



**HAL**  
open science

## Clause 'Subordination' and Discourse Relations.

Laurence Delort

► **To cite this version:**

Laurence Delort. Clause 'Subordination' and Discourse Relations.. Proceedings of the 28th Annual Meeting of the German Society for Linguistics (DGfS-06), Workshop on "Subordination vs. Coordination in Sentence and Text from a Cross-linguistic Perspective", 2006, pp.138-139. halshs-00081521

**HAL Id: halshs-00081521**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00081521>**

Submitted on 31 Jul 2006

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

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.