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Yes- and _No_-Responses to Biased Questions in Russian in Comparison to German

Abstract

Response particles like _yes_ and _no_ are generally considered to be anaphoric devices that pick up antecedent propositions as discourse referents in the context. Polar questions containing negation have been argued to introduce positive and negative propositional discourse referents into the discourse. However, different forms of questions can give rise to different inferences about the relevance or salience of these propositional discourse referents, which may reflect the speaker's previous beliefs concerning the truth of the respective proposition (the so-called _epistemic bias_), or about contextual evidence for against a proposition (the so-called _evidential bias_). For example, (1) conveys that before asking the question, the speaker held the belief that the positive proposition 'she has left' is true, while (2) may be neutral in this respect.

(1) Razve   ona uže   ne   uechala?
    Q-PARTICLE she already NEG left
    'Hasn't she left already?'

(2) Ona ešče ne uechala?
     she   yet NEG left
     'Has she not left yet?'

We present experimental evidence from four acceptability studies in Russian, compare this evidence to previous findings for German (Claus, Meijer, Repp & Krifka, 2017; Repp, Claus & Frühauf, ms.), and explore how different kinds of negative polar questions are answered with response particles to express that a certain proposition is true or not. The results will be discussed in current theories of response particles (Farkas & Roelofsen 2019) and of question bias (cf. Romero 2020).