

1. Mais pas que (MPQ)

★ Colloquial French makes a productive use of a controversial construction, *mais pas que*, which can be literally paraphrased as ‘but not only’. *Mais pas que* (henceforth MPQ) is increasingly used in different registers, as the following show:

- (1) a. Paris: les candidats planchent sur les Champs-Élysées, mais pas que...
‘Paris: candidates are brainstorming at the Champs-Élysées, MPQ...’ (*Le Point*)
b. Je suis prêt à vous aider, mais pas que.
‘I’m ready to help you, MPQ.’ (*Académie française*)
c. 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*)

★ Intuitively, MPQ somehow evokes alternatives introduced by its antecedent, which are then left unsaid. Accordingly, (1c) above suggests that some ingredients other than potatoes enter the composition of fries at McDonald’s.

★ I propose that MPQ is actually an instance of clausal ellipsis - stripping - licensed by the presence of a silent exhaustification operator EXH in the antecedent (parallelism) and negation (contrast).

2. MPQ-*que* AS *only*

★ French *que* cannot usually appear alone at the end of a sentence, be it as an exceptive (2a), as a comparative marker (2b) or as a relative pronoun (2c):

- (2) a. *Les frites McDo (ne) sont faites que.
Intended: ‘McDo French fries are only made out of.’
b. *J’ai mangé plus de frites que.
Intended: ‘I ate more fries than.’
c. *J’ai aimé les frites que.
Intended: ‘I liked the fries that.’

★ MPQ-*que* can be felicitously substituted by adverb *seulement/uniquement* ‘only’ in all examples, suggesting it is an adverb (Gaetone, 1999):

- (3) Promis juré, les frites McDo sont faites avec des pommes de terre (mais pas seulement) = (1c)

★ This is compatible with an ellipsis analysis, since adverbs often appears as stripping remnants, just like additive *aussi* ‘too’ (cf. (10a)).

★ However, the behavior of French *que* contrasts with that of English *only*, which is unable to associate with elided constituents (Beaver and Clark 2009, Bassi et al. 2022):

- (4) *Kim only SALUTES because Sandy only does.
(intended: ‘Kim salutes (and does nothing else) because Sandy salutes (and does nothing else).’)
(Beaver and Clark, 2009, (7.52b))

Nevertheless, as evidenced by MPQ, this association seems felicitous in French.

REFERENCES

Thank you very much for stopping by! This is ongoing work which has received little feedback. Any comments are much appreciated! References here



3. MPQ AS STRIPPING

★ Further tests suggest that MPQ is an instance of *stripping* (or bare argument ellipsis), a kind of coordinated clausal ellipsis (Hankamer and Sag 1976; van Craenenbroeck and Merchant 2013; Wu 2022):

- ✓ Stripping is attested and productive in French (Dagnac 2019; Morris 2008 i.a.)
✓ That clausal ellipsis is involved is corroborated by the fact that MPQ cannot be substituted by *seul*, which is adjectival ‘only’ in French:

- (5) *Des frites, mais pas seules.
Intended: ‘Fries, but not only (fries).’

✓ MPQ parallels locality constraints observed in stripping (Merchant, 2019, (24)) (6)–(7):

- (6) 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.
(7) a. 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...).’
b. *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...).’

4. THE ROLE OF CONTRAST

★ A variant of MPQ can also be observed with the standard conjunction *et* ‘and’, if it involves negation; the positive counterpart without it is infelicitous, (11).

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

★ Adding an anaphoric demonstrative *ça* ‘that’ rescues the positive sentence:

- (12) 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 stark difference between (11) and (12) (‘surface’ vs ‘deep’ anaphora, Hankamer and Sag 1976) strongly suggests that negation provides the required contrast to license ellipsis (Rooth 1992; Stockwell 2022).

★ But: what prevents ellipsis to take place when *que* associates without negation? (11) should be fine, with the prejacent of *que* being elided.

★ However, ellipsis is still infelicitous in the absence of negation, suggesting that the presence of *que* alone is not enough to license it.

★ I suspect that this is because *que* actually parallels a silent element in the antecedent; without negation, no contrast obtains.

5. PARALLELISM, CONTRAST AND EXHAUSTIFICATION

★ I propose that *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.), (8a).

★ This is why negation is required: since ellipsis requires both contrast and parallelism (Sag 1976; Rooth 1992 i.a.), the presence of *que* in the second clause is not enough, since it parallels EXH in the antecedent.

★ MPQ-ellipsis targets the obligatory implicature obtained through exhaustification of the antecedent (8b), which negates the (salient) innocently excludable alternatives (8c):

- (8) a. $\llbracket \text{EXH} \rrbracket^w = \lambda A. \lambda p. p(w) \wedge \forall q [q \in A_{IE}(p) \rightarrow \neg q(w)]$
b. $\llbracket \text{EXH Les frites McDo sont faites avec des PDT}_\phi \rrbracket^w = 1 \Leftrightarrow \llbracket \phi \rrbracket^w = 1 \wedge \forall \psi \in A_{IE}(\phi), \llbracket \psi \rrbracket^w = 0$
c. $A_{IE}(\phi) = \begin{cases} \text{McDo fries are made with carrots,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with plastic,} \\ \text{McDo fries are made with leftovers...} \end{cases}$

★ MPQ associates with the exhaustified antecedent and cancels the implicature just generated, reintroducing negated alternatives through the negative component of MPQ:

- (9) $\llbracket \text{EXH [Les frites McDo sont faites avec des PDT]}_\phi, \text{MPQ } \langle \text{avec des PDT} \rangle \rrbracket^w = 1 \Leftrightarrow \llbracket \phi \rrbracket^w = 1 \wedge \neg [\forall \psi \in A_{IE}(\phi), \llbracket \psi \rrbracket^w = 0] \equiv \llbracket \phi \rrbracket^w = 1 \wedge \exists \psi \in A_{IE}(\phi), \llbracket \psi \rrbracket^w = 1$

★ The MPQ construction is true iff there is at least one alternative to its prejacent that is true in the context, which seems to capture the intended meaning.

6. MPQ AS A COUNTERPART OF *aussi* ‘TOO’

★ The present analysis brings MPQ very close to additive particles such as *too*, which is mandatory with ellipsis, as the stripping example (10a) shows:

- (10) a. $\text{EXH [Les frites McDo sont faites avec des PDT]}_\psi$, et [celles du Burger King (sont faites avec des PDT)] $_\phi$ *(aussi)
‘McDo fries are made with potatoes, and BK ones are (made with potatoes), *(too).’
b. $\llbracket \phi \text{ too} \rrbracket^c = 1 \Leftrightarrow \llbracket \phi \rrbracket = 1 \wedge \exists \psi [\psi \in C \wedge \llbracket \psi \rrbracket = 1 \wedge \phi \neq \psi]$

★ *Too* cancels the mandatory implicature of EXH in (10b) (Bade, 2014) (that both McDonald’s and Burger King fries are each the only product made with potatoes) by presupposing the existence of at least one relevant alternative in the context.

★ Thus MPQ shares essentially the same function as *aussi*: that of cancelling the generation of an otherwise obligatory implicature triggered by EXH .

★ This expands our knowledge of obligatory-exhaustification ‘defusers’ in natural language and the environments they appear in.

★ It 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.