



# Basque Writing 20

## Language Restoration: Basque Experience

The Basque PEN celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. We received the solidarity of the whole world and the support of dozens of groups and colleagues, but we were also asked a simple but incisive question: in addition to receiving the solidarity of the world, don't you think you should create your own PEN Center?

Said and done. For our language, for the freedom of speech, since losing a language is the final attack against the freedom of speech. Without language, there is no speech. We have taken our culture, our language, our literature worldwide... and we have brought home what we have seen and learnt with worldwide friend during these years. We have tried to return the same solidarity to other friends in other countries whose freedom of speech has also been suppressed.

Basque PEN is not the only actor in this field. Many other activists, in other organizations have shown in many places of the world the experience of this path walked for the last decades. We are a people that committed to organize itself for a boost to our language, often in hiding and through clandestine ways, with a big intuition and a much bigger cooperative work. We created our own ikastola schools, rather from the action and the intuition of thousands of parents than a Socio-Linguistic developed planning. We were able to agree and adopt a standard literary language, forecasting the needs of the future: a language viable for the university, for hospitals, for laboratories or the Internet.

Gather, organize yourself, and do it, everyone in their own sphere, from the microcosm to the national level. Step by



step we have developed this literary Basque, step by step, from the education to the research, from Arts to Science, from the speech of the market to the chat online, from the joke at the bar to the gif in the cell phone. Doing many things well, not without mistakes, but always walking. **We call it the Basque Experience.** We have brought this experience worldwide, not as a mirror everyone should copy, but rather to serve as inspiration so that others can

decide what might be useful for them, and adapt to their own needs.

As I said, many are working in this field. In the European Capital of Culture 2016 in Donostia a Protocol of Linguistic Rights was adopted by several grassroots organizations, among them PEN International. Equally, the small NGO Garabide has been working for years with the Experience of the Basque language, supporting Indigenous Language activists in the Americas and elsewhere. When we all come together, the result is impressive, as we saw last May in Chiapas. In this issue of Basque Writing, we have collected some of those experiences. We want to show our gratitude to everyone participating in it, **especially to Garabide**, for their magnificent work. Let's keep walking together this long and prosperous path in the future, too.



**Urtzi Urrutikoetxea**  
*Basque PEN*



# Garabide

## Linguistic Cooperation

Garabide is a Non-Governmental Development Organization that promotes a new model of cooperation based on the exchange of experiences.

When Garabide was founded in 2005, we started to base our work in the idea that, when it comes to undertaking a cooperative project, a country should not wonder how much money it has to put forth, but rather what experiences it will share; which of its processes could serve as a guide or example for other communities. We think that is the way for other communities to become part of their own sustainable self-development, as that question changes the helper-helped dynamic and removes the subordinate position of the beneficiary that just receives money. This new way of understanding cooperation treats both poles as equals as it turns them into senders and receivers of knowledge at the same time.

### Linguistic cooperation

So if we wonder which of our processes could serve as guide or example for other communities, which know-how do we have to share, the answer is clear for us: the revitalisation of our language. There is no other language revitalisation process in the world born from the civil initiative and that knowledge is a treasure in this time when lan-

guages are dying faster than ever.

### Sharing experiences

Our aim is to share that recovery experience with minority language speaking southern communities, taking into account that cultural revitalisation can only be made from the ideas of sustainability, human rights defence and gender equality. Some of those communities are going through the same processes we suffered 40-50 years ago, we feel identified with them, and that creates great mutual understanding and empathy.

In the past 50 years, the Basque language has gone from being on the verge of disappearance to advancing significantly in some areas. The revitalisation of a language is a process that encompasses many fields, such as media, educational institutions, academies or government. Starting from this general perspective and looking at the progress made during those years, Garabide shares the experience of the Basque language with other minority language communities of the world, hoping that this might light the way in some respect and provide us with their vision as well.





## Expert Degree

The degree “Strategies of development and revitalisation of language and native identities” is Garabide’s most important project, and a one-of-a-kind course regarding language revitalisation in the world.

We organise it with the collaboration of the HUHEZI faculty of the University of Mondragón and it is designed to strengthen the strategic bonds between organisations and build the bases of future projects. Essentially, we train southern minority language promoters in language revitalisation strategies so that they can become leaders of their own development process.

With four successful editions in 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2018, the Degree in “Strategies of development and revitalisation of language and native identities” has been an inflection point for Garabide, as we have achieved to offer a 490 study-hours official university qualification that combines theoretical aspects and the opportunity to get to know real experiences.

## “Bidaide” programme

The Bidaide Programme is a comprehensive linguistic planning based programme designed to develop native language speaking communities.

Its objective is to create a cooperative relationship –with Garabide’s mediation– between Basque experience related organisations and people, public or social organisations working for language recovery in different minority language communities in the world

### Characteristics:

- It is a system based on the accompanying concept, a new cooperation system based on experience sharing.
- It is the result of the will to develop language revitalisation strategies from the Basque experience.
- It activates Basque promoters and promoters from other native language communities

of the world at the same time.

- It is a shared-non-assistance programme. It does not create a dependent relationship as its aim is not to just fund projects
- It is a comprehensive programme that integrates several activities and promoters: exchanges, recurrent training, advising...

We are currently developing Bidaide programmes with Nasa people in Colombia, Nahuatl in Mexico, Kichwas in Ecuador, Kaqchiquel Mayas in Guatemala, Aymaras and Qechuas in Bolivia, Maya people of Yucatán in Mexico, Mapuches in Chile, Kurdish in Kurdistan and Amazighs in northern Africa.

## Publications and documentaries

Our informative material is the result of our Research and Development work. From the beginning, we have worked not only regarding endangered languages, but also investigating and promoting Basque’s experience. A very important work has been made in the past 50 years in the field of language recovery. However, Basque language needs to keep working towards language normalisation due to its minority and endangered condition, and in Garabide we do not forget that.

We strengthen and complement our field work with educational material. In Garabide we have synthesised and systematised in four books (each of them in Basque, Spanish, English and French) the work that has been made in the past 50 years to revitalise Basque language. We have also gathered together the reflections of the participants of both editions of the Degree in “Strategies of development and revitalisation of language and native identities” in two documentaries.





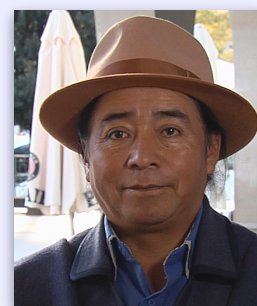


**Martín Hernández Alcalaf**  
mapudungun

*“It is impressive what you have done, what you are doing here in the Basque Country. And I hope we are able to revitalize our languages, just like you are doing with your language. When I get back, the first lesson I will bring will be the need to come together the different actors of the revival process: writers, teachers, musicians, all fields should come together and coordinate. If we are split and separated it will be very difficult to strengthen the Mapudungun”*

*“It has been a very important course, in the Americas we have millenary languages that have been weating away for decade, we were asleep. We now see clearly what is happening, and Garabide and the experience in the Basque Country have given us strength to face this beautiful world languages.*

*Education is one of the most important ways, and coming here and visiting an ikastola has been very important for. In Ecuador we were told that we were wrong, but I knew that our children should not follow the state education system, that we needed to build an autonomous system. We started 20 years ago, in a resistance system to that state system that makes us fail – if Ecuador follows that path Europe will always it call a 3rd world country”*



**Miguel Calapi Wayra**  
kichwa hiztuna



**Gloria Puc**  
kakchiquel

*“I am a teacher at the immersion school in Sumpango Sacatepequez, revitalising the kakchiquel language. What has impressed me to most how you have it in your heart, how you feel it from the bottom of your heart, and it all starts there, in the school and everywhere. We would like to carry on implementing an educational system, including our thoughts and experiences, where the learning starts from the heart. We start with 3 year olds, we started a program that is working very well. It is our first immersion experience in Kakchiquel Mayan language”*



**Milouda El Hankari**  
Rif, Alhucemas

*“It has been a very rewarding experience, not limited to the theoretical level and the common strategies, I have also learned that it is possible to learn from another country, from your experience over the years with the Basque language, and I have also learned a lot from other participants. Linguistic cooperation is something new to me, for the first time I saw an NGO working in this field, and I am very happy. I carry many things back home, the importance of the corpus, we still have a way to do for writing, we need to expand our training. And then there are relationships with people, some of the participants have a very spiritual part, we don't have that much of a worldview, or we have in a different way”*

*“In our community we are in a process of revitalization. In the literacy process we have undertaken various initiatives, such as Nasa Yuwe meetings, sporting events, etc. Our dream is for the community to speak Nasa Yuwe. It starts from childhood. Let's hope soon, in the next 10-15 years, young people will have conversations in our language. We need to bring ideas and people together, so that we can live and feel in our language. In the Basque Country they have encountered many obstacles, but they have not given up, they have been brave. I think we lacked that, our community, the young people, we did not transmit that energy to strengthen our language. On the one hand, we have given them a traditional education, which is why I would like to highlight the courage here and how they have worked in each area, such as education or cooperatives”*



**Ana Ramos**  
nasa yume hiztuna



**Nancy Quispe Charca**  
aymara

*“I work on state TV in Aymara language. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia there are 36 languages; Aymara has more speakers than Basque, and Quechua has even more. Progress has been made in the language recognition, but no steps have been taken in the communicative field like here, everything has focused on community radios, in the media aimed at indigenous communities, but Aymara has very little space on state television. I would highlight the work of weaving to revitalize the Basque language, starting in schools and all the way until the university, promoting economics and the working place. Gara-bide is in this project, driven by activists. It seems that everything is calculated: entrepreneurs working in the economy, young people in schools, ikastolas with their own education. This has fascinated me”*



# Cooperation with the Maya People from Yucatan peninsula

## **Maria Elisa Chavarrea Chim**

Maya writer and agricultural development management specialist

## **Yazmin Novelo Montejo**

Sociolinguist, communicologist specialised in Maya language

The Popol Wuj is a book that gathers Mayan thought about the origins of an entire nation. The story describes the importance of the word to shape what exists but there is also a fundamental element for the construction of the world: The union of thoughts "They said then when they thought, when they meditated. Their words and their thoughts met and gathered" (Popol Wuj, Colop 2008 version, p. 26).

What does the union of thoughts mean today and how does the word continue to create realities? The relationship between the Basque people and the Mayan people is an example of the realities that can be built when the word is shared. In this article we want to share some of the realities that have been built with the socialization of the experience of Euskera and the union of Mayan knowledge.

Since 2011, eight local Mayan leaders have been trained in the diploma of revitalization of indigenous languages by Garabide in the Basque country; During that time the accompaniment of Garabide strengthened some communication (Tosepan 2016) and organizational cohesion projects (Small Aditus in Peto and Mérida in 2017).



## **Visit of the Mayor to the Anthropology Faculty**

The meeting was attended by twenty-two women from places like Sanahcat, Valladolid, Tecoh, Peto, Calcehtok, Chumayel, Conkal, Sihó, Kinil, Xaya, Mani, Kopomá and Mérida. In it they reflected an approach to diagnosis from linguistic activism, from a gender perspective (who we are, what we are doing, what level of real empowerment exists, patriarchal context or complementarity in our relationship with other activists. Women and language: types, representations, and readings of the genre from the Mayan worldview in the language, its application in activism.





In 2018 the fruits started to be noticed, with the sum of more heads and hands in this work, therefore, supported by the mayor of Beasain (Basque Country), the Training Workshop for Linguistic Managers in Yucatec Maya was held between October 2018 and February 2019, in which more than 30 Maya speakers from Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo and Belize participated. In this workshop it was carried out a diagnosis and a mapping of linguistic activism that specified the situation of the Mayan language by areas and, in parallel, the creation of a collective twenty-year dream.

In October 2018, the Mayor of Beasain visited the municipality of Mérida, where he had an exchange of experience on the language policy work that has been developed in that municipality for 50 years to strengthen and visualize the Basque language a work feasible to apply in Mérida with the Mayan language. In this way and with the advice of Yazmin Novelo and Maria Elisa Chavarrea, who have been trained in the experience of linguistic revitalization, on February 28, 2019, the municipality of Mérida approved the creation of the Municipal Institute for the Strengthening of Maya Culture.

In 2019 many more collaborative works will be defined. There has been a contact with Urtzi Urrutikoetxea, in an animated dialogue, for the creation of a Yucatecan Maya PEN.

This list of activities can be seen as an informative relationship or as a finding for the transformative element, and without a doubt, linguistic cooperation is a work of social justice. The collaboration between these two peoples affects how we understand the realities and how we influence it: gender, language, literature, linguistic policies are some of the axes positively affected by this relationship and that certainly allows us to return to the creative function of worlds by sharing the word.



**Workshop for women**



**Workshop held in Merida for language managers**



**Visit of the Mayor to Merida Town Hall**



# Second Summit of Young Speakers of Minority Languages

**Beñat Garaio Mendizabal**

Director of HIGA

HIGA was held from the 16th to the 19th of July in the Faculty of Arts of the University of the Basque Country and in the Oihaneder House of Basque Language not only with the aim of giving continuity to the summit that had been organised seven years before but also to take it a step forward. 65 of the participants had previously been formally invited to the event and represented 32 communities. Aside from those 65 people, another 70 Basque youngsters took part in at least one of the activities.

HIGA was promoted by two departments of Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council (the Basque Language Service and the Young People's Service), and received the collaboration of several associations and institutions. The aim of the encounter was four-fold: 1) To give the young people in Gasteiz the opportunity to learn about language revitalisation strategies with speakers of other minority languages; 2) to promote favourable attitudes towards the Basque language and language activism among young people in Gasteiz; 3) to educate young activists in the field of sociolinguistics and language policy, and 4) to give those youngsters the chance to create bonds with people from other communities, following the philosophy of linguistic cooperation promoted by Garabide.

Various sorts of activities were carried out in order to achieve those goals: in the mornings, some of the participants attended the summer course that was organised by the University of the Basque Country as part of its summer study programme; around midday, different reflective activities were carried out in order to get participants to understand the situation of their own language and compare it those sitting next to them; in the afternoon HIGA's most fun activities would take place, including concerts in Oihaneder, fun activities to get to know each other better, and with documentaries and alike.

Xavier Vila invited us look at language policy from a wide perspective and talked about the influence of the "Eco-linguistic revolution". Sechu Sende informed us of very successful initiative that has been carried out in Galicia, as well as explaining a way to drive linguistic revitalisation. Neus Mestres and Óscar-Adriá Ibáñez, representing Plataforma per la Llengua, talked about the nuances of the activism for the Catalan language. Gemma Sanginés taught the participants how to develop linguistic assertiveness. The rapper Aneguria, the culture and communication developer Kepa Matxain and the Basque handball player Iñaki Artola told the participants how they experi-



ence Basque language in their daily lives, and to round off the academic section, Jon Sarasua explained the current situation of the revitalisation process. Sarasua pointed out that the tremendous amount of work that has been carried out in the area of revitalisation should be celebrated, and that, whatever happens, the

years to come will be decisive in this matter.

Regarding the aforementioned activities of reflection, in the first two days we addressed the situation of the 32 minority languages that were represented at the summit, paying special attention to the areas that predominantly affect young people such as culture, media, education and socioeconomics. As it was to be expected, the reality of those 32 languages is completely different; however, once that the participants understood those differences, they realised that the elements that we share are more than one could expect (i.e. the risk of interruption in the chain of transmission, the attitude of the states towards minorities, the attitude of young people towards minority languages...).

In the second series of reflective activities we talked about the objectives that need to be set by linguistic communities with a view to the future, with some of the ideas being: achieving an official status, promoting the use of minority languages, making those languages more present in contexts of leisure, and, last but not least, reinforcing the importance of the identity-language pairing.

Finally, on the last day the young participants established 22 commitments they would assume personally. First of all, the youngsters committed to make an effort to promote the use of their language. Secondly, they expressed their intention to become leaders in their environment. Thirdly, they decided to introduce the minority language into their leisure time. Lastly, they said they would work in order to create and maintain links with members from other linguistic minority communities.

We believe that it turned out to be a very successful initiative. It must be pointed out that, as far as we are aware, this has been the first time that an initiative of these characteristics has ever been carried out in the world, and we think that it is significant that it has taken place in Gasteiz, in the Basque Country. Now all that is left to do is wait and see what path the network that we have just set up will take, and hope we will be able to organise similar events more regularly in the future.