

# ***NOR-NORI-NORK PRESENTE ETA SUBJUNTIBO: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND HUMOUR IN THE BAC***<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to discover what the role of a satiric program in language revitalization in the Basque Autonomous Community is and how laughter is connected with language ideology. For that purpose two sketches of the program *Vaya Semanita*, which depict what looks like a regular adult Basque classroom, were analyzed. Also, messages from the official forum web site were analyzed and compared with the sketches. The results show that a satiric program presents a common reality to its audience and at the same time it raises awareness towards the importance of the linguistic shift in the Basque Autonomous Community.

**Keywords:** *Language revitalization, Humour, Identity, Ingroup relationship*

## **1. Introduction**

The Basque Country is on the coast of the Bay of Biscay and straddles the Eastern Pyrenees. It has seven provinces, three in south-west corner of France (Lapurdi, Zuberoa, Navarre Behera) and four in the south Pyrenees area in Spain (Gipuzkoa, Biscay, Araba, Navarre). The term Basque Country refers to the Basque speech community and it occupies three political units: the Basque Autonomous Community (henceforth BAC) and Navarre in Spain, and the Atlantic Pyrenees Department in France. The data shown in this paper were gathered from a TV program and its official web site forum of the BAC.

The BAC consists of three provinces (Araba, Biscay and Gipuzkoa) and it is an official bilingual community as a result of the implementation of the Basic Law on the Standardization of Basque in 1982. Basque is regarded as a minority language and Spanish as a majority language (Fishman 1991, Cenoz and Perales 1997, Lasagabaster 2004). Efforts on language revitalization have been made not only by public institutions but also by private institutions as well (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 261). Basque language measures are a hotly debated issue, regarded by some as insufficient and as too demanding by others (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 261). Without entering this controversy, this paper aims at providing a further dimension on how language ideologies in the BAC are reflected and conflicted in a satiric TV program. The primary aim of this paper is thus to analyze what the role of a satiric program in the linguistic shift of the BAC is. This TV program depicts what looks like a regular adult classroom of Basque. In this classroom, stereotypes of learners of Basque are provided. Language ideologies are presented through laughter, drawing a comparison between real life and fiction. A TV program was chosen because according to Echeverria (2003) in order to understand language ideologies we should examine “not only the school and home domains, but also popular culture and the public spheres as well” (Echeverria 2003: 351). The official webpage forum was also analyzed in order to answer the questions of who the audience of the program is, and how they respond to the content of the program.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nor-nori-nork presente eta subjuntibo*: Title of the song used for the introduction of the sketches analyzed. It refers to the one of the conjugations of auxiliary verbs in Basque.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Background to Basque efforts on language revitalization in the BAC.

The Basque language is of unknown origin. It is not an Indo-European language, and for the time being, the efforts made to link it with other languages such as Berber, Georgian or Iberian, have been unfruitful. Also, hypotheses about the Basque language origin remain inconclusive (Cenoz and Perales 2001: 91). Basque has undergone a process of Standardization since 1970. This process is an effort on language revitalization as Basque has six main dialects and, although it was spoken in most areas of the Basque Country, it had never been used at the institutional level (Cenoz and Perales 2001: 91). In Spain, Basque was prohibited during Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975). After his death, the Spanish Government approved a Statute of Autonomy in 1978 and established by referendum a Basque Government.

In 1979 the Spanish Government issued a *Decree on Bilingualism* and declared Spanish the official language of Spain establishing further that in the regions with indigenous languages, public schools had to teach these languages for at least three to five hours a week during primary and secondary education (Fishman 1991: 150). In 1982, the Basque Government adopted the *Basic Law on the Standardization of the Basque Language*, which recognizes the right of all BAC citizens to know and use both Basque and Spanish. Further on, this law established some measures for the process of Basquization of the administration. According to this law, different stages have been established and also several plans have been issued. The principal addressees of these plans are civil servants, non-University teaching-staff, health-care staff and University teaching staff. The first stage (years 1990-1995) was focused on civil servants working at the Administration (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 265). Non-University teaching-staff followed a different plan (Decree to regulate the usage of the official languages of the Basque Country of non-University staff) and it was implemented in 1983 (Cenoz and Perales 2001: 94, Etxeberria 2004: 4). Health-care staff was affected by another plan stated in 2005 ([www.osanet.net](http://www.osanet.net))<sup>2</sup>, and the teaching staff of the University of the Basque Country started their plan in October 2007 ([www.ibercampus.es](http://www.ibercampus.es))<sup>3</sup>.

In the next subsection I will explain the process of Basquisition regarding Basque schooling and adult Basque education. Even though the purpose of this paper is not to provide a detailed description of Basque education I provide some data on Basque education because according to Cenoz and Perales (1997: 262) it “explains the increase in the number of Basque speakers and the demand for a Basque-speaking administration”. At the same time education can be seen as an “example of successful Basquisition” (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 262). In addition to that, the section on adult education will be explained because the setting of the program analyzed is an adult private school of Basque.

#### 2.1.1 Schooling in the Basque Autonomous Community

As stated above, Basque education is considered a successful model of Basquisition that according to Cenoz and Perales (1997: 262) should be taken as such by other sectors.

In the BAC there are three educational models (A, B, D). In model A Spanish is the language of instruction and Basque is taken as a subject (three to five hours a week). Model B is the bilingual model in which the two languages are used as languages of instruction. In model D the language of instruction is Basque, whereas Spanish is taught as a subject (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 262; Echeverria 2003: 353; Cenoz and Perales 2001: 98-99; Reichelt 2006:

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<sup>2</sup> [www.osanet.net](http://www.osanet.net): Official Health-care service web site in the BAC.

<sup>3</sup> [www.ibercampus.net](http://www.ibercampus.net): Web site for university students and university staff.

5). The following tables (below) provide an idea of the dramatic change in terms of enrolment in each model that can be taken as a reflection of the linguistic shift development:

Years	Module A	Module B	Module D
1982	75%	12%	17.7%
1995/96	34%	28.8%	36.8%

Table 1: Distribution of student in Primary and Secondary education since 1982 to 1996 (Cenoz and Perales 2001: 99)

Years	Module A	Module B	Module D
2007/8	20%	25%	56.1%

Table 2: Distribution of students in Primary and Secondary education year 2007/2008<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1.2 Basque Adult education in the BAC

Adult classes of Basque usually take place in special academies called *euskaltegiak*. These can be public or private. *Euskaltegiak* were created to teach Basque as a second language, although they also provide classes to native speakers of Basque who are literate only in Spanish (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 265).

Courses are organized by two institutions: the Basque Institute of Public Administration (IVAP/HAEE) and the Basque Institute for the Basquisition of Adults (HABE) (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 265, Cenoz and Perales 2001: 102).

The classes are aimed at passing the exams of proficiency in Basque. The Basque Administration provides some levels of linguistic ability, which are called *perfiles* (profiles), and consist of four different levels. There is also an official exam or Certificate of Proficiency in Basque, called EGA.

The courses are directed to teach the four basic linguistic skills (listening comprehension, oral production, reading comprehension and written production). According to Celce Murcia et al. “the final goal of the learning process is to achieve communicative competence in Basque - and this includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, actional, discourse and strategic competencies” (Celce Murcia et al. 1995 cited in Cenoz and Perales 1997: 266).

Learning a second language is usually regarded as a difficult process. In this process, students develop attitudes towards the given second language and towards the process of learning. In the next section I explain the different attitudes towards language and the different languages ideologies that circulate in the BAC among adults and children as well.

## 2.2. Language and ideology in the BAC

As the data analyzed are linked with adult education, television and humour, this section is divided into three subsections. In the first, I explain the relationship between schooling and language identity. In the second, I describe the concept of television as a means of transmission of ideology. In the third section, the connections between humour and identity will be unfolded.

### 2.2.1 Schooling as means of transmission of language ideology

Nationalist discourses were born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These discourses regard language as a marker of ethnic or national identity (Heller 2003: 474). According to Heller (2003: 474),

<sup>4</sup> The data regarding the academic year 2007/2008 were provided by Juan José Aguirrezabala, Educative Innovation director of the Basque Government at that moment, in an official communicate to the newspaper *El Diario Vasco* released on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2007 ([www.eldiariovasco.com](http://www.eldiariovasco.com))

dominant groups have used discourses linking identity, language, community and nation to legitimate their actions.

In addition, following Bourdieu, schools reproduce dominant discourses and at the same time are reflections of the power relations of a given society (cited in Blackledge 2001: 345). Thus, schooling can be considered as a means of transmission of nationalist language ideology.

According to Woolard and Schieffelin (1994: 55-56), language ideologies are important because not only do they embody ideas about language, but also they are connected with identity, morality and epistemology.

Echeverria (2003: 365) in her study about language ideology in the BAC shows that the language used at home and at school is a determinant factor on which the language ideologies of the secondary students of her study depend. However, she claims that her findings cannot be explained only by appealing to the presence or absence of Basque in the school or home, but rather “it is the social meanings ascribed to Basque-and Spanish- in those and other domains that matter” (Echeverria 2003: 365). Lasagabaster (2004) documented that university students in the BAC (specifically in the Basque Country University) had very different attitudes towards Basque, Spanish or English depending on their L1. Those students with Basque as L1 had a better attitude towards Basque than students with Spanish as L1. However, those with Spanish as L1 had better attitudes not only towards Spanish but towards English as well. Cenoz and Perales (1997, 2001) demonstrate that civil servants make a distinction between attitudes towards language and attitudes towards the process of Basquisition. In their article, teachers in *euskaltegiak* perceived the attitudes of civil servants towards Basque as quite positive (48% positive, 20% neutral, 32% negative). However, their attitudes towards the learning of Basque (33% positive, 28% neutral, 39% negative) or towards the process of Basquisition (18% positive, 23% neutral, and 59% negative) are not so positively perceived (Cenoz and Perales 1997: 268).

### 2.2.2 Media as a means of transmission of identity.

According to Bourdieu (1996: 38) television is a universe where “social actors- even when they seem to be important, free and independent [...] are the puppets of a necessity that we must understand, of a structure that we must unearth and bring to light” (Bourdieu 1996: 38). This structure is further described as the relationship between the television producers and the audience rating system that makes producers follow market pressures which are unnoticed by the consumer (Bourdieu 1996: 66-67). Bourdieu claims that television wields an especially pernicious form of symbolic violence (1996: 17). By symbolic violence is meant a violence which is exerted with tacit complicity between the so-called victims and agents, taking into account that none of them are conscious of it. Moreover, Bourdieu shows that part of the symbolic functioning of television relies on the fact that it offers “something for everybody” by calling attention to elements that would engage the whole audience (Bourdieu 1996: 18). By depicting collective activities, television generates homogenization, which, in turn, smoothes and depoliticizes these activities (Bourdieu 1996: 44). Bourdieu wants to demonstrate that television does more than recording reality, and he goes as far as saying that television creates reality as, ultimately, the social world is “primarily described-and in a sense prescribed- by television” (Bourdieu 1996: 22).

Following Lindstroth (2002: 212), the link between media and nationalism is a common one. Television in particular can be seen as a vehicle of nationalist sentiments (Lindstroth 2002: 212). In addition, Lindstroth (2002: 212) argues that it is important to consider the images as well as who broadcasts them.

Numerous indigenous European linguistic minorities have claimed their right to have special, decentralized television services (Hourigan 2001: 77). Hourigan (2001) claims that

indigenous linguistic minority campaigns can be affected by the symbolic status of the given language. In his study about Welsh, Scots, Gaelic, Faroese and Irish language movements, Hourigan comments on the fact that there is not a direct relationship between language and nationalist discourses in all indigenous minority languages, i.e. Scots Gaelic and Scottish nationalism (Hourigan 2001: 84). However, other linguistic minorities attained a very strong sense of nationhood to their language, i.e. the Welsh (Hourigan 2001: 83). Hourigan (2001) building on Sullivan (1988), claims that Basque groups “are the most fervent in asserting their distinct ethnicity although Basque identity has weaker links to the Basque language than the indigenous languages in Catalonia or Galicia” (Hourigan 2001: 83).

Following Watson (1996), the Basque government included as an essential target “the creation of Basque infrastructure of mass media” that had the double aim of promoting citizenship and strengthening Basque national identity (Watson 1996: 260).

As far as the Basque Television (Euskal Telebista, EITB) is concerned, Linstroth (2002: 214) shows that popular programs on Basque Television depict traditional and folkloric activities. There are Basque game shows, cooking shows, live concerts in Basque, cartoons in Basque and many other programs. Among them, Basque comedy soap operas and other satiric programs are very popular.

### *2.2.3 Humour, language and identity*

Humour does not lend itself for a definition, in part because there are many aspects to humour. As a consequence, there are theories of humour coming from linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology and theatre (Moran and Massan 1999). According to Krikmann (2006: 27), humour theories have been divided traditionally into three main branches. The first branch regards cognitive theories of incongruity, inconsistency or contradiction, and bisociation. The second branch includes theories of superiority, disparagement, criticism or hostility and they rely on the accentuation of negative attitudes of the producer towards its target. Theories of the third branch are the so-called psychoanalytic theories, which include theories of release, relief, relaxation and they are focused on the *recipient of humour* or the psychological effect of humour. Due to the limited scope of this paper, in order to narrow the task, it has been followed the advice provided by Coser who argues that “meaning of humour is to be detected primarily in the common concerns of the group” (Coser 1960, cited in Moran and Massan 1999: 36).

In his study about jokes in Bosnia, Vucetic (2004: 8) claims that individuals who share similar social identities are likely to share also perceptions, beliefs, values and interests. Moreover, intergroup humour is also used to alleviate the fear of the unknown. Indeed, Vucetic shows that “jokes are often about identity and that identity is often about jokes” (Vucetic 2004: 7).

In addition to that perspective, following Bakhtin (1984), Vitanova (2005: 165) argues that laughter and irony can be regarded as “acts of resistance towards oppressive utterances”.

In this paper I am interested in the role of humour as a tool to define *in-group* relationships and language ideology. In other words, the relationship between language and national identity expressed through a satiric program.

## **3. Methodology and data**

This paper was written in order to discover how language and identity are expressed through a satiric program. The major research purpose is to find what the role of a satiric program in language revitalization in the BAC is.

For this purpose, sketches of the popular satiric program, *Vaya Semanita*, offered by the Basque Television (Euskal Telebista, EITB) were selected. First of all, I would like to point out that EITB has two channels, EITB1 which broadcasts entirely in Basque, and EITB2 which broadcasts in Spanish. *Vaya Semanita* is broadcast by EITB2; therefore the language of the sketches is Spanish. The sketches were downloaded from the webpage youtube.com.

*Vaya Semanita* consists of a series of sketches that satirically describe the daily life in the BAC. The selected sketches depict what looks like a regular adult class of Basque in a *Euskaltegi* in the BAC. The data consists of two sketches.

In addition to the sketches, the forum offered by the official EITB webpage of *Vaya Semanita* was also analyzed in order to compare the points of view presented in the forum with those in the sketches. A forum was chosen in order to know who the followers are and their opinions. The forum analyzed contains opinions of fans posted in the web from December 2006 to December 2007. The sketches and the forum messages were compared in order to find out similarities and differences.

The sketches and the forum opinion webpage were transcribed and tagged manually. The next section covers the analysis and results of the sketches and the forum.

#### 4. Analysis and results

The aim of this paper is to discover if a satiric program could have a role in language revitalization in the BAC, and if so, how humour could be connected with language ideology. For that purpose sketches and the official forum webpage of *Vaya Semanita* were analyzed as follows. For the ease of the analysis and because the sketches are set in a classroom, only the parts of the sketches that follow the pattern of interaction *initiation-response-follow up* were analyzed. The different moves of the pattern are performed interchangeably by the students or the teacher. In this study I have focused on the content of the questions, the answers and the follows up and not in the frequency. Finally, the interactions were divided according to the topic they discuss.

The topics found in the data that follow this pattern are: a) reasons for learning Basque, b) reasons why people in the BAC do not know Basque.

##### 4.1 Reasons for learning Basque

1. *Initiation*- In the first sketch, the teacher or *andereño* (the term for teacher in Basque) asks the students (Yosu, Edorta, Alfredo, Manu, Janire) to introduce themselves and to explain to the rest of the class the reasons why they want to learn Basque:

(1) **Andereño:** [...] *me gustaría que os presentaseis y dijeseis al resto de la clase porqué queréis aprender euskera. A ver, tú por ejemplo...*

**Andereño:** [...] I would like you to introduce yourselves to the rest of the class, and tell them why you want to learn Basque. Let's see, you for example...

2. *Response*- The students' answers are very varied and they could be summarized as follows:

(2) **Yosu:** *¿yo? Me llamo Yosu, y como miembro del PNV, me parece fundamental conocer esta parte de nuestra cultura milenaria.*

**Alfredo:** *Alfredo, profesor. A los de mi colegio se les ha ocurrido cambiarse al modelo D, y no me queda otro remedio más que aprender... Bueno, por esoy por otros motivos...*

**Manu:** *yo soy Manu, y me he apuntado porque mi novia y toda su familia es euskaldún...*

**Janire:** *quieto parao que ahora voy yo... soy Janire de Barakaldo, y quiero aprender euskera para cumplir mi sueño...*

**Yosu:** me? My name is Yosu and as a member of the PNV, I think it is fundamental to know that part of our millenary culture.

**Alfredo:** Alfredo, teacher. My school has decided to shift to model D and I must learn Basque. Well, for that reason and for others...

**Manu:** I am Manu, and I am here because my girlfriend and all her family are Basques...

**Janire:** stop! Now is my turn...I am Janire from Barakaldo and I want to learn Basque to make my dream come true...

As it can be seen, the answers are related to job keeping (Alfredo), to statements of learning Basque as means of fitting in the society (Manu), to statements of Basque as a means for dreams to come true (Janire) or to learning Basque for the love of it (Yosu, Edorta). Edorta's answer can be inferred from Edorta's comments. Edorta has been making many comments throughout the sketch demonstrating his love towards Basque (how beautiful it sounds, how old it is...).

3. *Follow up*- The sketch further presents as a follow up, the *real* reasons why the students are in the *euskaltegi*. These are presented in the form of subsketches after every statement. Yosu wants to learn Basque because he is a member of the PNV (the oldest nationalist party in the BAC) and he cannot understand what people say in meetings. Alfredo is a teacher and he cannot understand when children speak to (insult) him in Basque. Manu wants to learn Basque because his mother-in-law loves to laugh about his precarious Basque. Finally, Janire's dream is to work as a cashier in a Basque supermarket where speaking Basque is required.

When contrasted with the opinions of the forum regarding language, many of the messages state that they have learnt how life in the BAC is as the audience think it is reflected in the program. Not only do people of the BAC write these types of messages, but also people from other parts of Spain such as Valencia or Andalucía, and people from South America such as Peru or Mexico:

(3) 25/10/2007 - *Enhorabuena y gracias. Vaya Semanita me ha ayudado a conocer mejor la realidad del pueblo vasco [...] Claudia (País Valencià)*

01/11/2007 - *ver vaya semanita me hiso ver la realidad de los españoles [...] Karla (Monterrey, Nuevo Leon Mexico)*

25/10/2007- *Congratulations and thank you. Vaya Semanita has helped me to know better the real life of the Basque People [...] Claudia (Valencia)*

01/11/2007- *Watching Vaya Semanita made me realize of how Spanish reality is [...] Karla (Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico)*

As a result, it could be stated that the real reasons why these people want to learn Basque is that Basque society is changing and knowing/speaking Basque has become a necessity. The factors that could be associated with the process of language revitalization are the Basquization plans and the shift to bilingual education in the BAC. According to Cenoz and Perales (1997: 265) the plan adopted by the general administration of the Basque Government affected indirectly 1,902,640 citizens or 91.96% of the population in the BAC in its first step (years 1990-1995). In addition, Reichelt (2006: 5) claims that Basque in educational context is likely to gain more and more importance in the BAC.

#### 4.2. Why some people in the BAC do not know Basque

1. *Initiation*- in this sketch, Edorta, a student from Andalucía initiates the conversation with a question:

(4) **Edorta:** *una pregunta que yo me he hecho siempre, ¿porqué vosotros que sois vascos de toda la vida no tenéis ni puñetera idea de euskera?*

**Edorta:** A nagging question...why you being Basque don't have any idea of Basque?

2. *Response*- the answers are very different from each other:

(5) **Janire:** *es que a mí no me lo enseñaron de pequeña...*

**Manu:** *es que en las ciudades se habla menos que en los pueblos...*

**Alfredo:** *es que en tiempos de Franco el euskera estaba muy perseguido...*

**Yosu:** *es que yo nací en Vitoria...*

**Janire:** Because I wasn't taught when I was little...

**Manu:** Because Basque is less spoken in cities than in little towns...

**Alfredo:** Because during Franco's dictatorship Basque was persecuted...

**Yosu:** Because I was born in Vitoria...

3. *Follow up*- After listening all the questions, Edorta gives his own follow-up:

(6) **Edorta:** *es que teniais que veros la cara que ponéis...todos los vascos que no sabéis euskera ponéis la misma jeta....estáis un poco acomplejadillos, eh?*

**Edorta:** You would have to see your faces...every Basque person who doesn't know Basque has the same look... you really got a complex about not knowing Basque...

In this sketch, the problem of why the adult population in the BAC does not speak Basque is tackled. Janire states that she was not taught when she was little. As already mentioned, the official introduction of Basque in schooling was in 1982. In addition, according to the Statistics Centre of Euskadi (eustat.es)<sup>5</sup>, the rest of the statements regarding Basque is true: Basque is less spoken in cities than in villages, and Vitoria (Araba) is the city where Basque is least spoken. Moreover, Alfredo claims that during Franco's dictatorship Basque was forbidden, which is also true. Although all these statements are correct, Edorta claims that people seem to feel guilty or ashamed. This statement could be link with Azkona's approach (1998). According to Azkona (1998: 163), Basque culture has created a social identity that stigmatizes those who do not take part in it<sup>6</sup>. In addition, following Echeverria (2003: 355), the approach followed in education is the ethnolinguistic approach, which states that a Basque is a person who speaks Basque. Therefore, the guilt felt by the students who do not know Basque can be regarded as normal.

When contrasted with the opinions of the forum, many of the messages are related to the learning of Basque. It seems that the audience also wants to learn Basque and in fact some of them have begun to use the few words that appeared in the *Euskaltegi* section, such as *Agur* (good bye). Again, the messages come from other parts of Spain as well as South America:

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<sup>5</sup> Eustat.es: Web site of Euskal Statistics, an organization dependent of the Government of the BAC.

<sup>6</sup> See also Noci 1999



(7) 13/04/2007 - [...] quisiera saber mas sobre su cultura y por sobretodo su otro idioma deberian tener una seccion o un skets de euskera sin fronteras o euskera para dummies, [...] AGUR. Julián Trujillo (Bucaramanga, Colombia)

26/05/2007 - Hola VS, ¿Qué les parece grabar "sketches" en euskera (con subtítulos en castellano, claro); me intriga escucharlos en su lengua materna. Agur. Félix (Tacna-Perú)

13/04/2007- [...] I would like to know more about your culture and overall about your language. You should have a section or a sketch of Euskera (Basque) without borders or Euskera for dummies [...] AGUR. Julian Trujillo (Bucaramanga, Colombia)

26/05/2007- Hello VS. What do you think about recording "sketches" in Basque (with subtitles in Spanish, of course)? I'm very curious about hearing you speaking in your mother tongue. Agur. Félix (Tacna-Perú)

It could be claimed that Basque has become a focus of attention, not only because of the demands of the Basque society, but also because the general curiosity towards it. Apparently this awareness has been raised by the program *Vaya Semanita* in general and the sketches set in a *Euskaltegi* in particular. Following Vucetic (2004), who builds on Apte and Durkheim, jokes are concepts of collective representations because jokes "help define and redefine the boundaries of socially differentiated groups" and help "demarcating 'us' from 'them'" (Apte 1985: 55, cited in Vucetic 2004: 10). Taking into account the messages of the forum, it could be claimed that the audience of this program identify themselves with the fictional characters and situations of *Vaya Semanita*, and they want to take part of the ingroup problems. Indeed, laughter and jokes can be regarded as "cultural signifiers" (Duara 1996: 165, cited in Vucetic 2004: 10) or even, following Vucetic who builds on Hobsbawm, jokes could be seen as invented traditions, implying that they act to "socialize or inculcate beliefs, values, or behaviours" (Hobsbawm 1983: 9, cited in Vucetic 2004: 10).

The situation as presented in the data could be explained in Bourdieu's terms. Basque is the symbolic capital which reproduces a power based relationship and it is related to language competence. Symbolic violence is exerted by the dominant group, in this case through television. However, people seem not to be aware because as Bourdieu stated (1996: 44) TV exerts symbolic violence by smoothing and homogenising reality. In addition, laughter makes people want to take part of the Basque society, not only Basque audience, but also people from other parts of Spain and South America as well.

## 5. Conclusions

The primary aim of this paper was to discover what the role of a satiric program in the process of language revitalization in the BAC was. The program seems to have fulfilled several objectives. On the one hand, it presents *Basque real life* as what people say and what people think seem to be represented in the sketches (sketch A). On the other hand, it seems that it helps people understand the linguistic shift and the efforts made not only by the Government of the BAC, but also by Basque people as well (sketch B). The fact that reality is described from a micro level allows people identify themselves with the fictional characters and share with them their experiences.

The secondary aim of this paper was to explore the relationship between language, national identity and humour. It seems that it is through laughter that social identities are constructed and maintained (Vucenic 2004: 10). *Vaya Semanita* has helped through laughter

to transmit discourses regarding language, such as the necessity for people in the BAC to learn Basque.

It remains for a further research the analysis of attitudes towards language in *Vaya Semanita* and in the forum following other kinds of pattern of interaction.

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