

Arabako herri izenen azentueraz

(On the accentuation of Basque place names in Álava)

Garazi de Olano Martinitz-Xil and Gorka Elordieta
University of the Basque Country

Abstract

This paper analyzes the Spanish stress patterns of town and village names of the province of Araba (southern Basque Country, Spain), where the local dialect of Basque is virtually extinct. There are many names that are accentuated closer to the beginning of the word than to the end of the word, contrary to the most common Spanish penultimate stress pattern (e.g., *Gardélegi*, *Etxábarri*, *Arrízala*, *Olábezar*, *Gújuli*, *Róitegi*, etc.). Other names, however, show word stress on the penultimate syllable (e.g., *Aretxabaléta*, *Egiléta*, *Maturána*, *Urtupíña*, *Arenáza*, *Zubillága*, etc.). Our unified analysis for both patterns is that in words of Basque origin word stress is assigned to the last syllable of the root, following a morphophonological stress assignment algorithm. Thus, in place names with the compound structure *root + root (+ affix(es))*, stress surfaces on the last syllable of the first root (which on the surface is farther from the right edge of the word). In words with the structure *root + affix(es)*, stress surfaces on the last syllable of the root (which on the surface is closer to the right edge of the word, thus giving the appearance of penultimate stress). This accentuation pattern is still observed in Northern Bizkaian Basque (NBB), the oldest prosodic system among Basque dialects. The conclusion would thus be that the extinct Basque dialect of Araba was closely related to the one spoken in the province of Bizkaia, and that people in Araba must have kept the Basque stress pattern of place names in Spanish as well.

Keywords: word stress, Basque, place names, Álava.