

## Fragment Answers and Negative Concord in Turkish

Türkçede Parçalı Yanıtlar ve Olumsuz Uyum

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### ÖZ

Bu makale, olumsuz uyum ifadelerinin (bundan böyle OUI'ler) Türkçedeki olumsuz sorulara parçalı yanıtlar olarak yorumlanması ile ilgilidir. Türkçenin katı bir olumsuz uyum dili olduğu bilinmektedir. Bununla birlikte, yapılan bir değerlendirme testi Türkçede OUI'lerin çeşitli soru tiplerinde parçalı yanıtlar olarak davranışlarının beklenmedik olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Parçalı yanıtlardaki OUI'ler yalnızca olumsuz uyum okuması göstermektedirler ve bu yönden diğer katı olumsuz uyum dillerindeki benzerleriyle farklı özellik sergilemektedirler. Yani, birden fazla olumsuzlamanın birbirini iptal ettiği çift olumsuzlama yorumu, Türkçedeki parçalı yanıtlarda hemen hemen hiç mevcut değildir. Bu nedenle, çifte olumsuzlama okumasına yol açan örtük bir olumsuzlama işleyicisi içeren bir açıklamayı ortaya atmak Türkçede mümkün değildir. Bunun yerine, bu açık okumayı açıklamak için, OUI'lerin tümcesel olumsuzlama yoluyla yerel olarak lisanslandığı bir analiz önerilmektedir. Araştırmadan çıkan bulgular, olumsuz uyum dilleri arasında olumsuz uyum ifadelerinin parçalı yanıtlar olarak yorumlanmasında tipolojik bir ayrım olduğunu işaret etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Parçalı yanıt, olumsuz soru, olumsuz uyum, çift olumsuzluk, yerellik, Türkçe.

### ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the interpretation of negative concord items (NCIs henceforth) as fragment answers to negative questions in Turkish. Turkish is known as a strict negative concord language; however, a judgment test showed that the behavior of NCIs as fragment answers in negative questions is rather unexpected. NCIs as fragments do not pattern with their counterparts in other strict negative concord languages since they only display the negative concord reading. The double negation

reading in which each instance of negation is interpreted is almost never available. Therefore, an analysis that includes a covert negative operator in order to explain an otherwise double negation reading is not possible in Turkish. Instead, to account for this unambiguous reading I argue for an analysis in which fragment NCIs are locally licensed by sentential negation. The findings reveal a typological distinction among negative concord languages in terms of NCI licensing as well as their interpretation

**Keywords:** Fragment answers, negative question, negative concord, double negation, locality, Turkish.

## 0. Introduction

NCIs are generally defined as negative dependents that require the presence of sentential negation or some other negative licenser in the environment (Giannakidou 2011; Giannakidou and Zeijlstra 2017). They are found in typologically different negative concord languages and have been previously analyzed as *n-words* and sometimes even as strong polarity items that can appear as negative fragment answers (Giannakidou 2006). The fact that Turkish is a strict negative concord language is well-documented in previous studies (Kelepir 2001; Şener 2007; Kamali 2017; Görgülü 2018; Jeretič 2018, 2022; Gračanin-Yüksek 2023). Nevertheless, the way NCIs behave as fragment answers to various negative questions in the language is unexpected. This is due to the fact that NCIs in fragments do not display the same characteristics as their counterparts in other strict negative concord languages. They are interpreted rather unambiguously and predominantly have the negative concord reading. On the other hand, the double negation (DN) reading where two negative elements cancel out one another is almost never available in fragment answers. Therefore, an account involving a covert negative operator that would otherwise have an effect on the interpretation of NCIs is not viable. Instead, it is proposed that the lack of ambiguity in the reading of NCIs is due to locality reasons. NCIs are licensed locally by overt sentential negation within the Tense Phrase (TP) domain. Similar accounts that are in line with the current analysis can be found in prior work (Kelepir 2001; Kayabaşı and Özgen 2018; Jeretič 2018, 2022). The findings of the study indicate a typological distinction in the licensing as well as the interpretation of NCIs as fragment answers among other strict negative concord languages. In the next section, I will introduce negative concord.

## 1. Negative Concord

Negative concord is a phenomenon in which negation is interpreted only once even though it may be expressed more than one time (Giannakidou 2000; Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016). This means that whereas there is more than one negative element (e.g., sentential negation and NCI(s)) in the structure, there is only one

semantic negation that is interpreted. This is exemplified by the Serbo-Croatian examples in (1).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. Milan \*(ne) vidi ništa.  
 Milan not see n-thing  
 ‘Milan cannot see anything.’  
 b. Milan nikada \*(ne) vozi.  
 Milan n-when not drive.3SG  
 ‘Milan never drives.’ (Progovac 1994: 40-41)

The co-occurrence of the NCI *ništa* ‘nothing’ and sentential negation *ne* ‘no’ in (1a) yields only one negative interpretation. This is also true for the negative adverb *nikada* ‘never’ and negative marker in (1b). Note that in Serbo-Croatian, the presence of sentential negation along with the NCIs is obligatory. Its absence would lead to ungrammaticality. These NC languages are often referred to as strict NC languages since NCIs are only licensed by clause-mate negation and by the negative preposition *without* (Giannakidou 1998, 2000, 2006). In other words, some kind of negation is necessary for NCIs to be licensed. On the other hand, in non-strict NC languages such as Italian and Spanish, the presence of sentential negation is not always required. If there is more than one NCI in the structure, the former can license the latter. This is a phenomenon called negative spread (den Besten 1986) and is illustrated by sentences from Italian and Spanish respectively in (2).

- (2) a. Nessuno ha letto niente.  
 n-person have.3SG read n-thing  
 ‘Nobody read anything.’  
 b. Nadie dijo nada.  
 n-person said.3SG n-thing  
 ‘Nobody said anything.’ (Giannakidou 2006: 353)

The NCIs in the preverbal position can license those in the post-verbal position in the absence of sentential negation. Note that the insertion of sentential negation in (2a) and (2b) would lead to the double negation reading in which the NCIs are assigned an indefinite reading as in *Somebody read something*.

When we consider similar phenomena in Turkish, we observe that Turkish also displays the characteristic of strict NC languages. In fact, Turkish has been analyzed as one by Şener (2007), Kamali (2017), Jeretić (2018, 2022) and Gračanin-Yüksek (2023). In these studies, negative sensitive elements are

<sup>1</sup> Historically, NCIs are referred to as n-words (Laka 1990) since the first letter of these elements always begins with n-, such as *nessuno* in Italian, *nadie* in Spanish, *nikomu* in Polish and *ningu* ‘nobody’ in Portuguese. In this paper, however, I use the terminology of the more recent work such as Watanabe (2004) and Miyagawa et al. (2016).

considered to be NCIs and not negative polarity items (NPIs). Consider the sentences in (3).<sup>2</sup>

- (3) a. Kimse / hiçkimse gel-\*(me)-di.  
no one / no one come-NEG-PAST  
'No one came.'
- b. Sakın / katiyyen / asla git-\*(me).  
never / in no way / never go-NEG  
'Never go!' (Şener 2007: 408)

The sentences in (3) indicate that NCIs require the presence of sentential negation regardless of their position and function in the sentence. The absence of sentential negation would lead to ungrammaticality. Note also that, unlike non-strict NC languages, the presence of more than one NCI along with sentential negation does not yield the DN reading, as shown in (4).

- (4) a. Hiçkimse hiçbir şey söyle-\*(me)-di.  
no one nothing say-NEG-PAST  
'No one said anything.'
- b. Sakın hiçbir şey-e dokun-\*(ma)!  
ever not one thing-DAT touch-NEG  
'Don't ever touch anything!'

The data above show that Turkish is a strict NC language where NCIs require the presence of negation. Also, the presence of more than one NCI along with negation does not yield the DN reading. In the next section, I will turn to NCIs as fragment answers to both positive and negative questions in various languages.

## 2. Fragment Answers

It is well attested that both NCIs and NPIs constitute negative dependencies across languages. Neither NCIs nor NPIs appear in affirmative sentences as they require the presence of sentential negation or some other licensing element (Giannakidou and Zeijlstra 2017). However, there are also significant differences between these two types of negative dependents. For instance, while NPIs cannot be modified by certain adverbs such as *almost* and *absolutely*, this is not the case for NCIs. Also, they have different locality requirements. NPIs, unlike NCIs, can be long-distance bound and do not require clause-mate negation. Another distinguishing characteristic of NCIs is that unlike NPIs, they can be used as fragment answers to both yes/no questions and wh-questions (Laka 1990; Quer 1993). They can also appear in certain elliptical constructions. Consider the sentences in (5) from Romanian.

<sup>2</sup> Both NCIs and NPIs form negative dependencies. Neither of them appears in affirmative sentences and both require the presence of sentential negation or some other licensing element. However, they also differ from each other in terms of their distribution, semantics and pragmatics, a topic beyond the scope of this paper.

(5) A: Cine a venit?  
 who has come  
 ‘Who has come?’

B: Nimeni.  
 Nobody  
 ‘Nobody.’ (Fălăuș and Nicolae 2016: 586)

The NCI in (5B) appears as a fragment answer. It occurs as a part of the entire sentence that somehow involves elision. However, it still receives the interpretation of a full sentence. When we consider similar phenomena in Turkish, we observe that NCIs can also act as fragment answers to questions, as in (6).

(6) A: Ne al-dı-n?  
 what buy-PAST-2SG  
 ‘What did you buy?’

B: Hiçbir şey.  
 not one thing  
 ‘Nothing.’

As can be seen from the examples above, NCIs can appear as fragments as well as in elliptical constructions without leading to ungrammaticality in Turkish. Note that this is not the case for typical NPIs such as *anybody/anything* and *ever* since they cannot be licensed as fragment answers. Consider (7).

(7) a. A: Who did you see?  
 B: \*Anybody.

The next section will be concerned with fragment answers to negative questions across languages.

## 2.1 NCIs as Fragment Answers to Negative Questions in strict NC Languages

The ability of NCIs to act as fragment answers to negative questions has been investigated in recent analyses (Bošković 2009; de Swart 2010; Fălăuș and Nicolae 2016; Espinal et al. 2016). In their work on the possible readings of negative fragment answers in eight strict NC languages, Fălăuș and Nicolae (2016) found that fragment answers to negative questions have different interpretations. Consider the question-answer pair in (8) from Romanian.<sup>3</sup>

(8) A: Cine nu a venit?  
 who not has come  
 ‘Who has not come?’

B: Nimeni.  
 Nobody  
 ‘Nobody.’

<sup>3</sup> These strict NC languages are Czech, Greek, Japanese, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian. Note, however, that Bošković (2009) argues that fragment answers to negative questions are ungrammatical in Serbo-Croatian, as will be discussed later in this section.

- (i) Nimeni = nobody came... You are the first one here.
- (ii) Nimeni = nobody didn't come... Everybody is here. (Fălăuș and Nicolae 2016: 594)

Fălăuș and Nicolae (2016) argue that the fragment answer in (8B) is ambiguous as it has two different meanings. In the first reading, the NCI is assigned the NC interpretation. On the other hand, the second reading is the double negation reading in which the two negations cancel out one another and the fragment is interpreted as a negative existential that scopes over another negation. Fălăuș and Nicolae also note that all the NCIs in eight languages display the same behavior. However, it should be noted that the double negation reading is never available in the non-elliptical answer. This is rather interesting because the analyses on this issue seem to vary in terms of whether or not fragment answers to negative questions are acceptable. For instance, Bošković (2009) shows that NCIs in Serbo-Croatian can be used as fragment answers to positive questions but not to negative questions. Consider the contrast between the sentences in (9) and (10).

- (9) A: Šta si kupio?  
what are bought?  
'What did you buy?'
- B: Ništa nisam kupio.  
nothing SN.am bought.  
'I bought nothing.'
- B': Ništa. 'Nothing.' (Bošković 2009: 131)
- (10) A: Ko nije došao?  
who SN.is some  
'Who didn't come?'
- B: Niko nije došao.  
Nobody SN.is come  
'Nobody came.'
- B': ?\*Niko.  
nobody (Bošković 2009: 133)

In (9), both the non-elliptical and the fragment answer are possible as answers to the positive question while the only possible answer in the non-elliptical in (10). Therefore, languages seem to show variation with respect to whether fragment NCI answers are possible in negative questions. The question that arises is how Turkish NCIs are interpreted as fragment answers to negative questions. This issue will be addressed in the next section.

## 2.2 Turkish NCIs as Fragment Answers

In order to answer the question at hand a judgment study was carried out and a number of participants was recruited and asked to judge the possible meanings of fragment answers to negative questions in Turkish. The methodology, participants, the procedure employed as well as the results of the study are given in the following subsections.

### 2.2.1 Methodology

In the judgment study, there were 20 participants who were over eighteen years old, and they were all native speakers of Turkish. The participants were all post-secondary students attending the same university and were randomly chosen for the experiment. The number of participants was deemed sufficient as it matched or exceeded the number of participants employed in similar experimental studies (cf. Espinal and Prieto 2011; Fălăuș and Nicolae 2016). The participants were provided with a task that included 18 contexts and 36 items (i.e., question/answers). For each context, there were two questions, one with a non-elliptical (i.e., full) answer and one with a fragment answer. The items included different types of negative questions like *wh*-questions (22 questions), *yes/no* questions (6 questions) and non-verbal (4 questions) and existential sentences (4 questions) with *wh*-phrases in them. Some negative *wh*-questions contained NCIs (4 questions) and some were in passive voice, in addition to having NCIs (4 questions). There were also 36 filler question-answer pairs that did not have NCIs in them. The reason for having such differential negative questions was that in earlier experimental treatments such as Fălăuș and Nicolae (2016) and Espinal et al. (2016), the data included only negative *wh*-questions in verbal sentences. Therefore, the question how NCIs as fragment answers to other questions would behave remained unaddressed in these studies. These questions were added to the current study in order to find out if the question type or verbal morphology (i.e., voice) makes a difference in the interpretation of NCIs. The addition of *yes/no* questions made it possible to include NCIs functioning as adverbs. The items were randomly ordered so that the participants did not judge a non-elliptical and a fragment answer one after another within the same context. The participants were asked which possible continuation is compatible with the answer. The first continuation is associated with the NC reading while the second is associated with the DN reading. If participants rejected a possible continuation, that was taken to indicate that they rejected or dispreferred that particular reading. Note that the data The judgment study was designed as a formal and controlled task in which the participants were asked about their intuitions. The participants were provided with a context, followed by the relevant questions and answers as well as two possible continuations.

Context 1 (*wh-question*): Ahmet threw a party at his house the other day and expected everyone that he invited to come. Later, someone wondered about the number of people who attended the party.

- (11) A: Parti-ye kim git-me-di?  
party-DAT who go-NEG-PAST  
'Who did not go to the party?'

- B: Parti-ye hiçkimse git-me-di.  
party-DAT no one go-NEG-PAST  
'No one went to the party.'  
(I) *Partide hiçkimse yoktu.*  
'There was no one at the party.'  
(II) *Partide herkes oradaydı.*

‘Everyone was at the party.’

- (11') A: Parti-ye kim git-me-di?  
party-DAT who go-NEG-PAST  
'Who did not go to the party?'

B: Hiçkimse.  
'No one.'  
(I) *Partide hiçkimse yoktu.*  
'There was no one at the party.'  
(II) *Partide herkes oradaydı.*  
'Everyone was at the party.'

Context 2 (*wh-question*): There is a local election soon. Each candidate told the voters what they were going to do if elected. Later, people talked about the running candidates.

- (12) A: Hangi aday-ı destekle-mi-yor-sun?  
which candidate-ACC support-NEG-PROG-2SG  
'Which candidate do you not support?'

B: Hiçbir aday-ı destekle-mi-yor-um.  
no candidate-ACC support-NEG-PROG-1SG  
'I don't support any candidate.'  
(I) *Adaylardan hiçbiri bana uygun değil.*  
'None of the candidates are suitable for me.'  
(II) *Adayların hepsi bana uygun.*  
'All of the candidates are suitable for me.'

- (12') A: Hangi aday-ı destekle-mi-yor-sun?  
which candidate-ACC support-NEG-PROG-2SG  
'Which candidate do you not support?'

B: Hiçbir aday-ı / Hiçbir-i-ni.  
no candidate-ACC / no one-3POSS-ACC  
'None of the candidates / None (of them).'  
(I) *Adaylardan hiçbiri bana uygun değil.*  
'None of the candidates are suitable for me.'  
(II) *Adayların hepsi bana uygun.*  
'All of the candidates are suitable for me.'

Context 3 (*wh-question*): Ayşe often has a fallout with her husband Ali about not listening to her. On the other hand, Ali kept on saying the opposite.

- (13) A: Sen-i ne zaman dinle-me-di-m?  
you-ACC when listen-NEG-PAST-1SG  
'When did I not listen to you?'

B: Ben-i hiçbir zaman dinle-me-di-n.  
I-ACC no time listen-NEG-PAST-2SG  
'You never listened to me.'  
(I) *Benim söylediğime hiçbir zaman değer vermedin.*  
'You have never cared what I said.'



(II) *Benim söylediğime her zaman değer verdin.*

'You have always cared what I said.'

- (13') A: Sen-i ne zaman dinle-me-di-m?  
you-ACC when listen-NEG-PAST-1SG  
'When did I not listen to you?

B: Hiçbir zaman.

no time

'Never.'

(I) *Benim söylediğime hiçbir zaman değer vermedin.*

'You have never cared what I said.'

(II) *Benim söylediğime her zaman değer verdin.*

'You have always cared what I said.'

In the next subsection, I will show the main findings of the experimental study and also discuss their significance.

## 2.2.2 Results

The findings of the judgment study show that all the non-elliptical answers were judged to be unambiguous, associated only with the NC reading. More importantly, the findings show that Turkish is different from other strict NC languages since a great majority of fragment answers (335 out of 360) was assigned the NC reading only. The results indicate that only 2 fragment answers to negative wh-questions (one of them including an NCI) were judged to be ambiguous between the NC reading and the DN reading. Interestingly, 13 fragment answers to wh-questions (four of which containing NCIs and two of which involving NCIs and passive morphology) were judged to have only the DN reading. Note that similar findings were also found with yes/no questions that include fragment NCIs functioning as adverbs. Consider the question/answer pairs first.

Context 4 (*yes-no question*): Ayşe wants to go on a wild nature tour that she has thought about for a long time. There is a particular place that she wants to go but she has not decided yet and asks her friend.

- (14) A: Oraya git-me-se-m mi?  
there go-NEG-COND-1SG Q  
'Should I not go there?'

B: Asla git-me!

never go-NEG

'Never go there!'

(I) *Orası güzel değil.*

'It is not nice there.'

(II) *Orası çok güzel.*

'It is so nice there.'

- (14') A: Oraya git-me-se-m mi?  
there go-NEG-COND-1SG Q  
'Should I not go there?'

- B: *Asla!*  
 ‘Never!’  
 (I) *Orası güzel değil.*  
 ‘It is not nice there.’  
 (II) *Orası çok güzel.*  
 ‘It is so nice there.’

Note that the results drawn from the yes/no questions are not so different from those of wh-questions. This is because only 2 fragment answers to negative yes/no questions were judged to display ambiguity between the NC reading and the DN reading. Also, 4 fragment answers were judged to be ambiguous between the NC and DN readings. In addition to that, the fragment answers to only 2 wh-questions in existential sentences were judged to have both the NC and DN readings. 1 fragment answers to wh-questions in non-verbal sentences was judged to have the DN reading only and 1 was judged to have both NC and DN readings.

Fălăuş and Nicolae also note that the ambiguous reading occurs in answers to negative questions that already involve an NCI, as shown by the following example from Romanian.

- (15) A: *Cine nu a primit nimic de Crăciun?*  
 who not has received nothing for Christmas?  
 ‘Who didn’t get anything for Christmas?’  
 B: *Nimeni.*  
 nobody  
 ‘Nobody.’  
 (I) *This year was hard on everyone, so we decided to do no presents.*  
 (II) *Santa was very generous this year.* (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016: 595)

The NCI as a fragment answer in (15B) has both the NC and the DN readings. Let us now consider similar question/answer pairs from Turkish.

Context 5 (*wh-question*): It had been a few days since the New Year’s. People talked about who gave presents in the office.

- (16) A: *Kim yılbaşı-nda hiçbir hediye ver-me-di?*  
 who new year-LOC not one present buy-NEG-PAST  
 ‘Who didn’t give any presents on New Year’s Eve?’  
 B: *Hiçkimse yılbaşı-nda hiçbir hediye ver-me-di.*  
 no one new year-LOC not one present buy-NEG-PAST  
 ‘No one gave any presents on New Year’s Eve.’  
 (I) *Bu yılbaşı çok sönük geçti.*  
 ‘This New Year was rather dull.’  
 (II) *Herkes birbirine hediye verdi.*  
 ‘Everyone gave one another presents.’  
 (16’) A: *Kim yılbaşı-nda hiçbir hediye ver-me-di?*  
 who new year-LOC not one present buy-NEG-PAST  
 ‘Who didn’t give any presents on New Year’s Eve?’

B: *Hiçkimse.*

no one

'No one.'

(I) *Bu yılbaşı çok sönük geçti.*

'This New Year was rather dull.'

(II) *Herkes birbirine hediye verdi.*

'Everyone gave one another presents.'

The results of the study reveal that only 1 fragment answer to a wh-question with an NCI was judged to be ambiguous between the NC and DN readings. On the other hand, 4 fragment answers to wh-questions with NCIs in them and 2 fragment answers to wh-questions with NCIs and passive morphology were judged to have only the DN reading. The results of the entire judgment study can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Interpretation of Non-elliptical and Fragment Answers*

Number of Items	Non-elliptical answers			Fragment answers		
	NC reading	DN reading	Both NC and DN readings	NC reading	DN reading	Both NC and DN readings
720	360	0	0	335	16	9

The findings of the study clearly indicate that a great majority of fragment answers to negative questions has only the NC reading. The ambiguity between the NC reading and the DN reading observed in other NC languages is almost never available in Turkish. This is true regardless of the question type and whether the question involves an NCI or passive morphology. In other words, the behavior of fragment answers in terms of their interpretation is very similar to their counterparts in non-elliptical answers. One interesting finding is that some fragment answers were judged to have only the DN reading. This is something that was not found in previous work. What is also interesting is that the number of fragment answers that was judged to have only the DN reading is greater than that of fragment answers that was judged to be ambiguous. However, given the findings of the study, the total number of the DN readings and ambiguous readings is far less than that of NC readings. Therefore, proposing an analysis based on the DN or ambiguous interpretation of fragment NCIs would not be reasonable<sup>4</sup>. In that sense, whereas the DN reading amounts to two negations, a similar reading in Turkish requires an NCI, sentential negation and a negative copula after the verb, which still does not yield an exclusively negative existential reading. The question to ask at this point is why Turkish NCIs behave in a way that is different from their counterparts in other languages. Why do NCIs not have the DN reading

<sup>4</sup> One possible explanation why there are double negation readings and ambiguous readings, albeit so small in number, is that the participants may have put extra stress on the NCI fragment while reading the answers. It has been attested in other languages that stressing on the NCI makes it easier to get a double negation reading (Corblin et al. 2016). Since stress and intonation were not controlled for in the study, I will leave this to future research.

as well as the NC reading in negative questions? Is it possible to account for the unambiguity the NCIs display? These questions are particularly important since Fălăuş and Nicolae (2016) argue that the DN reading in fragment answers is actually the preferred one as the fragment answer is in a competition with the non-elliptical answer. However, this does not appear to be the case for Turkish.

In this section, I looked into the interpretation of NCIs as fragment answers to negative questions in various strict NC languages. I showed that whereas fragment NCIs are interpreted ambiguously between the NC reading and the DN reading (i.e., single negation vs. double negation) in other NC languages, this is not the case for Turkish NCIs. In the next section, I will provide an overview of previous work on the various interpretations of NCIs as fragment answers to negative questions and show that none of them are compatible with the Turkish data presented in this section.

### 3. Previous Analyses of NCI Interpretation in Fragments

In this section I will discuss two analyses of the interpretation of NCIs as fragment answers to negative questions across languages. Then I will argue that they cannot explain the facts in Turkish. There is a couple of analyses concerned with the distribution and the interpretation of NCIs as fragments. For instance, in their work on fragment answers to negative questions in non-strict languages like Spanish and Catalan, Espinal and Tubau (2016) propose a lexical ambiguity approach. They show that NCIs (n-words in their terminology) are ambiguous between NC and DN readings for a subset of speakers in these languages. Consider (17).

- (17) A: *Quien no llevaba gafas?*  
 who not wore glasses  
 ‘Who wasn’t wearing glasses?’
- B: *Nadie.*  
 nobody  
 ‘Nobody.’  
 (I) *Nobody was wearing glasses.* NC reading  
 (II) *Everybody was wearing glasses.* DN reading  
 (Espinal and Tubau 2016: 44)

The NCI in (17B) displays ambiguity between a negative concord reading and a double negation reading in Spanish. In order to account for these interpretations of NCIs, Espinal and Tubau (2016) argue for a lexical ambiguity analysis. Specifically, they propose that there are two competing lexical variants of NCIs: (i) one yielding a single negation (NC) reading and (ii) one that does not participate in NC structures. That way they can account for why there is an asymmetry between pre-verbal and post-verbal NCIs in Spanish, as in (18).

- (18) a. *Nadie (\*no) vino.*  
 nobody not came

- ‘Nobody came.’
- b. *Juan \*(no) vio nada.*  
 Juan not saw anything  
 ‘John didn’t see anything.’
- c. *Nadie vio nada.*  
 Nobody saw nothing  
 ‘Nobody saw anything.’ (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016: 587-588)

In (18a), the pre-verbal NCI acts like a negative quantifier and introduces negation by itself. Thus the presence of negation would yield ungrammaticality. The post-verbal NCIs, however, need either sentential negation as in (18b), or a pre-verbal NCI as in (18c). In that sense, post-verbal NCIs, as opposed their pre-verbal counterparts, always yield the NC reading.

On the other hand, Fălăuş and Nicolae (2016) argue that the analysis in which multiple NCI readings are accounted for by way of an ambiguity approach cannot be extended to NCIs in the eight strict NC languages. They note that there is no asymmetry between pre-verbal and post-verbal NCIs with respect to how they are interpreted. Moreover, NCIs in these languages require the presence of sentential negation (SN) regardless of their syntactic position. Therefore, they conclude that it would not be reasonable to pursue an ambiguity approach even though the NCIs they analyze are ambiguous when they act as fragment answers to negative questions. Instead, they adopt Zeijlstra’s (2004, 2008) analysis of syntactic agreement between interpretable and uninterpretable features and argue for a covert negative operator (CN) to explain the acceptability of NCIs as fragment answers. This operator has the same semantic force as sentential negation and appears in a high projection (i.e., a focus position) that can only be licensed locally. However, whereas Zeijlstra (2008) takes CN to be the only possible licensor of NCIs, Fălăuş and Nicolae (2016) propose that the insertion of CN is a last resort rescuing mechanism for NCIs that appear only in elliptical constructions. More specifically, they propose that a covert negative operator can only surface if the VP is not spelled-out. Also, this mechanism should be seen as a lexical property of NCIs as it is restricted to them. The syntactic representation of fragment NCIs would then look like (19).

(19) [CN [NCI [<sub>IP</sub>...]]] (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016: 593)

More evidence for the presence of covert negation comes from DN readings themselves. In certain NC languages like Romanian and Greek, the DN reading arises when there is more than one NCI in the sentence, as in the following from Romanian.

- (20) *Nimeni nu a citit nimic.*  
 nobody not has read anything  
 (i) ‘Nobody has read anything.’ (NC)  
 (ii) ‘Nobody hasn’t read anything.’ = ‘Everybody read something.’ (DN)  
 (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016: 593)

Since the DN reading equals two negations, in order for (20) to be assigned the DN interpretation a covert negative operator must be present. As NCIs themselves do not have any negative force, the only overt element is sentential negation. This is represented in (21).

(21) [CN [NCI [SN [... [NCI]]]]] (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016: 593)

Therefore, the availability of the DN reading is explained by the presence of CN. One thing Fălăuş and Nicolae's analysis predicts is that one should expect to find more than one interpretation in elliptical constructions than in non-elliptical constructions. This is what is found in Greek since NCIs as fragment answers to negative questions are ambiguous between the NC and the DN reading, as in (22).

(22) A: *Pjos den plirose to prostimo?*  
 who not paid the fee  
 'Who didn't pay the fee?'

B: *Kanis.*  
 nobody  
 'Nobody.'  
 (I) *We all support the 'don't pay' movement. NC reading*  
 (II) *Everybody paid. DN reading* (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016: 594)

The NC reading in (22) is accounted for by the presence of the SN in the ellipsis site (Giannakidou 2000, 2006). The fact that NCIs survive as fragment answers to negative questions is expected since the identity condition on ellipsis guarantees the presence of negation at the interpretive level (i.e., at LF). Following Weir (2015), Fălăuş and Nicolae argue that NCI fragments move only at PF and the movement itself is not interpreted. In other words, NCIs are interpreted in a way similar to how they would be interpreted in their non-elided counterpart, namely by way of reconstruction under negation. On the other hand, the DN reading only surfaces in the elliptical structures. The availability of the DN reading is accounted for by assuming that when there is no sentential negation, the CN enters the configuration as the VP is not spelled-out. The LF representation would look like in (23).

(23) [CN [NCI [SN [...]]]] (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016: 596)

As the SN is still in the structure underlyingly in (23), the overall meaning is unquestionably the DN reading here.

The discussion above shows that the CN account works for languages that exhibit the DN reading as well as the NC reading in fragment answers. However, as it was shown in section 3, NCIs as fragments to negative questions are almost never interpreted ambiguously in Turkish. This is true regardless of whether the negative question includes a single NCI, or more than one NCIs. Consider the example in (24).

(24) A: *Kim yılbaşı-nda hiçbir hediye ver-me-di?*  
 who new year-LOC not one present buy-NEG-PAST  
 'Who didn't give any presents on New Year's Eve?'

B: *Hiçkimse.*

no one

‘No one.’

(I) *Bu yılbaşı çok sönük geçti.*

‘This New Year was rather dull.’

The fragment answer only carries the NC reading in this case in (24B). The one with the DN reading is not available in this case. Note that this is one of the significant distinctions between the NCIs in Turkish and their counterparts in other NC languages. Similarly, a lexical ambiguity analysis is not applicable to the Turkish data either since Turkish NCIs are never interpreted ambiguously in non-elliptical constructions. This is illustrated below.

(25) A: Hangi aday-ı destekle-mi-yor-uz?  
which candidate-ACC support-NEG-PROG-1PL  
‘Which candidate do we not support?’

B: Hiçbir aday-ı destekle-mi-yor-uz.  
no candidate-ACC support-NEG-PROG-1PL  
‘We don’t support any candidate.’

(I) *We support none of the candidates.*

(II) *\*We support some / all of them.*

In the non-elliptical answer in (25B), the only reading that is possible is the NC reading. In other words, the DN reading is unavailable here.

Given the claim that covert operators are taken to be universally available (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008), the question that arises is why CN remains inert and does not take part in the licensing of NCIs as fragment answers. Put differently, what would be the reason for two negations (i.e., the sentential negation and covert negation) to not be both interpreted in the structure? These are some issues that need to be addressed. In this section I discussed two influential accounts of the interpretation of NCIs as fragment answers in NC languages. I showed that these accounts are not compatible with the behavior of Turkish NCIs. In the next section, I will propose an analysis that accounts for the unambiguous reading of NCIs as fragment answers.

#### 4. An account of locality

In this section, I will introduce a new analysis in which I show why fragment NCIs are not interpreted ambiguously by a great majority of Turkish speakers. Before that, I briefly review the theoretical framework adopted in prior work on NCI interpretations. It was shown above that the existing analyses are not compatible with the Turkish data. In order to account for the unambiguous behavior of NCIs as fragment answers to questions in Turkish I adopt a version of the ellipsis account proposed by Merchant (2001) Giannakidou (2000, 2006). The idea here is that fragment answers are in fact elliptical constructions that include both movement and ellipsis. The ellipsis site contains a moved element and unpronounced syntactic structure. When NCIs appear by themselves as fragments,

the rest of the sentence including the negative marker gets deleted under ellipsis. The underlying representation of the fragment answers would then look like in (26B) and (27B), taken from Giannakidou (2000, 2006) and Giannakidou and Zeijlstra (2017).<sup>5</sup>

(26) A: Ti idhes?  
what saw.2SG  
'What did you see?'

B: TIPOTA dhen ida.  
n-thing NEG saw.1SG  
'Nothing.'

(27) A: Pjos irthe?  
who arrived.3SG  
'Who arrived?'

B: KANENAS dhen irthe.  
n-person not arrived.3SG  
'Nobody.'

The NCIs in (26B) and (27B) appear as fragment answers due to ellipsis. The strike-through indicates the part that is elided. If one were to spell out the entire structure rather than the fragment answer, the presence of negation would be necessary.

It should be noted at this point that the ellipsis account was proposed to account for the availability of NCIs as fragment answers to only positive questions. I argue that the ellipsis analysis can also be extended to fragment answers to negative questions in Turkish.<sup>6</sup> Consider the examples below.

(28) A: Ahmet kim-i gör-me-di?  
Ahmet who-ACC see-NEG-PAST  
'Who did Ahmet not see?'

B: *Hiçkimse*<sub>i</sub>-yi [Ahmet t<sub>i</sub> gör-me-di].

<sup>5</sup> Capital letters indicate emphatic use in the Greek examples.

<sup>6</sup> An anonymous reviewer suggests that there needs to be an account why this is a strict case of ellipsis and not clefting. To answer that one could argue that Turkish is in fact a null subject language and subjects may be omitted in tensed clauses. In other words, Turkish does not have pleonastic elements like *it* and *there* in English and is often cited to not have clefting (Kornfilt 1997). Turkish does have what is called pseudo-clefting constructions that are used for emphasis. In a pseudocleft sentence, the emphasized element becomes a predicate nominal with no case marking and carries verbal morphology. Also, it is impossible to elide the rest of the clause in a cleft structure, as in (i) below.

(i) A: Oraya kim gitmedi?  
'Who didn't go there.'  
B: \*(Oraya git-mey-en) Ahmet-ti.  
there go-NEG-SUBJP Ahmet-PAST  
'Ahmet was the one who didn't go there.'



no one-ACC Ahmet see-NEG-PAST  
'No one.'

- (29) A: Sen oraya git-me-di-n mi?  
you there go-NEG-PAST-2SG Q  
'Did you not go there?'

B: *Hiç*<sub>i</sub> [ben oraya t<sub>i</sub> git-me-di-m].  
never I there go-NEG-PAST-1SG  
'Never.'

B': *Hiçbir zaman*<sub>i</sub> [ben oraya t<sub>i</sub> git-me-di-m].  
not one time I there go-NEG-PAST-1SG  
'At no time.'

The NCIs as remnants in (28B), (29B) and (29B') move to the sentence-initial position through focus movement in order to escape ellipsis and the rest of the sentence including negation gets deleted. The elided part is syntactically there but is not pronounced in the phonetic form. This can be captured in (30) where the non-elliptical counterpart requires negation although there is negation in the question itself.

- (30) A: Sen oraya git-me-di-n mi?  
you there go-NEG-PAST-2SG Q  
'Did you not go there?'

B: Ben oraya *hiç* git-\*(me)-di-m.  
I there never goNEG-PAST-1SG  
'I never went there.'

B': Ben oraya *hiçbir zaman* git-\*(me)-di-m.  
I there not one time goNEG-PAST-1SG  
'I never went there.'

Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that in elliptical constructions there is unpronounced syntactic structure that contains negation. The syntactic structure I propose for a fragment like (28B) would look like in (31).

- (31) [<sub>FP</sub> *Hiçkimse*<sub>i</sub>-y<sub>i</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> Ahmet [<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> gör-me-di]]]]

In 31), the NCI fragment answer moves to the sentence-initial position and therefore escapes ellipsis. Note that a similar analysis that involves the deletion of the part of the clause except for the wh-word was entertained by İnce (2009, 2012). Consider the example below (İnce 2009: 29).

- (32) Ali biri-ni ara-dı ama KİM-İ bil-mi-yor-um.  
Ali someone-ACC call-PAST but who-ACC know-NEG-PROG-1SG  
'Ali called someone but I don't know who.'

İnce notes that even though Turkish is a wh-in-situ language, sluicing in (32) is derived by deleting the clause after the wh-word moved to the left periphery. He goes on to say that the wh-word focus-moves to the sentence initial position after which the rest of the clause elided. Based on this analysis, I argue that the

fragment answer in (31) is [+focus] and it carries focal stress. Also, its landing site is the [Spec, FP] position. The rest of the structure is elided, meaning it is syntactically there but is not phonetically realized. The NCI itself reconstructs back to its base position at the interpretive level, something NCIs are able to do across languages (Fălăuş and Nicolae 2016). Back in its original position, the NCI obeys the c-command requirement and is licensed by and interpreted under negation. This is also true for NCIs functioning as subject NPs as they are able to reconstruct to their pre-movement position (i.e. [Spec, vP]).

Recall that the syntactic assumptions that Fălăuş and Nicolae (2016) make actually originated in Zeijlstra's (2004, 2008) account of NC as syntactic agreement. Based on Chomsky (2001), Zeijlstra argues that NC should be seen as a syntactic Agree relation between a single interpretable feature [iNeg] and one or more uninterpretable negative features [uNeg]. Zeijlstra also adopts the mechanism called Multiple Agree (Hiraiwa 2001) which states that single interpretable formal features may establish Agree relations with multiple uninterpretable formal features. In NC languages, NCIs are taken to be semantically non-negative elements that bear the [uNeg] feature. In strict NC languages, overt sentential negation is argued to lack semantic content and also carry the [uNeg] feature. Therefore, NCIs agree with a higher covert negative operator (i.e., CN), which has the [iNeg] feature. On the other hand, if an NC language is non-strict, sentential negation has the [iNeg] feature and NCIs agree with sentential negation. Note, however, that while Zeijlstra takes CN to be the only licenser of NCIs in strict NC languages, Fălăuş and Nicolae (2016), argue that the covert negative operator is a last resort mechanism only inserted in elliptical constructions (i.e., fragment answers). The reason for the DN reading of fragment NCIs is accounted for by the presence of both sentential and covert negation canceling out one another.

It was shown in previous sections that Turkish is a strict NC language. However, it dramatically differs from other NC languages in terms of the interpretation of NCIs as fragments. Based on the findings of the judgment study presented in section 4, I argue that the licensing of NCIs in Turkish does not include any covert negative operator in elliptical or in non-elliptical constructions. Licensing is done locally within the Tense Phrase (TP) and covert negation cannot be the licenser due to locality constraints in Turkish. I argue that NCIs functioning as subject and object NPs as well as adverbs agree with sentential negation –*mA*, or its existential counterpart (i.e., *yok*), or its non-verbal counterpart (i.e., *değil*). The structure I am proposing for the licensing of NCIs in Turkish can be seen in labelled brackets below.

- (33) [CovNegP [TP [NegP [vP [VP NCIs] v] Neg –*mA*] T] CovNeg  $\emptyset$ ]  
[uNeg] [iNeg] [iNeg]

The assumption in (33) is that NCIs, whether they are NPs or AdvPs, carry the uninterpretable negative feature [uNeg]. The checking of this feature needs to be done by an element with the interpretable negative feature [iNeg]. In the structure, there are two potential candidates that c-command the NCIs and that can check



negative dependencies that are similar to the analysis proposed here. The idea of locality restrictions was entertained as clause-mateness by Kelepir (2001), as phase-mateness by Kayabaşı and Özgen (2018) and as phrasal boundary by Jeretic (2022). In that sense, the current account seems to be compatible with these various frameworks.

There is one question that still remains to be asked at this point. What makes Turkish different from other NC languages in terms of NCIs licensing? Given that covert negation cannot check off the uninterpretable negative features of NCIs due to locality reasons and lexical ambiguity approach is not feasible to account for the Turkish data, one answer would be that there must be a typological difference between Turkish, on the one hand, and other NC languages, on the other. In that sense, the current study has contributed to the theories and arguments that not only is there an important difference between strict and non-strict NC languages, but there is significant variation among strict NC languages as well. Further work will surely shed further light on these phenomena.

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