

Loanword Adaptation of Spanish /θ/ Across Basque Dialects

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1 Overview

Basque

- Basque is an isolate with a high degree of dialectal diversity [1]
- Extensive contact between Spanish and Basque: many loanwords
- Typologically marked three-way sibilant series:** /tʃ/, (t)ʃ, (t)ʂ/ [2]
 - Example:** *xaia* (bodega) ~ *zaia* (skirt) ~ *saia* (vulture)

Spanish → Basque

- Peninsular Spanish is known for its interdental fricative /θ/: **missing in Basque**
- Laminal [ʃ] is the dominant adaptation of /θ/ in loanwords [3]
- However, the Western dialect has a merger: laminal /ʃ/ surfaces apically as [ʂ] [4]
 - Example:** *zu* (you) and *su* (fire) are both realized apically: [ʂu]

Corpus

- Extracted from the Euskararen Herri Hizkeren Atlas (EHHA) [5]
 - Over 2000 lemmas that are phonetically transcribed for 145 villages
- Tokens constitute individual lemma realizations extracted from the atlas
 - Only preserved lemmas whose Spanish translation containing /θ/ is **phonemically similar** to its Basque translation
 - Over 5000 observations of 62 lemmas

3 Dialectal variation

- Laminal adaptation is not categorical: shaped by the **sibilant merger** (Fig. 1)
- Apical adaptation aligns strongly (~96%) with Zuazo's Western dialect [6] (Fig. 2)

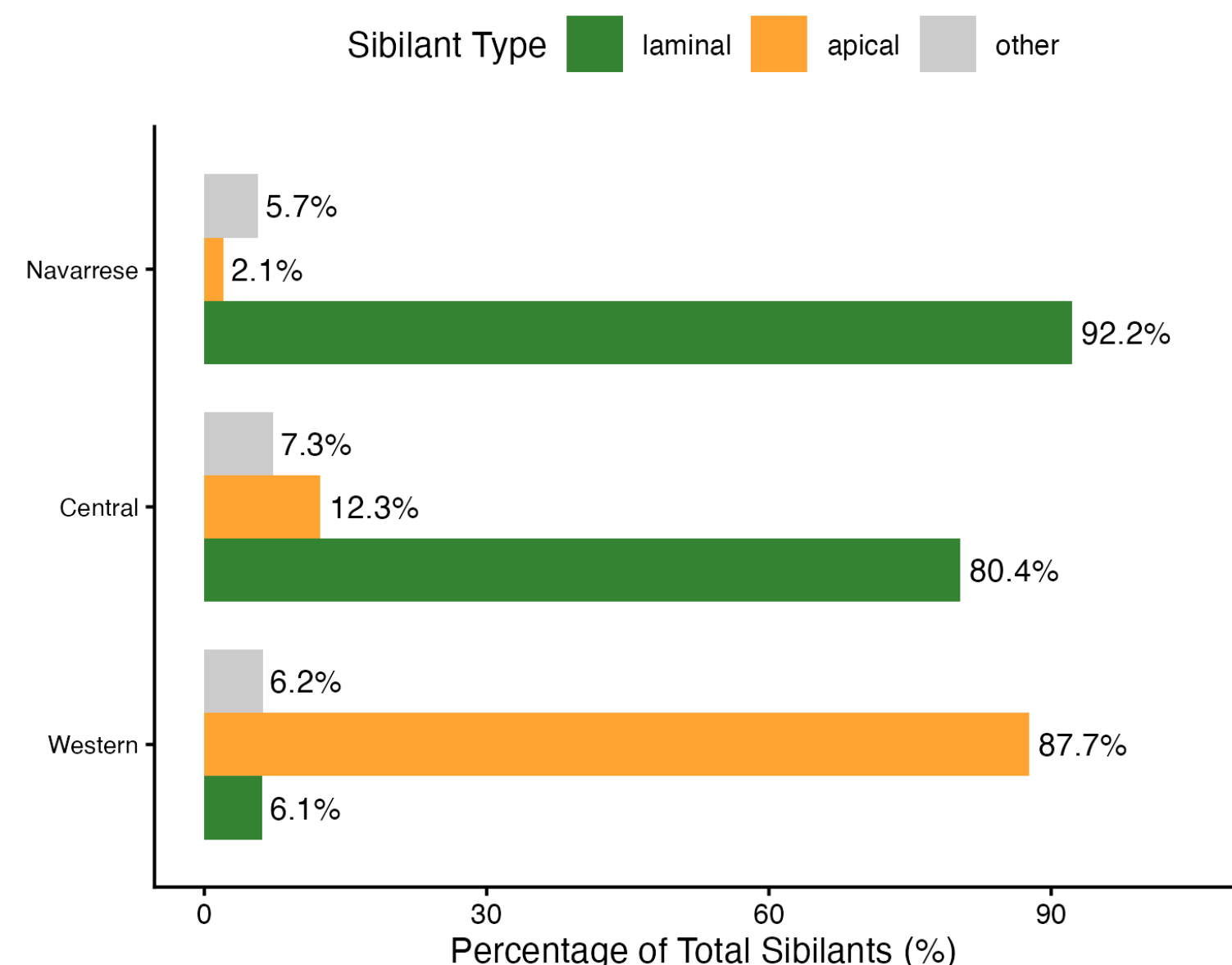


Fig. 1: Western Basque shows dominant apical adaptation, compared to other dialects of the Southern Basque Country.

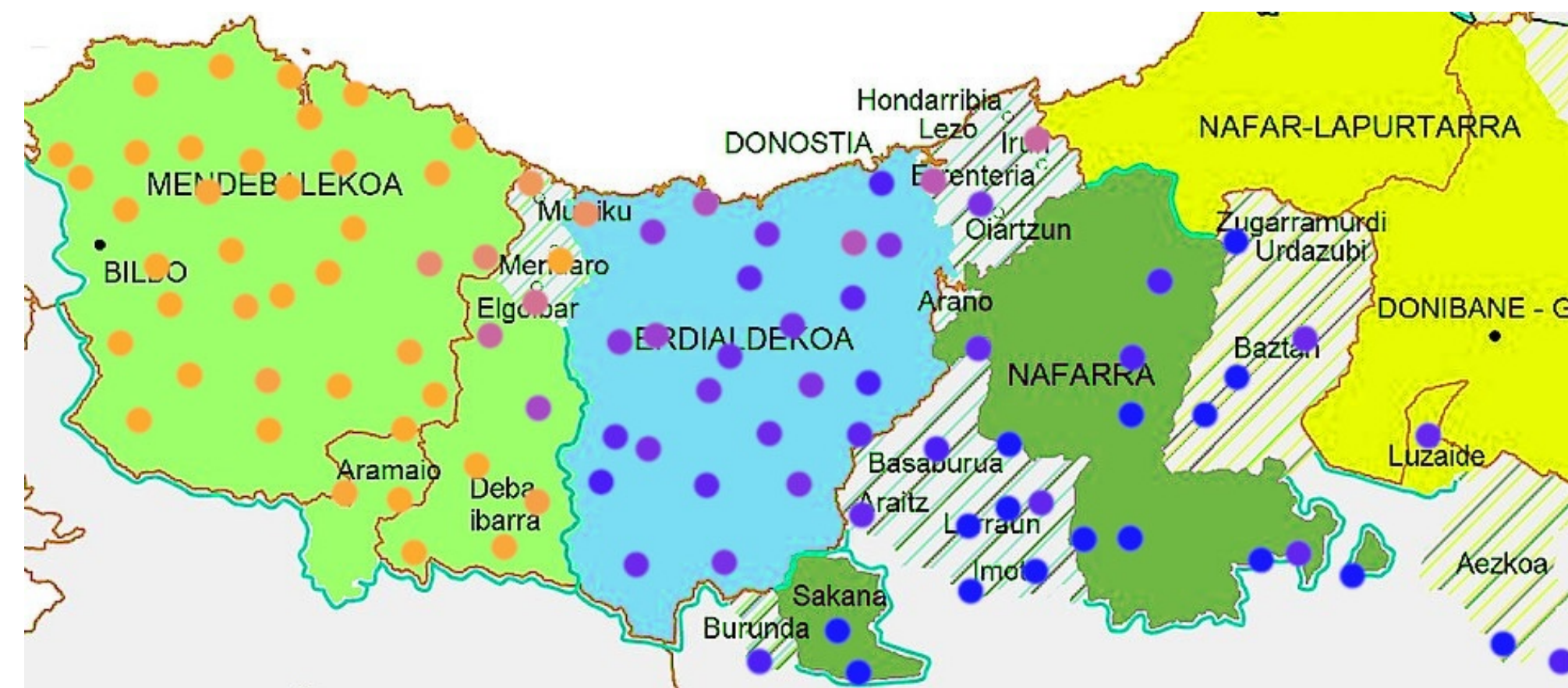


Fig. 2: Scaled to an orange-blue color gradient, the realizations of each village of the Southern Basque Country included in the corpus are overlaid onto Zuazo's dialect classification [6], where blue dots represent laminal realization and orange dots represent apical realization.

2 Phonotactics

- Phonotactics condition how /θ/ surfaces:
 - When not following a sonorant: relatively low probability of affrication ($\hat{\beta} = -5.09$, 95% CI [-5.41, -4.80], $p < .001$)
 - Post-sonorant contexts significantly increase affrication**
- This effect is not uniform:
 - After /n/: $\hat{\beta} = 0.78$, 95% CI [0.63, 0.93], $p < .001$
 - Liquids condition affrication more than /n/: $\hat{\beta} = 1.01$, 95% CI [0.72, 1.31], $p < .001$
 - After non-sonorant contexts: $\hat{\beta} = -5.09$, 95% CI [-5.41, -4.80], $p < .001$

4 Conclusion

- Loanword adaptation can serve as a probe into dialectal variation
 - Specifically, the Western sibilant merger
- The adaptation of /θ/ is conditioned by:
 - Phonotactics
 - Dialectal variation
- Future work:** Exploring more recent data to see if the merger is stable

References

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