On the limits between negative polarity and negative concord.
A reference to Basque

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INTRODUCTION. The main goal of this investigation is to delimit the boundary between negative polarity and Negative Concord (NC), and as a result to argue that Basque is not a (Strict) NC language. Since Labov (1972), Den Besten (1986, 1989), and Van der Wouden & Zwarts (1993), it has been assumed that the intuitive notion of NC, by which two or more apparently negative elements yield one logical negation, can show up in natural languages either by means of negative spread (i.e. two or more negative expressions co-occurring), negative doubling (i.e. the sentential negative marker and a negative expression co-occurring), or a combination of negative spread and doubling (Zeijlstra 2004:61). Giannakidou (1997, 2000) has further distinguished between Strict NC (negative expressions must necessarily co-occur with the sentential negative marker regardless of whether they occur preverbally or postverbally) and Non-Strict NC (postverbal negative expressions must co-occur with the sentential negative marker, but preverbal n-words cannot if a single negation reading is intended). Crucial to these technical definitions is the term *n-word*, coined by Laka (1990). The core property of n-words (or Negative Concord items) is that they can be used as negative fragment answers. N-words have been originally conceived as negative polarity items (NPIs), interpreted as non-negative indefinites (Acquaviva 1993, Quer 1993, Déprez 1997, a.o.) that appear under the scope of a sentential negative marker or a similar expression, and yield one single logical negation. Alternative analyses conceive n-words as non-negative indefinites syntactically flagged for Agree with the sentential negative marker (Zeijlstra 2004 and ff), or as universal quantifiers that outscope negation (Giannakidou 1997, 2000).

Concerning Basque, it has been claimed (Etxepare 2003:523) that it is a NC language on the basis of the fact that existential NPIs such as *i-nor* 'prefix *i*-who, anybody', *e-zer* 'prefix *e*-what, anything', and *N bakar bat ere* 'lit.: N single one even' must co-occur with the sentential negative marker *ez* 'not' to render the sentence negative (and grammatical), as the contrast in (1-3) illustrates (see, i.a., Laka 1990, Etxepare 2003, de Rijk 2008).

(1) a.   *Jonek   *inor*   ikusi   zuen.
             Jon.erg   anybody   see   Aux
    b.   *Inork*   goxoki bat   jan   zuen.
             anybody.erg   candy   one   eat   Aux
(2) a.   *Ez*   du   *inork*   goxoki   bat   jan.
             not   Aux   anybody   candy   one   eat
    b.   *Inork*   *ez*   du   goxoki bat   jan.
             anybody   not   Aux   candy   one   eat
             'Nobody ate a candy.'
(3)   *Ez*   du   *inork*   *ezer*   *inon*   erosi.
      not   Aux   anybody   anything   anywhere   buy
      'Nobody bought anything anywhere.'

However, none of these PIs can be used in isolation as negative fragment answers.

(4)   Nor   etorri   da?   *Inor*.   √*Inor ez*.
      who   come   aux   anybody   anybody not

Thus, the questions that this paper aims at considering are the following: Are Basque existential NPIs to be actually considered n-words? Is Basque to be considered a NC language, more precisely a Strict NC language? And, more generally, is NC a special kind of NPI licensing (Giannakidou & Zeijlstra 2017)?

ARGUMENTS. In order to provide a reply to these questions we will focus on:
(i) the distribution of {*inor, ezer, N bakar bat ere*} PIs, showing that they are superweak PIs (Hoeksema 2012) licensed by non-veridical operators (Zwarts 1995), which include downward entailing, anti-additive, and anti-morphic operators.
(ii) the differences between Basque PIs, which behave similarly to Hindi NPIs (Lahiri 1998), and English *any:* Basque PIs are not allowed in fragment answers unless the sentential negative marker *ez* is present (see (4)); Basque PIs can appear both in post-negative and pre-negative position, see (2)

(Laka 1990, Etxepare 2003, de Rijk 2008); and Basque PIs do not compete with a negative quantifier series (as is the case in English) and can appear in focus position when fronted.

(iii) the contrasts between Basque PIs and Romanian (R)/Greek (G)/Hungarian (H)/Romance creole n-words (Falaus 2009; Giannakidou 1997, and ff.; Surányi 2002, 2006, Szabolcsi 2018; Déprez 2017, Déprez & Henri in press): (i) Basque has only one series of PIs, and these are not allowed in isolation without the sentential negative marker *ez* 'not', which contrasts with R/G n-words; (ii) *PI ez PI* 'PI not PI' structures never license double negation readings (Etxeberria et al 2018), which contrasts with combinations of multiple n-words in R/G/H, especially when one of the n-words appears in a dedicated Focus position (Falaus & Nicolae 2016, Púskas 2012).

ANALYSIS. We base our analysis of Basque on the difference between negative polarity and NC, on the existence vs. lack of lexical competitors, and on the negative marker being an operator encoding logical negation ($\neg$) vs. an operator carrying a negative syntactic feature.

With respect to the first issue we assume a distinction between PI licensing, conceived as sensitivity to semantic features (Giannakidou 1997), and NC, understood as syntactic agreement (Zeijlstra 2004, and ff.). In Basque, we argue that licensing of PIs is a semantic operation.

Concerning the second issue, Basque only has one series of items, which are PIs. In addition, it has two series of Free Choice items (*edo-nor* 'or-who' and *nor-nahi* 'who-want'). By contrast, note that (i) Hindi PIs have FC readings in generic and modal contexts; (ii) English has two series of items: PIs (and FCIs) vs. Negative Quantifiers; (iii) Strict NC languages such as G/R have two series of items: PIs and n-words; (iv) Non-Strict NC languages such as Catalan and Spanish only have one series of n-words, which, in contrast to Basque PIs, can occur in isolation -as fragment answers- without the negative marker, and are claimed not to allow a negative marker when preverbal.

Finally, regarding the third issue, we postulate that Basque PIs are characterized by a semantically strong [+σ] feature that is frozen only under the scope of an operator (e.g., the one corresponding to the negative marker *ez* 'not') to which a sigma (exhaustifier) operator is attached (Chierchia 2006, 2013). In this sense, licensing PIs in Basque (like *any* in English, non-emphatic *tipota* 'nothing' in Greek, and PIs in Hindi) is dependent on a c-command relation between a semantic operator to which a sigma operator is adjoined and the item to be licensed. By contrast, licensing n-words in NC structures requires a syntactic Agree relationship between either an uninterpretable polarity syntactic feature valued as negative ([uPol:Neg]) (as in the case of Romanian *nimeni* 'no one', and Greek emphatic TIPOTA 'nothing') or an unvalued [uPol:] feature (as with Catalan *res* 'nothing', and Spanish *nadie* 'nobody'), and a constituent syntactically specified for [iNeg] (the sentential negative marker) o simply [iPol] (other polar operators). On this view n-words are a subset of PIs, specified syntactically with a [uPol] feature that is checked by a covert negative operator in fragment answers and in negative spread structures, and that may license double negation in cases of negative spread and doubling (such as Romanian "n-word *nu* n-word" structures; Falaus & Nicolae 2016). However, PIs in Basque are ungrammatical as fragment answers and are excluded in negative spread constructions, which we take to show that in this language no covert negative operator specified as [iNeg] can be triggered.

CONCLUSION. Basque PIs behave differently from n-words in both Strict and Non-Strict NC languages. Basque PIs do not compete with a series of negative quantifiers and, therefore, (i) need to combine with a negative marker in fragment answers, (ii) may occur in pre-negative/post-negative position, and (iii) may occur in sentence initial as well as in focus position. Furthermore, we claim that Basque does not have n-words (contra Laka 1990) and, consequently, it is not a (Strict) NC language (contra previous studies that suggest it is). Basque PIs are polarity sensitive, but do not show syntactic Agree, a relationship that is exclusive of n-words. Thus, we conclude that Basque shows negative polarity but not NC.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Etxepare 2003. 'Negation', *A Grammar of Basque*, de Gruyter. Falaus & Nicolae 2016. 'Fragment answers and double negation in strict negative concord languages'. *Semant. Linguist. Theory* 26. **Giannakidou** 2000. Negative…concord? NLLT 18. **Hoeksema** 2012. On the Natural History of NPIs. *Linguistic Analysis*, 38. **Laka** 1990. *Negation in Syntax: On the Nature of Functional Categories and Projections.* Ph.D, MIT. **Zeijlstra** 2004. *Sentential Negation and Negative Concord.* Ph.D. U.Amsterdam.