In his classic essay “The Production and Reproduction of Legitimate Language” Bourdieu (1982) argued that notions of what constitutes proper language are intimately tied to hierarchies of class and institutional power. While this model served well to capture the denigration of the “patois” of rural peasants, it has proven insufficient for scholars attempting to explain the complex dynamics of value and authority that arise in the context of minority language movements where revitalization efforts generate new linguistic markets, new kinds of speakers, and often new standardized varieties. The resulting sociolinguistic scenario requires more nuanced conceptualizations of competing ideologies of authority (Woolard 2008). This paper focuses on the reworking of structures of value in Basque language revival in Spain, where normalization and standardization have occurred simultaneously. We explore how a particular group of users – new speakers who have learned Basque outside the home – attribute value to standard and vernacular Basque. New speakers are an interesting group of users both because they constitute the majority of younger Basque speakers, and because they typically learn only standard Basque. We find that while new speakers report the utility of their mastery over standard Basque, they aspire to markers of authenticity associated with the vernacular. Standard Basque has acquired values of anonymity, but, contrary to Bourdieu, it does not command higher prestige among these users who say they would rather "speak the Basque of somewhere.” Incomplete normalization may partly account for these results, but we also argue that the social consequences of standardization cannot be seen separately from the social process by which standardization is carried out. Basque language revival has benefitted from a broad social involvement and debate that helped temper some of the de-authorization of native speakers that standardization has been known to provoke in other language revival contexts.

Keywords: Basque, standardization, new speakers.