Un étrange cas d'ellipse, mais pas que

Diagnosing a new elliptical construction in French

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The phenomenon: *mais pas que (MPQ)*

- If you're strolling through the streets of Paris instead of attending CSSP you might hear something alongside the following:

  1. 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. MPQ: and that's precisely what makes language language.' (*Le Monde* Blog)

  ↝ Language is about communication but also other things.

Mais pas que (MPQ)

1. Paris: les candidats planchent sur les Champs-Élysées, **mais pas que**...
   `Paris: candidates are brainstorming at the Champs-Élysées, MPQ...'* (*Le Point*)

⤳ The candidates are brainstorming but also doing other things.

2. Promis juré, les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre (**mais pas que**).
   `Cross my heart, McDonald's French fries are made with potatoes (MPQ).* (*Terraeco.net*)

⤳ McDO French fries are made with a bunch of other things.

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Mais pas que (MPQ)

- Intuitively, MPQ somehow evokes (but leaves unsaid) alternatives introduced by a former sentence, the "other things" that the sentence could have been about.

- Today I will try to make a case for the following:

  - That MPQ involves ellipsis;

  - That this ellipsis is licensed by the presence of a covert exhaustification operator EXH in the antecedent of MPQ, thus satisfying parallelism requirements (Rooth 1992).

- This brings MPQ close to other elements in natural languages that "defuse" exhaustivity operators, such as the additive particles *too* (Bade 2014, 2016) and *also* (Paillé 2022).

Anatomy of a construction

- MPQ consists of five essential parts (or so I shall argue):
  - A clausal antecedent;
  - Some form of conjunctive marker (mostly *mais/but*, can also be *et/and*);
  - Sentential negation;
  - Adverbial *que* (*only*);
  - The elided material that follows *que*.

What is MPQ *que*?

- *Que* is one of the most versatile elements in French and has numerous uses in different syntactic contexts, among which that of:

  - An exceptive marker;

  - An adverb;

  - A preposition;

  - A relative pronoun;

  - A complementizer.

- To what class belongs MPQ *que*?

What is MPQ *que*?

- Among varieties of *que*, the majority of them cannot appear at the end of a sentence, be it as an exceptive (1), a comparative (2), a relative pronoun (3), or a complementizer, (4):

  1. *Les frites McDo (ne) sont faites que.
     Intended: `McDo French fries are only made out of.'

  2. *J'ai mangé plus de frites que.
     Intended: `I ate more fries than.'

  3. *J'ai aimé les frites que.
     Intended: `I liked the fries that.'

  4. *Les clients du McDo exigent que.
     Intended: McDonald's clients require that."

What is MPQ *que*?

- Observation: MPQ *que* can be felicitously substituted by adverb *seulement/only* in all cases:

  1. Promis juré, les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre (**mais pas seulement**)
     = `Cross my heart, McDonald's French fries are made with potatoes (MPQ).*

  2. Paris: les candidats planchent sur les Champs-Élysées, **mais pas *seulement***...
     = `Paris: candidates are brainstorming at the Champs-Élysées, MPQ...'*

- This test suggests that MPQ *que* is actually a counterpart of adverbial *seulement*, which could also be operative in exceptive constructions (Gaatone 1999).

MPQ as an elliptical construction

- In what follows, I propose to consider MPQ as involving ellipsis.

- More precisely, MPQ is an instance of stripping (or bare argument ellipsis), in which a full clause is deleted (Hankamer and Sag 1976; van Craenenbroeck and Merchant 2013; Wu 2022 i.a.)

- Although French ellipsis is restricted compared to e.g. English, stripping is attested and productive (Dagnac 2019; Morris 2008):

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

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

MPQ as an elliptical construction

- Evidence for stripping comes from locality constraints that MPQ constructions share with elliptical constructions in other languages.

- In stripping, a locality constraint is expected between the remnant and the correlate (the remnant `counterpart' in the antecedent clause):

  1. The man stole the car after midnight, but $\langle$ did $\rangle$ not $\langle$ steal $\rangle$ the diamonds $\langle$ after midnight $\rangle$.

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

MPQ as an elliptical construction

- This pattern is mirrored by MPQ constructions in French: the remnant *seulement* can only associate with an elided constituent that parallels the most local antecedent, (2):

    1. La police a interpellé l'homme qui avait volé une voiture, MPQ ⟨interpellé l'homme...⟩.
       `*The police caught the man who stole a car, MPQ ⟨caught the man...⟩.*'

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

The role of contrast

- As previously mentioned, MPQ is also possible when *mais/but* is replaced by *et/and*;

- However, negation is obligatory for both forms, (1):

    1. Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre, et *(pas) que.
        `*McDonald's French fries are made with potatoes, and *(not) only.'*

- The positive variant can be rescued by adding an anaphoric demonstrative *ça/that* after *que*:

    2. Les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre, et que ça.
        `*McDonald's French fries are made with potatoes, and only with this.'*

The role of contrast

- The difference between MPQ and its positive counterpart with a demonstrative is reminiscent of the difference between "surface" and "deep" anaphora from Hankamer and Sag (1976).

- Ellipsis, the standard surface anaphora, has to be syntactically controlled (1), whereas oth "deep" types of pragmatically-controlled anaphora (2) do not:

    1. *Hankamer attempts to stuff a 9-inch ball through a 6-inch hoop.*
       Sag: #It's not clear that you'll be able to $\langle$do it$\rangle$.

    2. *Same context.*
       Sag: It's not clear that you'll be able to **do it**.
       [Hankamer and Sag 1976: (3)-(4)]

The role of contrast

- The main difference between MPQ and its positive counterpart is that the former is **contrastive**, i.e. the elided constituent does not semantically overlap the antecedent.

- On the basis of examples such as (1), Stockwell (2022) establishes that contrast is a necessary condition for ellipsis to obtain:

  1. *If John is wrong, then he is ⟨wrong⟩.
  2. If John is wrong, then he is wrong.

The role of contrast

- Focus-based theories of ellipsis (in the spirit of Rooth 1992) requires that the set of alternatives denoted by the elided constituent be proper, i.e. do not contain the alternative denoted by the antecedent:

Ellipsis as proper alternative-hood

For ϵ to be elided, ϵ must be inside a phrase E that has antecedent A s.t.

1. $[\![A]\!] \in \|E\|$; and
2. $[\![A]\!] \neq [\![E]\!]$

- This is why negation is crucial in MPQ; without it, the contrastive requirement is not met and ellipsis does not obtain, since $[\![A]\!] = [\![E]\!]$

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Parallelism and exhaustification

- Turning now to the meaning of MPQ, I propose that MPQ *que* is actually anaphoric to a covert element in the antecedent clause – a silent exhaustification operator EXH (Chierchia 2006; Spector 2006; Fox 2007; Chierchia et al. 2012 i.a.).

$$[\![\mathbf{EXH}]\!]^w = \lambda A.\lambda p.p(w) \wedge \forall q[q \in A_{IE}(p) \rightarrow \neg q(w)]$$

- EXH is a silent version of *only* (Fox 2007; Asherov et al. 2022), which asserts its prejacent p and negates every innocently excludable alternatives q of p.

Parallelism and exhaustification

- Assuming that the set of excludable alternatives for (1) is (2), applying EXH to it negates that set to produce the strenghtened meaning in (3).

  1. [Les frites McDO sont faites avec des pommes de terre]$_\phi$.

  2. $A_{IE}(\phi) = \begin{cases} \text{McDo fries are made with carrots,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with plastic,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with leftovers...} \end{cases}$

  3. $[\![\mathbf{EXH}\ \phi]\!]^w = 1 \iff [\![\phi]\!]^w = 1 \wedge \forall \psi \in A_{IE}(\phi), [\![\psi]\!]^w = 0$

- What results is an implicature-like, strenghtened meaning for (1) which asserts that potatoes are the only ingredient of McDo fries.

Parallelism and exhaustification

- What MPQ does is targeting this strenghtened part in effectively negating the EXH component of the antecedent:

  1. EXH [Les frites McDO sont faites avec des pommes de terre]$_\phi$, MPQ [$\langle$faites avec des pommes de terre$\rangle$]$_\psi$.

  2. $$\llbracket \text{not only } \psi \rrbracket^w = 1 \iff \llbracket \neg\psi \rrbracket^w = 1 \lor \exists \zeta \in A_{IE}(\psi), \llbracket \zeta \rrbracket^w = 1$$

- In words: MPQ ψ is true iff it is not the case that ψ or there is some innocently excludable alternative ζ of ψ that is true.

- But this last part is precisely what EXH excludes; we'll come back to this problem soon.

Back to contrast

- We can check that the proposed meaning for MPQ abides to the contrast principle proposed above:

Ellipsis as proper alternative-hood

For ϵ to be elided, ϵ must be inside a phrase E that has antecedent A s.t.

1. $[\![A]\!] \in \|E\|$; and
2. $[\![A]\!] \neq [\![E]\!]$

3. EXH [Les frites McDO sont faites avec des pommes de terre]$_\phi$,
   MPQ [$\langle$ faites avec des pommes de terre $\rangle$]$_\psi$.

- $A = \phi, \epsilon = \psi, E = [\text{not only } \psi]$

Back to contrast

- Since $[\![\text{not only } \psi]\!] \equiv \| \psi \|$, we conclude that:
  - i. $[\![\phi]\!] \in \| \psi \|$ (ϕ is an alternative to ψ), and
  - ii. $[\![\phi]\!] \neq [\![\psi]\!]$ (they are distinct).

Both conditions are thus satisfied, so ellipsis goes through.

A problem

- At this point we run into a problem: conjoining the antecedent with EXH **and** the MPQ clause would amount in a contradiction:

  1. EXH [Les frites McDO sont faites avec des pommes de terre]$_\phi$, MPQ [⟨faites avec des pommes de terre⟩]$_\psi$.
  2. $\llbracket \textbf{EXH}\ \phi \wedge \textbf{not only}\ \psi \rrbracket^w = \bot$

An incremental solution

- No such contradiction arises if we backtrack and compute the meaning of ϕ without EXH, leaving the alternatives unaffected:

   1. [Les frites McDO sont faites avec des pommes de terre]$_\phi$,
      MPQ [$\langle$ faites avec des pommes de terre $\rangle$]$_\psi$.

   2. $[\![\phi \wedge \textbf{not only } \psi]\!]^w = 1 \iff [\![\phi]\!]^w = 1 \wedge [[\![\neg\psi]\!]^w = 1 \vee \exists \zeta \in A_{IE}(\psi), [\![\zeta]\!]^w = 1]$

- What MPQ does is that it forces a parse of the antecedent sentence without EXH – one in which the alternatives are not negated and therefore still active in the context.

MPQ and additive particles

- This brings MPQ very close in meaning to additive particles such as *too/aussi, also*, and *again*.

- *Too* is mandatory with ellipsis, as the following examples shows:

  1. McDO fries are made with potatoes, and BK ones are, *(too) `stripping`

  2. Les frites McDo sont faites avec des PdT, et celles du BK *(aussi) `stripping`

  3. Bill loves McDo fries and Mary does *(too) `VP-ellipsis`

- Bade (2014, 2016) proposes that *too* encodes a presupposition that requires an active alternative in the preceding discourse, exactly the meaning of *not only*:

  4. $[\![\phi \text{ too}]\!]^{C} = 1 \iff [\![\phi]\!] = 1 \wedge \exists \psi [\psi \in C \wedge [\![\psi]\!] = 1 \wedge \phi \neq \psi]$

MPQ and additive particles

- Just like MPQ, the insertion of *too* is necessary to block the strengthening inference brought about by the mandatory insertion of EXH:

  1. John came. EXH [Bill]$_F$ came, *(too).
     [Bade and Renans 2021, (9)]

- Similarly, the insertion of *also* is mandatory in the case of co-predication for certain predicates:

  2. This [EXH comedy] is *(also) a [EXH tragedy]
     [Paillé 2022; (2b)]

- Analogous data obtains in the temporal domain with particle *again*:

  3. Peter was in Norway last year. Peter was in Norway *(again) this year.
     [Bade 2014, (25)]

A potential issue

- As it has been observed by Beaver and Clark (2009) and Bassi et al. (2022), *only* in English cannot associate with an elided constituent:

  1. *Kim only [salutes]$_F$ because Sandy only does.
     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.

- This has to be investigated further on the basis of a general typology of association with focus.

Conclusion: MPQ, *too* and other EXH "defusers"

- The main empirical takeaway is that MPQ, just like particles *too, also* and *again*, counts as obligatory-exhaustification `defusers' in natural language.

- The role of these EXH-defusers is to cancel unwanted but nonetheless mandatory exhaustivity inferences.

- 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.

Thank you for your attention!

Comments most welcome

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