

「バスクの言語と文化:現代バスク語文学を中心に」 Basque language and culture: centered in contemporary Basque Literature

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The 2023 Center for Language Research lecture was held at the Yoneda Yoshimori Memorial Hall on November 20th, 2023, during the fourth period (15:10-17:00). Per request from the speaker, the talk was open for the general public, and not only for those students specialized in foreign language or the Spanish department. For the first time since the Pandemic, the talk was only offered as in-person.

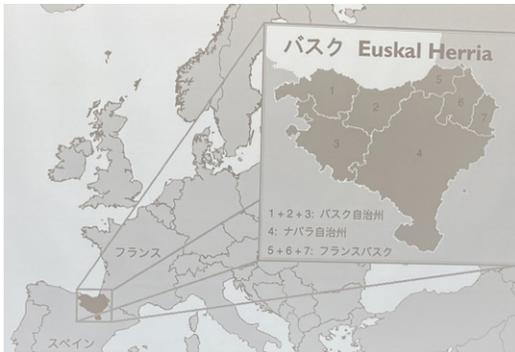
The speaker of the talk was Nami Kaneko, from the Foreign Languages Department, Faculty of Letters at Keio University. When I set up to preparing this talk, I was determined to have someone talking about the Basque language, which is one of the 4 official languages in the country, but it is considered as a minority language. This would provide an invaluable opportunity for our students at Kanagawa University. With that objective in mind, I contacted Aingeru Aroz from Sophia University, who quickly introduced me to the esteemed Professor Kaneko. Professor Kaneko is specialized in Basque literature, Contemporary Literature from Spanish Speaking countries, as well as in Translation Studies. Professor Kaneko not only possesses theoretical knowledge on these topics, as proven by her several academic publications, but also has hands-on experience in



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the translation field. Professor Kaneko has published several translations of Basque literature into Japanese through Hakusuisha and Shinchosha. Among them, her translation of Kirmen Uribe's "Mussche" (Translated in Japanese as ムシェ小さな英雄の物語) earned her the 2nd Best Translation Award in Japan; and the 2nd Etxepare Laboral Kutxa Translation Award in the Basque Country. She also won the 7th Etxepare Laboral Kutxa Translation Award for her translation of Bernardo Atxaga's masterpiece "El hijo del acordeonista" (translated in Japanese as アコーディオン引きの息子) in 2020.

Professor Nami Kaneko, having our young students in mind, started off her talk with a self-introduction from the times she was also an undergraduate student of Spanish language, feeling insecure about her choices. I believe her



talk was very effective, since many students enrolled in our programs are feeling the same insecurities and the same doubts. Having a successful professor that mirrors those feelings will hopefully increase their motivation and drive to pursue a better future for themselves.

Professor Kaneko started off by explaining that the Basque language and culture is not a notion connected to a single nation, and thus the Basque Country region (normally referred to a Euskal Herria) spreads beyond Spain into France as well. This could come as a surprise to some students since Basque language is normally talked about as one of the official languages of Spain.

Basque, as a language, has always been surrounded by mystery and mythos. It is normally talked about as one of the oldest languages in Europe and that it is unique, unrelated to the Romance languages that surround it: Spanish, French and Portuguese. One of the differences is that, unlike the Romance languages, Basque does not have difference of gender in nouns and adjectives. Another difference is that Basque has cases (or declensions). Spanish lost the declensions from Latin, but Basque has a large number of cases, a total of 18, including the ergative case, a rare

case that became the object of conversation at the talk's Q&A. Professor Kaneko did a great job at explaining how it works by comparing it to the Japanese particles. Some of the examples she brought up were: 家の etxeko (the house's) 家から etxetik (from the house) 家へ etxera (to the house).

Such an interesting language, however, has a history of being repressed. However, by looking at it we can find a success case of a minority language recovery. Nowadays only about 30% of the population in the Basque region can speak fully in Basque. This unfortunate situation was brought about mostly by the suppression of the use of Basque language in any public sphere during the dictatorship of General Franco that occurred after the Spanish Civil War. Because of that suppression, Basque language became relegated to the realm of the home. Losing its usefulness, the Spanish language became dominant in the region until this day. From the 1980s, after Franco's death the Basque country became the official language in the Spanish Basque Country as well as the Chartered Community of Navarre (Nafarroa in Basque). This was followed by a push and promotion of the use of the language in all areas of public life, from the political sphere to education, culture and traditional media.

Language and culture are intrinsically connected to each other, and in the case of a minoritarian language like Basque it is particularly true. Although in the Basque country there is a culture expressed in the dominant languages (either Spanish or French), those are different from the traditions that are rooted in the historical and cultural context of the Basque language. While

maintaining those traditions is important, the drive behind the promotion of the Basque language, Professor Kaneko argued, was not to simply keep it as if an ancient artifact that needs to be displayed, but to promote its use in all spheres of social life until it gets to the same level of use as the dominant language. This kind of movement is what is called “language normalization”.

Professor Kaneko then moved on to show some examples of the cultural products created in Basque language in recent years, most notably literary works, since her specialty is in Basque literature and translation. She went on to explain that the Basque language was very late at becoming a written language because it was used for a long time as an oral language among the folks of the region. It was not until the 1960s that we saw a dynamization of the literary movement along with the effervescence of the move to recover the Basque language in the region. As I already mentioned, in the 1980s the Basque language became an official language in the Basque country, and with that we saw a drastic expansion in the number of authors and literary works in the language. At the end of the 1980s Bernardo Atxaga’s “Obabakoak” gained international success and recognition, which became the spark to make the existence of Basque literature known around the globe. In the 1990s Basque literature started to be translated into a multitude of languages, and became available to readers across 50 different languages, including Japanese.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Professor Nami Kaneko once again. Thanks to her speech at this academic year’s lecture was a resounding

success. Professor Kaneko has been instrumental in the translation and dissemination of Basque literature, of which she introduced three works by contemporary authors. Through her passionate explanation about the authors, the plots of the stories and the techniques used, those present at the lecture could truly experience the quality of this minoritarian literature. The Q&A session was very lively, with many questions coming from both academics and outside guests, as well as from students from the Spanish department. This was proof, in my opinion, of the success of the talk, because it was palpable how Professor Kaneko’s speech had picked everyone’s interest in this unique minoritarian language and its literature.

Morales Rama, Alejandro

ベルナルド・アチャガ 金子奈美 訳
『アコーディオン弾きの息子』(新潮社刊)

アコーディオン弾きの息子
ベルナルド・アチャガ
著 金子奈美 訳

SONUJOLEAREN SUENA
BERNARDO ATXAGA
BERNARDINO ATXAGA

神奈川大学 言語研究センター主催
2023年度講演会
バスクの言語と文化：
現代バスク語文学を
中心に
2023.
11/20 (月)
15:20-17:00 (4限)
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(鹿応義塾大学 文学部助教)

専門はバスク文学、スペイン語圏現代文学、翻訳研究。訳書にキルメン・ウリベムシェ 小さな英雄の物語』(第2回日本翻訳大賞受賞)、同『セルバオニエーノーク・エルバオ』(いずれも白水社刊)、ベルナルド・アチャガ『アコーディオン弾きの息子』(新潮社)など。

参加方法
神奈川大学関係者：直接会場にお越しください(事前連絡必要無し)。
神奈川大学関係者以外の方：11月16日(木)までに左記QRコードよりお申込み下さい。参加は無料で、どなたでもご参加いただけます。
連絡先：言語研究センター (gengo-meeting@kanagawa-u.ac.jp)

講演会ポスター