

PRONOMINAL RELATIVE CLAUSE WITH ZEIN

Mendi-a, [zein-etan belar berde-a bai-tago]
 mountain-DET which-INES grass green-DET SUB-be.3SG
 'The mountain where green grass is'

PRENOMINAL RELATIVE CLAUSE

[Belar berde-a dago-en] mendi-a
 grass green-DET be.3SG-SUB mountain-DET
 'The mountain where green grass is'

The usual RC in Basque.
 It has less frequent postnominal and appositive variants too.

ZEIN RC & HISTORICAL SYNTAX

- **Research on zein RC?** Almost nonexistent.
- **Grammarians?** "Barbarism" / "Borrowing from Romance".
- **What is known:** Found in most pre-19th-century texts, afterwards its usage drops. More common in translations and texts influenced by Romance models.

Basque historical corpus:
 relatively small and late, mostly religious texts, different coverage for different dialects.

This is based on printed literary texts. Other types of texts?

DIGLOSSIA

- Administration used Romance, and only very rarely Basque.
- Limited literacy in Basque. Better in the French Basque Country.
- Little texts are preserved.
 - But: a collection of 50 18th-century letters from the Le Dauphin ship (Lamikiz, Padilla & Videgain 2015)

Language history from below

92 texts (18 administration documents, 32 administrative letters, and 42 private letters).
 189 examples of zein RC.

Our corpus:
 ✓ Private letters
 ✓ Administration letters
 ✓ Administration documents (16th-19th cent.)

"Incorrect" relative clauses and Basque historical syntax

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1 ZEIN RC WAS USED IN LETTERS & ADM. DOCUMENTS

| Cent. | Adm. doc. | Adm. letters | Private letters |
|-------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|
| 16-17 | 0 | 33 | 12 |
| 18 | 23 | 9 | 47 |
| 19 | 33 | 27 | 5 |

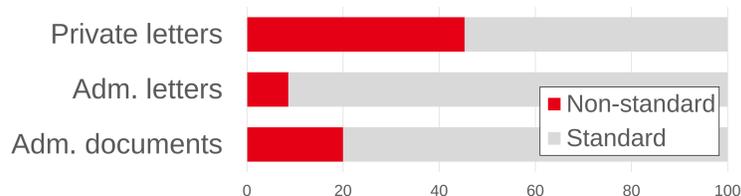
- Found in 24 out of 50 Le Dauphin letters (18th cent.)
- Used also by barely literate people (women included), who knew little Romance

2 ZEIN RC IS SOMETIMES "INCORRECT"

A form of the pronoun is used as **invariable relativizer**. Usually inessive, but also absolutive or ergative forms of the pronoun.

saluta-tzen zaituzte aizpa Nana-k,
 greet-IPFV AUX.2PL>3SG sister Nana-ERG
[zein-etan Miarritz-en baita neskato.]
 which-INES Biarritz-INES SUB-be.3SG maid
 'sister Nana, who ('in which') is maid in Biarritz, sends greetings' (Le Dauphin)

"Incorrect" from the point of view of printed literary texts, where non-standard zein RCs are not found.



3 ZEIN RCS ARE FREQUENT IN EPISTOLARY FORMULAE

Rezebitu dut zure guthuna, zeinetan eskribatzen baiterautazu ...

'I have received your letter, in which you write that...'

Eskribatzen dauzkitzut presenteko bi lerro hauk zuri ene osasunaren markatzeko, zeina hagitz baita perfeta Jainkoari esker.

'I am writing you these two lines to inform you on my health, which, thank God, is perfect.'

Letter-writing skills were acquired by imitation: by reading or listening to letters

4 EMERGENCE OF THE NON-STANDARD VARIANTS

Diglossia and lack of standard language: when people wrote in Basque they looked for models:

- Monolinguals (semi-)literate in Basque: whatever Basque texts they had access to.
- Bilinguals literate in Romance: also Romance models.

The role of epistolary formulae:

- Monolinguals did not understand well how the construction worked.
- Extension of the relative pronoun found in a formula to other contexts.
- Recycling and slight modifications of parts of formulae.

Imitation with modifications brings the non-standard variants

(1) **Change from above:** standard zein relative spreads in writing from more literate bilinguals to less proficient writers.

(2) **Change from below:** new non-standard constructions begin to spread, mainly among monolinguals.

CONCLUSIONS

Zein relative clause in our corpus witnesses **language change** –from above and from below– in **written registers**, in a situation of **diglossia** and **lack of standardization** (of Basque).

It gives us insights into **writing practices** of barely literate people (private letters) and people literate in Romance, but not in Basque (administration texts and letters of members of higher social ranks). Private letters are close to spoken language, but they contain elements of more formal written registers too.

The importance of: **historical sociolinguistics**, taking into account **different text types** and their characteristics, and studying "uninteresting" **non-standard constructions** for historical syntax.