
Laurence Delort – Université Paris 7
Clause 'Subordination' and Discourse Relations
Mi: 14.30 – 15.00

It's tempting to correlate clause combining and discourse structure because both display subordination and coordination. Particularly, it seems assumed in (Matthiessen & Thompson, 1988) that subordination at the clause level (a subordinating conjunction) lexicalizes subordination at the discourse level (a subordinating relation in Segmented Discourse Representation Theory, (Asher & Lascarides, 2003), or a nucleus-satellite relation in Rhetorical Structure Theory, (Mann & Thompson, 1988)).

The goal of this study is to draw a distinction between clause 'subordination' and discourse relations, by examining two French subordinating conjunctions: *avant que* (English *before*) and *parce que* (English *because*). They usually introduce subordinate clauses which denote circumstances of eventualities described in main clauses. That is, they convey temporal or causal relations which occur at the conceptual level, not at the discourse level. On the other hand, they may not introduce subordinate clauses, but main clauses, (Green, 1976). In this case, they convey (structural) discourse relations which occur at the discourse level: *avant que* triggers the coordinating relation *Narration*, (Le Draoulec, 2005; Delort, 2006), and *parce que* triggers the subordinating relation *Explanation*, (Debaisieux, 2005; Delort & Danlos, 2005).

It seems that there is no parallel between clause 'subordination' and discourse subordination, because a subordinating conjunction can express either a conceptual relation or a discourse relation, and if a discourse relation is conveyed, it can be either coordinating or subordinating.

- Asher, N. & Lascarides, A. (2003). *Logics of Conversation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Debaisieux, J.-M. (2005). Les conjonctions de subordination: mots grammaticaux ou mots de discours? Le cas de *parce que*. *Revue de Sémantique et de Pragmatique*. Forthcoming.
- Delort, L. (2006). *Avant que* en contexte discursif. *Cahiers Chronos*. Forthcoming.
- Delort, L. & Danlos, L. (2005). Coordination of Causal Relations in Discourse. In *Proceedings of the Symposium on the Exploration and Modelling of Meaning (SEM-05)*, p. 75-84, Biarritz, France.
- Green, G. M. (1976). Main Clause Phenomena in Subordinate Clauses. *Language*, 52(2), 382–397.
- Le Draoulec, A. (2005). *Avant que/de*: Possibles passages à la connexion temporelle. *Journal of French Language Studies*, 15(2), 131–151.
- Mann, W. C. & Thompson, S. A. (1988). Rhetorical Structure Theory: Toward a Functional Theory of Text Organization. *Text*, 8(3), 243–281.
- Matthiessen, C. & Thompson, S. A. (1988). The Structure of Discourse and 'Subordination'. In J. Haiman & S. A. Thompson (eds), *Clause Combining in Grammar and Discourse*, volume 18 of *Typological Studies in Language*, p. 275–329. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.