

# BASQUE IN THE WEST: EUSKARA JALGI HADI MUNDURA\*

Monika Madinabeitia Medrano  
Mondragon University/ Etxepare Euskal Institutua

## ABSTRACT

Thousands of individuals have left the Basque Country, Euskal Herria, throughout its history. In the US West they encountered a language barrier, which had an effect on their relationships and ability to settle in the host nation. Conversely, their educated children spoke English fluently, which accelerated their integration into mainstream America. Euskara, the Basque language, disappeared from many households as an outcome of this assimilation. This essay explores the history of Basque emigration and settlement in the region, the relationship between Euskara and the American West since the 19th century, and highlights some of the ongoing initiatives to advance Euskara and its usage in the region.

**KEYWORDS:** Basque, Settlement, Immigration, Euskaldun

## EL EUSKERA EN EL OESTE AMERICANO: EUSKERA SAL AL MUNDO

## RESUMEN

Miles de personas han abandonado el País Vasco, Euskal Herria, a lo largo de su historia. En el oeste estadounidense se encontraron con la barrera lingüística del inglés. Por el contrario, sus descendientes recibieron hablaban inglés con fluidez, lo cual aceleró su integración en la sociedad estadounidense. El euskara, la lengua vasca, desapareció de muchos hogares vascos como resultado de esta asimilación. Este ensayo explora la historia de la emigración vasca y el asentamiento en la región, la relación entre el euskara y el oeste americano desde el siglo XIX, y destaca algunas de las iniciativas en curso para promover el euskara y su uso en la región.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Euskera, Asentamiento, Inmigración, Euskaldun

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Basques who immigrated to the United States (versus South America) faced a language barrier, which impacted their settlement and the relationship they established in the host country. Due to their limited proficiency in English, first-generation Basques were taunted, and their employment options were limited to occupations that did not require language skills, such as sheepherding, which was a tough and lonely job that no one else wanted. Instead, their children learned English and acquired an education, which allowed them to assimilate into the culture of mainstream America. One of the outcomes of this assimilation was the loss of the Basque language, Euskara, in almost all Basque families. This paper explores the relationship of Basques in the West with Euskara since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and showcases some of the current efforts to promote Euskara in the American West.

Over the centuries, Basques have travelled in search of employment, trade, or additional colonial endeavours. Basques “were quintessential shipbuilders and mariners in fifteenth century Iberia and actually took part in the voyages of discovery and expansion of imperial interests of both [Portuguese and Spanish] Iberian powers” (Douglass 2013, 1). Similarly, “Basque whalers left the Bizkaian and Gipuzkoan coasts as early as the seventh century for their North Atlantic hunts, and documents from 1540 demonstrate that they most likely had been fishing off the coasts of Greenland for a considerable number of years” (Totoricagüena 2004a, 82). Aside from the scant Basque presence during Spain’s exploration and colonisation of the present-day states of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, one could argue that the historical beginning of Basque immigration to the United States was the California gold rush in the middle of the nineteenth century (Douglass 2016, 10). When the Basques arrived in the West, they discovered a job opportunity in the unpopular and despised profession of sheepherding. The story began in the 1850s, when a small group of Basque adventurers in the California gold fields grew disenchanted with their lot as miners and started working as shepherds. The middle period, which lasted into the early twentieth century, started in the 1870s as Basque herders spread across the American West (Lane and Douglass 1985, 1). Even though not many Basque immigrants worked as shepherds in their home country, their agrarian roots and values of tenacity, endurance, and hard work frequently assisted them in finding success in the sheep industry. A Basque sheepherder’s life was an isolated one. They would frequently be left alone for weeks or months at a time and resided in extremely rudimentary sheep waggons or tents. In the American West, being a sheepherder was considered a denigrated occupation, but since it required no education and no command of English, it gave the young Basque men economic opportunities.

By 1870, Basques had begun to spread into northern California and Nevada, where the demand for sheep to feed the new miners had increased due to the booming economies brought on by gold and silver strikes. Later, in the 1890s, Basques migrated

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to southern Idaho and Oregon and had colonised the West's open-range regions by 1910. Basques asked for assistance in the Basque Country as their herding practices in the US grew. Nonetheless, the western American open-range industry declined strongly during the 1970s, which had a direct effect on the number of Basques leaving for the US. Similarly, as the economy of the Basque Country improved and salaries became competitive, "fewer Basques wanted or needed to emigrate for economic reasons" (Toticagüena 2004a, 219) and preferred to remain in their homeland.

For almost exactly a century, Basques dominated the sheep business in the United States. However, "[b]y the 1970s, most of the second and third generation Basques had moved into different industries, occupations, and professions" (Toticagüena 2023, 2003). Their immigrant parents worked arduously to provide them with more opportunities than those they had been given, and they tried to instil in their children moral principles and good habits that, when combined with education, would give them a strong foundation for a prosperous life in the United States. Many people progressed through this process to become, for instance, managers, bankers, lawyers, and business owners (Bieter and Bieter 2003, 4). Frank Bergon, a Basque American scholar and writer, claims in his novel *Wild Game* that "Laxalt, Arrizabalaga, Ybarguengoitia were familiar names around Reno, but no longer of shepherders. The solitary Basque herders of previous generations—those tough "Black Bascos" as they were derisively called—had pretty much vanished ... Most of the Basques ... sold cars, taught school, ran banks ..." (1995, 2-3). Once Basques felt integrated into the hostland, or rather fully assimilated, they started to feel that they were lacking in the Basque aspect of their identity. That is why, the same way the first generation needed meeting places, like boarding houses, to feel "Home Away from Home" (Echeverria 1999), subsequent generations started to build Basque Centers, Clubs, and alike to engage with their own ethnic ancestry. These are the hubs where Basque American traditions consciously began to develop and have continued to do so ever since. Through dances, picnics, and sporting events, Basque traditions were preserved, ensuring the survival of cultural elements and paving the way for the third generation. Besides, in the 1960s and later, it became less fashionable to be American alone in what many people perceived as a bland, vanilla culture, and it became more popular to be from somewhere, to have an identity that would set one apart and make one more recognisable. Because of this, the third generation, unlike the first two, was able to display their ethnic pride publicly (Bieter and Bieter 2003, 3-4, 5).

Modern-day Basques are assimilated citizens who proudly assert both their Basque and American identities. As expressed by the fictional Basque American character Jack Irigaray, in *Wild Game*, when he was a kid, "they were all just Americans, not even hyphenated ones. His two little girls—who sang Basque songs and danced the jota at the Zazpiak Bat Club, were more conscious of their ethnicity. When Jack was their age, he was just another Westerner—Nevadan" (3). Irigaray's children show how later generations benefited from the effort of previous Basques to raise the younger generation in an environment of ethnic pride and thus give them the opportunity to be proud of their roots. However, many Basque Americans did not speak Euskara at this point, as English had taken over as their



primary language. The novel *Shoshone Mike* (1987), also by Bergon, exemplifies the loss of Basque from first to second generation Basques, which was primarily prompted by the need to assimilate into society as quickly as possible and appear to be American in the community's eyes to avoid discrimination. At the time, Basques were frequently disparaged and did not benefit from the current recognition. Such experiences adversely influenced their feelings towards their own origins, as is typical in migrant settings.

There are many and varied political, social, and economic factors that encouraged Basque migration, but the following could be highlighted: economic hardships in the homeland, demography, rural exodus, the French Revolution (1789), Napoleonic (1799-1815) and Carlist Wars (1833-1876), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the ensuing Franco dictatorship (1939-1975), the conscription laws that required all young men to serve four years in the Spanish army, or the loss of Spanish colonies like Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. However, according to the renown Basque anthropologist Julio Caro Baroja (1985, 21-22), the primogeniture inheritance system used in Basque territories was the main reason that drove Basques from their native land. An intact farm could only be inherited by one sibling from a family, and it could not be divided. Children who would not inherit were sent to or joined the Catholic Church, while others worked on ships, joined the military, or moved to newly colonised lands. While Basques from rural areas were more likely to immigrate to the USA, Basques with some type of formal education were more likely to do so to Latin America, where their command of Spanish was clearly advantageous (Totoricagüena 2008, 44; Lasagabaster 2008, 67). Those Basques who left for America were called "Amerikanuak" (Douglass and Bilbao 1975, 1) by those in the Old World.

The Old World, or Basque Country, is a small region with a relatively small population—just over three million people. The three provinces in France are referred to as the North, *Iparralde*, and the four provinces in Spain are known as the South, *Hegoalde*. Lapurdi, Zuberoa, and Low Navarre, on the one hand, and Araba, Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, and Nafarroa, on the other, have long been attached to France and Spain, respectively. The French-Spanish border has marked a deep division within the country, especially since 1659. The status and development of Basque have been particularly affected by this administrative division. In addition, *Hegoalde* has been distinguished administratively in the current Spanish state since the Constitution of 1978. The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) of Euskadi is made up of the three provinces (Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Araba) according to the Statute of Autonomy adopted following the 1979 referenda, and there is a unique autonomous statute for Nafarroa (Totoricagüena 2004a, 55-56). These divisions have led to identity conflicts among the Basque people, and they have likewise affected their linguistic expression, both at home and in the diaspora. Although Basque has been co-official with Spanish in Euskadi since as late as 1978, there are ongoing debates and tensions regarding the achievement of full recognition and equal status of Euskara as an official language within Spain. Additionally, Basque has been co-official only in a small part of the north of Nafarroa since 1982 and non-official in *Iparralde*. This has had implications within the homeland and among the Basque



communities in the US West. Furthermore, speaking Euskara was a crime during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–1975). The use of Euskara was forbidden in public settings such as religious services, schools, publications, radio, and the streets. This repression against the language had repercussions; for instance, Euskara was being lost by many families out of fear and the language was not transmitted in some generations. Euskara survived the dictatorship, but because of the repression, it continues to face many challenges.

Although Euskara plays a crucial role in preserving the Basque cultural identity, acting as a symbol of resilience and resistance against external forces throughout history, and although centuries ago Basque was the predominant language, nowadays, however, only part of the population speaks it. The last Sociolinguistic Survey<sup>1</sup> indicates that in *Iparralde*, the use of Basque has been decreasing since 1997. Gipuzkoa is the most Basque-speaking province (30.6%), followed by Bizkaia (9.4%), Nafarroa (5.9%), *Iparralde* (4.9%), and finally Araba (4.8%). Although Gipuzkoa shows the highest rate, its use has also diminished in the last 10 years, while it has increased in Araba (“Hizkuntzen” 2021). The provinces of Lapurdi, and particularly Bizkaia, which received a large number of immigrants before the end of the 19th century, include a large number of people who are completely ignorant of Euskara. In Nafarroa and Araba, the loss of Basque took place mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Zuberoa, Low Navarre, and the interior areas of Lapurdi have a very low population density and have been a source of emigration themselves (Zuazo 1995, 5).

Basque immigration into the US took place during a time when the Basque language had a low social status and was seen as the language of the uneducated rural populations due to the language attitudes of the French and Spanish regimes. Hence, migrants carried with them these attitudes. The shift in attitudes experienced in the homeland after the 1960s was not something that earlier migrants experienced or witnessed. That is, they did not experience the social advancement and prestige that Euskara now enjoys in their native land (Totoricagüena 2008, 45). This lack of exposure to the positive changes in attitudes towards the Basque language may have contributed to the creation of negative stereotypes and beliefs among earlier migrants. As a result, they may have continued to view the language as inferior or less valuable, even as approaches back home began to shift. Similarly, this perception may have influenced their decision not to pass on the language to their children, particularly at a time when, as previously explained, Basques were discriminated against and consequently tried to assimilate into the mainstream as soon as possible. This assimilation process involved adopting the dominant language of the new country, further marginalising the Basque language within their own community. Additionally, economic and social pressures may have played a role in discouraging the transmission of the Basque language, as speaking the hegemonic

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<sup>1</sup> A street survey that analyses linguistic competence and the use of Euskara in the streets. It is conducted every five years. This one was conducted in 2021 and its results were published in 2023.



language was seen as necessary for upward mobility and integration into society. Nowadays, though, Basque Americans are well-respected and recognised citizens within mainstream America, and their attitude towards Euskara has changed. Native speakers, *euskaldun zaharrak*, feel not only safe but also proud to use Euskara. Learners and neo-speakers, *euskaldun berriak*, are likewise proud and motivated to learn Basque.

Nonetheless, the processes that Euskara has lived through and is still undergoing in the homeland also affect the motivation of *euskaldun zaharrak* and potential learners, or *euskaldun berriak*, in the US. One of such processes is its standardisation. Basque was primarily a spoken language with significant dialectal variation for most of its recorded history (Zuazo 1995, 22). Basque is a minority language, a linguistic isolate, unrelated to either French or Spanish, and lacks the literary heritage of these other languages, unlike other neighbouring minority languages like Catalan and Galician. The ruling class of the Kingdom of Navarre, which ruled over the region for eight centuries (816-1620), never made Basque the official language of the court. In the sixteenth century, a small amount of writing in Basque started to appear. In an effort to make their texts readable by as many readers as possible, authors typically wrote in the dialect of the area in which they lived while using the Roman alphabet and borrowing words and spellings from one another. Modernising reformers and nationalist elites turned the status of Basque into a point of interest in the late nineteenth century, making both its declining use and its “unregulated” nature a problem. Standardising Basque appeared to be a necessary step towards becoming a modern, logical country, as evidenced by the growing push for Basque-language education, industrial growth, and potential state-building on the horizon (Urla). Although Euskaltzaindia, the Royal Basque Language Academy, was established in 1918 and tasked with standardization, these efforts were long-term hampered by the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) and dictatorship. Only in 1964 did a standard orthography gain widespread acceptance, and in 1968 Euskaltzaindia started developing guidelines for standardising different aspects of grammar. Koldo Mitxelena, a renowned linguist and Academy member, was given the assignment. Mitxelena and the academicians decided to create the *Euskara Batua* [Unified Basque] amalgamated standard, which was “nobody’s spoken language” at the time (Hualde and Zuazo 2007, 7). The force behind *Batua* was not the financial or social support of a group of already-proficient speakers, but rather a grassroots Basque schooling and adult literacy movement, which served as its promoter and initial means of dissemination. It would later come to represent both *euskaldun berriak* and the movement to restore national languages (Urla et al. 2018, 26).

Due to the complexity and breadth of Euskara *Batua*’s effects on native speakers, opinions on this standardisation process differ among Basque speakers. While *Batua* has contributed to the language’s unification and guaranteed its continued use in media and education, it has also sparked discussions about identity and the preservation of various dialects. The *euskaldun zaharrak* in the diaspora have also been impacted by this controversy. They brought their own dialects to the US and, hence, find it extremely challenging to communicate in *Batua*. As a result, many native speakers, particularly those who have not been schooled in





Basque, believe that their Basque is inferior and often avoid using it. Both the US West and *euskaldun zaharrak* in the homeland are impacted by this. Additionally, *Batua* is the language learned by Basques in the diaspora, making communication in Euskara amongst natives and learners difficult. This language barrier between *Batua* and *euskaldun zaharrak* creates a divide within the Basque community as it hinders effective communication and understanding. Furthermore, the difficulty of using *Batua* for native Basques in the diaspora adds another layer of complexity to the motivation to use and foster it.

Another area of discussion is the terminology used when referring to Basqueness. The terms “Basque” in English or “vasco” in Spanish imply Basqueness and ethnic identity and encompass a broader range of aspects related to identity. On the contrary, the term *euskalduna* usually specifically refers to someone who speaks Euskara. Therefore, being Basque does not automatically make one *euskalduna* unless the term is used interchangeably with “Basque” or “vasco”. In summary, while “Basque” and “vasco” can encompass various aspects of identity and the Basque Country, *euskalduna* is often used to specifically discuss and identify the people and their language; “This primal identifying factor invokes one of the strongest indicators of Basque cultural uniqueness, the language” (Totoricagüena 2004b, 20). This emphasis on language can sometimes lead to a perceived hierarchy where those who are native speakers or fluent in Basque may be seen as (more) authentically Basque than those who are not.<sup>2</sup>

The motivation to speak Euskara in diaspora settings is typically based on identity and strongly held emotional ties to ancestors. The motivation might also be related to becoming “more Basque,” and for some, this would fill a void of feeling less strongly Basque than Basques in their homeland or the diaspora. Although instrumental rewards do not exist, learning and using Euskara have intrinsic rewards. Notwithstanding this, diaspora Basques maintain Euskara for the same psychological and emotional reasons that they uphold their ethnic identity. Maintaining a chain of language transmission is frequently an important aspect of defining one’s identity and has a high status within diaspora communities. In the case of Basque, speaking Euskara identifies a person as Basque and *euskalduna*. In addition to the sense of belonging and cultural pride it brings, speaking Euskara also serves as a way for the diaspora Basques to connect with their roots and maintain a strong connection to their heritage, further enriching their understanding of their own culture and history (Totoricagüena 2008, 44-47).

A person’s affective connection to a language has a positive impact on the outcome. Today, a sizable portion of immigrants and subsequent generations of Basques in the diaspora of the West have a very positive attitude towards ethnic identification and actively promote the idea that maintaining the ability to speak Euskara is an essential part of being Basque. This strong emotional attachment

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<sup>2</sup> Although this is not the topic of discussion in this essay, it is important to recognise that Basque identity in the diaspora is multifaceted and encompasses various aspects beyond just language.



to their language contributes to their motivation and dedication to learning and preserving it, resulting in a higher success rate in language acquisition compared to those who lack such a connection. Additionally, this sense of cultural pride fosters a sense of belonging and identity among the Basque diaspora, reinforcing their commitment to passing down their language to future generations. This deep-rooted connection to their language not only enriches their sense of self but also strengthens their bond with other Basque communities around the world.

Similarly, the fact that Euskara is considered one of the most enigmatic languages in the world due to its lack of demonstrable relationships with other languages currently adds to its high status in the diaspora. Linguists and philologists have extensively studied Euskara, but to date, no conclusive evidence or theories about its origins have been widely accepted. The survival of Euskara is “one of the most extraordinary of historical phenomena. It is the unique case in Europe of the preservation of an indigenous language that through several millennia has resisted invasions and influences...” (Tovar 1957, 17). In other words, the uniqueness of Euskara sparks curiosity and fascination among the diaspora Basques, making it a source of pride and identity.

Calculating the number of Basques living in the USA at any one time in the past is not an easy task due to the fact that they have traditionally been counted as Spanish or French in censuses. Unlike in previous censuses, the ones in 1980, 1990, and 2000 allowed Basque Americans to define themselves as Basque. The results showed that with each decade, higher numbers of people claimed Basque identity. The figures of the 2000 census reflected that the presence of Basque Americans was significant in the West, with approximately 58,000 persons—10,000 more with respect to the 1990 census—in the entire United States, out of which almost 21,000 were in California, followed by Idaho (6,637) and Nevada (6,096). California has the largest Basque population within state boundaries. However, Basques are simply one more ethnic group of hundreds and are not as noticeable as they are in Idaho or Nevada, where the overall population is much lower. The last American census to give a detailed profile of the Basque American presence was in 2000. Unfortunately, the approach was abandoned in the 2010 census (Lasagabaster 2008, 67-68; Douglass 2016, 5). The difficulty of calculating the number of Basques makes it even more challenging to estimate the number of Basque speakers.

While Euskara or any other Basque identity-related signs were strictly prohibited in *Hegoalde*, in the Basque West, the *Euskaldun Ordua* (Basque Hour) radio programme was created by Basques in Buffalo, Wyoming, and it debuted on Sundays in 1956 with announcers who volunteered their services and funding from the Basques in the Buffalo region. Every Sunday at noon for forty years, the programme included music as well as regional and national news in Euskara. In Idaho, Julian Lachiondo and Cecil Jayo started airing radio programmes in the Basque language in the early 1950s. Espe (Espectación) Alegria presided over “The Basque Program” from Boise, Idaho, from 1956 to 1982. After publishing a manual on how to learn Basque in English in 1965, Oregon native Joseph V. Eiguren authored one of the first English-Basque dictionaries in 1974. Both the University of Nevada, Reno’s Basque Studies Program and the Idaho Basque Studies Center’s classes in





Boise began operations in 1967 and 1974, respectively (Totoricagüena 2008, 58). In the 1970s, Boise State University's Basque Studies department took over 100 students from Idaho to Oñati, a small village in Gipuzkoa, to immerse them in Euskara ("Looking Back" 2015, 2).<sup>3</sup> Many of the participants are fluent Basque speakers today and are strongly involved in the Basque community. In 1973, Boise, Idaho's first *ikastola*<sup>4</sup> was established as an after-school full immersion programme for elementary school-aged kids. Boise's *ko Ikastola* is now a full-immersion Basque language school for kids aged four to six that was established in 1998. From Monday through Friday, kids go to school and spend the entire day learning and playing in Euskara (Totoricagüena 2008, 58-59).

Government policies in the Basque Country have been working to increase language and identity awareness in the US West to preserve the cultural heritage associated with Euskara. In 1948, the various leaders present at the VII Eusko Ikaskuntza (Basque Studies Society) Congress in *Iparralde*, agreed that international action was necessary to advance Euskara. Due to this, Eusko Ikaskuntza established the International Day of Euskara that same year. The Basque Government in Exile maintained "delegations" abroad during the Franco dictatorship, and strong ties existed with the immigrant Basque communities, which mainly addressed questions of political identity and the restoration of democracy in Spain. The creation of cultural policies for the diaspora in the Departments of Culture and Education and in the office of the Presidency in Euskadi, all occurred after Franco's death in 1975. Relationships between the Basque Centers and Euskadi underwent a qualitative change in the 1990s because of increased activity, funding, engagement, and communication with Basques living all over the world (Totoricagüena 2008, 56-57). The First Congress of Basques was held in Donostia in 1982, one year after the Basque Autonomous Community government was established. 203 delegates from nine countries attended and requested funding for materials and teaching aids, as well as for Euskara teachers in the diaspora to receive pedagogical training. A Basque Government Advisor for Relations with Basque Communities and Centers was appointed in 1985. The Basque Government's Department of Culture took control of relations with the Basque Centers, or *Euskal Etxeak*, in 1986, and in 1988, the homeland began funding their cultural activities (Totoricagüena 2008, 59).

The interactions between the Basque Autonomous Government and the Basque Communities Abroad are governed by Public Law 8/1994, which was passed on May 27, 1994. The right to the supply of published and audiovisual material designed to facilitate the transmission of knowledge of Basque history, culture, language, and social reality is granted to Basques who reside outside of their country of origin. This material is intended for display and distribution among Basque communities. The Basque Centers are to be given resources so they can

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<sup>3</sup> Inspired by this initiative, in 2023, a programme called Ateak Ireki (Open Doors) was offered to over 30 youths from the US (<https://www.ateakireki.eus/?lang=en>).

<sup>4</sup> Basque school.



schedule Basque language classes within their budgetary constraints. The body of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country's public administration regulates how members of the Basque community can apply for and obtain certificates of Basque language proficiency (Totoricagüena 2008, 61). Currently, HABE<sup>5</sup> oversees these certificates.

Argentine Basque initiatives wishing to promote Euskara led to HABE's initial involvement with the diaspora. *Argentinan Euskaraz* (Euskara in Argentina) began in 1990 as a result of a request for assistance from the Basque Government made by the Federation of Argentine Basque Entities (FEVA) in order to hire language teachers and produce materials in the diaspora. After a decade of success teaching Basque in Argentina, the Department of Culture expanded the programme by making it accessible to other Basque Centers worldwide through HABE (Totoricagüena 2008, 62). Since 2018, the Etxepare Euskal Institutua (Etxepare Basque Institute)<sup>6</sup> has been in charge of this programme, now known as *Euskara Munduan* (Basque in the World), led by Kinku Zinkunegi since its creation. *Euskara Munduan* goes in line with one of the missions of the Etxepare Euskal Institutua (EEI), which is to encourage Basque language literacy and use among Basque communities worldwide.

Despite the fact that *Euskara Munduan* is not as popular in the US as it is in South America, particularly in Argentina, EEI has other programmes that support the instruction of Basque. The ones that are available in the West include, on the one hand, teaching Basque in the Euskal Etxeak thanks to collaborations with NABO (North American Basque Organization) and on the other, in higher education via partnerships with various universities. Through the programme of lecturers, *irakurleak*, the University of California Los Angeles, Boise State University, Idaho, and the University of California Santa Barbara offer Basque language and Basque culture lessons, totalling nearly 240 students (Irakurleak 2023). Similarly, the Eloisa Garmendia Chair at BSU, the Jon Bilbao Chair at the Center for Basque

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<sup>5</sup> HABE (Helduen Alfabetatze eta Berreuskalduntzeako Erakundea, or Institute for Adult Literacy and Basque Language and Regulation of the Basque, for the instruction of the Basque language and literacy to adults). A network of adult-educational Basque language schools was established in the Basque homeland after Franco's death in 1975 by organisations like AEK, a coordinator for the instruction of the Basque language and literacy. The institution was established by the Basque Government in 1981. Through initiatives to train Basque language instructors, after-work language programmes, the development of pedagogical materials for both children and adults, the establishment of numerous publications, and the production of radio programmes, HABE encourages the learning of the Basque language and literacy, particularly for adults. Through the Department of Culture of the Basque Autonomous Community, they are also responsible for promoting and coordinating Basque language programmes outside Euskadi (Totoricagüena 2008, 61).

<sup>6</sup> The Etxepare Basque Institute is a public institution. The law establishing and governing EEI was approved by the Basque Parliament in 2007, and it was introduced in 2010. Since that time, Etxepare has worked to promote international cooperation, encourage exchange and communication between creators, professionals, stakeholders, and public institutions, and increase the international presence and visibility of the Basque language and contemporary Basque creativity (<https://www.etxepare.eus/en/who-we-are>).



Studies (University of Nevada, Reno), and the Frank Bidart Chair (California State University Bakersfield) promote academic research and specialised education in Basque Studies, primarily at the graduate or postgraduate level. Specialised teachers, artists, or creators are selected to participate at the partner universities.

The main objectives of EEI are the promotion, dissemination, and global projection of Euskara and Basque culture. It operates within the general confines of the foreign policy of the Basque Government as well as the linguistic and cultural norms of the Basque Autonomous Community. In collaboration with other national and international organisations, the mission of EEI includes fostering interest in the Basque language and culture throughout the world. In order to do so, EEI has assumed the responsibilities of the majority of international programs for Basque language and culture that were being developed by the Directorate of Relations with Basque Collectivities and by the Department of Culture.

Etxepare Euskal Institutua takes its name from the poet and writer Bernart Etxepare. His book, *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae* (1545), was the first book published in Euskara. A prologue by the author and fifteen verse compositions on various topics, including praise for the Basque language, make up this relatively small book that is written in the Lower Navarrese dialect. The last two compositions are specifically about the Basque language. Etxepare tried to show that Euskara was “as good as any tongue to write in” and at the same time, he hoped “upcoming generations might be motivated to perfect it” (Altuna 2012, 12-13). Etxepare believed that Euskara had the potential to be just as effective and worthy as any other language for writing and communication and thus tried to promote it. He wrote “Euskara, jalgi hadi mundura” (Basque, go forth into the world!), which matches the motto of EEI: Euskara. Kultura. Mundura. (Basque. Culture. To the World.)

EEI's mission goes hand in hand with Etxepare's vision and vindication. By making Basque accessible to those in the American West, EEI not only internationally promotes the instruction, study, and use of Basque, but it also enhances its international recognition, which positively impacts its prestige and location in the world map. In doing so, more Basques in the West are likely to feel interested and engaged in learning and using the language and creating stronger identity connections. This increased interest and commitment can lead to a (re) vitalization of Basque culture and traditions in the American West, fostering a sense of belonging and pride among the Basque community, which also enriches global linguistic and cultural exchange.

However, although all actions and initiatives play a crucial role in the promotion and use of Basque, none of this would be possible without the effort and active engagement of the many volunteers, teachers, Basque speakers, and Basque learners in the US West. Their passion and commitment contribute significantly to the vitality and growth of the language and create a strong sense of community among Basque speakers and learners. This collaborative effort has not only preserved the language but also fostered a sense of pride and identity among its speakers and learners, ensuring that Basque continues to flourish for generations to come. As a result, Basque not only thrives within its native region but also gains recognition and appreciation on a global scale. It is thanks to the many Basque speakers and



learners in the diaspora of the American West that every time they use it or learn it, Basque becomes less of a minority language worldwide. It is also thanks to them that Euskara goes forth into the world, Mundura.

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