

Advanced course in Sound Change with a focus on Basque

COURSE SYLLABUS

Linguistics, Graduate Seminar (University of Chicago) 2025

INSTRUCTOR: Ander Egurtzegi

OFFICE: Linguistics Department, Room 205D (Diane Brentari's office).

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COURSE PERIOD: March 24 – May 19, 2025

CLASS HOURS: 13:30 – 14:20

A. DESCRIPTION

This graduate seminar is intended for students with a background in phonetics and (historical) phonology and an interest in either sound change or the sound patterns of Basque. In this seminar, we will discuss many of the linguistic aspects relevant to theories of sound change with a focus on the Basque language (with occasional case studies from other endangered languages such as Ribagorzan Aragonese or Lakota). Key topics will include phonetically-based sound change, synchronic variation as the seed of change, the role of contact, the advantages of studying change from different perspectives, typologically rare sound changes, and the importance of the precise phonetic documentation of endangered languages for sound change typology and linguistic theory overall.

B. ORGANIZATION

This is a lecture in which topics are presented by the instructor. It is advised that students go through the papers to be discussed first at home. A short 7-10 page paper will be graded at the end of the quarter. Familiarity with some of the course topics is assumed. Students are assumed to have general knowledge of phonetics and phonology and a basic familiarity with sound

change research. Nevertheless, most concepts regarding the topics of interest will be discussed in class. Questions about any of them are welcome, during and after the class or by email.

C. OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce the general mechanisms of sound change.
2. To introduce the theoretical topics relevant for sound change through examples from Basque and other endangered languages.
3. To introduce modern approaches to quantitative sound change research.
4. To present the research methodologies of the discipline.

D. EXPECTED COURSE SCHEDULE

1-Introduction

- Methodology
- The sound structure of Basque

2-Documenting endangered varieties

- Mixean Basque
- Zuberoan Basque

3-Looking at a 'weird' sound change from a phonetic perspective: Metathesis

- Everything we know about metathesis
- Other cases of metathesis in Basque

4-The role of contact in phonetically-based sound change

- u-fronting in Zuberoan Basque
- Other contact-triggered sound patterns in Basque

5-Analyzing a sound change from multiple sources and angles

- Basque sibilant merger with acoustic data
- Basque sibilant merger in a 18th century dictionary

6-Synchronic variation as the seed of sound change: Cluster palatalization

- Cluster palatalization in Romance
- Borrowing into Basque

7-Typologically rare sound patterns: /h/ vs. /ñ/ in Basque

- Nasalance study of Zuberoan aspiration data

- Acoustic study of Mixean aspiration data

8-Typologically rare sound changes: Final voicing

- Final obstruent voicing in Lakota
- The importance of endangered languages and varieties for linguistic theory

9-Prosodic change

- The reconstruction of the Basque prosodic systems
- Implications for synchronic analysis: Pitch accent in Northern Bizkaian Basque

E. READINGS

1-Introduction

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2-Documenting endangered varieties

Egurtzegi, A. & C. Carignan. 2020. An acoustic description of Mixean Basque. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 147.4, 2791-2802. <https://doi.org/10.1121/10.0000996>

3-Looking at a 'weird' sound change from a phonetic perspective: Metathesis

Egurtzegi, A. 2025 (in press). Metathesis. In Ledgeway et al. (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Diachronic Linguistics*. Wiley-Blackwell.

<https://egurtzegi.github.io/papers/MetathesisDiaComEgurtzegi.pdf>

4-The role of contact in phonetically-based sound change

Egurtzegi, A. 2017. Phonetically conditioned sound change: Contact induced /u/-fronting in Zuberoan Basque. *Diachronica* 34.3, 331-367. <https://egurtzegi.github.io/papers/Egurtzegi-u-fronting-preprint.pdf>

5-Analyzing a sound change from multiple sources and angles

Krajewska, D., E. Zuloaga & A. Egurtzegi. 2022. Sibilant mergers in 18th-century Basque: A quantitative study. *Phonological Data & Analysis* 4.5, 1-31.
<https://phondata.org/index.php/pda/article/view/67/43>

Egurtzegi, A., D. Krajewska, C. Carignan & I. Urrestarazu-Porta. 2024. An acoustic exploration of sibilant contrasts and sibilant merger in Mixean Basque. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 54.2, 677-706.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-the-international-phonetic->

[association/article/an-acoustic-exploration-of-sibilant-contrasts-and-sibilant-merger-in-mixean-basque/839C776F241162A02D7505FE4D042A7E](https://doi.org/10.1075/dia.20066.egu)

6-Synchronic variation as the seed of sound change: Cluster palatalization

Blevins, J. & A. Egurtzegi. 2017. Unexpected obstruent loss in initial obstruent–sonorant clusters: An apparent example from Basque. *Phonology* 34, 507-522.

https://egurtzegi.github.io/papers/blevins_egurtzegi2017phonology.pdf

7-Typologically rare sound patterns: /h/ vs. /ħ/ in Basque

Egurtzegi, A., A. García-Covelo & I. Urrestarazu-Porta. 2023. A nasalance-based study of the /h/ vs. /ħ/ opposition in Zuberoan Basque. In Skarnitzl & Volín (eds.), *Proceedings of the 20th ICPHS*. Prague: Guarant International, 3427-3431.

<https://egurtzegi.github.io/papers/ICPhS2023-Egurtzegietal.pdf>

8-Typologically rare sound changes: Final voicing

Blevins, J., A. Egurtzegi & J. Ullrich. 2020. Final obstruent voicing in Lakota: Phonetic evidence and phonological implications. *Language* 96, 294-337.

<https://egurtzegi.github.io/papers/Blevinsetal2020Reduced.pdf>

9-Prosodic change

Egurtzegi, A. & G. Elordieta. A history of the Basque prosodic systems. *Diachronica* 40.1, 30-72. <https://doi.org/10.1075/dia.20066.egu>