

Neologisms and Lexicography in the Basque Language

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In any language, the need for new terminology is satisfied by means of borrowings or by creating the new words with the tools the language provides, namely, derivation and composition. On the other hand, the quantity of borrowed terms and new coinages is not decided on linguistic grounds, but on sociological, political, or other grounds. As a matter of fact, purist trends which try to take any borrowed terms out of the respective language are well known in the history of the languages of Europe. This entails the coining of new terms, not only because of the need for new names but also when there is a rejection of existing borrowed terms.

Focusing all this from the point of view of lexicography, the lexicographer must decide how to face the problem of neologisms. How many of them should he include in his dictionary: all of them, just those which have a certain tradition . . . ? And if he realizes that there is something lacking in the terminology, is he allowed to create his own words and include them with the other, well-established items?

I will not discuss these points from a theoretical point of view. I shall simply give a survey of what kind of answers can be found throughout the history of Basque lexicography. Special attention will be paid to the dictionaries of this century, although there will also be some reference to the past centuries.

First, we may mention P. D'Urte (1664-1720 approx.), the author of the *DIC-TIONARIUM LATINO-CANTABRICUM* (1715), which comprises the Basque translations of the Latin words from **A** to **commotus**. When giving the equivalents of the Latin terms, the reader can find Basque neologisms, that is, words coined by the author, which are not found in texts of this period. Furthermore, there are no indications whether a certain word has been created by D'Urte or is a living word in the Basque language, or, at least, in the author's dialect. Thus, although his Dictionary has not had great influence for several reasons¹, P. D'Urte is a good example of a lexicographer who invents the terms he feels are needed, and gives them the same treatment as 'ancient', well-established terms.

A second point of reference would be M. Larramendi's *DICCIONARIO TRILINGÜE* (1743). One of the major apologists for the Basque language, he tried to follow the path taken by his predecessors (Basque is a pure language, which has kept its own words, with no influences from other neighbouring languages, etc.). He could not accept the borrowing of Greek and Latin scientific terminology to fill the need that the Basque language had in this field. Therefore, and making an explicit statement on this point in his introduction to the dictionary², he coined new words according to the rules that this language has for composition and derivation, words which could supply Basque with arts and sciences terminology, which at the same time prevented the introduction of a large number of borrowings in the language. It is the first time that explicit statements on neologisms (related to a puristic conception of the language) are made. Unfortunately, M. Larramendi did not give any indications of which ones were the newly coined words, although it is not too difficult to guess.

At the end of the last century and the beginning of the 20th century, coinciding with the birth and growth of what has been called Basque Nationalism there was another influx of neologisms into the Basque language. But these purists, nationalists, went much further than M. Larramendi, for they not only created genuine Basque terms for technical purposes (as did Larramendi), but they also rejected all the Latin borrowings, even those long ago accepted and established as Basque words. Therefore, certain people started to use many new words which replaced the 'foreign' (Latin-origin) ones, but which had the inconvenience of being strange and unintelligible to lay people. Basque literature was invaded by words such as **notin** 'person', instead of **pertsona**, **goteun** 'Holy Spirit' instead of **Izpiritu Santu**, **txadon** 'church' instead of **eleiza** or **gotzon** 'angel' instead of **aingeru** (all of them discarded because of their Latin origin).

In this atmosphere R. M. Azkue wrote his **DICCIONARIO VASCO-ESPAÑOL-FRANCÉS** (1905-1906), a dictionary which has influenced all the lexicographical work of this century. R. M. Azkue took the opposite course to M. Larramendi: he tried to collect only genuine Basque words for his dictionary, leaving borrowed terms and neologisms aside. This goal compelled him to reject Larramendi's **DICCIONARIO TRILINGÜE** as well as the neologisms coined by the purists of his time. And to show that every entry was a living word in the language, he carefully marked the dialect and subdialect, often even the villages, where a certain word had been heard and therefore collected. Thus, all the entries in the dictionary are assumed to be chosen because they pertain to a genuine oral or written tradition. All these points are also explicitly discussed by the author in the introduction to the **DICCIONARIO VASCO-ESPAÑOL-FRANCÉS**³. As a result of this position, the reader can find in this dictionary words such as **eleiza**, **aingeru**, **arima** . . . which, in spite of their origin, are well documented in our written tradition, but not **txadon**, **gotzon** and many others of recent creation. On the other hand, there is no specific concern about arts and sciences' terminology; consequently, there seems to be no need to give entries for 'astrology' or 'theology' either.

Some years later we find another approach in Lhande's **DICTIONNAIRE BASQUE-FRANÇAIS** (1926). Arana's neologisms and the whole nationalist movement being essentially a phenomenon of the south of the Basque Country, namely of the Spanish side, it did not much influence the French side. Now, since it is a dictionary which deals with the eastern dialects (Labourdin, Bas-Navarrais and Souletin spoken in the French area), those neologisms coined at the beginning of this century are not collected because they do not belong to the eastern dialects and are not used by the eastern writers. On the other hand, Larramendi, through Hiribarren's manuscript (1862), is one of the sources of this dictionary⁴; therefore not only Larramendi's own coinages, but also those terms created by Hiribarren himself appear in Lhande's dictionary (1926), the origin of each entry, however, being carefully noted.

But, from the point of view of the standardization process Basque has been undergoing in the last twenty or twenty-five years⁵, the position of lexicographers who have published their works in the last years is much more interesting. In fact, the Basque language has to face a process of modernization and adaptation of its lexicon in order to be able to be employed at every level, so that its users can speak or write about any subject. Besides that, we must keep in mind the technological progress over the last forty or fifty years, with all the devices this has brought into

our everyday life (for instance washing machines, TV-sets, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators and so on). How can the Basque language fill all these gaps? As Professor Zgusta (1971: 181) states, sometimes, this task is undertaken by an official body or institution of recognised authority, which is in charge of the creation of the required neologisms, which, in turn, will be accepted by the speakers' community by virtue of the prestige enjoyed by these specialists and/or linguists. As we did not acquire a public university or a department of Basque philology until the seventies, there were no specialists (including philologists) trained in Basque. Therefore, the only 'official' institution of recognised authority was Euskaltzaindia, the Academy of the Basque Language. In fact, there are two publications which deserve special mention from the point of view of the modernization of the lexicon. The first, ZORTZI URTE ARTEKO IKASTOLA HIZTEGIA (1975), is a dictionary, divided into different areas of knowledge (such as 'The city; the streets, the shops, the urban services', 'music, painting, sculpture', 'clothes, shoes, hair-dressing', or 'physical geography, geology, astronomy' . . .) for children up to eight years old who attend Basque schools.

The other, MERKATALGO IZENDEGIA (1984), is a dictionary which offers terminology relating to commerce, shops, employees, and associated matters.

Although, of course, there is not a total overlap in the kind of terminology these works offer, we can, nevertheless, make a brief comparison between them, choosing terms which appear in both dictionaries. Giving only the year of publication of the dictionary and the Spanish target name, we get the following:

	1975	1984
ambulancia	anbulantza	eriautoa 'ambulance'
aire acondicionado	aire egokitu	aire girotu 'air condit'
ascensor	aszensore/igogailu	igongailu 'lift'
calefacción	bero-eragile	berogailu 'heating'
frigorífico	hozkaile	hozkaile 'refrigerator'
biblioteca	liburutegi	biblioteka/liburutegi 'library'
perforadora	zulagailu	zulagailu 'drill'
hospital	ospitale/klinika/ sendategi	ospitale 'hospital'
peluquería	ileapaindegi orraztegi 'hairdresser's'	ileapaindegi 'hairdresser's' bizartegi 'barber's'

As can easily be seen, even if both dictionaries are proposals coming from the same Institution, different neologisms have been created to translate the same Spanish term; something that, on the other hand is quite usual since they are the first attempts. But, at the same time, this shows the degree of uncertainty which is nowadays involved in the creation of these kinds of neologisms in Basque. Thus, Zgusta's (1971: 181) words:

"A proceeding like this—referring to the situation in which an official body undertakes the creation of neologisms—cannot automatically guarantee that the 'invented' terms will be the best possible ones, in each single case; but it has the great advantage

that the terminological neologisms chosen usually become quickly stabilized"—do not seem to apply to our case.

Let us now compare the above data with three other dictionaries published after 1975, namely those of L. M. Mujika (1977), X. Kintana and others (1980) and finally P. Mujika (1981).

The first two dictionaries, of medium size, are the first attempts at a modern, standard dictionary, using the standardized orthography proposed in 1968. They include loan-words and the cultural and technical, but not too specialized, neologisms required in everyday life today. Both authors also have explicit statements on these points in their introductions⁶, although we shall not go further into the different ways followed by the one and the other and how much they have respected the rules which have up to now governed Basque word-formation when coining their own neologisms. Our aim is merely to show the vacillations in the creation and the difficulties in the stabilization process of the different neologisms over the last ten to fifteen years.

P. Mujika's dictionary (1981), on the other hand, is the most recent dialect-based dictionary. Its author also discusses the problem of neologisms in the dictionary. He is all for accepting the cultural, technical words that nowadays pertain to western culture, admitting nonetheless that it can sometimes be more convenient to create new terms that are more transparent because of their structure and their components. Being a dialect dictionary, the problem is that there are no systematic marks indicating the origin of each entry, where it was gathered and, therefore, there is no way to distinguish the terms coined by Mujika and the terms he has collected from other authors.

However, again comparing some entries in these dictionaries with those of Euskaltzaindia (1975), we get:

	1975	1977	1980	1981
televisión	telebista	telebista/ teleikuskin	telebistailu/ teleaparatu	telebista/ teleikuskin
ametralladora 'machine gun'	mitrailusa	mitrailusa/ metrailgailu	metrailadore	metrail-izkilu
azafata 'air hostess'	damatxo	azafata/ damatxo	aeroneska	aero-neska/ damatxo
ventilador 'ventilator'	(h) aizemaile		airegailu/ haizagailu	aireztailu/ airegailu

We could go on and find many more examples of different proposals, but we think it is enough to see the present situation of standardization of the Basque lexicon and how it is reflected in the dictionaries; even more, to see how often the lexicographer himself is the producer, and not only the collector, of neologisms.

To sum up the present situation, we may conclude that the existence of the Basque Academy does not by itself guarantee the acceptance of certain neologisms (as it did, by contrast, with the acceptance of the standardization of the orthography and morphology), even of those which do not belong to a very specialized technical area. We are, therefore, in a period of vacillations and different proposals.

But, at the same time, we can be sure that, as speakers and writers continue talking and writing in Basque about every subject, a consensus will be attained; and that the coming generations will find a stable terminology.

Notes

- ¹ Apart from being incomplete, it was written in Great Britain and never published.
- ² Under the heading *De las Voces Facultativas Y de la Licencia, que me tomo en la formación de algunos vocablos*, Larramendi explains the situation of the Basque language which has no terms which belong to the 'Faculties', 'Arts' and 'Sciences' because nobody had cultivated these areas in Basque up to that time. In this sense, he compares the situation of the Basque language with that of Latin, a language which borrowed Greek 'scientific' terms, ignoring the ways the language offered to create new terms. Since he does not wish anything similar for his language. Larramendi offers Basque equivalents for terms like *astrology, chronology, theology*. . . (= *izarquindea, eraquindea, jaincoquindea*. . .). In the same way, and since Basque has very few words with prefixes, he coins quite a lot of terms to give the translations of Spanish words which show the prefixes **des-** and **con-**: *desezcondu* = descasar (unmarry), *desalaitu* = desalentar (discourage), *desibili* = desandar, *elcarquidatu* = conspirar (conspire), *equidatu* = fabricar, construir (build), *erizquidatu* = consultar ('consult'), *donequidatu* = consagrar ('consecrate'), and so forth.
- ³ "Con grandísimo sentimiento he tenido que dejar a un lado el Diccionario Trilingüe del gran vascófilo Larramendi, porque viendo que había un sinnúmero de voces debidas a su fecunda pluma, no sabía cuáles eran las populares y cuáles las elaboradas. Muchas he visto confirmadas por el pueblo y las he incluido en la obra" (Azkue 1905, XIII).
"No he querido exponer palabras nuevas de nadie, a pesar de haber mucha necesidad: pues todavía no hay autoridad para implantarlas" (Azkue 1905, XVIII).
- ⁴ "Il existe deux copies de cet important ouvrage: l'une complète, de la main de l'auteur; l'autre inachevée, due à divers copistes et que nous avons fait compléter nous-même, d'après le manuscrit original. . . Les termes formés par Larramendi figurent ici au grand complet et, au besoin, on renchérit sur eux. . . Le génie inventif de Hiribarren se donne surtout libre carrière dans la formation des dérivés et des composés. Chaque mot est suivi de toute une grappe d'expressions, plus ingénieuses les unes que les autres, mais dont le très grand nombre a le tort de n'être pas en usage. . . Assurément, ces procédés arbitraires rendent la consultation du Dictionnaire d'Hiribarren extrêmement délicate. Sous la plupart des mots «nouveaux» s'embusque ou un Larramendi ou un Chaho, ou simplement un mot castillan transformé. Voilà pourquoi nous n'avons osé attribuer à aucun dialecte parlé les termes empruntés à cet auteur. Nous les marquons simplement «Hir.» et «Hb.» (Lhande 1926: XX—XXI).
- ⁵ 1968 is taken as the point of departure of the standardization of the Basque language, for in this year Euskaltzaindia, the Basque Academy, as a first step, standardized the orthography.
- ⁶ "Con todo, en este período de adaptación expresiva a módulos urbanos, existe mucha improvisación del momento, falta de criterios científicos y una tendencia, en parte exagerada, al empleo abusivo de préstamos innecesarios del castellano, especialmente en el campo semántico del habla 'bajo'. Este libro pretende realizar la adecuación del euskara al entorno «urbano, industrial y técnico» de la forma más fiel al genio de la lengua, a sus posibilidades de derivación, a su composición lexical y a su potenciación sufijal y prefijal" (L. M. Mujika 1977:19).
"Cuando no ha sido posible encontrar en el inventario antiguo de nuestra lengua los términos adecuados a los objetos modernos, no hemos podido hacer otra cosa, claro está,

que recurrir a los neologismos. Para ello hemos utilizado dos métodos: a) En los casos en que en las grandes lenguas de cultura no existe una unidad de criterio, estas palabras las hemos formado a partir de raíces vascas. . .” (Kintana 1980: XXII).

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