No hard triggers under speculation?
(Abstract)

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Abusch (2010) claims that the class of presupposition triggers can be divided into *soft* and *hard* triggers. Based on contrasts like (1), she argues that the presupposition of soft triggers like *win* can be accommodated in the antecedent of a conditional although their truth is explicitly suspended, whereas that of hard triggers like *too* cannot.

(1)   a. I don't know if Paul participated in the race, but, if he won, he must be very proud.

b. I don't know if Paul participated in the race, but if Mary

participated ?? too they probably had a drink together just after.

This distinction proved more difficult to apply than Abusch suggests (Jayez et al. 2014), if only because the reasons for this alleged contrast are far from clear (Abbott 2006, Jayez 2015). This paper is a follow-up to (Jayez et al. 2014). There, it was shown experimentally that acceptability judgments for clefts, *regretter (regret)* and *aussi (too)* in French do not obey the pattern one expects to see if hard triggers strongly resist conditional accommodation, as proposed by Abusch. However, acceptability judgments are generally poor indicators of the time course of sentence processing. In order to overcome this limitation, I used eye-tracking methodology to gain insight

into the visual exploration of *aussi* sentences analogous to those in (Jayez et al. 2014).
The following example illustrates the task, which is basically a silent reading task
followed by an evaluation of the main sentence (leaving fillers aside)

Type	Context	Main sentence	Evaluation
Content	3 sentences describing a situation such as : Véronique considers upgrading her operating system but she is hesitating because the IT department could run the upgrade themselves, which would save time and energy for her.	*Because* **condition** I don't know whether *Véronique* will upgrade **because** if the IT department upgrades <u>too she will have been busy for nothing</u> and it will be stupid *But* **condition** I don't know whether *Véronique* will upgrade **but** if the IT department upgrades <u>too she will have been busy for nothing</u> and it will be stupid	
Task	Read silently + press a key when the text has been understood	Read silently + press a key when the text has been understood	Evaluate the main sentence on a 7 point scale

TABLE 1

Participants saw 8 *because* and 8 *but* sentences each, as well as 16 fillers. Their
visual exploration and their evaluations of the main sentences were recorded. In
(Jayez et al. 2014), it was observed that a *because* vs*. but* contrast had an effect :
participants preferred the *because* sentences. This was accounted for in terms of
accommodation. The *because* condition helps participants to recover more quickly the
proposition to be accommodated as the antecedent of *too*, either by inference or by
priming. I decided to investigate this difference more systematically in order to detect

possible eye-movement correlates. Given the initial experiment, it was expected that the *but* versions would be evaluated less favorably and would give rise to more fixations and backward eye movements on and from the region following the occurrence of *too* (underlined in table 1). The results of visual exploration are briefly summarized in the following diagram (figure 1). An arrow connecting two boxed regions R1 and R2 corresponds to the fact that the fixations on R2 coming from R1 are significantly shorter or longer under one of the two conditions *but* or *because*.

Ignorance + Si.Comp + DM + Pre.Aussi.1 + Pre.Aussi.2 + Aussi + Post.Aussi.1 + Post.Aussi.2 + End.Sentence

Ignorance + Si.Comp + DM + Pre.Aussi.1 + Pre.Aussi.2 + Aussi + Post.Aussi.1 + Post.Aussi.2 + End.Sentence

Ignorance + Si.Comp + DM + Pre.Aussi.1 + Pre.Aussi.2 + Aussi + Post.Aussi.1 + Post.Aussi.2 + End.Sentence
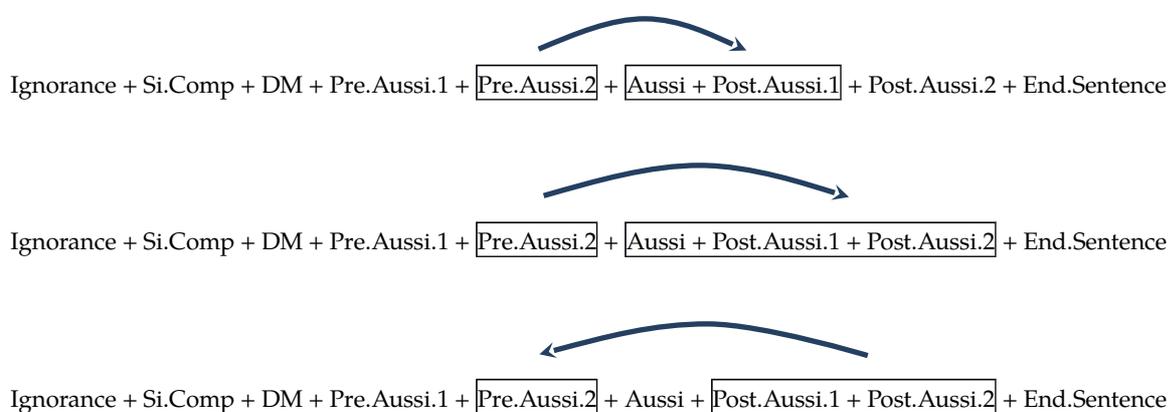
FIGURE 1

In all three cases the *because* condition was associated with shorter fixations. This suggests that the presence of *parce que* (*because*) facilitates processing. However, no significant effect on backward transitions from the Aussi region was observed. Moreover, sentence evaluation by the participants did not show any significant difference between the two conditions.

Given this new set of observations, the paper discusses two points. First, how it is that the findings of (Jayez et al. 2014) are not replicated? There at least two explanations. (1) There were not enough stimuli in the initial experiment (5 in each condition). (2) The task of monitoring one's understanding, in order to determine when to press the key, and of evaluating the sentence immediately after, can induce

the participant to focus on the logical interpretation of the sentence and to disregard the problems of anaphor resolution (*too*). Explanation 1 is unlikely since there are only 8 stimuli per condition in the present experiment and there is not the slightest hint of a negative evaluation trend. So, explanation 2 is the best candidate.

Point 2 concerns the interpretation of visual exploration. The eye-tracking measures seem to confirm the existence of a difference between the two conditions, thus providing some support to the analysis of (Jayez et al. 2014). I analyze in detail the relevance and limits of the three observed differences. Finally, I discuss the possible role of the temporal structure in the current experimental stimuli. Contrary to (1b) type examples, they crucially involve *speculation* about possible future continuations of an actual situation. I suggest that the ontological status of the information to be reconstructed influences accommodation and constitutes an additional factor in presupposition accommodation.

References

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