

Lenguas, lenguaje y lingüística

Contribuciones desde la Lingüística General

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(Eds.)

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TWO KINDS OF MINIMAL ANSWERS TO YES-NO QUESTIONS IN CZECH AND SPANISH

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1. INTRODUCTION

Four types of minimal answers to *yes-no* questions can be distinguished across languages (Pope 1972, see table 1): positive agreement (PA), negative agreement (NA), positive disagreement (PD) and negative disagreement (ND). The opposition negative-positive reflects the presence or absence of negative elements in the question and in the answer. The opposition agreement-disagreement expresses whether the answer is meant to agree or disagree with the question's presupposition.

	<i>Positive answer</i>	<i>Negative answer</i>
<i>Positive question</i>	Positive Agreement (PA)	Negative Agreement (NA)
<i>Negative question</i>	Positive Disagreement (PD)	Negative Disagreement (ND)

Table 1. Minimal answers to yes-no questions (Pope 1972).

Pope (1972) shows that there are two major answering systems used across languages to express these four types of answers (see table 2 below).

In one system, the particle *yes* is used to confirm a positive and a negative question, so to express *Positive* and *Negative Agreement*, and the particle *no* to deny a positive and a negative question, *Negative* and *Positive Disagreement* as e.g. in Japanese in (1) (cf. Kuno 1973). This system is called *truth-based system* since the particles seem to confirm or disconfirm the true value that is presupposed by the question.

- (1) a. Kimi tsukareteiru? – Hai. (PA) // Iie. (ND) (Japanese)¹
 you tired yes no
 ‘Are you tired?’ ‘Yes (I am)’. // ‘No (I am not)’.
- b. Kimi tsukareteinai? – Hai (tsukareteinai). (NA) // Iie (tsukareteiru desu). (PD)
 you tired-neg yes (tired-neg) // no (tired être)
 ‘Are you not tired?’ ‘Yes (I am not)’. // ‘No (I am)’.

In the other system, the particle *yes* is used to confirm a positive question and to deny a negative question, so to express *Positive Agreement* and *Positive Disagreement*, while the particle *no* is used to deny a positive question and to confirm a negative question, so

¹ All examples and acceptability judgements are due to my Japanese, Spanish and Czech informants.

to express *Negative Agreement* and *Negative Disagreement*, as e.g. in Spanish in (2) and in Czech, where the particle *ano* in PD must be further preceded by the conjunction *ale* ('but')², see (3). This system is called *polarity-based system* since the particles seem to express the positive or negative polarity of the answer.

- (2) a. ¿Juan viene? – Sí. (PA) // No. (ND) (Spanish)
 b. ¿Juan no viene? – No. (NA) // Sí. (PD)
- (3) a. Přijde Jan? – Ano. (PA) // Ne. (ND) (Czech)
 b. Jan nepřijde? – Ne. (NA) // *Ano. / Ale ano. (PD)

	YES expresses:	NO expresses:
<i>Truth-based answers</i>	PA + NA	ND + PD
<i>Polarity-based answers</i>	PA + PD	NA + ND

Table 2. Truth-based answers vs. polarity-based answers.

In this paper, I deal with minimal answers in Spanish and in Czech³ to show that we can find both kinds of answers in one language, and those languages, which typically behave as polarity-based languages, may also possess truth-based answers. I will propose that this is due to the capacity of answering particles to express either absolute polarity or relative polarity, i.e. relation between the polarity of the questions and that of the answer (see Farkas 2010). The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I discuss and analyse polarity-based answers. I argue that these answers involve ellipsis of all elements except for particles or the finite verb in Czech, for they bear the polarity feature of the answer. In section 3, I discuss answers to negative questions and show that they allow both polarity and truth-based answers. I argue that this is due to the fact that there are two types of negative questions: negative questions with pleonastic negation that behave as positive questions, and “true” negative questions that convey a negative presupposed assertion, like negative declaratives. Only the latter can receive a truth-based answer. In section 4, I propose that particles in truth-based answers express relative polarity to the extent that they (dis)confirm the presupposed assertion conveyed by the question. From the syntactic point of view, I propose that truth-based answers also involve ellipsis of all elements except for particles, but that the particles function here as clausal heads. Consequently, truth-based answers to positive questions are identical at surface to polarity-based answers, which may explain why polarity-based interpretation prevails over the truth-based one. The section 5 sums up my proposal.

² Positive disagreement can be considered as the most marked answer. Therefore, some languages have developed a specific answering particle to express PD: *si* in French, *doch* in German, *ja* in Swedish (Holmberg 2001). In English, *yes* expressing PD must be accompanied by an elliptical clause: *Is he not coming? Yes, he is.*

³ Czech belongs to the family of Slavic languages; it is an svo and *pro-drop* language with a morphologically rich nominal and verbal system.

2. POLARITY-BASED ANSWERS

2.1. Answering particles and minimal verbal answers

Polarity-based answers in Czech may be minimally realized not only by answering particles, as shown in (3) above, but also by echoing the finite verb of the question (see table 3)⁴. When the answer is negative, the verb bears the negative prefix *ne-* expressing sentential negation. The important observation to be made here is that when the verbs and particles co-occur, they always bear the same polarity. Thus, *ne* and the negative verb express negative polarity, while *ano* and the positive V express positive polarity (see section 4.2 for *ale ano*).

Question	Answer			
	Particle	V	Particle + V	Meaning
Jsou rodiče doma? <i>Are the parents at home?</i>	Ano.	Jsou.	Ano, jsou.	<i>PA (yes, they are)</i>
	Ne.	Nejsou.	Ne, nejsou.	<i>ND (no, they are not)</i>
Nejsou rodiče doma? <i>Aren't the parents at home?</i>	Ne.	Nejsou.	Ne, nejsou.	<i>NA (no, they are not)</i>
	Ale ano.	Jsou.	Ale ano, jsou.	<i>PD (yes, they are)</i>

Table 3: Polarity-based answers in Czech.

In Spanish, it is less felicitous to use verbal answers alone, in particular in answers to negative questions (see table 4). However, when particles and verbal answers co-occur, they bear the same polarity like in Czech. Although the negative particle and the sentential negation in Spanish are formally identical, they behave differently: the particle *no* is prosodically separated from the verb, while the sentential negation *no* is attached to it. In the same way, the particle *sí* in positive answers is prosodically separated from the verb, but the verb can also be accompanied by a second particle *sí* (see section 2.2), which must be attached to the verb and which cannot appear without the first *sí* (see Laka 1990).

Question	Answer			
	Particle	V	Particle + V	Meaning
¿Están en casa los padres? <i>Are the parents at home?</i>	Sí.	Están.	Sí, (sí) están. *Sí están	<i>PA (yes, they are)</i>
	No.	?No están.	No, no están.	<i>ND (no, they are not)</i>
¿No están en casa los padres? <i>Aren't the parents at home?</i>	No.	?*No están.	No, no están.	<i>NA (no, they are not)</i>
	Sí.	?*Están.	Sí, (sí) están.	<i>PD (yes, they are)</i>

Table 4: Polarity-based answers in Spanish.

2.2. Syntactic analysis

Although minimal verbal answers in Czech are interpreted as full clauses, they do not have a complete syntactic structure. We can see in (4) that:

⁴ This kind of answers can be found in many other languages, e.g. Basque (Laka 1990), Irish (McCloskey 1991), European Portuguese (Martins 1994), Welsh (Jones 1999), or Finnish (Holmberg 2001).

- (i) obligatory complements including reflexive pronouns must be absent, see (4ab),
 (ii) overt subjects are disallowed, see (4b),
 (iii) complex verbal forms are disallowed⁵ too, see (4ac),
 and (iv) only modal (CP/IP) adverbs, but no manner or aspectual (VP) adverbs may modify the verb (see Cinque 1999), see (4d).

Given these properties, I claim that verbal answers in Czech are elliptical clauses in which all elements except for the finite verb have been elided (Gruet-Skrabalova 2013).

- (4)a. Poslal jsi Pavlovi ten dopis? – Poslal. / *Poslal mu ho.⁶ / *Poslal jsem.
 sent.sg aux.2sg Paul.dat this letter.acc sent.sg / sent.sg him it / sent.sg aux.1sg
 ‘Did you send the letter to Paul?’ ‘Yes (I did)’.
- b. Zúčastníš se té soutěže? – Zúčastním. / *Zúčastním se. / *Já
 participate.2sg refl this competition participate.1sg / participate.1sg refl / I
 zúčastním.
 participate.1sg ‘Will you take part in this competition?’ ‘Yes (I will)’.
- c. Zúčastnili jste se té soutěže? – Zúčastnili. / *Zúčastnili jsme.
 participate.pl aux.2pl refl this competition participate.pl / participate.pl aux.1pl
 ‘Did you take part in this competition?’ ‘Yes (we did)’.
- d. Mluví Jan francouzsky? – Asi mluví. / – *Mluví často.
 speak.3sg John French probably speak.3sg / speak.3sg often
 ‘Does John speak French?’ ‘Probably yes’.

On the contrary, there is no evidence for ellipsis in verbal answers in Spanish:

- (i) obligatory complements must appear with the verb, see (5a),
 (ii) the subject may be overt, see (5b),
 (iii) verbal forms must be complex, see (5c),
 and (iv) the verb may be modified by a vp-adverb, see (5d).

- (5) a. ¿Enviaste la carta a Paul? – *Sí, envié. / Sí, se la envié. / ?Sí, la envié.
 b. ¿Participarás en la competición? – Sí, (yo) participaré.
 c. ¿Has participado en la competición? – *Sí, he. / Sí, *(he) participado.
 d. ¿Habla francés Juan? – Seguramente (lo) habla. / (Lo) habla frecuentemente.

⁵ Past auxiliary verbs in Czech are second position clitics that only bear agreement features. It is the lexical participle that bears the tense feature in complex past forms (Veselovska 1995).

⁶ This answer would be correct if the subject were 3rd person masculine:

Poslal Pavlovi ten dopis? – Poslal.
 sent.sg.m Paul.dat this letter sent.sg.m
 ‘Did he send the letter to Paul?’ ‘Yes, he did’.

Assuming the proposal of Laka (1990) that the polarity feature of the clause is realized in a functional projection Polarity Phrase⁷ that dominates the clause (IP), I propose that polarity-answers in both Czech and Spanish involve clausal (IP) ellipsis, but that the polarity feature, which constitutes the focus in *yes-no* question-answer pairs, is realized differently in these languages.

In Czech, the feature is carried out by the verb that moves out of the IP to assign the polarity feature to the Polarity head. The clausal complement of the Polarity head (IP including second position clitics) is then elided under identity with the IP in the question (see Merchant 2001's analysis of sluicing)⁸. Answering particles are generated in the specifier of the Polarity projection and agree with the Polarity head according to *specifier-head agreement* (Chomsky 1995). They have an emphatic role. If the verb only moves at *Logical Form* (i.e. covertly), the particle appears alone and indicates itself the positive or negative polarity of the answer.

- (6) Poslal jsi Pavlovi dopis?
 'Did you send the letter to Paul?'
 a. – [_{PolP} ano [₊] [_{Pol'} poslal_i [₊] [_{IP} jsem *pro* t_i Pavlovi dopis]]]
 b. – [_{PolP} ne [₋] [_{Pol'} neposlal_i [₋] [_{IP} jsem *pro* t_i Pavlovi dopis]]]

In Spanish, the polarity feature is carried on by the particle itself. The particle must thus be generated in the Polarity head and the IP can be then elided (Martins 1994). If it is not, we obtain verbal answers that correspond to full sentences with pronominal or null arguments. Verbal answers are not felicitous alone, since only particles bear the focused polarity feature. The facultative particle *sí* indicates emphasis and can be considered as the affirmative equivalent of the sentential negation *no*, that is attached to the verb and stays within the IP.

- (7) ¿Enviaste la carta a Paul?
 a. – [_{PolP} [_{Pol'} sí [₊] [_{IP} *pro* (sí) se la envié]]]
 b. – [_{PolP} [_{Pol'} no [₋] [_{IP} *pro* no se la envié]]]

Both analyses correctly predict that minimal answers in Czech and Spanish may be embedded under an overt complementizer^{9,10}:

- (8) a. ¿Habla francés Juan? – Pienso [_{CP} que [_{PolP} sí / no [_{IP} Ø]]].
 – Pienso [_{CP} que [_{IP} *pro* (sí) (lo) habla / no (lo) habla]].

⁷ Laka (1990:86) calls such polarity projection the Sigma Phrase: *Both Neg(ation)P and Aff(irmation)P are claimed to be different instantiations of a more abstract projection: the Sigma Phrase.*

⁸ Agreement features are not relevant for the identity between the elided IP and its antecedent (Merchant 2001), cf. *gapping* or elliptical answers to *wh*-questions:

*Yo como manzanas, y los otros (comen) peras. / Já jím jablka a ostatní (jedí) hrušky.
 ¿A quién invitaste? – A Juan (invité). / Koho jsi pozval? – Jana (jsem pozval).*

⁹ Contrary to English: **I think that yes / no.*

¹⁰ The co-occurrence of the particle and the verb in embedded answers in Czech is odd because the matrix predicate (of saying or believing) expresses itself emphasis or doubt.

- b. Mluví Jan francouzsky? – Myslím, [_{CP} že [_{PolP} ano / ne [_{IP} Ø]]].
 – Myslím, [_{CP} že [_{PolP} mluví / nemluví [_{IP} Ø]]].

3. ANSWERS TO NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

3.1. Particles and verbs in answers to negative questions

We have seen in the previous section that negative answers in Spanish and Czech are confirmed by *no* (*no/ne* + negative verb) and denied by *yes* (*sí/ale ano* + positive verb). However, if we look more closely on answers to negative questions in Czech, we can observe that they can also be confirmed by *ano*, and denied by *ne*, in particular when the particles combine with a verb, as shown in the attested examples in (9). The important observation to be made here is that verbs and particles in these answers do NOT agree, since *ano* combines with a negative verb, and *ne* with a positive verb. We seem thus to be dealing with truth-based answers.

- (9) a. Irán tedy svou politiku prakticky nezměnil? – Ano, nezměnil. (ČNK)¹¹
 Iran thus his politics really neg.changed yes neg.changed
 ‘Did Iran really not change his politics?’ ‘No, he did not’.
- b. Oni ten návrh nepřijali? – Ne, přijali. (ČNK)
 they that proposal neg.accepted no accepted
 ‘Did they not accept the proposal?’ ‘No, they did accept it’.
- c. Rodiče nejsou doma? – Ano, nejsou. // Ne, jsou.
 parents neg.are home yes neg.are no are
 ‘Are your parents not at home?’ ‘No, they are not’. // ‘Yes, they are’.

In Spanish, such truth-based answers to negative questions are also possible though to a lesser degree than in Czech, in particular when *sí* combines with a negative verbal answer, see (10)¹².

- (10) a. ¿Irán no cambió su política? – ?Sí, no (la) cambió. // No, (la) cambió.
 b. ¿No aceptaron la propuesta? – ?*Sí, no (la) aceptaron. // No, (la) aceptaron.
 c. ¿Los padres no están en casa? – ?Sí, no están. // No, están.

The lesser acceptability of truth-based answers seems not surprising, since using the same particle to confirm or deny both positive and negative questions necessarily leads to ambiguity. However, I would rather claim that truth-based answers are possible only for a restricted subset of negative questions, those that have a declarative form and convey a negative presupposition. The properties of these questions are discussed in the next section.

¹¹ Czech National Corpus, subcorpus Syn2010.

¹² This conclusion is based on the questionnaires I had submitted to 34 Czech and 12 Spanish native speakers.

3.2. Two types of negative questions

It has been claimed in the literature that there are several semantic types of questions, i.e. informative questions, rhetoric questions, dubitative questions, presumptive questions and emotionally charged questions. Brown & Franks (1995) argue that only negative presumptive and emotionally charged questions contain a true negation, meaning that they bear a negative presupposition. The other questions would contain a pleonastic negation, i.e. a formal negative morpheme semantically void of content¹³.

From the syntactic point of view, questions can be expressed not only by interrogatives sentences, but also by declarative sentences with rising intonation. Gunlogson (2001) shows that distribution of rising declaratives differs in many ways from the distribution of interrogative clauses¹⁴ and that, in general, they cannot be used as neutral questions. She argues that this is due to the fact that rising declaratives express a bias. Following Gunlogson (2001), I will claim that negative questions that can be answered by truth-based answers are negative declarative clauses used as questions that have a negative bias, meaning that they convey a negative proposition. Semantically, they thus contain true negation. They are used to elicit the agreement or disagreement of the addressee with this negative proposition.

Evidence for this claim comes from the observation that truth-based answers to negative questions in Czech and Spanish are the most natural when the question contains a non initial verb, like a declarative sentence, and when the question is actually interpreted as containing a presupposed negative assertion, as shown in (11) and (12).

- (11) Poslanci ten návrh nepřijali? – Ano (nepřijali). // – Ne (přijali).
 deputies this project neg.accepted.pl yes neg.accepted no accepted
 ‘The deputies did not accept this proposal?’ No, they did not. // Yes, they did.
- (12) ¿Los diputados no aceptaron esta propuesta? – ?Sí, no (la) aceptaron.
 – No, (la) aceptaron.

In other words, negative questions in (11) and (12) behave like negative declarative assertions that straightforwardly express a negative proposition and that can also be confirmed by *yes* and denied by *ne*, as shown in (13) and (14).

- (13) Poslanci ten návrh nepřijali. – Ano, to se dalo čekat.
 deputies this project neg.accepted.pl yes this refl could expect
 ‘The deputies didn’t accept this proposal’. ‘Yes, that’s what we could expect’.
 – Ne, to je nesmysl!

¹³ From the syntactic point of view, pleonastic negation has been argued to be linked to the presence of an interrogative complementizer and therefore to occur high in the syntactic structure (see Espinal (1992), Brown & Franks (1995) and Abels (2002) for formal analyses). Consequently, verbs bearing pleonastic negation in questions should be clause-initial.

¹⁴ Rising declaratives cannot be used raise an open issue, to solicit an advice or an opinion, to instigate a discussion. They cannot function as a polite request for action and are unsuitable in contexts where the speaker is expected to maintain an attitude of neutrality or ignorance (Gunlogson 2001: 22-25).

‘No, that’s a non-sense!’

- (14) Los diputados no aceptaron esta propuesta. – Sí, podíamos esperarnos a ello.
– No, es imposible.

Furthermore, negative declaratives used as questions behave as declaratives with respect to negative polarity items. We can see in (15) that, contrary to negative interrogative sentences in Czech, they may have as subject the negative word *nikdo* (*nobody/anybody*), licensed by sentential negation. This suggests that the initial negative verb in (15a) bears pleonastic negation, while the non-initial negative verb in (15b) bears true negation, exactly as in (15c). The question in (15a) can only be confirmed by *ne*, exactly like a positive question. On the contrary, the question containing *nikdo* in (15b) can be confirmed both by *ne* and by *ano*.

- (15) a. Neví *nikdo / někdo, jak se to dělá?
 neg.know.3sg anybody / somebody how refl this make.3sg
 ‘Does anyone know how this is done?’
 b. Nikdo / Někdo neví, jak se to dělá?
 anybody / somebody neg.know.3sg how refl this make.3sg
 ‘Nobody knows how this is done?’ / ‘Anybody doesn’t know how this is done?’
 c. Nikdo / Někdo neví, jak se to dělá.
 anybody / somebody neg.know.3sg how refl this make.3sg
 ‘Nobody knows how this is done’. / ‘Somebody doesn’t know how this is done’.

Contrary to true negative questions, questions with pleonastic negation (negative interrogatives) behave as positive interrogatives can be especially seen with so-called polite negative questions, that are naturally confirmed by *ano* and denied by *ne*, as shown in (16).

- (16) Nechtěl byste šálek čaje? – Ano (chtěl/ *nechtěl). / Ne (nechtěl / *chtěl).
 neg.wanted cond.2pl cup tea yes wanted neg.wanted no neg.wanted wanted
 ‘Would you like a cup of tea?’ ‘Yes (I would)’. / ‘No (I would not)’.
(17) ¿No quiere(s) un té? – Sí (con mucho gusto). / No (gracias).

Finally, truth-based answers are also considered as acceptable when the answering particle is emphasized and separated from the following verb/verbal answer by a pause, as shown in (18). This indicates that the particle is related to a previous utterance rather than to what follows it.

- (18) a. Vy nemluvíte anglicky? – ?Ne, mluvím. / NE – mluvím.
 you.pl neg.speak.2pl English no speak.1sg no speak.1sg
 ‘Do you not speak English?’ ‘Yes, I do’.
 b. ¿Juan no habla francés? – ?Sí, no (lo) habla. / sí – no (lo) habla.

I conclude therefore that truth-based answers to negative questions are possible when the questions behave as declaratives sentences in that they contain a true negation and convey a negative presupposed assertion. Consequently, particles express agreement or disagreement of the addressee with this presupposed assertion. When negative questions only contain expletive negation, they behave syntactically as positive interrogatives and receive polarity-based answers.

4. TRUTH-BASED ANSWERS

4.1. Semantic analysis

To account for difference between polarity and truth-based answers, we need to assume that positive and negative interrogatives have open polarity (cf. Holmberg 2001) in the sense that they ask [P or not P]. The particles and/or the verbs in the answer express thus [P] (= *yes/V*), or [not P] (= *no/neg-V*). On the other hand, negative declaratives used as questions have negative polarity and only ask to confirm [not P]. The particles thus either confirm [not P] (= *yes/neg-V*), or disconfirm [not P] (= *no/V*).

The meaning of particles could then be accounted in terms of absolute and relative polarity. Relative polarity is defined in Farkas (2010) as the relation between the absolute polarity of the question and the absolute polarity of the answer. It is a feature that has two values: *same* [*Q,A*] or *reverse* [*Q,A*]. The value *same* means that the polarity of the question [*Q*] and that of the answer [*A*] are identical. The value *reverse* means that the polarity of the question [*Q*] and that of the answer [*A*] are different, or that there is a move from the polarity of the question to the polarity of the answer. The particles *ano* and *sí* can be associated with the value *same*, and the particles *ne* and *no* with the value *reverse*.

Furthermore, given the absolute polarity of the question and of the answer, the value *same* can have two interpretations: [+,+], and [-,-]. Likewise, the value *reverse* can have two interpretations: [+,-], and [-,+]. In answers to negative rising declaratives, *ano/sí* are interpreted as [-,-] and *no/ne* as [-,+]. The second interpretation applies in truth-based answers to positive questions, i.e. positive rising declaratives (Gunlogson 2001), that have a positive bias: *ano/sí* is then interpreted as [+,+], and *no/ne* as [+,-].

However, truth-based answers to positive questions as in (19a) are identical, at surface, to polarity-based answers in (19b), since *yes* agrees with a positive presupposition and *no* disagrees with it. The particles in (19a) seem also to agree with the following verbal answer. I suggest that this is the reason why polarity-based interpretation prevails in usage over truth-based interpretation and that the truth-base interpretation must be marked by word order and intonation of the question and of the answer.

- (19) a. ¿Los padres están en casa? – Sí (están). // No (no están).
 b. ¿Están los padres en casa? – Sí (están). // No (no están).

4.2. Syntactic analysis

From the syntactic point of view, I propose that particles expressing relative polarity are generated in the head C, which indicates the illocutionary force of the utterance (here as-

sertion). The complement of this head, i.e. TopicP, is then elided since it is given in the question (Merchant 2001), as shown in (20). The interpretation of the value *same* and *reverse* depends on the question, as shown in (21). The particles can then be followed by an elliptical verbal answer in Czech and a full sentence in Spanish.

- (20) a. [_{CP} ano/sí_[same] [_{TopP} Ø]]
 b. [_{CP} ne/no_[reverse] [_{TopP} Ø]]
- (21) a. [_{CP} ...V_[+]...]? – [_{CP} ano/sí_[+/+] [_{TopP} Ø]] // [_{CP} ne/no_[+,-] [_{TopP} Ø]]
 b. [_{CP} ...V_[-]...]? – [_{CP} ano/sí_[-,-] [_{TopP} Ø]] // [_{CP} ne/no_[-,+] [_{TopP} Ø]]

This analysis predicts that answering particles in truth-based answers cannot be embedded under a complementizer, since they are generated themselves in the head C, see (22). Only particles generated in the Polarity Phrase (as well as the verbs that move to this head in Czech) are expected to occur with a complementizer (see (8) above)).

- (22) a. Rodiče nejsou doma? – *Myslím, že ne (= jsou) / ano (= nejsou)
 ‘Are the parents not at home?’
 b. ¿Los padres no están en casa? – *Pienso que no (= están) / si (= no están).

Finally, the particle *ano* introduced by the conjunction *ale* cannot be embedded under C, because it only conjoins or introduces CPs, see (23a). I suggest that using *ale* with the particle *ano* corresponds to a syntactic strategy that allows to express the move from negative to positive polarity in *reverse* contexts. When *ale* combines with *ne*, it only emphasizes the disagreement of the addressee with the negative expectations of the question, see (23b).

- (23) a. Oni ten návrh nepřijali? – Ale ano (přijali). / *Myslím, že ale ano.
 they that proposal neg.accepted but yes accepted think.1sg that but yes
 ‘Do they not accept the proposal?’ ‘Oh yes, they did accept it’.
- b. Oni ten návrh nepřijali? – Ale ne, přijali.
 they that proposal neg.accepted but no accepted
 ‘Do they not accept the proposal?’ ‘Certainly no, they did accept it’.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have shown that Czech and Spanish have two kinds of minimal answers: polarity and truth-based answers. Truth-based answers are however limited to the contexts in which the questions are biased, i.e. that they convey a negative or a positive presupposition. From the syntactic point of view, both kinds of answers involve ellipsis of the complement of the head expressing polarity, but, from the semantic point of view, particles express either absolute polarity of the answer or relative polarity, i.e. relation between the polarity of the question and that of the answer.

The absolute (positive or negative) polarity feature is located in the head Polarity. In polarity-based answers in Spanish, this feature must be realized by the particles that are directly generated in this head. In Czech, this feature is carried on by the finite verb that moves to the head Polarity. The particles are generated in the specifier of this head and agree with it.

The relative polarity feature is located in the head C, where the particles in truth-based answers are generated. The value *same* is realized by the particles *ano/sí* and is ambiguous between [+,+] and [-,-]. The value *reverse* is realized by the particles *ne/no* and is ambiguous between [+,-] and [-,+]. Particles expressing relative polarity agree or disagree with the presupposed assertion (polarity) of the question.

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