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### **Basque improvised sung poetry: the key to understand the linguistic rhythm**

The verse of a language is said to reflect its prosodic typology (Sapir, 1921: 230; Bertinetto, 1989: 100, among others), even when for plain speech this matter is not that clear. Along with verse, music is considered to be influenced by the prosody of the native language of composers (research in this field summarized in Patel, 2008: 159-168), and so is the text setting (language into music) phenomenon (Janda and Morgan, 1988, 1989; Rodriguez-Vazquez, 2010, among others). Owed to that, the case of Basque improvised sung poetry (*bertsolaritza*, in Basque) may be meaningful for a better understanding of the rhythm (and prosodic typology) of Basque. Consequently, the aim of this research is to explain some aspects of the rhythmical organization of Basque, by studying its oral improvised poetry.

When *bertsolaritza* is performed, improvised words are mapped (generally in a syllabic relation of one syllable per one musical note) in a popular tune already known by the improviser (commonly called *bertsolari*) and the listeners. Language is measured in order to fit into an exact number of syllables, and sometimes word order is changed so that rhyme is correctly placed within the verse.

Linguistic rhythm is conditioned by the tune the *bertsolari* is improvising with, as the syllables are mapped into musical notes with certain rhythmic values. However, the fact that words are improvised influences the way rhythm is produced, and sometimes the improviser changes the main musical rhythmic patterns of the tune. It is a complex phenomenon because many factors come into play, such as linguistic and musical features.

That is why knowledge of linguistics and musicology are needed to understand the phenomenon of the prosody of *bertsolaritza*, highlighting that interdisciplinary research is necessary.

So analysing a corpus of 16 sets of verses performed by two *bertsolaris*, not only do I intend to understand how “the words are put to the music” (Donegan and Stampe, 1978: 29-30), but also how music is arranged to fit with the words. Special attention will be paid to syllables, accent, and other units of the prosodic hierarchy, within the framework of Natural Phonology, for a better understanding of how the rhythm of Basque is organised.

In conclusion, the new data gathered by the analysis of *bertsolaritza* enables us to confirm that Basque is a syllable-timed language, as claimed by the work done before

(Hurch, 1988; Jauregi, 2007; Oñederra, 2015). Moreover, we could state that the study of improvised sung poetry could be the key to advances on the research of prosody.

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