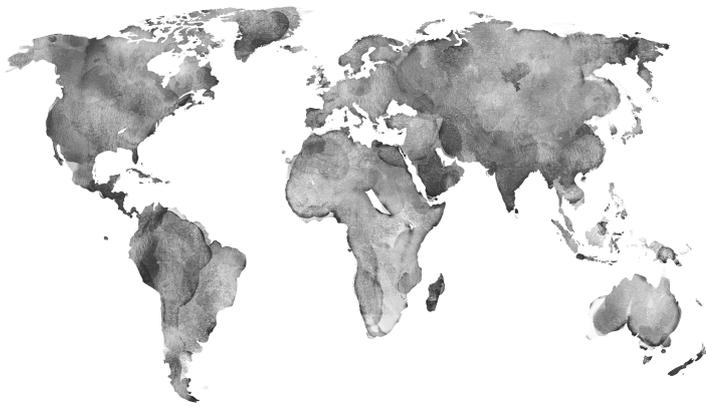




Basque Writing 25

Teaching Basque around the world



In the previous issue, we referred to the Basque language learning of adults, and our readers have probably realised that there is great diversity within the profiles of the people who start learning Basque later in life. There may be various reasons, desires, wishes and motivations to learn a new language, but whatever the reason, the impact of learning will always be the same: by learning a new language, we open the door to a new world. This is a great benefit for the new speaker. Moreover, the benefit is bilateral, since the language also benefits from this process, that is, it gains a new speaker.

Even beyond the borders of the territory of the Basque language, there are many people who have decided to open the door to the Basque language and in so doing have discovered a new world. The teaching and learning of Basque, therefore, have no bor-

ders, and our language and culture have shown us that they are capable of attracting the interest of many people throughout the world.

In this *Basque Writing* we will cross borders to analyse what Basque language teaching consists of abroad. We have looked not only at the present, but also at the past, since the study of the Basque language and culture made the leap into the international arena several centuries ago. **Unai Lauzirika** will tell us about the most significant moments, places and people along the way.

In the current context, there are two leading institutions: the Basque Houses and the Etxepare Basque Institute. The former are responsible for the transmission of the language in the diaspora, and the latter acts in the academic sphere, by means of Basque language lectureships and university chairs of Basque studies. Both institutions therefore weave a fertile network across the globe. We close the issue with the words of **Irene Larraza**, Director-General of the Etxepare Basque Institute, who will explain the key points of the work carried out by the institution.



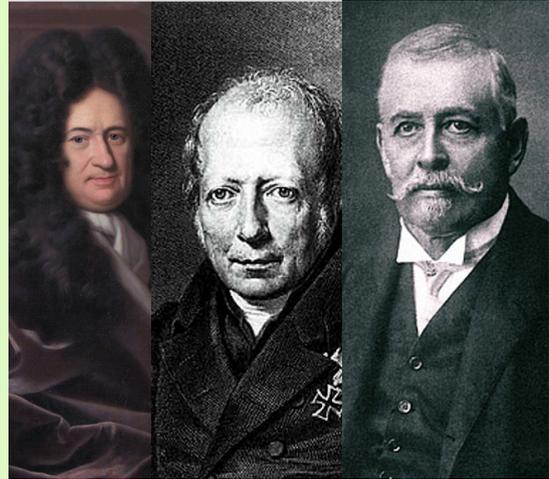
Maddalen Subijana
Basque PEN



Teaching Basque abroad

When examining Basque teaching abroad, we must distinguish between two areas: firstly there is Basqueology, which was developed mainly in European academic circles **from the 19th century onwards**, and which is a discipline that involves theories and research into the Basque language and its origins

Secondly, there is the teaching of Basque, driven throughout history by the diaspora and the various waves of Basque emigration, with the aim of maintaining **the language as an ethnic indicator** and as a language of their own within their communities and families. These two spheres or networks have sometimes overlapped or complemented each other in order **to spread Basque internationally, to give it prestige**, and to transmit it from generation to generation.



Leibniz, Humboldt and Schuchardt,
Basqueology in Germany

In **1876**, the first Basque houses in the Americas were created after the end of the Second Carlist War and within the context of the loss of the Charters. In addition to the **Laurak Bat** houses in Montevideo (1876) and Buenos Aires (1877), the renewed Basque identity was forged through associations such as the **Asociación Vasco Navarra de Beneficencia** of La Habana, uniting Basques from both sides of the Bidasoa River abroad and adopting the **Basque language and religion** as their main ethnic symbols.



Council of Nationalist Women Venezuela, one of the founders of *Euzkadi Ikastola* Copyright, ed. Xabier Iñaki Amezaga

With the turn of the century, Basque language university chairs and classes started to be established in Argentina and Uruguay. In **1904**, the bertso-singer **Pedro Mari Otaño** was the first to give classes at the Laurak Bat house in Buenos Aires. In **1907**, at the **Euskal Echea** men's school in Llavallol, the Capuchin Order of Lekaroz began to teach Basque language, literature, history, and geography for the first time.

The presence of Basque religious figures grew in America, many of whom were exiled nationalists and so had a great influence on the creation and awareness of the Basque community. Examples of this are the purist methods of the Curso Primero del Idioma Basko (1912) and Curso Segundo del Idioma Basko (1914) developed to teach Basque by the Capuchin **Father Soloeta Dima** at the **Euskal Echea** in Buenos Aires. The instinct and responsibility to transmit the Basque language did not stop there, as demonstrated by **the first ikastola of the diaspora** created in the **Instituto de Enseñanza Euskal Erria** in **1925** in Montevideo.



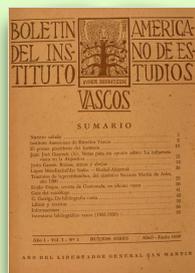
Meanwhile, in Europe, the journal *Revue Internationale des Études Basques* (1907) directed by Julio Urkixo promoted the institutionalisation of Basque studies, guaranteeing the networking and academic exchange of Basqueology. The creation of *Eusko Ikaskuntza* (1918) and *Euskaltzaindia* (1919) laid the cultural and institutional foundations for promoting the Basque language and Basque studies on a social and academic level. Eusko Ikaskuntza also promoted the teaching of Basque through its foreign delegations, launching the first Basque classes in Barcelona and Madrid.

Before the Second World War, there were more than **70 Basque scholars in 30 universities** across 12 European countries, introducing Basque subjects into their classes or research (Estornes Zubizarreta, 1991). Twentieth-century Basque studies flourished in that academic network woven by **Julio Urkixo** and several members of RIEV, Eusko Ikaskuntza and Euskaltzaindia, which would later disappear to a large extent as a result of war.

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the victory of the fascists destroyed Basque autonomy and all political, social and cultural progress. A large part of the Basque political and social **exile found refuge and residence in America**. Basque journalists, intellectuals, politicians, and men and women from Basque civil society took their political ideas and social situation into exile, thus activating some sectors of the diaspora. The Basque government led by Lehendakari Aguirre **took refuge in the diaspora network** in order to maintain its political, diplomatic and cultural activity. This transnational political network was strengthened by hundreds of publications, magazines, authors, publishers, journalists and activists, and managed to **perpetuate** the legitimacy of **the Basque Government and of the Basque cultural system in exile**.

The **Ekin** publishing house (1942), with Ixaka López Mendizabal and Andrés de Irujo, along with the *Instituto Americano de Estudios Vascos* (1943) and its *Bulletin* (1950-1993) are the most important indicators of cultural creation in exile and pro-Basque political thought.

In 1944, at the *Universidad de la República*, the **first Basque university chair** in the Americas was created. In Argentina and Uruguay, literary works and reading groups were created and promoted. This pro-Basque push reached Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, and the USA.



Likewise, exiles such as **Martin Ugalde**, **Yon Oñatibia**, **Jon Bilbao**, **Jokin Zaitegi** and **Andima Ibiñagabeitia** promoted the teaching of journalism, literature, translation and Basque all over the world. The most significant publication was the magazine *Euzko Gogoia* (1950-1959), the only magazine written exclusively in Basque, aimed at bringing the Basque language and cult into the cultural language, and was created with the intention of promoting the Euskal Eskola Nagusia or Basque university. It was in this intellectual environment that the Basque **PEN Club** was born in 1950.

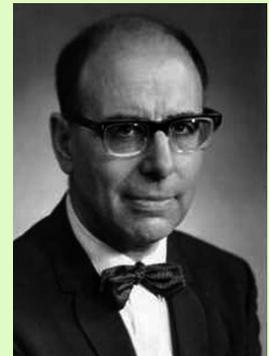


In 1948, a **chair of Basque Language and Literature** was created at the **University of Bordeaux**. It was directed by **René Lafón** until 1969, after which the chair was directed by **Jean Haritschelar** and **Jean Casenave**. From 1974 onwards, sociolinguist and politician **Jose Luis Alvarez Enparantza Txillardegi**, dialectologist **Koldo Zuazo**, translator **Xabier Olarra** and professor **Patri Urkizu** became lecturers of Basque. Today, researchers from the *Université Bordeaux Montaigne*, the *Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour* and the **IKER Centre de Recherche sur la langue et les textes basques**.

In 1952 the **Larramendi Chair** was established at the **University of Salamanca**. **Antonio Tovar**, the rector at the time and a well-known Basqueologist, was its main promoter. Professors such as **Joxe Miel Barandiaran** and **Patxi Altuna** also taught there. However, the most important protagonist of the academic network of Basqueologists in Salamanca was **Koldo Mitxelena**.



René Lafón



Antonio Tovar

Nevertheless, the largest centre for Basque studies outside of the Basque Country is the Center for Basque Studies at the **University of Nevada**, Reno. Anthropologist **William A. Douglass** and professor and bibliographer **Jon Bilbao** launched the **Basque Studies Program** in 1967, the seed of today's **Center for Basque Studies**. In addition to its publications in English, its faculty and its doctoral programmes, it is also known for the size and importance of its library.

Not far from Reno, the **Basque Studies** programme offers a full minor in Basque studies at **Boise State University** in Idaho, complementing the Basque lessons delivered at the Basque Museum, and the Basque classes offered to pre-school students at the **Boiseko Ikastola**. Without a doubt, Boise is the best example of the uninterrupted work carried out to further the transmission of Basque in the North American Basque diaspora.



Jon Bilbao and William A. Douglass



Boise Basque Center

Author of the text: **Unai Lauzirika**



The *Basque in the world* programme

Amongst the Basque diaspora in Argentina, the teaching of Basque never ceased, however, in the **1980s** the use and transmission of Basque almost came to a halt. In the whole of Argentina there were only 40 students of Basque. Basque speakers were disappearing, and the renewal rate was in decline.

In **1989**, on an official trip to Macachinera by Basque President Ardanza, members of the diaspora asked him to help support Basque language classes in the Basque Houses. A humble request made from afar, which was nonetheless taken into consideration by the Basque institutions.

This was the root of the *Argentinan Euskaraz* initiative, and the precursor of today's ***Euskara Munduan*** programme. From the outset, three areas of work were established: the preparation of teachers, the preparation of teaching materials, and the financing of Basque language schools.

To ensure the success of the initiative, it became a priority to train teachers in the diaspora itself, so that the pupils at the time would become the teachers of the future. In **1990**, 17 young students took part in the first Macachingo boarding school for three months. Once they completed the course, they returned to their Basque Houses to teach another 165 students. During the initial years, training lines and groups were set up, and as the teacher candidates improved their level, they progressed on to the boarding schools in Maizpide and Zornotza to further improve their Basque.

At the International Congress of Basque Communities in **1999**, seeing the success of the *Argentinan Euskaraz* programme, the USA, Venezuela and a few others expressed their interest in participating, so the *Argentinan Euskaraz* programme was expanded internationally, and the ***Euskara Munduan*** programme was created. To respond to the new situation, the ***Euskara Munduan*** teaching material was created using the experience of the professionals at the Maizpide

boarding school in Lazkao and is the only textbook to include the perspective of foreign pupils learning Basque.

Nowadays, the Etxepare Institute manages the ***Euskara Munduan*** programme and the academic network of lecturers. The classes offered through 60 Basque Houses complement and reinforce the lecturers' approach at the universities. Although each network has different objectives and audiences, the effectiveness of the ***Euskara Munduan*** programme is remarkable, as it reaches a wider public in terms of scope of use, context and offering. It draws the general public towards the activities of the Basque Houses.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that Basque language classes are the most well-established and deep-rooted activity of the diaspora, as they were the only programmes to carry on regardless. The global health crisis has also had its upsides. Society has become accustomed to online learning and Basque classes have attracted a wide audience outside the orbit of the Basque diaspora. New online groups have been set up in large cities, attracting people who would not otherwise be able to participate, due to a lack of time to study or travel.

After all, the ***Euskara Munduan*** programme connects you to a long tradition of linguistic recovery worldwide. Student, participant, member, and speaker. Whatever the aims and motivations of the students, the programme introduces the Basque language into a transnational community of learners and teaches us that the borders of the Country of the Basque language are more distant than we imagined.



Unai Lauzirika (Lekeitio, Bizkaia, 1980). Former Basque language and culture lecturer in Leipzig (Germany)



Chairs

**City University of New York
(USA)**



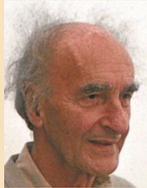
BERNARDO ATXAGA
(1953-) Writer

**University of Chicago
(USA)**



KOLDO MITXELENA
(1915-1987) Linguist

**J. W. Goethe Universität
(Frankfurt, Germany)**



EDUARDO TXILLIDA
(1924-2002) Sculptor

**University of Liverpool
(United Kingdom)**



MANUEL IRUJO
(1891-1981) Politician

**University of Reno-Nevada
(USA)**



JON BILBAO
(1914-1994) Researcher

**Boise State University
(USA)**



ELOISE GARMENDIA
(1925-1999) Basque lover

**University of Massachusetts
(USA)**



WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS
(1939-) Anthropologist

**Université Bordeaux Montaigne
(Bordeaux, France)**



JEAN HARITSCHELHAR
(1923-2013) Linguist

**CONICET
(Buenos Aires, Argentina)**



AMALE ARTETXE
(1894-1986) *Council of Nationalist Women*

In 2022an three more Chairs will be opened: Alan R. King, Elbira Zipitria and Frank Bidart



Some things worth nothing

The Basque language has an absolute capacity to define the world. Our language has shown its maturity in all areas: from academia to science, from administration to the arts. And it also has the capacity to reach far beyond our borders; for there is nothing universal that does not have a particular origin.

To achieve all that, we need a common language – a common language, which for some is a main language and for others a “*bridge language*” –, that is, the language of public or social life, because they also have another language for their private life: Arabic, Spanish, English, Nepali...

At the Etxepare Institute we work to spread the Basque language and culture internationally, promoting their knowledge and recognition. By introducing their teaching into universities; promoting academic and research programmes in Basque Studies; managing the *Euskara Munduan* Basque language teaching programme in Basque Houses; helping to spread the work of our creators and other actors; and creating displays to visualise contemporary artistic expression. After all, we agree with what Koldo Mitxelena said: *“the people who create something in the field of culture create it for themselves and for others, and, in general, those who do not create it for others do not create it for themselves either”*.

The Etxepare Institute, along with the Ramon Llull Institute, is a very odd entity among European linguistic and cultural institutes, since these others represent states and hegemonic languages. Within this context, we cannot be full members of their organisations, and we do not

have the same resources available to us. However, we still continue to collaborate with them, as we believe that we should be on a par with each other. No more, no less. Because parity between cultures is a right and our contribution cannot be made by anyone other than the Basques. We are irreplaceable.

It is clear, however, that the international teaching of Basque, both through the Etxepare networks and through other non-institutionalised channels, goes beyond a simple pedagogical exercise.

On one hand, it strengthens the community and is essential to transmit our identity, our desires and our conflicts; and on the other, it places the Basque language and culture in the field of international academic studies. And I would also add that it is totally exemplary in terms of sustainability: non-hegemonic languages will never be tempted to colonise. We are driven by a passion for sharing. The people who learn Basque around the world do not seek commercial profits or productive benefits; on the contrary, what they want is to satisfy their curiosity and further their own knowledge, opening up their perspective on the world and enriching themselves as a result. As if that were not enough!



Irene Larraza Aizpurua
Director General of the Etxepare Basque Institute