

Polarity, Negative Polarity and Negative Concord

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Basque

(1) a. *Ez du inork (ere) deitu.*

not AUX inor.ERG even call

b. *Inork (ere) ez du deitu.*

inor.ERG even not AUX call

'Nobody called.'

(2) a. *Ez du ikasle bakar batek ere deitu.*

not AUX student single one.ERG even call

b. *Ikasle bakar batek ere ez du deitu.*

student single one.ERG even not AUX call

'Not even a single student called.'

Basque

1. *Inor (ere), bakar bat ere*, etc. **cannot negate a sentence**. They require co-occurrence with the sentential negative marker *ez* 'not' to render the sentence negative (and grammatical):

- (3) a. **Inork (ere) hori erosi du.*
anybody even that buy AUX
- b. *Ez du inork (ere) hori erosi.*
not AUX anybody even that buy
- c. *Inork (ere) ez du hori erosi.*
anybody even not AUX that buy
'Nobody bought that.'

Basque

2. The sentential negative marker **ez** ‘not’ can license multiple PIs (*i*-indefinites):

- (4) a. **Inork** **ez du ezer** **inon** **erosi.**
anybody.ERG not aux anything.ABS anywhere buy
‘Nobody bought anything anywhere.’
- b. **Mutikoetako** **bakar** **batek** **ere** **ez** **du**
boy-D.PL.GEN single one.ERG even not AUX
pilotetako **bakar** **bat** **ere** **jo.**
ball-D.PL.GEN single one even hit
‘None of the boys hit any of the balls.’

3. Basque *i*-indefinites cannot be used in isolation as fragment answers:

- (5) Q: **Nor** **etorri** **da?** A: **Inor** **ez.** A': ***Inor.**
 who come aux anybody not anybody

Basque

4. Basque *i*-indefinites cannot yield DN readings (Etxeberria et al. 2018):

- (6) a. *Inork* *ez* *du* *ezer* *egin.*
anybody.ERG not AUX anything.ABS do
'Nobody did anything.'
IT CANNOT MEAN: 'Everybody did something.'
- b. *Inork* *ere ez du ezer* *ere* *ekarri.*
anybody.ERG even not AUX anything.ABS even bring
'Nobody brought anything.'
IT CANNOT MEAN: 'Everybody brought something.'

But: Etxepare (2003:554) claims that (6a) is ambiguous depending on the intonation; we have not been able to support this ambiguity.

Basque

Regardless of the fact that **Basque *i*-indefinites**:

- (a) cannot negate a sentence
- (b) cannot be isolated fragment answers
- (c) cannot yield DN

Etxepare (2003: 523) claims that:

*“Typologically, Basque is a **negative concord language**: it has been argued that negative concord is related to the presence in a language of a negation head that can by itself negate a clause (see Rowlet 1998).”*

In Etxeberria et al. (2018): **Strict NC language**.

Goals

- To focus on the limits between Polarity Licensing (PL) and Negative Concord (NC)
- To understand the differences between Polarity Sensitive Items (PSIs) and Negative Concord Items (NCIs)
- To evaluate some contrasts among Basque, Hindi, English and so-called Strict and Non-Strict NC languages

Questions

- Q1.** What are the formal differences between Negative Polarity and Negative Concord?
- Q2.** Under what conditions an indefinite expression can be said to be a NPI (and therefore a PSI) or an NCI?
- Q3.** Are Basque PSIs NCIs? Notice that this would be a requirement for Basque being a Strict NC language

Roadmap

1. Basque *i-/bat ere* indefinites
2. Basque indefinites vs. negative indefinites in other languages: Hindi, English, Greek/Romanian/Hungarian
3. Interim summary
4. Experimental investigations: Basque vs. Spanish (Castilian Spanish, Basque Country Spanish)
5. Results
6. Discussion
7. Back to questions

Basque *i-/bat ere* indefinites

	Wh-words	Existential "Someone"	<i>i</i> -indefinite "Anyone"	Free-Choice ₁ "Anyone"	Free-Choice ₂ "Anyone"
WHO	<i>nor</i>	<i>nor-bait</i>	<i>i- nor</i>	<i>edo-nor</i>	<i>nor-nahi</i>
WHICH	<i>zein</i>	-----	-----	<i>edo-zein</i>	<i>zein-nahi</i>
WHAT	<i>zer</i>	<i>zer-bait</i>	<i>e-zer</i>	<i>edo-zer</i>	<i>zer-nahi</i>
WHERE	<i>non</i>	<i>non-bait</i>	<i>i-non</i>	<i>edo-non</i>	<i>non-nahi</i>
WHEN	<i>noiz</i>	<i>noiz-bait</i>	<i>i-noiz</i>	<i>edo-noiz</i>	<i>noiz-nahi</i>
HOW	<i>nola</i>	<i>nola-bait</i>	<i>i-nola</i>	<i>edo-nola</i>	<i>nola-nahi</i>

Basque indefinites vs. PSIs in other languages

Basque indefinites show a similar behavior to **Hindi NPIs** (Lahiri 1998, pc):

1. The negative marker is required to build a neg sentence:

(7) a. *koi bhii nahiiN aayaa.*

anyone not came

'No one came.'

b. **koi bhii aayaa.*

anyone came

2. PSIs alone are not possible in fragment answers:

(8) Q: *Kaun aayaa?* A: *koi bhii nahiiN.* A': **koi bhii*

who come.perf

anyone not

anyone

Basque indefinites vs. PSIs in other languages

3. Lack of Neg Spread:

- (9) *Kisii-ne* *kisii-ko* *dekhaa.*
someone.ERG someone.OBJ see
'Someone saw someone'
IT CANNOT MEAN: 'Noone saw anyone'

4. Lack of Double Negation:

- (10) *Kisii-ne* *kisii-ko* *nahiiN* *dekhaa.*
someone.ERG someone.OBJ not see
'Noone saw anyone' [SN]
IT CANNOT MEAN: 'Everybody saw something' [DN]

Basque indefinites vs. PSIs in other languages

5. Licensed in subject position:

- (11) *Koi bhii aadmii nahiiN aayaa.*
any man not came
'No one came.'

6. Pre-/post-negative symmetry:

- (12) a. *Koi bhii aadmii nahiiN aayaa.*
any man not came
b. *NahiiN aayaa koi bhii aadmii.*
not came any man
'No one came.'

Basque indefinites vs. PSIs in other languages

Basque indefinites show a similar behavior to **English** *any*, except for fronted positions:

1. Clausemate negative marker is required in well-formed negative sentences:

- (13) a. *John did not see anyone.*
b. **John saw anyone.*

2. Not possible in fragment answers:

- (14) Q. *Who saw her?*
A. **Anybody. / ??Not anybody. / Nobody.*

Basque indefinites vs. PSIs in other languages

3. Lack of negative spread and cannot induce DN:

(15) **Anybody has eaten anything.*

(16) *John didn't see anything.*

IT CANNOT MEAN: John saw everything

4. The neg marker can only license post-negative NPIs in English. *Any* cannot be used in fronted positions:

(17) a. *She didn't see anybody.*

b. **Anybody didn't see it.*

c. *Nobody saw it.*

(18) **Anything did she see.*

Basque indefinites vs. G/H/R NCIs (Strict NC)

Basque indefinites differ from **Greek, Hungarian, Romanian NCIs**.

1. Isolated NCIs are allowed as fragment answers:

- (19) Q: **Ti idhes?** A: **TIPOTA. / *Tipota** (Greek)
'What did you see?' 'Nothing' *'Anybody'
(Giannakidou 2000: 459, ex. (2))
- (20) Q: **Ki-t lát-tál?** A: **Senki-t.** (Hungarian)
'Who did you see?' 'Nobody'
(Puskás 2002: 89, ex. (8a))
- (21) Q: **Cine a venit?** A: **Nimeni.** (Romanian)
'Who came?' 'Nobody'
(Fălăuș & Nicolae 2015: 586, ex. (4))

The same applies to NCIs in Non-Strict NC (Cat, Spa).

Basque indefinites vs. G/H/R NCIs (Strict NC)

2. Preverbal NCIs (but not preverbal PSIs) can co-occur with postverbal NCIs (and postverbal PSIs):

- (22) a. *KANENAS* *dhen* *ipe* *TIPOTA / tipota* (Greek)
n-person not said n-thing anything
'Nobody said anything.'
- b. **Kanenas* *dhen* *ipe* *TIPOTA / tipota*.
anybody not said n-thing. anything

The same applies to NCIs in Non-Strict NC (Cat).

Basque indefinites vs. G/H/R NCIs (Strict NC)

3. Intuition that in the absence of the negative marker, the sentence is ungrammatical but still is interpreted negatively:

- (23) a. *KANENAS* **(dhen) ipe TIPOTA* (Greek)
n-person not said n-thing
- b. *KANENAS* **(dhen) ipe tipota*
n-person not said anything
'Nobody said anything.'

The same applies to NCIs in Non-Strict NC (Cat).

Basque indefinites vs. G/H/R NCIs (Strict NC)

Basque indefinites differ from **Hungarian, Romanian NCIs**.

4. NCIs allow DN:

(24) *SENKI nem vett semmit.* (Hungarian)

nobody not bought nothing

‘Everybody bought something.’

(Puskás 2012: 613, ex. (2b))

(25) *Nimeni nu a citit nimic.* (Romanian)

nobody not has read nothing

‘Everybody read something.’

(Fălăuş & Nicolae 2015: 586, ex. (4))

The same applies to NCIs in Non-Strict NC (Cat, Spa).

Interim summary

- Basque indefinites are **similar to** so-called Hindi NPIs (*ek bhii* ‘any, one even’)
 - cannot occur without an overt negative marker
- Basque indefinites are **distinct from** so-called English NPIs (*any*)
 - can occur in focus fronted positions
- Basque indefinites are **distinct from** NCIs in various so-called (Strict and Non-Strict) NC languages.
 - cannot occur in isolation as fragment answers
 - cannot license DN readings (not even in denial contexts)

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Experimental investigations

ETXEBERRIA, U., S. TUBAU, V. DÉPREZ, J. BORRÀS-COMES & M.T. ESPINAL (2018). Relating (un)acceptability to interpretation. Experimental investigations on negation. *Frontiers in Psychology. Language Sciences* 8:2370. doi:

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02370/full>

ETXEBERRIA, U., S. TUBAU, J. BORRÀS-COMES & M.T. ESPINAL (2021). Polarity Items in Basque. Experimental evidence for their existential reading. *Natural Language & Llinguistic Theory*.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-021-09513-2>

Hypotheses concerning PSIs

- Multiple PSIs do not contribute to a DN reading
- PSIs without an overt licenser (the negative marker in our examples) should be considered ungrammatical and give rise to low acceptability ratings
- PSIs without a negative licenser should give rise to existential non-negative readings

Hypotheses concerning NCIs

- NCIs can give rise to double negation readings
- NCIs without an overt licenser should be considered grammatical and give rise to high acceptability ratings
- NCIs without a negative licenser should give rise to negative readings

Basque indefinites vs. Spanish NCIs

Etxeberria, Tubau, Déprez, Borràs-Comes, Espinal (2018),
Relating (un)acceptability to interpretation. Experimental
investigations on negation. *Frontiers in Psychology. Language
Sciences* 8:2370. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02370

- Acceptability judgment task for sentences with two indefinite expressions, with and without a negative marker.

Order of negative sentences in Basque: S *ez* AUX O V

Order in Spanish: S *no* V O

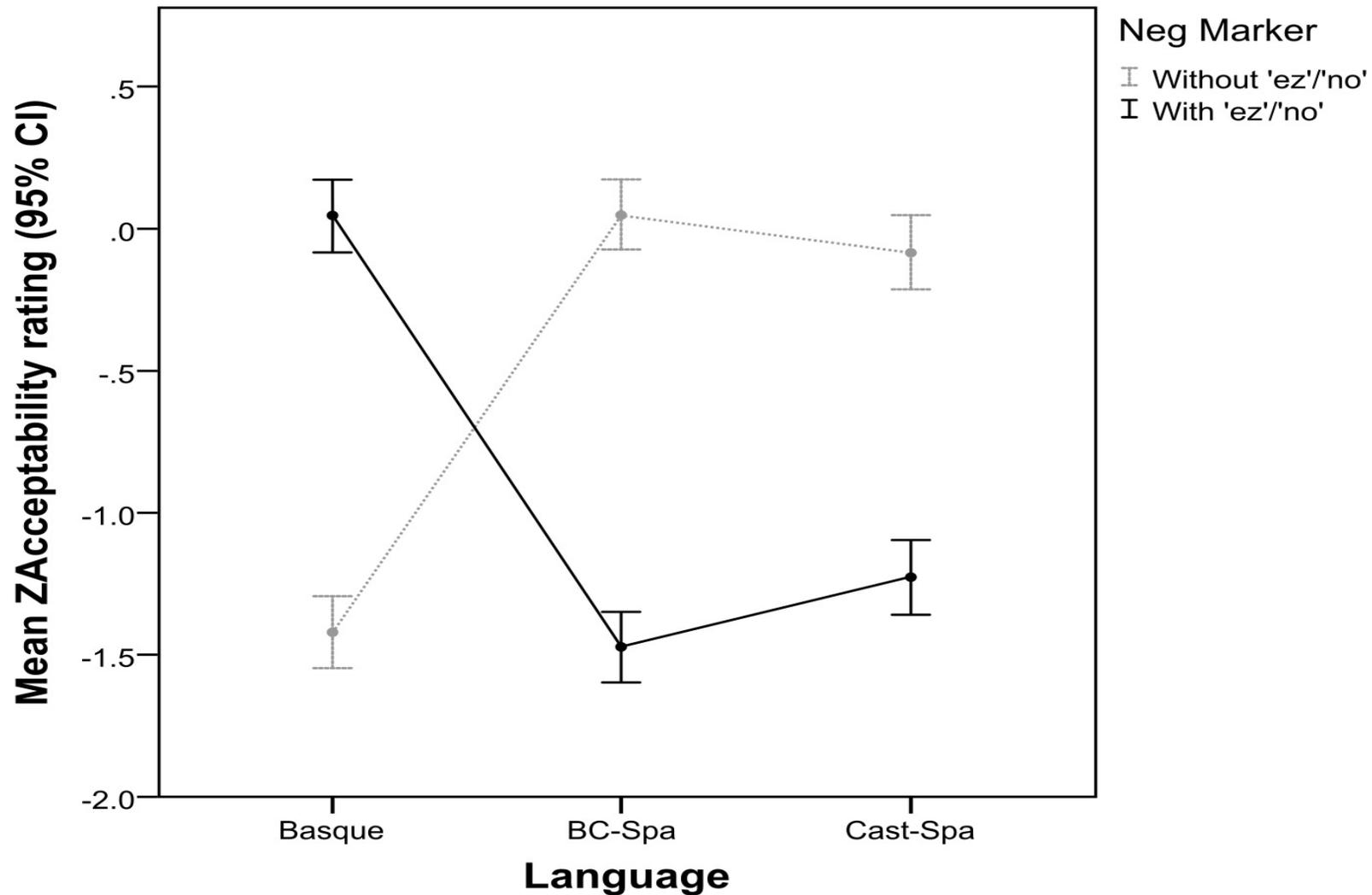
- Interpretation of sentences with and without a negative marker: single negation or double negation.

Basque indefinites vs. Spanish NCIs

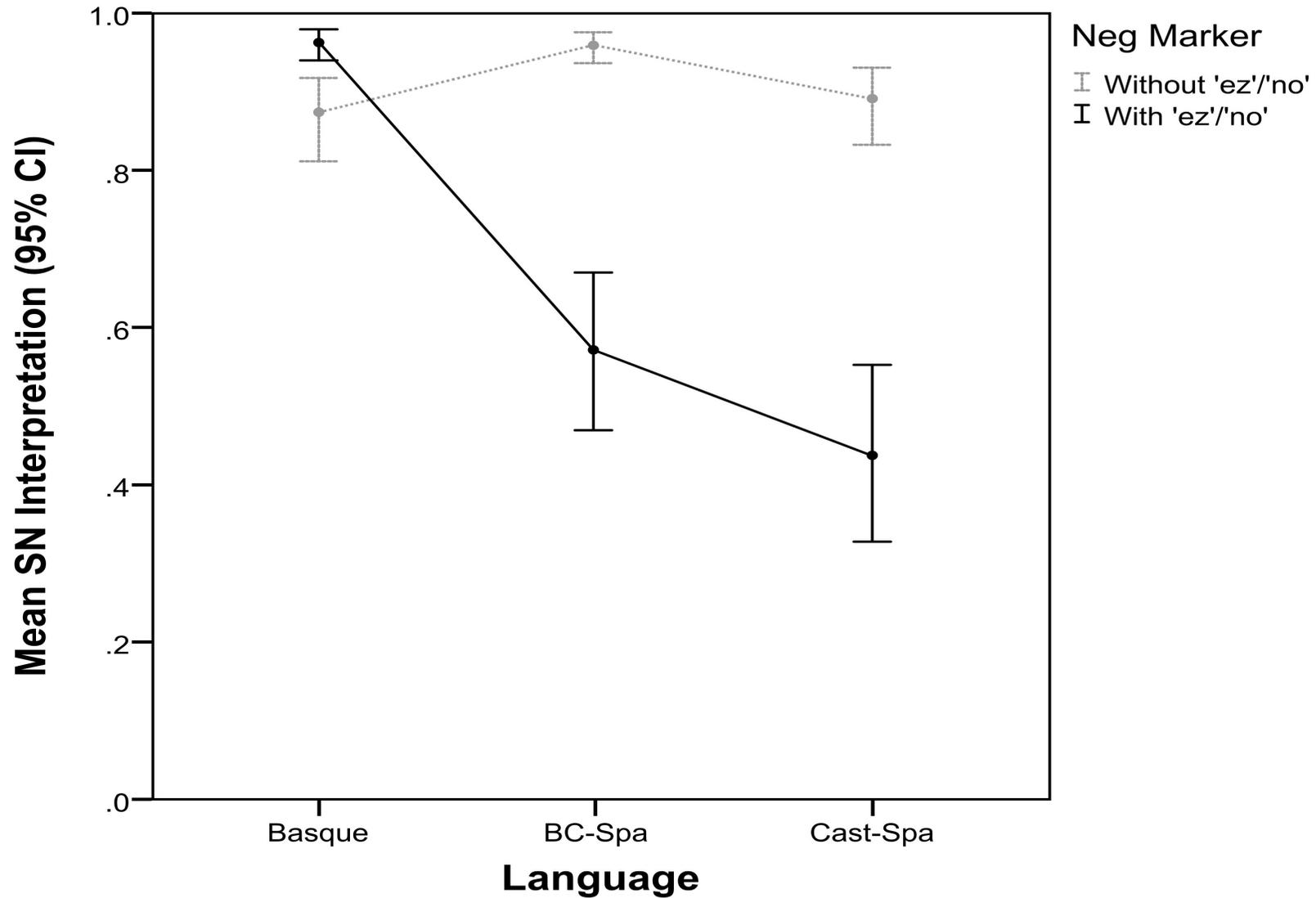
(26) *Inork* **(ez)* *du ezer* *hautsi.* (Basque)
anyone.erg not AUX anything break
'Nobody broke anything.'

(27) *Nadie* *(*no)* *ha roto nada.* (Spanish)
nobody not has broken anything
'Nobody broke anything.'

Basque indefinites vs. Spanish NCIs



Basque indefinites vs. Spanish NCIs



Basque indefinites with and without *ez*

ETXEBERRIA, U., S. TUBAU, J. BORRÀS-COMES & M.T. ESPINAL (to appear). Polarity Items in Basque. Experimental evidence for their existential reading. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-021-09513-2>

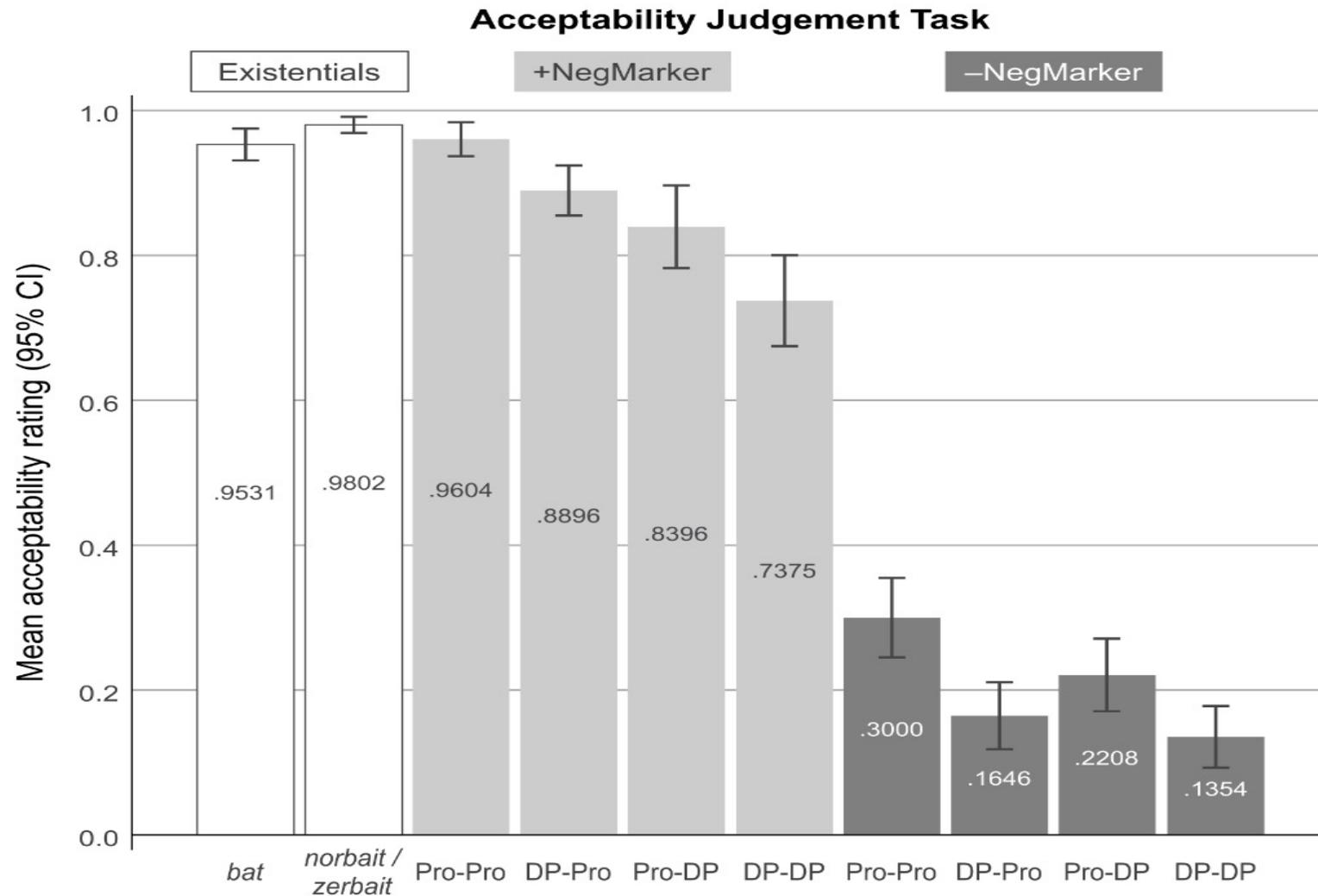
- Acceptability judgment task for sentences with two indefinite expressions, with and without a negative marker.
Order of negative sentences in Basque: S *ez* AUX O V
Order of affirmative sentences: S O V AUX
- Interpretation of sentences with and without a negative marker: single negation or existential reading.

Basque indefinites with and without *ez*

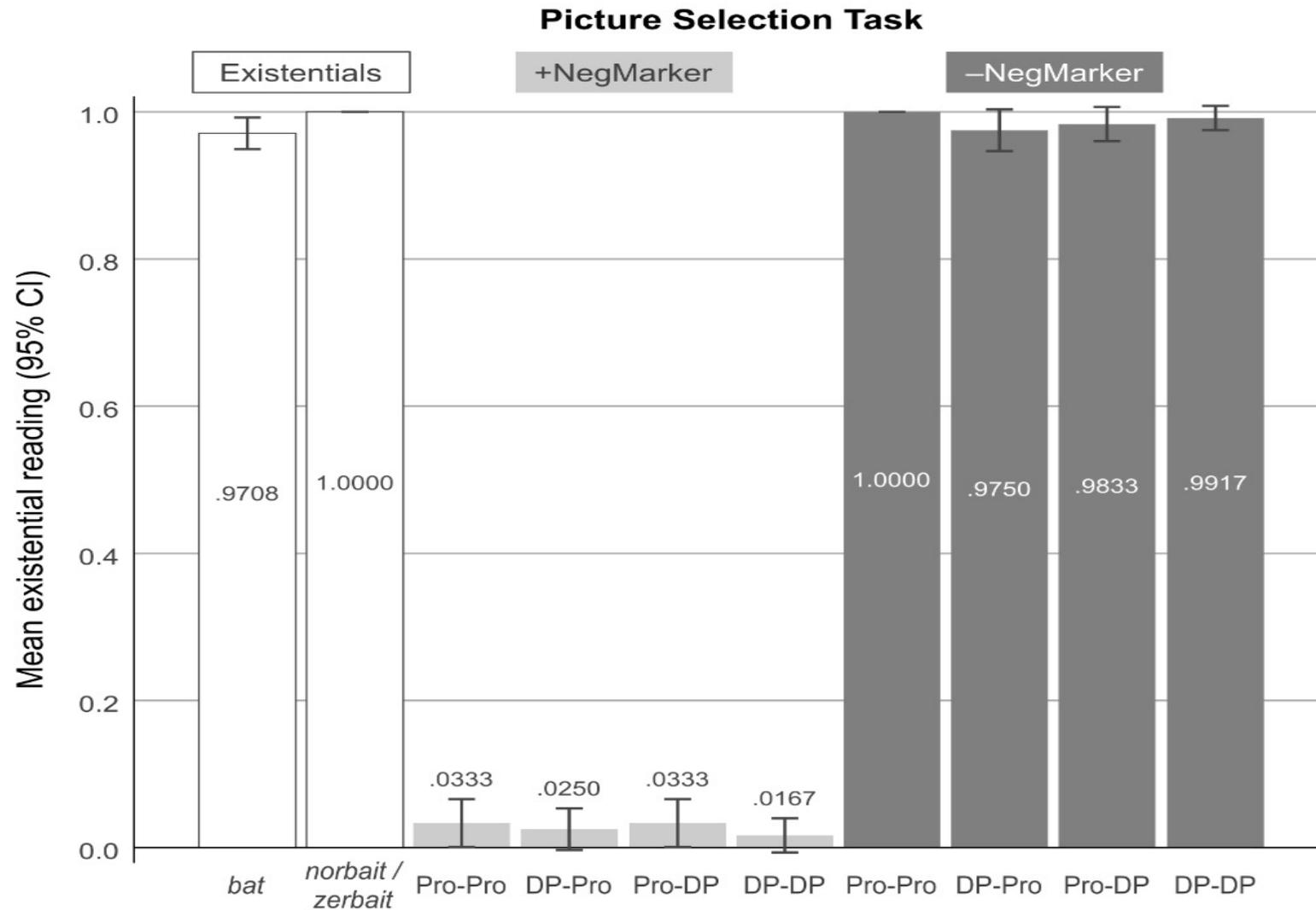
(28) *Inork* **(ez)* *du ezer* *hautsi.*
anyone.ERG not AUX anything.ABS break
'Nobody broke anything.'

(29) **Inork* *ezer* *hautsi du.*
anyone.ERG anything.ABS break AUX

Basque indefinites with and without *ez*



Basque indefinites with and without *ez*



Results

- These studies reveal that:
 - Basque *i-/bat ere* indefinites without a licenser are considered ungrammatical and, therefore, give rise to low acceptability ratings (Exps. 1 and 2)
 - Basque *i-/bat ere* indefinites without a negative licenser but in the Word order of a negative sentence (i.e., *S AUX O V) do not give rise to DN readings but consistently give rise to single negation readings (Exp. 1)

Results

- These studies further reveal that:
 - Basque *i-/bat ere* indefinites without a negative licenser but in the word order of an affirmative sentence (i.e., *S O V AUX) give rise to an existential non-negative reading (Exp. 2)

Results

One might say:

- The syntactic word order chosen (that of a declarative negative sentence in Exp. 1) might have been a syntactic cue for the SN reading
- The syntactic word order chosen (that of a declarative affirmative sentence in Exp.2) might have influenced the existential interpretation.
- Notice, though, that such consistent existential interpretation points at the lack of a covert source of negation. Therefore, Basque indefinites are not NCIs

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Discussion

- We have highlighted the fact that Basque indefinites differ from NCIs in that they are ill-formed as fragment answers and do not contribute to double negation readings. We conclude that they are PSIs
- In our experimental studies we have focused on two additional factors: the acceptability rating of sentences containing two indefinites with/without a negative marker, and the meaning associated with these sentences

Back to our research questions

Q1. What is the difference, if any, between Basque negative sentences and negative sentences in the other languages being considered? Do they show the same phenomenon?

- No. Basque (like Hindi) shows exclusively Polarity sensitivity
- In Basque, as in other languages with PSIs, only single negation can be inferred.
- Languages with NCI allow double negation readings

Back to our research questions

Q2. Under what conditions an indefinite expression can be said to behave as a PSI or as an NCI?

→ PSIs require a semantic licenser

If X c-commands Y in domain Z, assign the role of licenser to X.

If Y is c-commanded by X in domain Z, assign the role of licensee to Y

→ NCIs require a syntactic licenser

If $X_{[Neg]}$ enters into Agree with $Y_{[Neg]}$, the two constituents compose one single negation

Back to our research questions

Q3. Are Basque PSIs NCIs?

→ No. Basque indefinites are not NCIs.

→ Basque is not a Strict NC language

Thank you!!!

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