

# 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 <sub>1</sub> "Anyone"	Free-Choice <sub>2</sub> "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'  
(Fălăuş & 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.’

(Fălăuș & 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)

# Roadmap

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4. **Experimental investigations: Basque vs. Spanish (Castilian Spanish, Basque Country Spanish)**
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6. Discussion
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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 & Linguistic 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

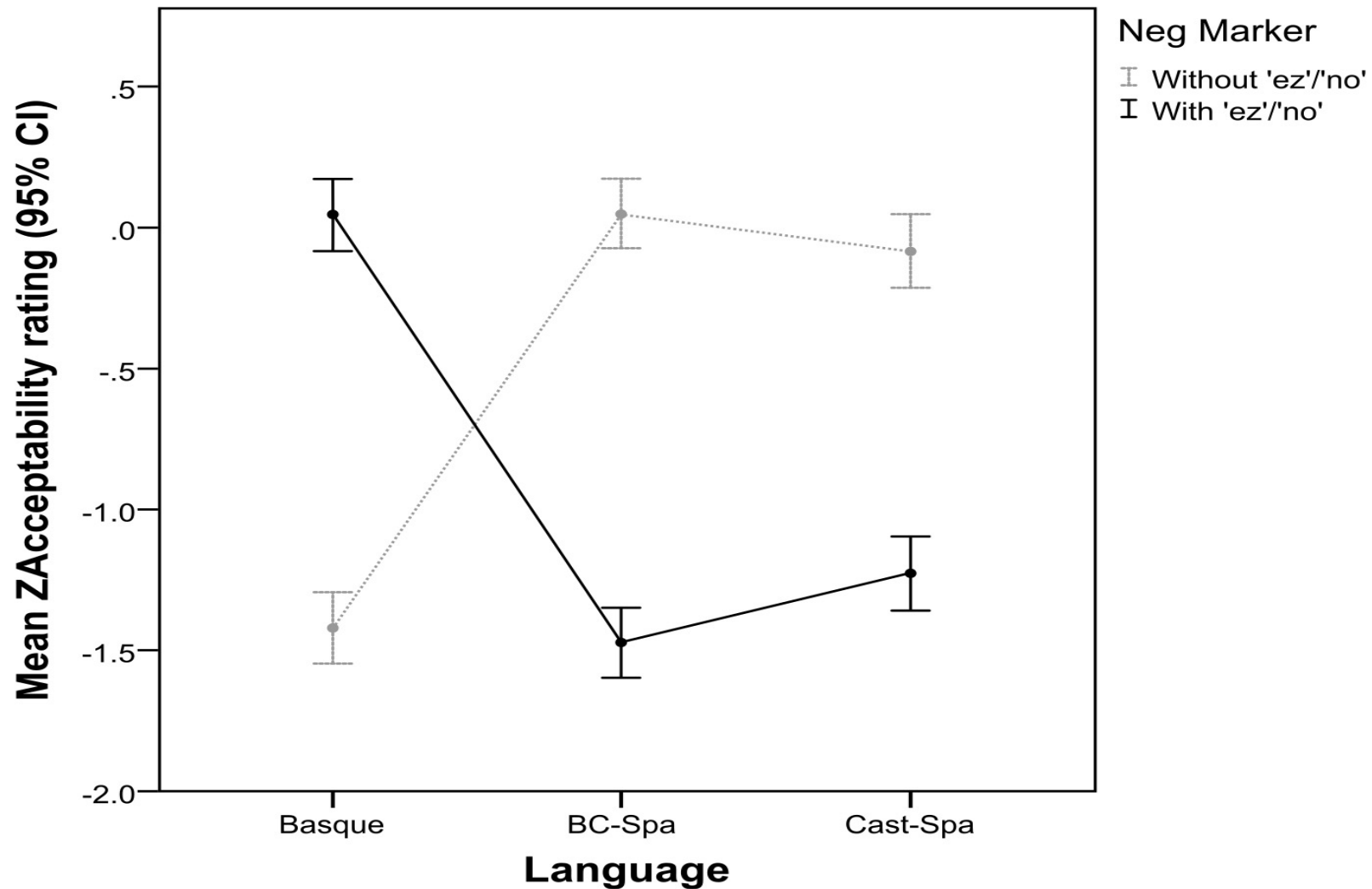
- Interpretation of sentences with and without a negative marker: single negation or double negation.

# Basque indefinites vs. Spanish NCIs

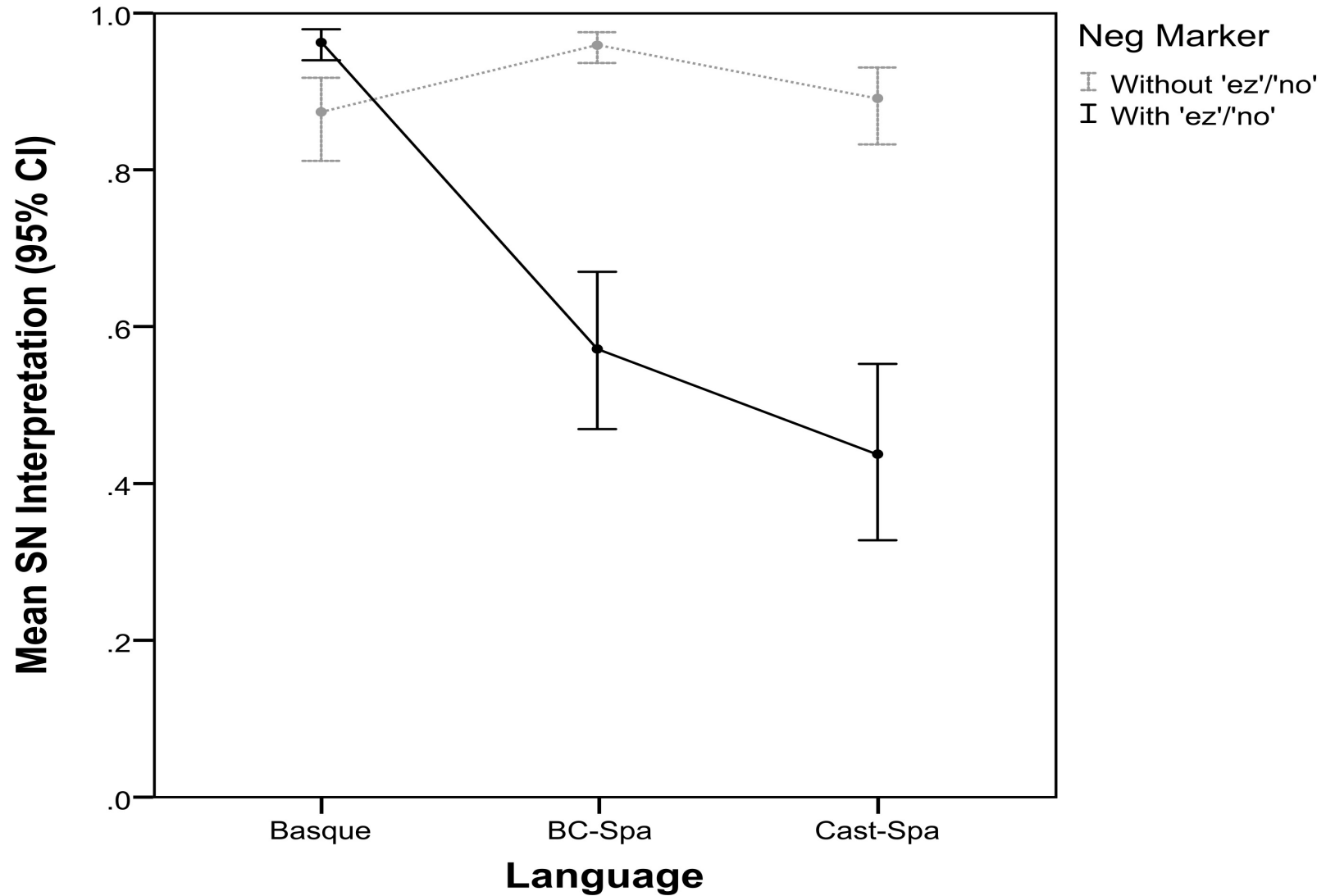
(26) *Inork*      *\*(ez)*      *du ezer*      *hautsi.*      (Basque)  
anyone.erg not      AUX anything break  
'Nobody broke anything.'

(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>

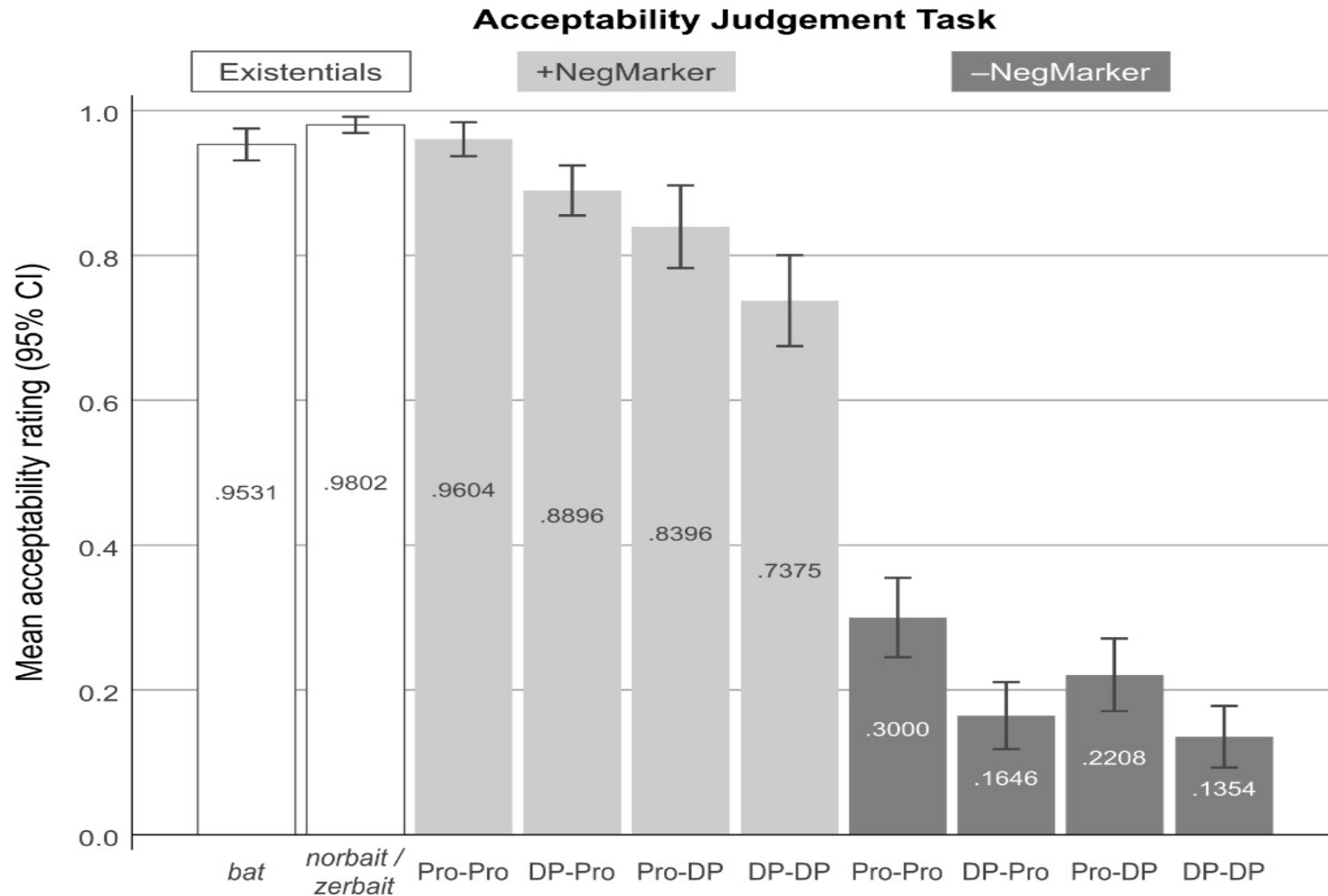
- Acceptability judgment task for sentences with two indefinite expressions, with and without a negative marker.  
Order of negative sentences in Basque: S *ez* AUX O V  
Order of affirmative sentences: S O V AUX
- Interpretation of sentences with and without a negative marker: single negation or existential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

# Basque indefinites with and without *ez*

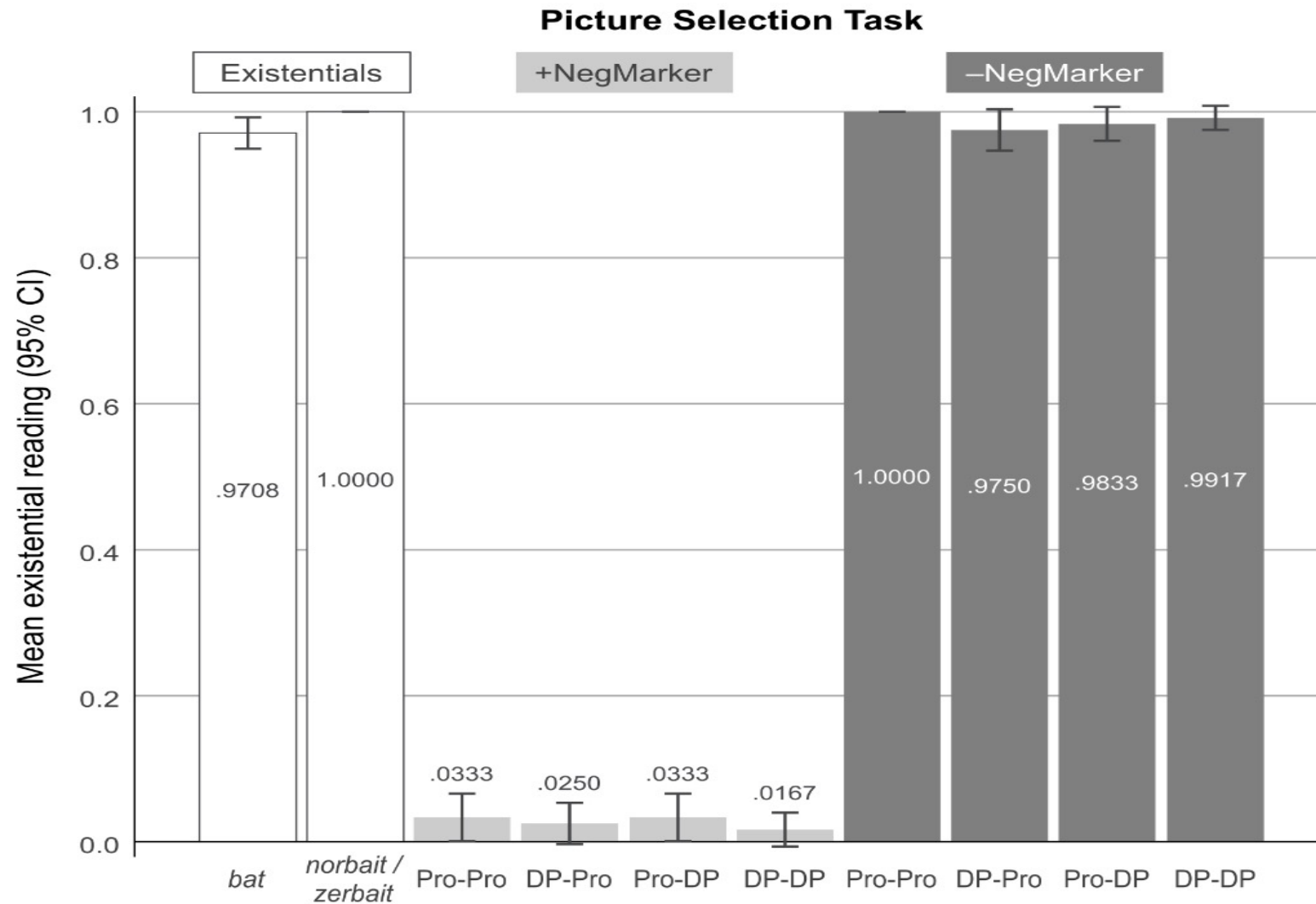
(28) *Inork*      *\*(ez)*      *du ezer*      *hautsi.*  
anyone.ERG not      AUX anything.ABS      break  
'Nobody broke anything.'

(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 licensor 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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