

Week 1

Phonetics and orthography of Basque

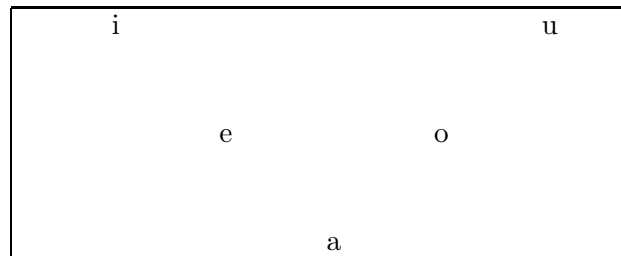
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1 Consonants of Basque

		Labial	Lamino-dental	Apico-alveolar	Palatal or postalveolar	Velar	Glottal
Nasal (voiced)		m		n	ɲ		
Plosive	Voiceless	p	t		c	k	
	Voiced	b	d		ʝ	g	
Affricate (voiceless)			t͡s	t͡ʃ			
Fricative	Voiceless	f	s	ʃ			h
	Voiced				ʝ — x		
Lateral				l	λ		
Rhotic	Trill			r			
	Tap			ɾ			

2 Vowels of Basque

Most speakers have only the same five vowels as in Spanish, illustrated in the diagram below. The exact quality of each vowel might vary a bit depending on the environment, but they are pretty stable.



Speakers of Zuberoan additionally have a sixth vowel [oe], written ⟨*ü*⟩, but in pronunciation similar to German ⟨*ö*⟩. They also have nasalized versions of these vowels, which is clearly an influence from French.

3 Basque orthography

Basque employs a minimal variant of the standard Roman alphabet, i.e.:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N Ñ O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Mostly, each letter is mapped into the standard sound. However, there are some special phonotactic rules that one must remember:

- The letters *c*, *q*, *v*, *w*, and *y* are only used in borrowed foreign words.
- The set of three sibilants [s̺], [s̺̺], and [ʃ] are represented by the letters *s*, *z*, and *x*, respectively. Specifically, *z* and *x* are never pronounced as they are in German.
- The letter *ñ* corresponds to the palatal nasal [ɲ], though sometimes it is replaced with *in* –thus, the word for *miss/female teacher* can be written both as *andereino* and *andereño*.
- There exist the following digraphs (i.e., combinations of two letters mapping to a single sound):
 - *dd* corresponds to the voiced palatal plosive [d̺].
 - *tt* corresponds to the voiceless palatal plosive [t̺].
 - *rr* corresponds to the apico-alveolar trill [r].
 - *ll* (sometimes written *il*) corresponds to the palatal lateral [λ].
 - *ts*, *tz*, and *tx* correspond, respectively, to the three voiceless affricates [t̺s̺], [t̺s̺̺], and [t̺ʃ].