in-group talk, and it is acquiring stereotypic indexical values related to informality. It is, moreover, being naturalized as a “social network speech” with which young people recreate multiple multicultural and playful voices.

KEYWORDS

Basque, ideology, social networks, voices, youth
Lan honetan, Instagrameko jokabide estilistiko elebarkar eta eleaniztunak aztertzen ditut euskal gazteen artean, Gaztesare proiektuaren barruan. Azterketa

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kualitatibo sakon baten bidez, saiatzen naiz azaltzen zein zentzutan diren sozialki esanguratsuak jokatzen edo estilo elebakar eta eleaniztun horiek (Gal & Irvine, 2019). Ikerketak agerian uzten du estilo horiek *bereizketa-ardatz* batean antolatuta daudela (Gal, 2016; Gal & Irvine, 2019) eta kontrajarriak diren pertsona-mota desberdinei lotutako irudikapen ikonikotzat har daitezkeela. Instagrameko testuinguru ezberdinetan elkar argitzen duten ahots kontrajarriak sortzeko tresnak dira, azterlaneko parte-hartzaileen arabera. Ikerketak gazte hauen dinamika ideologiko berrien berri ere ematen du. Izan ere, ikerketa honen emaitzarik berritzaileenak aztertzen dudana estilo eleaniztunari buruzkoak dira. Euskalkien, gaztelaniaren eta ingelesaren baliabideak biltzen dituen estilo eleaniztun hori, sare sozialeko hizkera gisa naturalizatzen ari da, gazteek ahots multikultural eta ludiko ugari birsortzekoa. Taldeko “berezko hizkeratzat” hartzen dute partehartzaileek, eta informaltasunarekin lotutako balio indexikal estereotipatuak bereganatzen ari da.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I explore the monolingual and polylingual stylistic behaviors on Instagram among Basque native young people within the project Gaztesare.¹ In this research project, we seek to discern what set of linguistic features are meaningful within the linguistic practices employed by that young people in their social networks, and the way these young people understand that sociolinguistic behavior to be the enactment of a collective order (Silverstein, 1996 [1987]). The focus on social networks has been clearly motivated by the increasing use of social media by young Basque people in their contemporary communication. These networks have become for them a key showcase for building one's identity in a mediated society. Yet, moreover, we find social networks to be crucial sites with which to look forward to new ideological dynamics among these young people. Such digital networks create situations in which Basque speakers' repertoires are indexically reconfigured in scaling to a translocal context. Having a voice for these young people has largely come to mean the ability to manage local and translocal semiotic resources in this new digital context (Androutsopoulos, 2011). In fact, the semiotic resources a person takes into account, together with the evaluating authority or “centers” (Blommaert, 2021) he or she behaves with reference to, may vary significantly from one of those scale levels to the other, as well as with regard to the perceived appropriateness criteria.

In Gaztesare, we have focused our studies on Instagram, a photograph and video sharing social platform that has been the most popular social network among Basque youth (after WhatsApp) since 2018, when the data for this research were collected, on the basis of information from the Gazteen Euskal Behatokia (Youth's Basque Observatory) of the Basque Government (Behatokia, 2019, 2022). Instagram integrates tools such as *photo-posts*, *reels*, *stories*, and *direct messages*, among others. However, we focused on the written text in timeline's photo-posts and comments and also on direct messages in the chat. Photo-posts on Instagram timeline include short written texts as photo-captions and also the option for

audience participation through likes and dislikes as well as via the comment function, which allows viewers to post their opinions to the photograph uploaded or respond to the posted texts. Additionally, at a lower level, Instagram gives users the option of chatting with friends in direct messages. This diversity of applications allows us to observe interactions of a diverse contextual nature within a single application and makes Instagram particularly interesting from the point of view of a normativity study (Elordui & Aiestaran, 2022). In timelines, photo-posts are sent to more abstract and translocal audiences. In these more public spaces, or *frontstages* in Goffman's terms (Goffman, 1956), Instagram brings together users from different geographical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds in a single network. Interactions in direct message chats, however, share more features with colloquial face-to-face interactions. They involve a private chat between people who follow each other and usually include more targeted audiences that are closer to the peer group. They interact in the *backstage* "where the camera is not focused at the moment or all places out of range of 'live' micro-phones" (Goffman, 1956, 72).

This difference was constantly highlighted by the participants in our study when they came to explain their linguistic practice on Instagram, and it was also confirmed in their stylistic behavior. From an initial approach involving the stylistic analysis of the Gaztesare participants' production, I could observe that the same young people in the corpus display very different stylistic behaviors in timeline posts, compared to those in Instagram directs interactions and comments. In general, the language use of native speakers in the Gaztesare corpus in timelines includes the use of Basque, for the most part, and also Spanish and English; yet this same use prioritizes a monolingual style that avoids the mixing of languages. As for Basque, the standard form or Euskara Batua (Unified Basque) is the most used variety in timelines; in their chat interactions, however, this young people employ a polylingual stylistic behavior² frequently and consistently: in other words, they constantly switch from using the resources of Basque dialects or *euskalkiak*³ to those of Spanish and English in those more intimate and informal directs.

My study begins with the abovementioned observation and tries to explain what the ideological bases of such stylistic contrasting behavior are. With that goal in mind, it focuses more deeply on a stylistic analysis of the production in timelines and chats of three students in Gaztesare who use this stylistic pattern, and it considers their production on Instagram from 2013 to 2018. The ideological analysis explores in what sense these monolingual and polylingual styles that I have observed in their Instagram practices are socially significant signs of difference for these students; that is, if they have become conventionalized, or enregistered, as social indexes for them (Gal & Irvine, 2019). And, if that is the case, what social person-types these young people try to evoke by adopting such styles in their interactions on Instagram (Gal, 2016). Yet the study addresses these research questions in a minority language context, that of Basque, in which intense revitalization work is being carried out, and also in the translocal cultural context of social networks. I take these two sociocultural frameworks into account. This double framing, I believe, has helped me to better understand the ideological trends the study shows are in force among Basque youth. Similar circumstances and ideological tendencies can be found in other minority language contexts. I hope this work can shed some light on the way young speakers of minority languages are managing the often antagonistic ideological flows they have to face in their daily interactions in the digital world, and also on the new ideological and stylistic trends among minority speakers that are derived from that management.

To link the aforementioned stylistic choices of these Basque students to the linguistic ideologies and stances they adopt in Instagram interaction, I consider Bakhtin's *voice* a useful methodological tool. Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981 [1935], 1984 [1963]) speaks about voices in relation to "the ways in which utterances index typifiable speaking personae" (Agha, 2005, 39). Bakhtin's notion of voice includes the speech of particular social groups and professions but

also unique images of personhood. Gal (2016, 118) notices, meanwhile, that the voice concept helps us to think about the invocation of models in interaction: it involves the creation of semiotic links between language forms and social scenes or activities and more stable figures that can be recognized across interactions (Agha, 2003, 2007; Länteenmäki, 2010). Within interaction, styles must be recognizable to the interlocutor as indexical of an identifiable persona. As Hill (1995) points out, voices draw from semiotic resources and ideologies that are publicly available.

In this study, I examine those ideologies that are publicly available to Basque youth. With this goal in mind, I analyze how those styles in the study are recognized by the participants as indexical of an identifiable persona and those images of personhood. In order to study these ideological aspects, I included in the study qualitative tools such as interviews, focus groups, and focus seminars. Based on the idea that the participants in the study knew about the models of language or personae invoked, I asked them about specific examples in the corpus focusing on the indexical associations of such monolingual standards and polylingual dialectal styles. Moreover, I requested them to interpret their voicing actions based on specific examples in the corpus by taking into account the Instagram interaction context.

The study provides what I consider to be significant results. It reveals that those styles analyzed are organized on an *axis of differentiation* (Gal, 2016; Gal & Irvine, 2019). This axis takes the contrasting monolingual standard style—Batua style in the analysis (see “[Axes of differentiation and contrasting voices](#)” section)—and the polylingual dialectal style—Euskalki style in the analysis—as iconic representations linked to different personhoods or person-types. The Batua style indexes a professional, formal, and wide-ranging persona and people use it to evoke a more translocal and public voice on Instagram; the Euskalki style, meanwhile, indexes an informal, street, and “youth” persona and it is appropriate to build an informal playful street voice. These qualities are seen as co-constitutive and participants recognize both of them as necessary because they contrastively define each other.

Urla (2012) describes a similar axis of differentiation in her study of Usurbil youth, in which she differentiates the Batua and Euskalki registers. The results are also in line with other studies on the topic among new speakers of Basque (see, for example, Lantto, 2015; Ortega et al., 2015; Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2021; Urla et al., 2018). However, in this study, I pay attention to native speakers of the language who introduce different practices and indexical orders (Gondra, 2024). I also bring these research questions into the context of social networks, which include a translocal mobility—and the scale-jumping (Blommaert, 2010, 2021) derived from it—that affects the indexicality of Batua and also of local dialects, as I will try to show. Taking translocal mobility and scale view (Blommaert, 2010, 2021; Gal, 2016; Gal & Irvine, 2019; Irvine, 2016) into account also helps us to understand the most innovative ideological trends found in the corpus, that is, those related to the enregisterment of the polylingual style I study. This “mixed talk” is becoming an exclusive in-group talk that is acquiring stereotypic indexical values related to informality. It is, moreover, being naturalized as a “social network speech” with which young people recreate multiple multicultural and playful voices.

In order to understand such enregisterment processes and their ideological context, I will first provide an overview of the ideological perspectives on monolingualism and polylingualism the young students in the survey received from authority centers such as Euskaltzaindia (Basque Language Academy), school, and the media. I will then extend the perspective to deal with the current digital sociocultural context that young Basque people inhabit, and I will introduce some relevant features of the normativity of social networks. I will then briefly introduce the participants, as well as the methods used for collecting and selecting the Gaztesare corpus and the material taken into account for this paper. Thereafter, I will explain the most significant results stemming from my analysis. In considering the results, I explore the linguistic ideologies linked to these styles by considering the voices invoked by these

Basque speakers across timelines and chats. Then, I will discuss the findings by comparing them with the results of other studies, focusing more on that research addressing young Basque people's language ideologies and social networks' normativity. Lastly, I will present my final considerations in which I will focus on the emerging ideological trends I can draw from the study. On one hand, the difference between the dialect and Batua as "authentic versus elaborate" at a local scale seems to be blurrier in the translocal digital context in which Batua evokes a "credible" voice. On the other hand, "mixing" of languages is part of an ideology of "realism" in Internet communication, and it is also acquiring stereotypic indexical values related to informality and playfulness.

MONOLINGUALISM AND POLYLINGUALISM IN A CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE REVIVAL: FROM THE 1990S TO THE PRESENT

In the imaginary associated with authenticity in Basque emancipatory discourses in the 1990s, when the three students in this study began their education, authenticity in Basque was associated with purity. The "authentic Basque speaker" was seen as an individual immersed in vernacular speech, but also someone who was far removed from any language contact (Androutsopoulos, 2015b, 74). This imaginary, linked to the sociolinguistic ideology that Bucholtz (2003) calls *linguistic isolationism*, drew a basic ideological axis based on the creation of the standard of Basque or Batua in the 1970s and 1980s, and it was also predominant in Basque-language policies in the 1990s and early 2000s.

In the 1990s, hybridization became one of the most deplored phenomena on the part of the Basque academy, as reflected in its new regulations concerning the language in which delimiting the grammatical boundaries of Basque became a central issue (Euskaltzaindia, 1994). Also, polylingualism—in terms such as codeswitching or language mixing with Spanish and French during that time—was often penalized and deemed synonymous with being inauthentic; while monolingualism was promoted as being associated with the cultural legitimacy of the Basque language itself. The standard of Basque, or Batua, was thought of as cultivated speech associated with cultural legitimacy and a monolingual model was proposed and, in turn, deeply implemented in the academic system. Similar principles guided the status and corpus language policy of the Basque media since their beginning in the 1980s and through the 1990s and early 2000s. Speakers in the Basque state media group, EITB, were conceptualized as the ideal, as examples to follow who promoted a pure monolithic model of Basque. For the head of the Basque-language section of ETB (the television station) at that time, Manu Arrasate, there was a special risk of hybridity when it came to Basque in media language use, as noted in the first style book for ETB journalists: That's how things are, journalists speak in a non-Basque way, all too easily turning to [non-Basque] expressions and structures, discarding the originality and richness of Basque (Arrasate, 1992, 24 my translation).

Basque dialects or *euskalkiak* have remained outside the school and media setting for decades (with a few exceptions) and have been free from any scrutiny on the part of linguistics policy, and that may have contributed to improving an image of them being non-normative. Even into the 2000s, when Basque schools started considering the option of including the dialects in the academic system, institutional discourses considered them only as tools for "authentication" in informal communication. Those Euskalki registers, that Urla (Urla, 2012) tells us about, have been linked to their "naturalness," or *jatortasuna* (genuineness) in Basque terms, and their value has been located in their relationship to the local community and to being "from somewhere" (Woolard, 2016, 22). This policy has had significant effects on Basque sociolinguistics that possibly had not been foreseen in linguistic

policy at that time: it has affected, for instance, the enregisterment of the Basque dialects, turning them into a space of “innate authenticity” in which everything is free; a popular perception is that there are no rules when it comes to using a Basque dialect.

That approach to authenticity as isolationism that I have explained was in force in the 1990s and 2000s—and which is largely in force in many academic and media institutions—inevitably conflicts nowadays with the nature of most Basque speakers; and especially with that of young minority language speakers' reality. For instance, all the participants in our research are far removed from that view of the isolated authentic minority speaker I mentioned before: they are native and habitual users of Basque in their familiar and peer relations, but they are also active producers in Basque as well as in Spanish and English in global networks, and daily consumers of multilingual popular culture in the form of series, movies, fashion, and music. In the case of the three participants in my study, they are also habitual consumers of Basque media for young people. This media provides them today with a very different model of language compared to that of the 1990s and 2000s. In fact, as I have argued elsewhere (Elordui, 2018, 2020), since the introduction of Basque on the Internet, heteroglossic policies have been more and more predominant in Basque media, particularly in those media products that target young people. In public media for young people such as Gaztea radio (Elordui, 2018), for instance, and also in “bottom-up” young cultural activity, Batua constitutes nowadays just part of a diversified and fragmented linguistic ecology, and Basque dialects are key tools in young cultural production. In addition, polylingualism, as noted, understood as the mixing and sampling of languages, is a significant tool in Basque youth creativity. It is common in current Basque hip-hop and pop culture in which many authors follow the aesthetic and cultural conventions of the global market.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SUPERDIVERSITY

As Varis and Wang (2011, 71) point out, “online space is a superdiverse space par excellence.” In fact, when analyzing networked multilingualism, some sociolinguistic approaches to digital practices propose the umbrella term *superdiversity* (Androutsopoulos, 2015b; Androutsopoulos & Juffermans, 2014; Leppänen et al., 2015), borrowed from sociolinguistic works on urban multilingualism and multicultural trends. In urban studies, superdiversity is a summary term for the increasingly complex interplay of actors that shapes patterns of immigration to metropolitan Britain and London in particular (Vertovec, 2007). The term adapts perfectly to the digital world and, even more, to that of social networks. In fact, Leppänen et al. (2015) compare the relationship structures of social networks and the complex sociolinguistic structures in cities like London, where people from very diverse backgrounds converge. All these studies suggest that users of language in social networks are fed from an inventory of multilingual resources and, what is more, as producers, they make intense use of that multilingual repertoire. In studies on networked media, *superdiversity* is reconceptualized as diversification of local and global semiotic resources closely linked to media technical processes such as mash-up and remix through which many digital artifacts are created in a process of recontextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, 76).

Research on social networks has offered ample evidence to show that social networks are one of the richer sites of code switching in the digital environment (Androutsopoulos, 2013, 2015a; Dovchin, 2015; Dovchin et al., 2018; Leppänen et al., 2015, among others). Focusing on this phenomenon—which differs from multilingualism, as Androutsopoulos (2015a, 187) points out—Androutsopoulos explains that code switching meets a range of discourse functions in social networks such as Facebook, and demonstrates the contextually motivated character of code switching online as a recourse for management of social relations and construct bilingual identities, for instance, as in the case of people in

a diaspora (Androutsopoulos, 2015a). However, Androutsopoulos (2015a) points out the close link between language mixing and informality. He finds these mixing practices in cases of wall dialogues among “best friends” on Facebook and suggests that language mixing might be decontextualized as an index of intimacy in network language practices (Androutsopoulos, 2015a, 201). This same intimacy related to polylingual practices is highlighted in the studies carried out by Dovchin among university students in Mongolia. Moreover, Dovchin (Dovchin, 2015) also explains how online users in Mongolia claim polylingual practice—or translingual practice in Dovchin's terms—to be the “authentic speech ... through the very specific cultural ideology of ‘keepin’ it real” (Dovchin, 2015, 448). But that ideology is both inclusive and exclusive, according to Dovchin (2015): “public and institutional discourse, which reaches larger audiences needs to be linguistically pure, whereas FB (Facebook) language practice with their own peer's circle can be expressed through translingual practices (Dovchin, 2015, 453). Leppänen et al. (2015), focusing in their studies among Denmark and Finland's youth, also note the increasingly close link between diversity and heterogeneity on one hand, and informality on the other, and consider it to be crucial characteristics of informal and interest-driven social media activities and interactions” (Leppänen et al., 2015, 4).

DATA AND METHODS

The data examples used in this paper derive from a larger stylistic and ethnographic research project called Gaztesare. Gaztesare seeks to understand the ideological underpinnings of Basque young people's language practices in social networks. To this end, qualitative methods have been included in Gaztesare's methodological guidelines; in particular, interviews and discussion groups. The questionnaires prepared for the interviews and the discussion groups were aimed at getting the students to describe their digital selves in their own words and to speak freely about their stylistic choices. Yet many of the questions in these discussion groups and interviews were based on students' linguistic choices from examples in their own production on Instagram and they were asked about specific stylistic options in these examples.

The core data of the analysis in this paper are based on the written production and metalinguistic reflections of three students in the project. I have focused on a smaller number of participants in order to explore in more depth their stylistic positioning and their own perception of their stylistic choices. I have chosen three students from Gaztesare project that met the requirement of using Basque in their peer groups and in their interactions on social networks, so that they could inform us about their management of the styles studied in the research. They were chosen also because they were the only native speakers of the corpus that completed all the phases of our qualitative methodology and provided us with their whole production in timelines and chats from 2013 to 2019.

The three participants (Maite, Miren, and Ainara⁴) come from different parts of the Basque Country: Maite lived in a town in Biscay in the time we collected the corpus and spoke a variety of the Western dialect at home and with her friends. Miren and Ainara lived in Bilbao at that time but they were from Navarre and Guipuscoa respectively and spoke a variety of Navarrese and Central variety in their hometowns. They all studied in Batua at school in a context of revitalization of Basque, in which Batua was the language of instruction. The three of them were students of communication in The University of the Basque Country at the time we collected the corpus.

In the stylistic analysis, I have analyzed their production in timelines and chats from 2013 to 2019. I have first examined the distribution of the sociolinguistic variables as components of styles (Eckert, 2019). The main goals of this stylistic analysis have been to find clusters of

co-occurring features that have social significance for the speakers and to explore whether they indexically associate them with specific cultural models or registers to be used on Instagram. Yet the guiding tenet of this line of research on language ideologies was that both linguistic patterns and social relations could be explained through the examination of speakers' own understandings of their communicative activities (Gal, 2023, 2). For this latter analysis, the study includes materials drawn from a qualitative study. The three students selected for this work agreed to take part in interviews and discussion groups that were mainly based on examples of their own production on Instagram. I thus took into account their interviews and the discussion group in which the three participated. In addition, I complemented this core analysis with another qualitative study, this time with another six students in the Faculty of Communication during ten 1-h seminars in 2021. In those seminars, we discussed selected excerpts of the Gaztesare corpus and the six students helped me to interpret the stylistic selections therein. Their explanations and statements are considered part of the data to analyze in the study.

I have observed in this qualitative work of interviews, focus groups, and seminars how such styles are accentuated and conceptualized by the young people in the study. I have focused on overt mentions of social categories related to them, but I have also considered the implications and presuppositions regarding each individual student's own identity position when using different styles. I have observed how these young people compared contexts and people when using these styles, as well as how they make relative judgments, invoke contracts, and express points of view (Gal & Irvine, 2019).

AXES OF DIFFERENTIATION AND CONTRASTING VOICES

In the interviews and focus groups, students talk about “batua” and “euskalkia” when they refer to the different styles in the corpus. But in their stylistic practices I have observed co-occurrence of several features like components of styles that I will term *Batua style* and *Euskalkia style* (see Table 1): the Batua style includes standard Batua's morphological, syntactic, and lexical options as well as following standard Batua's orthographic norms, but also—and this seems to be relevant—more monolingual behavior. On the other extreme, what the students refer to as “euskalkia” includes the use of morphological, syntactic, lexical resources of some local dialect of Basque, which in the corpus are Central, Navarrese, and Western dialects' resources. The Euskalkia style also incorporates the common practice of codeswitching to Spanish and often to English. It is a common feature that all students consider to be part of their dialect: “I often do that in my euskalkia,” Miren notes when talking about codeswitching. This Euskalkia style does not follow the orthographic conventions proposed for the Basque standards, nor those of Batua or the dialects. Instead, it includes contractions with auxiliary verbs and dropping and adding of letters that imitate phonetic features of the dialects. “Writing like we talk” is, according to the informants, the orthographic rule of this dialectal style.

These styles do not simply coexist; they stand in a “co-constitutive, mutually defining relation” (Gal, 2016, 120). The three informants in our study are aware of these cultural

TABLE 1 *Batua/Euskalkia* styles: axes of differentiation.

<i>Batua style</i>	<i>Euskalkia style</i>
Batua's grammar and lexicon	Dialects' grammar and lexicon
Non-codeswitching	Codeswitching
Standard spelling	Non-standard spelling

stereotypes and the social domains associated with these contrasting registers or styles. The students explained and justified these opposing poles in implicit and explicit juxtapositions when they were commenting on the examples in the qualitative study, as we will see in a few examples in the next sections.

Batua style: Indexing a translocal cultivated voice

I ask Miren about her use of that Batua style in the photo-post in [Figure 1](#) (*Errepikatzen zaizkit buruan hitz guztiak, izan dena eta litekeena* “I repeat every word in my mind, what it has been and what it may have been”), in which Miren shows a clear monolingual behavior and she uses the syntax, morphology, and lexicon proposed for Batua and also, she follows the normative spelling of the standard.

Miren describes that style that she terms “batua” as a “formal speech.” According to her, it is in line with an image of herself as a “formal” person she feels by using it. Miren links it to the fact that anyone can observe that photo-post in a more public context in timelines and that it is a permanent image that must be taken care of.

- (1) ... *berrietan (Timeline) bai egiten dut batua ze iruditzen zait gauza bat formalagoa, beti egon behar dena* (... , on publications (Timeline) I do use the standard because I think it's a more formal thing, something that is always going to be there) (Miren)

Maite explains that she is quite a different person according to which style she uses. When I ask her about a photo-post in which she wrote *Munduak ahazten banau, lur honek askatzen nau* (“If the world forgets me, this terrain frees me”) following the grammar, lexical and orthographic norms of Batua, Maite describes a self that goes far beyond language, and talks about demeanor, character, and attitude toward others. She points to a public image of herself and, from her words, one can see that Batua style helps to iconize a serious, important, and intense person for her:

- (2) *Nik esango neuke bai nazela apur bat diferentea. Euskara batua erabiltzen dodanean nik ikusten dot Maite serioago bat, igual jendaurrean garrantzi handiagoa hartu leiken Maite bat, indar handiagoa espresatzen dauelako...* (I would say yes, I am a little different. When I use Euskara Batua, I see a more serious Maite, a Maite who can become more important in front of people, because she expresses herself with greater intensity) (Maite)

When I ask the informants about using code switching in those timeline's posts, the three students hold that mixed language is not appropriate to gain respect and credibility there; in their words, that “purer” Basque is the style to use in order to appear knowledgeable and competent. But above all, they relate that more monolingual stylistic option with an elaborate register that they relate to a media professional's voice. They talk to me about themselves as future journalists and how an elaborate Batua can be used to navigate social hierarchies, especially in professional and educational settings. It seems clear that Batua is the variety of upward mobility for them and they relate it to the public genre that is a photo-post on a public timeline.

The next example of Ainara also demonstrates the relationship between monolingualism and the participants' commitment to maintaining the language. Ainara explains that the next message ([Excerpt 1](#)) was aimed at a broader group of friends from an association in the promotion of Basque in her hometown. She had been asked to make an effort to use and promote Basque on Instagram and to nominate another friend for this promotion. The style of the message is basically that of the Central dialect of Basque in verb auxiliary (*deten* “I have”) and lexicon (*bezela* “as/like”), including contractions with auxiliary verbs (such as *in-goet* and *hartukoet* instead of *egingo det* “I will do it” and *hartuko det* “I will take”), dropping of



FIGURE 1 Miren's photo-post in Instagram.

letters (*hoixe* instead of *horixe* “that very”) and adding letters (*txikiyei* instead of *txikiei* “to our little ones”) trying to imitate the pronunciation of the Central dialect from Guipuscoa. But at no time does it include switching to other language recourses, a feature that is very common in Ainara's chat production in interaction with her friends.

I used this example with Ainara and I asked her if she could use expressions switching to Spanish or English in that context. Her response is forceful: the image of herself that she wants to give in that photo-post is not in line with mixing language. She describes herself, talking about the message producer, as someone who cares about the preservation of the

Instagram photo-post

Translation

Euskararen alde konpromezu bat eskatu diate ta	I've been asked to commit myself to the Basque
hoixe ingoet: alde batetik txikitatik ikasitako	language, and that's what I'll do: on the one
hizkuntza da ta euskaldun naizen bezela hizkuntza	hand, it's a language I've been studying since I
hau erabikikoet. Bestetik, gure txikiyei erakusteko	was a child, and as I'm Basque, I'll use this
ere konpromezua hartukoet beaiek nik esan deten	language. On the other, I'll also make a
berdina esan ahal izateko.@XXXXXXXX-ek	commitment to teach it to our little ones. @
nominatu dit nei	XXXXX nominated me

EXCERPT 1 Ainara's interaction in a photo-post.

language. She talks to me about the importance of that more “elaborate way” to be able to evoke the figure of an activist she feels there. And her words reveal an awareness of the power inequality between Basque and other “universal” languages such as Spanish and English as well as a moral responsibility to use Basque in a careful way in a public context such as timelines: “if we don't do it, no one will” she said.

In short, monolingualism is a relevant feature of that style. I would say that as important as the election the standard/dialectal choosing. And, in this case, it seems closely linked to the demand for maintaining an ethnic group and culture, as well as being an important feature of an activist voice I can observe in the three participants in the study. Their explanations, when discussing those more monolingual or “purer” options, often echoes voices of maintenance and revitalization related to what they consider more “careful” Basque language.

Furthermore, in that *frontstage* (Goffman, 1956) of timelines, the three participants consider that a more monolingual style can also help them to evoke a translocal voice: to address the whole Basque community “to all those who know Basque” or “to all Basque speakers.” They also add that mixing Basque with Spanish in such a context would prevent the people of Iparralde (the northern or French part of the Basque Country) from being able to understand the messages. They think that, via monolingual Batua use, they can create a voice that allowed them to be heard in the digital space in Basque and to improve the mobility of Basque to scale levels beyond the local. We can observe the stylistic creation of that translocal voice also sometimes in the direct messages. As can be seen in this example of Maite that shows how she addresses in a direct a group of friends from Gasteiz, in another province of the Basque Country. Maite is chatting with friends of friends. The style incorporates morphosyntactic characteristics of Western dialect in verb auxiliary (such as *naz* “I am” and *dogu* “we have”) and lexicon (*goraintziak* “regards,” *emoteagaz* “with give”). But she opts for a style that is basically monolingual in Basque, without switches to Spanish and English, as is common in her chats' interactions (Excerpt 2).

Maite explains in the interview that this stylistic choice is a way to address an out-group of people from another part of the Basque Country and she can see that, by using a more monolingual style, she can create a “more general” voice that any Basque speaker can understand. She also points out that, in this case, that style is, to some extent, due to the fact that she is introducing herself to a new circle of friends and that she tries to evoke a more careful image of herself.

The Euskalki style: Indexing street and playful voices

Drawing on the local dialect they used in their peer group and family is perceived by the three participants as the only “credible” way to communicate in friendly and informal chats on social networks. The euskalkia is explained in the interviews and focus groups as an icon of authenticity, as the essence of themselves, as Maite’s words demonstrate: *Eta bizkaieraz egiten dodanean ez dot ikusten irudi hori horren serioa danik, baizik eta hurbilagoa da pertsona batena. Eta horixe da benetako Maite* (“And when I speak in Biscayan, I don’t think this image is that serious, but rather [that] of a person who is closer to others. And that’s the real Maite”).



















Also, the use of codeswitching when talking in the dialect is considered as part of the “essence” of a young peer group, as an in-group talk. When Ainara explains to me about the use of some expressions in Spanish and English in one of her examples in the corpus, she refers to her peer group as naturally choosing language resources that are present in their environment and talks to me about a young person that talks in that way, as those of her crew: *Nire kuadrillan, adibidez, denek dakite euskara, gaztelera eta inglesa. Hizkuntza horiek nahas ditzakegu. Igual da. Ulertzen dizute* (“In my crew, for example, everyone knows Basque, Spanish, and English. We can mix these languages. It doesn’t matter. They understand you”).

Spanish resources are very common in these polylingual practices, as Maite explains in next statement. Maite refers to this polylingual use as something that is perfectly “natural” in regard to language use among young peers:

- (3) *Gure barik, baina... badaude berba batzuk zeinak deukoguzen super sartute gaztelerez. (...) Esaldi batzuk berez be bai, adibidez 'zaoz mazo guapa!'. Zegatik imintzen duzu 'mazo'? Eztakit! Sin más, sartute dao kolokialismo horretan, berba egiteko moduen....* (Unintentionally, some Spanish and English words are so embedded in our way of speaking. Some expressions, too, for example “zaoz mazo guapa!” (You come very pretty!!). Why do you say ‘mazo’? I don’t know. No special reason. They are involved in that colloquialism, in our way of speaking) (Maite)

Those recourses are seen by the participants as an essential part of the colloquialism of an informal type of person. For instance, they explain that they feel that they sound friendlier by using that “mixed talk” because it is exactly what they would do in everyday interactions. When I discussed the next example in [Figure 2](#) with Ainara, that includes polylingual structures including Spanish recourses such as *waapaas* and *sesiss y de too!!* (You are pretty and sexy and everything) or *de cabeza* (“headfirst”), her explanations tell me that, by using such a polylingual style, she believes that they evoke as an “ingroup code,” that is, solidarity and intimacy as well as group membership with her nearest and dearest. According to her words: the “real voice of the street.”

But within such a polylingual style, students also draw on globally circulating semiotic elements. English resources, for example, are constant in these polylingual or codeswitching practices, and they are perceived by all the participants as part of their quotidian experiences. Maite states that her introduction of English words is “natural” because she is linguistically confident using the language. Ainara, however, admits to not knowing enough English in order to speak it well, but she explains her switches to the language as related to everyday interactions on social networks: *Denok erabiltzen deguz inglesezko esaldi horiek. Sare sozialetako hitz egiteko modua da* (“We all use those expressions in English. It’s our way of talking on social networks”). From the interviews, I can also deduce that all the students have naturalized this polylingual behavior that includes English as an image of the essence of a young multicultural group. The inclusion of English therein is often considered like a “project of realism” (Pennycook, 2007) in that multicultural context that, according to them, they and all their friends share.

Instagram chat conversation	Translation
MAITE. Aupa maddi! untzun kuadrillako Maite naz	MAITE. Hey maddi! It's Maite from the untzun gang.
MAITE. Nola Baionara doan erasmusean, kuadrillako lagunak bideotxo bat prestatzen gabiltza, berarentzako preziatuak diren pertsonak honetan agertzeko asmoz. Beraz pentsatu dogu zuek agertzea ezinbestekoa dala. Orduan ahal badozue mesedez grabatu ahal zarie zertxobait esanez? Ez du zertan oso luzea izan behar goraintziak emoteagaz edo balioko zauen	MAITE. As she's off to Baiona on the Erasmus program, we're making a little video with the aim of featuring people close to him. Then we got thinking that you have to show up. So could you please record yourself saying something? It doesn't have to be too long, just sending your regards or something like that.
MAITE. Hori bai, ez berari komentau 	MAITE. But do be sure to not say anything to him 
MAITE. bueno hori, bideoan agertu zaitezcan gure dogu ta hori jiji	MAITE. Well, we want you to appear in the video and all that, hehe.
FRIEND1. Aupa! Bale, perfekto, komentatuko diot Gasteizeko jendeari eta!? 	FRIEND1. Hey! Okay, perfect, so I'll tell the Gasteiz people!? 
MAITE. Bai mesedez	MAITE. Yes, please.
MAITE.  	MAITE.  
MAITE. nire zenbakie hau da XXXXX	MAITE. Here's my number XXXXX
FRIEND1. Perfektoo   	FRIEND1. Perfect   
MAITE. Eskerrik asko eee 	MAITE. Thanks a lot, ya know 
FRIEND1. Zuri abisatzeatiik! 	FRIEND1. Thank you for letting me know! 

EXCERPT 2 Maite's interaction in a direct.

Also, Miren acknowledges that her use of English is picked up through engagement with popular forms of entertainment that in turn index a larger cultural world. What is more, she does so by picking out qualities such as being “multicultural.” An example of this is the explanations that she gives me when asked in the interview about the use of the expression “Winter is coming” in an example from her corpus. She explains that the Basque translation does not have the cultural connotations of that in English, which thus make it invalid as a resource in this case, and she relates the use of English in that case with a real and meaningful voice she wants to create. She emphasizes that she could not use a “crude translation” that would not make sense, since her friends perfectly understand that expression in English and all the cultural connotations that it brings with it in relation to the TV series *Game of Thrones*:

- (4) “*Winter is coming*”, *Juego de tronos*-eko esaldi horri erreferentzia eginez. *Euskaraz*, “*negua heldu da*”... *ez du xarma iguala* (“...*Winter is coming*,” a reference to that saying in *Game of Thrones*. In Basque, ‘*negua heldu da*’ ... doesn’t have the same ring to it) (Miren)

We cannot forget the next statement of Miren when we were talking about the use of English in those directs of her corpus: *Inglesa, jajaja, adibidez, istorietan botatzen dituzun komentario edo gauzak dira gehiago dibertigarri edo ergelarena egiteko* (“In English, ha-haha, for instance to make the comments and other things you say funnier or sillier”). Miren laughs and tells me about an image of herself that evokes a funny person who plays with words when chatting with her friends. She integrates English resources into her interactions to achieve their discursive aim for leisure and she uses them to “posture” and somehow to “philosophize” in a joking tone and to give an image of herself that, in her words, is more “playful”:

- (5) *Inglesa postureatzeko. Tipiko, ez dakit...* “*life is mean to a have good friends*”, *ikusten dezu nire ingeles nibela, ez? Jajaja En plan holako gauzak, pixkot filosofatzeko...* (English is for posturing. Typical, I don’t know. ‘life is mean to have good friends’ You see what level of English, ha, ha, ha. That is, those things a little to philosophize) (Miren)

In fact, the analysis of those polylingual practices that include English in our corpus clearly reveals that they are often examples of playfulness, and the participant often explain these switches to English as a dramatization, a joke, or a case of irony. Below, I

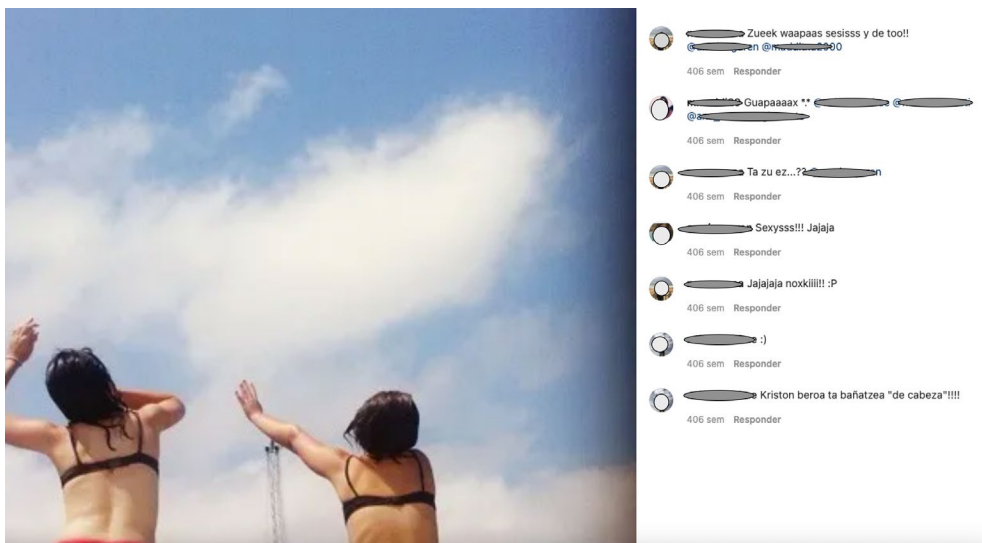


FIGURE 2 Comments to Ainara's photo-post in Instagram.

will show in more detail two examples of Ainara's corpus in which English recourses are used to evoke funny and ironic voices in the interaction. The two examples were analyzed in the focus seminar with the 6 students. In that seminar, we focused on the meanings of these recourses and also on the type of personhood they evoke in each case. In the first excerpt, Ainara is chatting with her local peer group in a direct message. She is asking her friends their opinion about a photograph that she is thinking of posting on her timeline. After what seems like a long wait with no response, one of her friends responds *lits very pretty* "It's very pretty." Although the statement might have been taken as neutral, according to the participants in the seminar, the codeswitching to English changes the contextual framing and it motivates the utterance to be understood potentially as a joke. Additionally, that *Zenkiu darlings* "Thank you darlings" with a Basque spelling that Ainara uses in her answer appears to be a good example of the exploitation of double-voicedness to create an ironic or cynical voice. It expresses simultaneously two different intentions in the opinion of the participant of the seminar: Ainara's direct aim is thanking her friends for their comments, but, at the same time, it also represents the refracted intention of commenting ironically on the overly lukewarm reaction they had to her demands for an opinion about the photograph (in bold for English, italics for Spanish and regular for Basque; [Excerpt 3](#)).

The last example that includes English recourses also shows this multivocality in a switch to English that is very common in the corpus: that is, the switch to expressions of English related to feelings and emotions, such as *Looovveeeittt sooo muuuch* or *Loveee you*. In the next expert, Ainara is chatting with a friend about a photograph that her friend uploaded to Instagram. When we analyzed the example with the students in the seminars, they could see a double-voicing in the introduction of this expression. According to them, the introduction of the stylized voice in English serves to convey Ainara's and her friend's intention to dissociate themselves from the voice, by saying "I love you." The participants in the seminar explain this further: "If she had said '*Maite zaitut*' 'I love you', it could have sounded like a true feeling, that she really meant it." According to them, by using English they dissociate themselves from such seriousness and create an informal and funny voice (in bold for English, italics for Spanish and regular for Basque; [Excerpt 4](#)).

In sum, on the basis of the students' own words about their and other young people's practices, we can conclude that Batua style evokes a serious and cultivated persona but also someone who talks to a translocal audience in social networks; however, the Euskalkia style suggests someone who is casual, genuine, and, mostly, playful and funny, and talks to a more intimate group. The polylingual style they call "euskalki" and what I have termed Euskalki style is becoming the iconic representation of "youth talk" in social networks. All the students in the study term this style *gazte hizkera* (youth talk). They frame it with phrases like "the way young people talk" and "street Basque." From their own words, we can deduce that "mixed" language has been naturalized as a tool for them to create a friendly and informal social media voice. In other words, codeswitching is an enregistered phenomenon that indexes specific person-types and that is often rhematized as the "essence" of a young peer group, as an in-group talk. The use of a polylingual style is also closely linked to the playfulness many times evoking in close relationships. English resources in such a polylingual dialectal style are considered excellent stylistic tools in performing such playful and funny voices. From students' explanations, we could conclude that, by using the language of *others* (Bakhtin 1984 [1963]) that can be considered English, often they dissociate themselves from seriousness and create ironic and lighter voices.

Instagram chat conversation

Translation

AINARA. Aber os gusta como pa subir?

AINARA. Hey, what d'yall think about uploading this?

FRIEND 1. **Yehee**

FRIEND 1. Yehee

FRIEND 1. *#pelofly?*FRIEND 1. *#pelofly?*AINARA. *Mi cara?*

AINARA. My face?

FRIEND 1. **Considerable**

FRIEND 1. Considerable

AINARA. *Eso ke kiere decir*

AINARA. What does that mean?

FRIEND 1. Kontuan hartzeko gauza?

FRIEND 1. Kontuan hartzeko gauza?

AINARA. *Aber tia ke si bien o mal*

AINARA. C'mon girl, yep or nope?

FRIEND 1. Ondo ondo

FRIEND 1. Ondo ondo

AINARA. *Noze noze*

AINARA. Dunno, no idea.

FRIEND 1. *Menos mal noze noze*FRIEND 1. Thank God you put *noze*

jarriezulaa...

*noze...*AINARA. Esk mikel **said yes**

AINARA. Well, Mikel said yes

FRIEND 1. ?

FRIEND 1. ?

FRIEND 2. **Its very pretty**

FRIEND 2. It's very pretty

AINARA. **Zenkiu darlins**

AINARA. Thank you, darlings

EXCERPT 3 Ainaras's interaction in a direct.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals that the students in the study built on a language ideology construction that takes the contrasting monolingual and polylingual stylistic behaviors as iconic representations linked to different personhoods. The monolingual Batua style and the polylingual Euskalki style resources are organized in an *axis of differentiation* (Gal, 2016; Gal & Irvine, 2019) that is, "a schema of qualitative contrast both for indexical signs and for what they are taken to represent" (Gal & Irvine, 2019, 19). According to the students, such contrasting styles are sufficiently salient and widespread among young Basques to be considered as conventionalized or enregistered as social indexes (Agha, 2007). The participants in the study consider these styles as tools to shape and create contrasting voices that interanimate or interilluminate each other on Instagram, as an excellent example of Bakhtin's notion of *heteroglossia*⁵ (Bakhtin 1984 [1963]). This clash of voices can also be found in the

Instagram chat conversation	Translation
AINARA. Looovveeittt sooo muuuch 😊	AINARA. Looovveeittt sooo muuuch 😊
AINARA. Zepolitaa geatu zaizuun ❤️	AINARA You've made it so nice
FRIEND1. Eskerrikaskoo Ainaaaa	FRIEND1. Thanks so much Ainaaaa
FRIEND1.	FRIEND1.
FRIEND1. Ez dau amaitutee baie hoi	FRIEND1. It's not over, but anyway.
AINARA. Zerdaa tu 2018??	AINARA What's your 2018??
FRIEND1. Baaai	FRIEND1. Yeah.
FRIEND1. <i>Ya esta</i>	FRIEND1. That's it.
FRIEND1. <i>Acsbsu</i>	FRIEND1. Finished.
AINARA. <i>Poss eres una puta monadaaa</i> 😊	AINARA. Well, you're amazing 😊
AINARA. Thank you too, it was lovely to meet you	AINARA. Thank you too, it was lovely to meet you
AINARA. Im so grateful 😊	AINARA. Im so grateful 😊
FRIEND1. Ohhh ainaaaa ❤️	FRIEND1. Ohhh ainaaaa ❤️
FRIEND1. Loveee you ❤️	FRIEND1. Loveee you ❤️

EXCERPT 4 Ainaras interaction in a direct.

interactions of the same individual on Instagram. They understand themselves and other people in the corpus to evoke “different selves” in each of the two styles.

Urla (2012) explains a similar axis of differentiation when talking about the Batua and Euskalki registers in the use of young people from Usurbil in the 90's. Urla notes the shifting language dynamics she could perceive among Basque youth during her research: Specifically, the new linguistic capital Batua was starting to represent and also a turn in which vernacular Basque was no longer a source of insecurity, but rather a communicative resource they would increasingly refashion for use in a variety of new context: ‘For new generations of Basque youth, vernacular (that is local dialect) became a way for them to signal a kind of identification with “realness,” authenticity, and populism in to a progressively institutionalized Basque political culture’ (Urla, 2012, 107) that is increasingly linked to standard Batua. In the last decade, the results of new studies on the perception of the variability of the Basque language among young new speakers also reinforce Urla's view (Ortega et al., 2015; Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2021; Urla et al., 2018). Batua, according to these

new speakers in their studies, is the academic and formal variety and ‘has instrumental value for accessing the particular labor markets and forms of media: careers in education, local civil service, newspaper, radio, and television’ (Urla et al., 2018, 30). Euskalkia indexes casualness and informality, and therefore, its use builds a close bond between those dialects and authenticity in the young community (Ortega et al., 2015). Conversely, being a native speaker of Basque from some specific geographical areas of the Basque Country and speaking a local dialect is assumed to confer sociolinguistic authenticity, as Gondra (2024) explains in detail. And as Woolard (2016) notices in the Catalan case, in this Basque case too, that logic of authenticity linked to nativeness “hampers efforts to extend minoritized language to new speakers” (Woolard, 2016, 24). In fact, new speakers often consider Batua “artificial” and do not feel legitimate when it comes to using it with other young people in daily interactions (Ortega et al., 2015).

The participants of the study consider *Batua* style “artificial” and “fake” for chat and comment interactions, but they seem to feel completely legitimized to use Batua with other young people in a translocal context like timelines. We could even speculate that mastering a dialect and being able to use it in their peer interactions empowers them to use Batua in those social network contexts. By opting for a Batua style in timelines, these young people build a more careful and elaborate voice that allows them to be heard in the digital space and move in Basque to scale levels beyond the local (Irvine, 2016). By doing so, they also attempt to promote the mobility of Basque and to address a larger Basque community of speakers. In fact, in the students’ explanations we have detected a political voice related to this Batua style that points out the need for a tool for a translocal voice in Basque. This voice reminds us of “the intentional imagining of a modern and translocal Basque linguistic identity” that, Urla argues, underpins Basque standardization (Urla, 2012, 78). The use of Batua is explained with reminiscences of a unified Basque community, of care for the language. It is used in a context that they consider public, such as the timeline on Instagram. In this context, it is important to use a model of Basque that allows them to create a careful and exemplary voice. They relate this style to the voice of the media to which 1 day they want to belong to.

This view surrounding Batua also affects its indexicality in the opposite sense. Monolingual standard Basque is not useful for them in a backstage setting such as direct messages. Batua has too much of a formal and academic connotation to be used in such a context. And the academic values symbolized in Batua lead these students to a tacit solidarity with the language varieties valued beneath the “posh” option, or even to actively converge with them, as Rampton explains in England’s case (Rampton, 2018 [1995]).

As Agha explains “any style is itself a form of semiotic capital that advances certain rights and privileges” (Agha, 2005, 55). The participants in the study dominate local dialects and use them in their peer-to-peer practices both offline and online. This permits them to be able to perform an informal image of social personhood on Instagram and to do so in a register-dependent way (Agha, 2005, 55). The dialect represents an escape to freedom from them, and that, as we have already pointed out in “[Monolingualism and polylingualism in a context of language revival: From the 1990s to the present](#)” section, may be related to the lack of scrutiny regarding the dialect by the Basque language policy institutions. Above all, the insistence of the study participants with that “academic” Batua compared to the way they write in chats as “street Basque” reveals a sense of “genuine authenticity” of the dialects that, in this case, is taken to digital writing.

Another one of these privileges seems to be the legitimate use of code switching among native speakers, as reclaimed by the new speakers in the study of Lantto in Bilbao (Lantto, 2015). Otherwise, the new speakers in Lantto’s study felt that the use of code switching in their case would be interpreted as lack of competence. The mixing of languages in the dialectal use in chats in the case of the participants in my study, however, is unequivocally

linked to the “naturalness” of the local dialects and their users. For these young people, language mixing is neither shame nor showing off. It is becoming part of a register distinction. There is a naturalization of polylingual practices in general, “where real people are said to be ‘keeping it real’” (Woolard, 2016, 22). The corpus analyzed gives us clear examples of this. We could even say that this polylingual style that students call *gazte hizkera* or “youth talk” has become an icon of such agency and openness and also an important tool in the creation of informal, ironic, parodic, and playful voices, in line with what Androutsopoulos contends in the case of Facebook (Androutsopoulos, 2011, 2015a). This ideological view echoes the view that sees mixed forms as legitimate on social networks; that is, “what is ‘real’” in Internet communication (Androutsopoulos, 2011; Dovchin, 2015; Dovchin et al., 2018; Varis & Wang, 2011). In a similar vein to Dovchin’s analysis in the case of Mongolia, in our corpus these polylingual practices only appear in direct messages, that is, in relations with their own peer circle. This exclusive in-group language also serves an authentic and valid purpose (Dovchin, 2015, 453).

To finish this discussion, I would like to highlight the role of English-language resources in the formation of those informal voices. The place of English on the Internet is often emphasized in terms of it being a translocal or universal tool. The students in the study also employ this tool. They refer to English as the language of the Internet, an “universal” language that everyone understands. And this reflection explains their use of English in the timelines of the three participants. However, it only partly explains its use in direct messages, in which students are chatting with their peer group, for instance, in the examples analyzed in “[Social networks and superdiversity](#)” section. As Dovchin et al. (2018) emphasize, this stylistic behavior is better understood by considering the place that English occupies in informality in the digital world (Dovchin et al., 2018). Also, in this study we see that English resources in polylingual styles are used to evoke funny and ironic voices that they relate to playfulness. In the creation of those voices, recontextualization and resemiotization of global semiotic resources is an essential discursive instrument, as Miren explains in the interview when commenting the example of “winter is coming.” In Basque, “*negua heldu da*,” she explained, “it doesn’t have the same ring to it.” In the interview, she explained her desire to evoke a voice that talks to her friends about an entire mediated cultural world. It is not merely a reference to a TV series, but rather the use of language picked up through engagement with popular forms of entertainment that in turn index a larger world of people, places, languages, and cultures (Dovchin et al., 2018, 12). The example reminds us of the increasing mobility of semiotic resources, in particular in a digital context such as that of social networks, and also the importance of intertextuality, or in Bakhtinian terms *dialogism*, when it comes to understanding the use of Spanish and English in such interactions. In fact, in the analysis of the corpus, I was able to perceive the fact that every message was essentially “a mosaic of quotations” (Kristeva [1969] 1980, 66).

CONCLUSION

Voices draw from semiotic resources and ideologies that are publicly available (Hill, 1995); in this case, from a recursive ideological structure that takes the contrasting monolingual and polylingual stylistic behaviors analyzed in this work as iconic representations of different contexts and person-types. The monolingual Batua style indexes a professional, formal, and wide-ranging persona and people use it to evoke a more translocal and public voice on Instagram; the Euskalki style, meanwhile, indexes an informal, street, and “youth” persona and it is appropriate to build an informal playful street voice.

Yet, as previously noted the participants in our study, as Instagram users, are constantly pointing toward different audiences and social and cultural norms in timelines and chats on

Instagram; and in each of them, they have different ideological stakes and they create different voices. The fractal replication of the same axes of contrast explained by Urla (2012) in the 90's can be observed, but at different scales of communication⁶ (Blommaert, 2010, 2021; Gal, 2006, 2016; Irvine, 2016) and always adapted to the normativity, patterns of language use, and expectations of those scales in social networks.

In another study, Jokin Aiestaran and I explore that *scale-jumping* (Blommaert, 2010, 35) on Instagram based on the corpus of Gaztesare (Elordui & Aiestaran, 2022; Elordui & Aiestaran, 2023). Our analysis reveals that Batua in this digital context is also taking on a different indexicality with respect to authenticity (Elordui & Aiestaran, 2023). The difference between “authentic versus elaborate” in the dialect and Batua at a local and peer-group scale seems to be blurrier in this translocal digital context. Batua is a tool for an “authentic” self-presentation, in contrast to Spanish and English which are more *anonymous* (Woolard, 2008). Unlike in chat interactions in which Batua is considered “fake,” “posh,” and “artificial, as in the studies among new speakers of Basque (Ortega et al., 2015; Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2021; Urla et al., 2018); in translocal timeline scales, Batua evokes a ‘credible’ voice that is valued as meaningful across entirely different time-spaces. As Gal (2006) points out when talking about languages’ standards, a standard “... represents the spirit of its speakers in contrast to other standards.” In the Basque case, that idea also provides Batua “with one source of authority, its ‘authenticity’ Gal (2006, 166). The duality between authenticity and universality as forms of authorization, as Gal (2006) points out, is resolved through differences in scales of comparison: authenticity vis-à-vis other national standards; or anonymity vis-à-vis ‘internal’ regional or minority forms” (2006, 171).

On the other hand, this study also shows that these young Basque speakers are forced to manage apparently antagonistic ideological forces in that multiscale and polycentric context in social networks. In Bakhtinian terms, one could say that they carry out an intense management of centripetal and centrifugal forces (Bakhtin, 1981 [1935]) that point to different models of authenticity. The centripetal forces that comes from the intense metalinguistic activity of revitalization initiatives have pushed in order to make Batua an “authentic” option for a high-scale: Linguistic authorities such as Euskaltzaindia, schools, the media, or well-known voices of local linguistic authorities have promoted the linguistic awareness of Basque speakers and provides them with monolingual standard models of authenticity that evoke an “historical naturalness” and seek to establish clear linguistic and cultural boundaries as well as promote their conservation. In the words of the students when talking about the Batua style, we can hear the echoes of Euskaltzaindia or the directors of EITB in the first style book. Also, the voices of translocality that they claim to evoke in using the Batua style in timelines and the valorization of the students as “everybody’s to understand,” prioritizes a language model that has been promoted by revitalization policies of Basque, always based on “guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystalizing into a real, although still relative, unity” (Bakhtin, 1981 [1935], 270). Yet, as Gal and Irvine (2019) note, scale-making goes far beyond a geopolitical scale that distinguishes the local from the national or global (Gal & Irvine, 2019, 218). This study also reveals that *Batua* is “indexically associated with those to whom its use has made accessible highly-valued characteristics” (Silverstein, 1996 [1987], 295); and in the case of the participants of our study, also with the voice of a media professional, as suggested for media policy.

The centrifugal forces that are commonly stronger in local and youth interactions (Rampton, 2018 [1995]) are also those that push harder in this case, in particular in a context like that of Instagram direct messages. These centrifugal forces stem from both the local and global authorities that these young people experience in their daily lives. In both cases, they resist the assimilation of a single language model and incorporate polylingual practices and multilingual identities, which have become the norm to follow in social network global practices (Androutsopoulos, 2011; Dovchin, 2015; Dovchin et al., 2018; Varis & Wang, 2011).

In *backstages* such as those of comments and directs, a resistance to that monolingual formal model emerges with the goal of evoking each as a “genuine” or “authentic” informal voice on Instagram. For this genuine voice, local dialects are chosen. Their values of authenticity among the peer group in the offline world, explained in research literature about Basque (Lantto, 2015; Ortega et al., 2015; Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2021; Urla et al., 2018), have been recursively reproduced in their informal interactions on Instagram. But the polylingual style used in chats is also constructed in dialects because participants consider it “a free scope for creativity” with almost no norms. The “mixing” of languages that is anathema for any standardizing ideology is part of an ideology of keeping them “real.” This “mixed talk” between recourses from a Basque dialect, Spanish, and English is becoming “what is real” in Internet communication (Varis & Wang, 2011). In fact, the most novel ideological tendency that I have found in the corpus is that related to the enregisterment of that polylingual style. It is becoming an exclusive in-group talk and is acquiring stereotypic indexical values related to informality. It is, moreover, being naturalized as a “social network speech” with which young people recreate multiple multicultural and playful voices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers of the paper as well as the journal editor for their encouraging comments and invaluable insights which helped making this issue stronger. My gratitude also goes to the participants in the project Gaztesare for their generosity and patience during these years. All misunderstandings and shortcomings are, of course, my own.

ORCID

Agurtzane Elordui  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7787-8714>

Endnotes

¹ Gaztesare research project looks into the online linguistic practices of Basque young people on Instagram. The data-collection was conducted between November 2018 and June 2022. Overall, 30 students aged between 19 and 23 from the University of the Basque Country, the Public University of Navarre, and the Lyceum of Bayonne volunteered to participate in the project. Gaztesare includes a corpus of Instagram written production of those students from 2013 to 2019. It also contains a qualitative corpus that seeks to understand the ideological underpinnings of those written language practices in social networks (Elordui et al., 2021).

² I refer to this stylistic behavior as *polylingual* following research on youth language and identity (Jørgensen, 2010). The term covers multilingual practices that have traditionally been described as code-switching or code-mixing. It “covers the linguistic behavior which involves whatever features are available to the speakers, regardless of the features’ (possible) association with different languages” (Jørgensen, 2010, 11), and languages are conceptualized as socio-cultural constructions.

³ According to Koldo Zuazo's classification (Zuazo, 2013), currently there are five main Basque dialects or *euskalkiak*: the Western dialect, spoken in Biscay, Araba, and most of the Deba Valley of Guipuscoa; the Central dialect, spoken in most of Guipuscoa and in some western counties of Navarre; the dialect spoken in most of Navarre; the Navarrese-Lapurdian dialect, spoken in Navarrese Lapurdi, Low Navarre, in High Navarre, and in the northwestern area of Zuberoa; and the Zuberoan (or Souletin) dialect, spoken in most of Zuberoa and in Béarn.

⁴ In order to maintain the anonymity of these students, I will use pseudonyms when referring to them.

⁵ Bailey (2007) notes that “What is distinctive about heteroglossia is not its reference to different kinds of linguistic signs and forms, however, but rather its focus on social tensions inherent in language. Social and political tensions and struggles that exist in society inhabit language, making it alive with social meanings” (Bailey, 2007, 499).

⁶ “Scales need to be understood as levels or dimensions at which particular forms of normativity, patterns of language use and expectations thereof are organized” (Blommaert, 2010, 36) but also as “a metaphor that suggests that we have to imagine things that are of a different order, that are hierarchically ranked and stratified” (Blommaert, 2010, 33).

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How to cite this article: Elordui, Agurtzane. 2024. "Heteroglossic Management in Instagram: Emerging Ideological Dynamics Among Basque Youth." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 00(0): e12448. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.12448>.