Une ellipse, mais pas que: diagnosing a new elliptical construction in French*

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Colloquial French makes a productive use of a controversed construction, *mais pas que* (MPQ), which can be litteraly paraphrased as 'but not only'. The main function of MPQ, we argue, is anti-exhaustivity: a sequence of the form *S, MPQ* conveys, in addition to asserting *S*, that there is at least one alternative *S'* that is true in the context. We propose an account of the semantics of MPQ, which treats it as an elliptical construction, used in order to re-introduce alternatives previously negated by a silent exhaustification operator EXH. Thus, the present proposal sheds new light on silent exhaustification processes at play in natural language, and constructions such as MPQ that act as exhaustification 'defusers', alongside particles like *also* and *too*.

1 Introduction

Colloquial French makes use of a controversial construction, *mais pas que* 'but not only' (also attested with the standard conjunctive marker *et*: *et pas que*, 'and not only', cf. §3) increasingly used in the oral register to convey that an element recently mentioned (usally in the immediately preceding clause) has alternatives. It is illustrated in the following examples:

(1) a. Comme le dit Hagège [...], la langue sert bien évidemment aussi à communiquer. Mais pas que : et c'est bien pour cela que c'est une langue.
'As Hagège puts it, language is about communication. *Mais pas que*: and that's precisely what makes language language.' [*Le Monde* Blog]

b. Paris: les candidats planchent sur les Champs-Élysées, mais pas que...
'Paris: candidates are brainstorming at the *Champs-Élysées*, MPQ...'
[*Le Point*]

c. François Hollande: «renforcer la mixité sociale» par le logement, mais pas que...
'François Hollande: strenghten social diversity, MPQ...' [*Le Moniteur*]

d. Je suis prêt à vous aider, mais pas que.
'I'm ready to help you, MPQ.' [Académie française]

e. Promis juré, les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre (mais pas

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que).
'Cross my heart, McDonald's French fries are made with potatoes (MPQ)' [*Terraeco.net*]

f. À partir du moment où apparaissent de plus en plus d'emballages, de conserves, du verre, et des plastiques dans ces dépôts-là, et ben là c'est des déchets qui restent, et qui s'accumulent, et qui vont sur le plan esthétique beaucoup dégrader l'environnement et pas que.
'From the moment on in which more and more packagings, tins, glass and plastics appear in those residues, then those form litter that remains and accumulates, and that will cause a lot of environmental damage aesthetically *et pas que*.' [*LSD, La Série Documentaire*]

What the use of MPQ suggests in (1a) is that language is about communication but also other, unspecified things; similarly, in (1e), MPQ conveys that potatoes are not the only ingredient to enter the composition of McDonalds French fries. The same goes, *ceteris paribus*, for the other examples above, in all of which MPQ is used to evoke alternatives apparently excluded by a previous sentence. In many ways, MPQ is reminiscent of another debated construction in French syntax, namely the exceptive construction *ne... que*:

(2) Il **n**'y a **que** Paul qui soit venu.
'Only Paul came.' (lit. 'there is only Paul who came.')

However, there are substantial differences between *ne...que* exceptives and MPQ: while the former is used to assert the exclusivity of a given alternative, MPQ essentially does the opposite. It therefore acts as the mirror image of the exceptive construction. In addition to this interpretive difference, the syntax of MPQ is quite different from that of the exceptive: for instance, MPQ cannot host the morpheme *ne* anywhere, suggesting that its underlying structure might be different from whatever that of the exceptive construction is:

(3) Les frites McDo *(ne) sont faites avec des pommes de terre, *(ne) mais *(ne) pas *(ne) que.

While the syntax and semantics of French *ne...que* have been discussed in detail, with no consensus emerging from existing analyses (Azoulay-Vicente 1988; Dekydtspotter 1993; Gaatone 1999; O'Neill 2011; Homer 2015 i.a.), it seems that MPQ has still not received attention from linguists.

In what follows, our goal is to fill in this gap and provide a formal account of the MPQ construction in French. Briefly, we argue that MPQ is to be understood as a form of elliptical construction consisting of i) a conjunctive marker, ii) sentential negation and iii) adverbial *que*, one of the forms that the exclusive particle *only* takes in French. We further argue that what allows ellipsis to be licensed is the presence in the MPQ antecedent of a silent exhaustification operator EXH, which has been argued to be the covert counterart of *only* (Chierchia, 2006; Chierchia et al., 2012; Fox, 2007; Fox and Spector, 2018; Asherov et al., 2022), therefore satisfying syntactic parallelism requirements for ellipsis (Rooth, 1992b; Fox, 1999). What emerges from this analysis is that MPQ is part of a class of natural language elements that we dub 'exhaustivity defusers', akin to additive particles such as *too* and *also*, which can be systematically used in discourse to reintroduce alternatives otherwise cancelled by the default computation of obligatorily exhaustivity inferences (Bade, 2014, 2016; Xiang, 2020; Paillé, 2022).

The rest of this article is structured as follows. §2 empirically motivates the claim that MPQ *que* is the French counterpart of *only*, and not an instance of other, homophonous *que* elements found in French, such as the comparative marker or the relative pronoun. §3 argues that MPQ is to be analyzed as an instance of stripping, a kind of ellipsis well attested in French (Morris, 2008; Dagnac, 2019; Abeillé and Kim, 2022), and spells out the analysis in detail. §4 argues that MPQ is to be understood as part of a broader typological class of constructions, that of 'exhaustivity defusers', which have counterparts in English and Mandarin Chinese. §5 concludes.

2 Which *que* is MPQ *que*?

French *que* is an extremely versatile element with numerous uses in different syntactic contexts; as such, it can be used (among others) as an exceptive marker, a comparative marker, a relative pronoun, or a complementizer.

(4) a. Les frites McDo (ne) sont faites qu'avec des pommes de terre.
'McDonald's French fries are only made out of potatoes.' [Exceptive]

b. Les frites du McDo sont meilleures que celles du Burger King.
'FF are better than Burger King's.' [Comparative marker]

c. Les frites que j'ai mangées étaient excellentes.
'The fries that I had were excellent.' [Relative pronoun]

d. On m'a toujours dit que le McDo faisait les meilleures frites.
'I was always told that McDonald's had the best French fries.'
[Complementizer]

It seems that MPQ *que* actually does not fulfill any of these roles since, on the contrary to all of the above, it can felicitously appear alone, in stark contrast with all of the above constructions:

(5) a. *Les frites McDo (ne) sont faites que.
Intended: 'McDonald's French fries are only made out of.' [Exceptive]

b. *Les frites du McDo sont meilleures que.
Intended: 'FF are better than.' [Comparative marker]

c. *Les frites que étaient excellentes.
Intended: 'The fries that were excellent.' [Relative pronoun]

d. *On m'a toujours dit que.
Intended: 'I was always told that.' [Complementizer]

However, French *que* has yet another use as an adverbial meaning *only*, which can otherwise be spelled out as *seulement* 'only'. This is, we believe, the function of *que* in our examples in (1) above: evidence comes from the fact that, in all the examples, *seulement* can substitue *que* with no noticeable change in clause structure or interpretation:

(6) a. Comme le dit Hagège, la langue sert bien évidemment aussi à communiquer. Mais pas seulement. (=1a)

b. Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre (mais pas seulement) (=1e)

The only difference between this *que* and *seulement* is syntactic, with the former not being able to either precede the constituent it modifies in exceptive constructions (7b) or appear within a PP, (7c):[1]

(7) a. Paul a seulement 40 ans.
Paul a 40 ans seulement.
'Paul only has 40 years old.'

b. Paul (n') a que 40 ans.
*Paul (n') a 40 ans que.
'Paul only has 40 years old.'

c. À seulement 40 ans, il dirige une multinationale.
*À que 40 ans, il dirige une multinationale.
'At only 40, he runs a multinational company.' [Roussarie 2021, (20a-c)]

Apart from these differences, the absence of semantic difference between examples in (1) and (6) strongly suggest that MPQ *que* is the focus particle *seulement* 'only'.

3 MPQ as an elliptical construction

3.1 Diagnosing ellipsis

Assuming that MPQ *que* is an instantiation of the focus particle *only* and that *only* has to associate with an expression, to what does *que* associate in MPQ constructions? We would like to suggest that it associates with an elided constituent. So practically, this amounts to assuming that an example such as (1e) has the following underlying form:

(8) Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre, MPQ ⟨~~des pommes de terre~~⟩.
'FF are made out of potatoes, MPQ ⟨~~potatoes~~⟩.

More precisely, we propose that MPQ is an instance of stripping, or bare argument ellipsis (Hankamer and Sag, 1976; van Craenenbroeck and Merchant, 2013; Wu, 2022). Stripping is well attested in French (Morris, 2008; Dagnac, 2019; Abeillé and Kim, 2022) and, as a form of coordinate ellipsis construction, involves a full clausal antecedent in a distinct clause, just like MPQ:

(9) a. Jim viendra, mais pas Léa ⟨~~viendra~~⟩.
'Jim will come, but Léa ⟨~~will~~⟩ not ⟨~~come~~⟩.' [Dagnac 2019, (47a)]

b. Jean aime le chocolat, mais Marie non ⟨~~aime le chocolat~~⟩.
'John likes chocolate, but Mary does not ⟨~~like chocolate~~⟩.'
[Morris 2008, (1)]

[1] Thanks to Anne Abeillé for bringing these examples to our attention.

Further evidence for the stripping status of MPQ comes from expected locality constraints between the remnant and the correlate (the remnant 'counterpart' in the antecedent clause; Merchant 2019). In (10a), stripping is licensed because nothing intervenes between the remnant and its antecedent (*stole the car after midnight*), whereas in (10b), ellipsis in infelicitous: this is because the targeted constituent *stole the car* is embedded in a relative clause, disrupting locality and therefore, preventing ellipsis.

(10) a. The man stole the car after midnight, but ⟨~~did~~⟩ not ⟨~~steal~~⟩ the diamonds ⟨~~after midnight~~⟩.

b. *They caught the man who'd stolen the car after searching for him, but not the diamonds. [Merchant 2019, (24)]

MPQ seems to obey this pattern: depending on the placement of focus, the ellipsis following MPQ in (11) can either target the entire VP (11a) or the smaller PP constituent in (11b), because no other constituent intervenes between them and MPQ. However, in (12), ellipsis cannot access the higher VP (12a) nor the smaller VP within the relative clause (12b) because of the presence of the most local antecedent PP *after searching for him*, which is the only available antecendent for MPQ, (12c).

(11) a. L'homme a [volé une voiture]$_F$ après minuit, MPQ ⟨~~volé une voiture après minuit~~⟩: il a aussi volé un scooter.
'The man [stole a car]$_F$ after midnight, MPQ ⟨~~stole a car after midnight~~⟩: he also stole a scooter.'

b. L'homme a volé une voiture [après minuit]$_F$, MPQ ⟨~~volé une voiture après minuit~~⟩: il en a volé une autre à deux heures du matin.
'The man stole a car [after midnight]$_F$, MPQ ⟨~~stole a car after midnight~~⟩: he stole another one at two AM.'

(12) a. *La police a interpellé l'homme qui avait volé une voiture après l'avoir cherché, MPQ ⟨~~a interpellé . . .~~⟩.
Intended: 'The police caught the man who'd stolen a car after looking for him, MPQ ⟨~~caught the man . . .~~⟩.'

b. *La police a interpellé l'homme qui avait volé une voiture après l'avoir cherché, MPQ ⟨~~qui avait volé une voiture~~⟩.
Intended: 'The police caught the man who'd stolen a car after looking for him, MPQ ⟨~~who had stolen a car~~⟩.'

c. La police a interpellé l'homme qui avait volé une voiture [après l'avoir cherché]$_F$, MPQ ⟨~~après l'avoir cherché~~⟩, après l'avoir aussi fouillé.
'The police caught the man who'd stolen a car [after looking for him]$_F$, MPQ ⟨~~after looking for him~~⟩, after also having searched him.'

Following Merchant (2019), we take this locality requirement as evidence that ellipsis is at stake in MPQ constructions.

3.2 Identity, parallelism, and contrast

Having convinced ourselves that MPQ involves ellipsis, we now go on to show that MPQ constructions satisfy the parallelism condition for ellipsis as formulated by Rooth (Rooth, 1992a; Fox, 1999; Takahashi and Fox, 2005). The parallelism condition is a way to address the identity problem of ellipsis, by formulating the requirements that need to hold betweenn an elided constituent and its antecedent. A formulation of parallelism is given in (13):

(13) **Parallelism (Rooth, 1992a)**
For a constituent ϵ to be elided, ϵ must be inside a phrase E that has an antecedent A such that $[\![A]\!] \in [\![E]\!]^f$.

In words, ellipsis licensing requires the semantic value of A to be part of the focus value of E, that is, in Rooth's alternative semantics terms, an element of the same semantic type.[2] This parallelism requirement is illustrated in (14) with VP-ellipsis, where $[\ ]_F$ indicates a focus-marked constituent:

(14) a. $[_A$ Mario likes pasta] and $[_E$ [Luigi]$_F$ does $[_\epsilon \langle$~~like pasta~~$\rangle]$, too.]

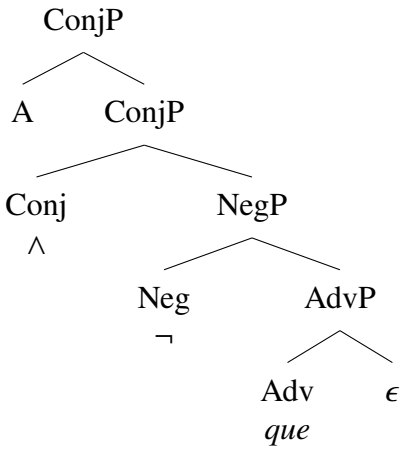
b. $[\![A]\!] = 1 \Leftrightarrow \text{like}(p)(m)$

c. $[\![E]\!]^f = \{\text{like}(p)(x) \mid x \in D_e\}$

Since the antecedent clause *Mario likes pasta* is an alternative of $\lambda x.x$ *likes pasta*, parallelism is satisfied and ellipsis can go through.

A question then arises: do MPQ constructions fullfill the parallelism requirement? In order to answer this question, we need to spell-out in more details what we believe is the structure of MPQ constructions. As we demonstrated in the previous section, MPQ *que* is the French counterpart of the exclusive *only*. We therefore assume that *mais pas que*, which is the constituent E hosting the ellipsis site ϵ can be represented along the lines in (15):

(15)



As (15) makes explicit, negation scopes over *que* 'only'. We assume the following semantics for *only* (Fox, 2007):

[2] More precisely, $[\![\alpha]\!]^f = D_\tau$, where τ is the type of $[\![\alpha]\!]$.

(16) $[\![\text{only}]\!]^w = \lambda\mathcal{A}_{\langle\langle s,t\rangle,t\rangle}.\lambda p_{\langle s,t\rangle} : p(w) = 1.\forall q[q \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(p) \rightarrow \neg q(w)]$

Only takes a set of propositional alternatives $\mathcal{A}$, a proposition p and for any world w, presupposes that p is true in w while asserting that every alternative q in the set of Innocently Excludable alternatives $\mathcal{A}_{IE}$ of p is false in w.[3] Going back to our French Fries example, we assume the following LF for (1e), where A, E and ϵ will have the following values (O stands for *only*):

(18) $[_{\text{A}}$ Les frites McDo sont faites avec des [pommes de terre]$_{\text{F}}]$, $\wedge\neg$ $[_{\text{E}}$ O $[_{\epsilon}$ $\langle$~~les frites McDo sont faites avec des PdT~~$\rangle]]$.

However, we now face a problem: the meaning of the antecedent is not part of the focus alternatives of $O(\epsilon)$. To see this consider what these would be, assuming that A and E (leaving out the higher constituent hosting the negation for now) have the following LFs:

(19) a. $[_{\text{A}}$ McDo FF are made with [potatoes]$_{\text{F}}]$

b. $[_{\text{E}}$ O $[_{\epsilon}$ $\langle$~~McDo FF are made with potatoes~~$\rangle]]$

Assuming that the alternatives of the proposition *only* associates with are as in (20a), it is straighforward to see that the semantic value of A is not part of the focus value of E: parallelism does not hold.

(20) a. $\mathcal{A}_{IE}(\epsilon) = \begin{cases} \text{McDo fries are made with carrots,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with plastic,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with leftovers...} \end{cases}$

b. $[\![\text{A}]\!] = \lambda w.$McDo fries are made with potatoes in w

c. $[\![E]\!]^f = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \lambda w.[\text{ McDo FF are made with } x \text{ in } w \\ \wedge\forall q[q \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(\lambda w'.\text{ McDo FF are made with } x \text{ in } w') \rightarrow \neg q(w)]] \end{array} \middle| \; x \in D_e \right\}$

d. $[\![A]\!] \notin [\![E]\!]^f$

While the meaning of A is compatible with other things made with potatoes, this is crucially not the case for the focus value of E, which requires that for every alternative ingredient x, x is made only of this ingredient. This formal demonstration, however, is counterintuitive in some way: if the antecedent is not interpreted exclusively, the need of a construction such as MPQ is obviated. More precisely, if what is asserted is merely that McDonald's french fries are made with potatoes and potentially other ingredients, rather than exclusively potatoes, what would be the purpose of saying that McDo fries are not only made with that ingredient - in other words, what would be MPQ *raison d'être*? In what follows, we go on to show that this intuition is correct, and that the antecedent is indedd interpreted exclusively - albeit covertly so.

[3] The set of Innocently Excludable alternatives $\mathcal{A}_{IE}$ can be defined as follows:

(17) **Innocently Excludable (IE) Alternatives (Fox, 2007)**
For any sentence S and set of alternatives $\mathcal{A}$, $\mathcal{A}_{IE}(S) = \bigcap\{\mathcal{A}' \subseteq \mathcal{A} \mid \mathcal{A}'$ is a maximal subset of $\mathcal{A}$ s.t. $\{\neg[\![S']\!] \mid S' \in \mathcal{A}\} \cup \{[\![S]\!]\}$ is consistent $\}$

In words, the set of Innocently Excludable alternatives of a sentence S is the set in the intersection of all maximal subsets of consistently excludable subsets of alternatives to S.

3.3 Enter EXH

As mentioned above, the function of MPQ is intuitively that of weakening the assertion of its antecedent: by saying S MPQ, we are precisely saying that alternatives to S have to be entertained further, rather than excluded. This device would be useless if the antecedent of MPQ was not interpreted as strenghtened somehow, excluding potential alternatives. In what follows, we would like to propose that the antecedent is actually interpreted exclusively, via the insertion of a covert exhaustivity operator EXH (Chierchia, 2006; Fox and Hackl, 2006; Fox, 2007; Magri, 2009, 2011; Chierchia et al., 2012; Fox and Spector, 2018). EXH is essentially a silent version of *only*: as its overt counterpart, it takes a set of alternatives and a proposition as arguments and asserts that the proposition is true and all its (innocently excludable) alternatives are false:

(21) **The exhaustivity operator**
$[\![\text{EXH}]\!]^w = \lambda\mathcal{A}.\lambda p.p(w) \wedge \forall q[q \in A_{IE}(p) \rightarrow \neg q(w)]$

When EXH applies to the antecedent, it is therefore interpreted exclusively, negating all the alternative ingredients FF could potentially be made of, (22):

(22) $[\![\text{EXH [Les frites McDo sont faites avec des PDT]}_\phi]\!]^w = 1 \Leftrightarrow [\![\phi]\!]^w = 1 \wedge \forall\psi \in A_{IE}(\phi), [\![\psi]\!]^w = 0$

The strenghtened meaning of the antecedent in (22), we argue, is precisely what MPQ targets: upon asserting MPQ, the speaker effectively aims at cancelling this otherwise unwanted obligatory inference about the exclusivity of the fries' ingredients. What is more, positing that the antecedent is prefixed with EXH ensures that the parallelism condition can be met: now the meaning of *A cum* EXH is part of the focus value of E, therefore (13) is satisfied and ellipsis can go through, as desired.

(23) a. $[_{\text{A}}$ EXH [McDo FF are made with $[\text{potatoes}]_{\text{F}}]]$

b. $[_{\text{E}}\ O\ [_{\epsilon}\ \langle$~~McDo FF are made with potatoes~~$\rangle]]$

c. $[\![\text{A}]\!] = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \lambda w.[\text{McDo FF are made with potatoes in } w \wedge \\ \forall q[q \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(\lambda w'.\ \text{FF are made with potatoes in } w') \rightarrow \neg q(w)]] \end{array} \right.$

d. $[\![\text{E}]\!]^f = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \lambda w.[\ \text{McDo FF are made with } x \text{ in } w \\ \wedge\forall q[q \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(\lambda w'.\ \text{McDo FF are made with } x \text{ in } w') \rightarrow \neg q(w)]] \end{array} \right| x \in D_e \Big\}$

e. $[\![A]\!] \in [\![E]\!]^f$

Note that, if our analysis is on the right track, the structure of MPQ constructions provides evidence for the syntactic reality of exhaustivity operators in natural language (Fox, 2007; Asherov et al., 2022): the presence of EXH in the antecedent of MPQ is precisely the element allowing parallelism to be satisfied, and ellipsis to be licensed accordingly.

3.4 The role of negation: contrast

As mentioned in the introduction, both the standard conjunction (1f) and the contrastive conjunction (1a)-(1e) can be used in MPQ constructions, with no change in meaning. What seems to matter is the presence of negation, as evidenced by (24):

(24) Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre, et/mais *(pas) que.
'McDo FF are made with potatoes, and/but not only'.

The positive counterpart of (30) can be rescued by adding an anaphoric demonstrative *ça* 'that', as in (25):

(25) Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre, et/mais que **ça**.
'McDo FF are made with potatoes, and/but only **that**'.

The difference between (24) and (25) is reminiscent of the difference between 'surface' and 'deep' anaphora as established by Hankamer and Sag (1976): while ellipsis, the standard surface anaphora, has to be syntactically controlled (26a), other types of pragmatically-controlled 'deep' anaphora do not, (26b):

(26) *Context: Hankamer attempts to stuff a 9-inch ball through a 6-inch hoop. Sag says:*

a. #It's not clear that you'll be able to ⟨~~do it~~⟩.

b. It's not clear that you'll be able to do it. [Hankamer and Sag 1976, (3)-(4)]

The main difference between MPQ and its positive counterpart is that the former is *contrastive*, i.e. that the elided constituent does not semantically overlap the antecedent. That such a semantic contrast is necessary for ellipsis has been argued for in recent approaches to Verb Phrase Ellipsis and Sluicing (Griffiths, 2019; Stockwell, 2022); for instance, Stockwell (2022) argues that what rules out ellipsis for cases such as (27a) is precisely the absence of contrast, a requirement that their overt counterparts are not subject to:

(27) a. *If John is wrong, then he is ⟨~~wrong~~⟩.

b. If John is wrong, then he is wrong. [Stockwell 2022, (1)]

In addition to the standard parallelism requirement needed for the theory of focus, Stockwell (2022) adds a contrast requirement: the set of alternatives denoted by the elided constituent has to be proper, i.e. does not have to contain the alternative denoted by the antecedent, (28b).

(28) **Ellipsis as proper alternativehood**
For ϵ to be elided, ϵ must be inside a phrase E that has antecedent A s.t.

a. $[\![A]\!] \in [\![E]\!]^f$ *Parallelism condition*

b. $[\![A]\!] \neq [\![E]\!]$ *Contrast condition*

[Stockwell 2022, (12)]

The contrast requirement, we argue, is fullfilled in MPQ because of the presence of negation scoping over E. This is the difference between MPQ and the infelicitous positive counterpart without negation in (30). When negation scopes over *only*, its meaning becomes inclusive: to be true, $[\![\neg\, O(p)]\!]$ requires that there is at least one active alternative q in $\mathcal{A}_{IE}(p)$ that is true:[4]

[4] Here I am mostly ignoring the various implications of the fact that the truth of the prejacent is merely presupposed, rather than asserted, which would require an adequate theory of presupposition projection under negation.

(29) $[\![\neg O(p)]\!]^w = \lambda\mathcal{A} : p(w) = 1.\exists q[q \neq p \wedge q \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(p) \wedge q(w)]$

Going back to our examples, we can now check that the contrast requirement in (28b) is fullfilled for MPQ constructions such as (1e) and (24), but not for non-contrastive examples such as (30):

(24) a. Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre, et/mais pas que ⟨~~avec des PdT~~⟩.
'McDo FF are made with potatoes, but not only ⟨~~with potatoes~~⟩'.

b. $[\![A]\!] \in [\![E]\!]^f$ ✓

c. $[\![A]\!] \neq [\![E]\!]$ ✓

(30) a. *Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre, et/mais que.
Intended: 'McDo FF are made with potatoes, and/but only ⟨~~with potatoes~~⟩'.

b. $[\![A]\!] \in [\![E]\!]^f$ ✓

c. $[\![A]\!] \neq [\![E]\!]$ ✗

As a consequence, assuming that the relevant constituent E for ellipsis licensing contains negation, the contrast condition is satisfied.

4 MPQ, *too*, and other natural language defusers

Assuming that antecedents are strenghtened by the insertion of EXH as proposed above, we now have an explanation of the very *raison d'être* of MPQ constructions: their role is to weaken the interpretation of the antecedent, by re-introducing potential alternatives to it. Since MPQ occurs in a subsequent assertion (as a conjoined clause), this is essentially a two-step process. On the first step, the antecedent is obligatorily exhaustified by EXH, leading to an exclusive interpretation: for our example (1e), this amounts to excluding the alternatives in (20a) repeated here.

(31) a. $[\![\text{EXH [Les frites McDo sont faites avec des PDT]}_\phi]\!]^w = 1$ iff $[\![\phi]\!]^w = 1 \wedge \forall\psi \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(\phi), [\![\psi]\!]^w = 0$

b. $\mathcal{A}_{IE}(\phi) = \begin{cases} \text{McDo fries are made with carrots,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with plastic,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with leftovers...} \end{cases}$

In a subsequent step, MPQ attaches to this exhaustified sentence in order to cancel the implicature just generated, reintroducing negated alternatives through the negative component of MPQ. Since conjoining the MPQ sentence with the exhaustified antecedent would amount to a contradiction, it forces the speaker to 'backtrack' by conjoining with the weaker, pre-exhaustified antecedent corresponding to the parse without EXH.

(32) a. $[\![\text{MPQ}]\!]^w(p) = 1$ iff $p(w) = 1 \wedge \exists q \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(p)[q \neq p \wedge q(w) = 1]$

b. $[\![[\text{Les FMcD sont faites avec des PdT}]_\phi, \text{MPQ } [\langle \sout{\text{Les FMcD sont faites avec des PdT}} \rangle]_\phi]\!]^w = 1$ iff $[\![\phi]\!]^w = 1 \wedge \exists \psi \in \mathcal{A}_{IE}(\phi), \psi \neq \phi \wedge [\![\psi]\!]^w = 1$

Therefore, The MPQ construction is true iff there is at least one proper alternative to its prejacent that is true in the context, which seems to capture the intended meaning. As such, MPQ is an anti-exhaustifier or EXH 'defuser': it forces a non-exhaustified parse of its antecedent, where antecedent is understood somewhat loosely as whatever occurs immediately before in discourse. This brings MPQ very close to additive particles such as *too*, which occur in very similar environments, as the examples (33a)-(33b) show:

(33) a. Les FMcD sont faites avec des PdT, et celles du Burger King $\langle$ sont faites avec des PdT $\rangle$ *(aussi)
'McDo fries are made with potatoes, and BK ones are $\langle$ made with potatoes $\rangle$, *(too). *Stripping*

b. Bill loves McDo fries and Mary does $\langle$ love McDo fries $\rangle$ *(too) *VP-ellipsis*

In cases of stripping (and VP-ellipsis in English), the remnant *aussi* 'too' is mandatory. As convincingly argued by Bade (2014, 2016) and Bade and Renans (2021), additive particles are also assumed to closely interact with EXH and the mandatory implicature it triggers: just like MPQ, the insertion of *too* is necessary to block the strengthening inference brought about by the mandatory insertion of EXH in assertions such as (34).

(34) John came. $[\text{Bill}]_F$ came, #(too). [Bade and Renans 2021, (9)]

According to Bade (2016), the mandatory insertion of *too* in cases such as (34) is due to the fact that the assertion of the first sentence *John came* is understood as obligatorily exhaustified by EXH, triggering the implicature that no one else came - cp. Krifka (1999); Sæbø (2004). The second sentence, *Bill came*, is parsed the same way by default, resulting in a contextual contradiction - that John and no one else and Bill and no one else came. A way of rescuing the assertion of the second sentence is by inserting *too*, which encodes a presupposition requiring an active alternative in the preceding discourse, (35c). Upon assertion of *too*, the hearer is forced to 'backtrack' and consider that the first sentence should not be exhaustified, on pains of not satisfying the presupposition of *too*.

(35) a. #EXH [John came]. EXH [Bill came].

b. John came. Bill came, #(too)

c. $[\![\text{too } [\phi]]\!]^{w,C} = \exists p[p \in C \wedge p(w) \wedge p \neq [\![\phi]\!]^{w,C}].[\![\phi]\!]^{w,C}$

In other words, *too* effectively defuses EXH by cancelling the obligatorily implicature generated by its insertion, just as MPQ does. This effect is mirrored in the temporal domain by the particle *again*:

(36) Peter was in Norway $[\text{last year}]_F$. Peter was in Norway *(again) this year.
[Bade 2014, (25)]

This additionally explains the behavior of *too* in the ellipsis data in (33a)-(33b): assuming that both the antecedent and the ellipsis clause are exhaustified, leaving out *too* would

result in a contradiction - namely, that both McDonald's and Burger King fries are each the only product made with potatoes, or that Bill and Mary are each the only fries-loving people, respectively. Adding *too* explicitly cancels this implicature, asserting the existence of at least one relevant alternative in the context. Conversely, just as in the case of MPQ, *too* can be felicitously left out if negation is added in the constituent containing ellipsis. In that case, ellipsis still goes through because of the contrast condition in (28b) and the antecedent is effectively exhaustified, the elided part being simply about asserting the exclusivity implicature just generated:

(37) a. Les FMcD sont faites avec des PdT, et **pas** celles du Burger King ⟨~~sont faites avec des PdT~~⟩ *aussi
'McDo fries are made with potatoes, and **not** BK ones ⟨~~are made with potatoes~~⟩, *too. *Stripping*

b. Bill loves McDo fries and Mary does **not** ⟨~~love McDo fries~~⟩ *too *VP-ellipsis*

Other examples of EXH defusers can be found in cases of co-predication: as argued by Paillé (2022), the insertion of *also* is mandatory in examples such as (38), indicating an anti-exhaustivity function analogous to that of MPQ and *too*:

(38) This [EXH comedy] is #(also) a [EXH tragedy] [Paillé 2022, (2b)]

In the case of (38), insertion of *also* is mandatory in sentences of the form *the a is b* in order to cancel the otherwise unwanted exhaustivity implicature generated by the obligatory insertion of EXH at the predicate level. Last, looking past French and English, other EXH-defusers have been argued to be active in other languages: for instance, Xiang (2020) reports that the Mandarin Chinese particle *dou* triggers an anti-exhaustivity inference of the kind discussed in this paper - albeit with important differences, most notably with respect to the alternatives *dou* applies to: we refer the reader to Xiang (2020) for further details and comparison.

5 Conclusion

This paper attempted to do the following. First, looking past prescriptive approches, we established that *mais pas que* (MPQ) is a well-attested and productive construction of colloquial French, which meaning can be intuitively accounted for in terms of re-introduction of discarded - but not asserted - alternatives. We then set out to spell this out formally, attempting to motivate an ellipsis-based account of MPQ, arguing that MPQ is the spellout of an ellipsis construction involving sentential negation scoping over *que*, the French counterpart of *only*. Based on the parallelism (Rooth, 1992a) and contrast (Stockwell, 2022) requirements at play in ellipsis licensing, we argued that the function of MPQ is to cancel an otherwise unwanted mandatory implicature generated by the obligatory exhaustification of its antecedent. In that, MPQ qualifies as an EXH-defuser, just like particles such as *too, again* and *also* which similarly block mandatory implicatures in discourse, thereby broadening our knowledge of the typology of grammatical devices sensitive to exhaustification operators in natural language. The present analysis in terms of ellipsis also provides further arguments for the *only*-implicature generalization (Asherov et al., 2022), by showing that EXH, just like overt *only*,can provide the necessary syntactic conditions (parallelism) for ellipsis to occur.

However, much remains to be said about this kind of constructions, and especially their cross-linguistic divergences. For instance, as it has been observed by Beaver and Clark (2009) (see also Bassi et al. 2022), *only* in English cannot usually associate with an elided constituent:

(39) *Kim only [salutes]$_F$ because Sandy only does ⟨~~salute~~⟩.
Intended: 'Kim salutes (and does nothing else) because Sandy salutes (and does nothing else).' [Beaver and Clark 2009, (7.52b)]

However, such association seems felicitous in French, calling for a further investigation on the basis of a general typology of association with focus.

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