

1. THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF BASQUE: SHB IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

As we have seen in another work (Zalbide, Joly, Gardner 2015), there are many ways of doing historical sociolinguistics and some approaches are very different from others. Having different objectives, the theoretical and methodological bases used are also different, to a large extent, despite occasionally complementing each other in some specific cases. In this section, we are going to place our project, the SHB project (Social History of Basque), in that international epistemological context.

First, we must mention a fundamental point: SHB's perspective and its sociolinguistic taxonomy is not exclusionary: an attempt has been made to include all perspectives. Nevertheless, it must be said that at the same time our methodological proposal is noticeably closer to the sociology of language than to variationism. The object to be described is not change in the language's internal configuration but, rather, the nature, evolution and, if possible, reasons for the evolution of the sociolinguistic situation. By sociolinguistic situation, we mean the explanation of parameters which the sociology of language habitually examines: language use, language competence, opinions/attitudes, language planning, etc. As our proposal gives substantial space to defining the socio-historical context, it is also close to social history and, finally, as it offers a whole line of research into language, it also takes external language history and variationist sociolinguistics into account. Our team has used the contributions of various branches of historical and synchronic sociolinguistics to establish its own model, not only in respect of its goals, but also in terms of the methodology used and the taxonomy we created. Contributions from the sociology of language have often been used as, to a lesser extent, those of variationism. Occasional contributions from other branches have also been used, as will be seen in detail in the following chapters.

SHB's methodology has tried to make use of these scientific bases, but this methodology, taken as a whole, is completely new. We have considered the creation of a whole new methodology framework to be indispensable. As we have seen (Zalbide, Joly, Gardner 2015), there is no generally accepted methodology for research in historical sociolinguistics, except in historical variationism. Usually, each author adapts and uses theoretical-methodological bases appropriate for their own partial objective. SHB's objective goes beyond that,

as it aims to reflect and present the most complete methodology possible. For the moment, this book is a first step: we are well aware that any model, however sophisticated, must be completed and adapted over time.

The model which will be presented in the following chapters is not completely universal. We have taken our starting point from international experiences and research to create a general methodology, but the resultant construct is particularly adapted to Basque: researching the social history of Basque is our main objective. We are convinced, though, that this model is valid for researching many other historical contexts involving language contact situations, once the necessary adaptations have been carried out.

The project's objective being to clarify the social history of Basque, two main tasks were contemplated from the beginning. On the one hand, creating a database on the lines of the giant databases which have been becoming common internationally in recent years, to appropriately classify data that may be of use in clarifying the social history of Basque. Secondly, putting forward a *grille de lecture* to use and examine that data, in order to ensure a homogeneous perspective in the monographs to be published within its framework. The taxonomy was created to classify the sociolinguistic information taking into account the most usual variables that arise in the international bibliography linked to the sociology of language.

1.1. SHB: THE DATABASE

More and more giant databases are being set up and used in linguistics. The latest technological innovations have strengthened this tendency considerably. These databases have brought enormous advantages to the fields of linguistics and historical sociolinguistics: they guarantee reliability and offer new ways of carrying out research (Conde 2007: 47). These databases also provide the opportunity to work with all the texts available for a given period. Thanks to this, new research parameters can be taken into account (Conde 2007: 48). However, the contribution of these databases to historical sociolinguistics is limited because they do not make the external variables affecting language use and behaviour explicit in a wholly reliable way (Conde 2007: 51).

There is a substantial difference between the database SHB has set up in comparison with databases deriving from linguistics. In addition to collecting texts, SHB also collects and classifies pertinent sociolinguistic information in particular passages of text ("quotations" in our technoelect). The SHB database has been designed specifically and directly for the analysis of the social history of language. The aim, therefore, is to classify all the sociolinguistic information

about a particular period in the database using a taxonomy that includes the different parameters raised by the sociology of language. In order to establish categories, as we will see in the following chapters, we have tried to take into account the most important variables and parameters commonly used in the sociology of language and sociolinguistics. Thanks to this, the SHB database is a fairly structured collection of information in conceptual terms: on the one hand, the aim is to guarantee the reliability of the data due to its abundance; on the other, a *grille de lecture* is provided to facilitate sociolinguistic analysis and, to an extent, to permit the systematic analysis of correlations between external variables and sociolinguistic events. Thanks to this, and to the quotations collected, the SHB database will be of use in several fields, primarily in the sociolinguistic history of languages, but also for historians, linguists, geographers, for people working in the sociology of language and, in particular, in language planning, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, textbook writers and so on.

1.2. SHB: TAXONOMY PROPOSAL FOR THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF BASQUE AND MINORITY LANGUAGES

The aim is to collect and organize information in the SHB database on the sociolinguistic situation of Basque in particular epochs, periods or moments. SHB has developed a methodological model for organizing information, a *grille de lecture*, which constitutes a taxonomy for historical sociolinguistics, especially from the point of view of the sociology of language. No such tool was previously available. During the first meetings of researchers on how to write a social history of the languages of France (*Histoire Sociale des Langues de France*), for instance, this same shortcoming was encountered. There was a need for a template to define the book: temporal and spatial limits had to be designated, topics of research delineated (treatment of other languages in the area where the language is spoken, emigration and immigration, ... – see Kremnitz 2004) and a methodological framework developed. But there were no frameworks available worldwide for the sociolinguistic history of languages. In the proceedings of the conference held by the authors in Paris to prepare the publication, one can detect two types of concern: the authors point to the need to determine the object of the research with precision, and they stressed that, even if that were done, the research methodology was lacking.

To create that methodology, we have examined methodological findings since the foundation of sociolinguistics and the tools it has developed, as well as its main theoretical concepts and, bearing our task in mind, we have tried to put together a wide-ranging, flexible and detailed methodology. SHB's ob-

jective has been to put forward a methodological framework for the Basque case. As we will see later on, the construct is flexible and, at the same time, precise. It is flexible enough to apply to other languages after making some adjustments. It is also precise in the sense that it fully reflects the methodological contributions of the sociology of language to facilitate a systematic description of the social history of languages.

So we did not start from scratch when creating this taxonomy. Even though sociology of language is a fairly new discipline, a number of its main authors have defined solid theoretical bases and concepts that we have tried to put together in our model, which led us to the consecution of a global and international sociolinguistic taxonomy. In addition, there has also been in-depth work in the historical sociolinguistics field. It would have been a serious mistake to have gone ahead as if there were no precedents. They have learnt that lesson thoroughly in the natural sciences: when an unknown species is found, a new classification is not created; firstly, already existing categories are used and, if the species does not fit the model, the latter is modified and improved. So SHB's model is a taxonomic proposal for the social history of languages (in this case, that of Basque): a structured listing of all the most important sociolinguistic concepts that leads to a taxonomy in which new findings of information in sociolinguistic theory can be accumulated scientifically. Starting from the extensive heritage of concepts and terms, we have tried to draw up an appropriate methodological framework for our task.

We have created a model for Basque in Basque. We will have to continue to keep in touch with other researchers in the field of historical sociolinguistics; however, to exchange ideas and improve the model itself, this book in English is another step down this path. Several international experts (B. Jernudd, B. Spolsky and C. H. Williams) took part in the first seminar organized by SHB and, before the release of this book, international experts gave their commentary on the reading, such as J. Darquennes and W. Vandenbussche.

In fact, communication between experts in the field sometimes needs to be improved; as Willemyns and Vandenbussche (2006: 158) have already mentioned, communication between researchers has been promoted less than it should be in our field: "As such, even as of today, European historical sociolinguistics still overwhelmingly tends to concentrate on one language at a time. Certain scholars, however, have repeatedly claimed that 'true' historical sociolinguistics needs intense international and cross-linguistic collaboration." Further on, Willemyns and Vandenbussche state (2006: 159): "Also, although there is an extensive and very successful historical-sociolinguistic tradition in German linguistics, its findings are hardly ever mentioned in English language

sociolinguistics, mainly because there [sic] are always published exclusively in German. One practical example: between 1987 and 2004 there have been seven conferences on ‘Historische Soziolinguistik des Deutschen’ (Historical Sociolinguistics of German) in Rostock”.