

Syntax II – Assignment #3

Negation in Basque and English

due March 5th

I. Basque Word Order

The examples in (1–2) illustrate some basic patterns of word order in Basque (a language spoken in Northern Spain and Southwestern France which has an unusually high rate of linguists per capita!). All of the Basque examples below are taken from Laka 1990. Suggest a basic structure for Basque sentences which will account for the positioning of main verbs and auxiliaries. You do not need to worry too much about what positions to put the arguments of the verb in – particularly the three arguments of the verb in (1a).

- (1) a. Irunek Iboni etxea eman dio.
Irunek Ibon house-the given has
'Irunek gave the house to Ibon.'
- b. Umea etorri da.
kid-the arrived has
'The kid has arrived.'
- c. Umeak sagarra jan du.
kid-the apple-the eaten has
'The kid has eaten the apple.'
- (2) a. Etxea erori da.
house-the fallen has
'The house fell down.'
- b. *Etxea da erori.
house-the has fallen
- c. *Erori etxea da.
fallen house-the has

Now consider the word order possibilities in sentences containing the negative marker *ez*. Describe the effect that negation has on the word order of the sentence, and suggest a structural analysis for this effect. [You may, if it helps, assume that negation + auxiliary sequences such as *ez da* are treated as a single word by the grammar of Basque.]

- (3) a. *Etxea erori ez da.
house-the fallen no has
- b. Ez da etxea erori.
no has house-the fallen
'The house didn't fall.'
- c. Ez dio Irunek Iboni etxea eman.
no has Irunek Ibon house-the given
'Irunek hasn't given the house to Ibon.'

II. Negative Polarity Item Licensing

The following examples illustrate the conditions under which *negative polarity items* (NPIs) such as *anybody*, *anything*, *anywhere*, *any* are possible in English. Under what conditions are negative polarity items possible in English? [Note: English NPIs can also have a so-called *free choice* reading, as in ‘Anybody could do that.’ We are not interested in the free choice use of NPIs here.]

- (4) a. Wallace didn’t see anything.
b. Nobody saw anything.
c. Wallace didn’t think that Gromit did anything.
d. Nobody thought that Gromit did anything.
- (5) a. * Wallace saw anything.
b. *Somebody saw anything.
c. * Wallace thought that Gromit did anything.
d. *Somebody thought that Gromit did anything.
- (6) a. * Anybody didn’t see the sheep.
b. *Wallace told anybody that Wendolene doesn’t like cheese.
c. * Anybody thought that Gromit did nothing.
- (7) a. * [_{NP}The man who nobody likes] thought anybody was kind to him.
b. * [_{NP}The man who Wallace didn’t notice] thought anybody had seen him.

The following facts may require you to generalize your account of negative polarity item licensing a little.

- (8) a. Gromit denied that he did anything.
b. Gromit denied that anybody left.
- (9) * Anybody denied that he robbed the museum.

Now look at some environments in which the negative polarity item *inor* ‘anybody’ may appear in Basque. [Note: the *-k* suffix in (10a) is a case marker – no need to worry about that here.]

- (10) a. Ez dio inork Iboni etxea eman.
no has anybody Ibon house-the given
‘Nobody has given the house to Ibon.’
(Literally: Anybody hasn’t given the house to Ibon.)
- b. Ez da inor etorri.
no has anybody come
‘Nobody came.’
(Literally: Anybody didn’t come.)
- c. Ez dio Ibonek inori etxea eman.
no has Ibon anybody-to house-the given
‘Ibon hasn’t given the house to anybody.’
- (11) * Inor etorri da
anybody come has

Question: based on your answer to earlier questions, why do you think that the Basque sentences in (10a–b) allow NPIs, whereas the closely related English sentences in (6) and (9) do not?