Clause ’Subordination’ and Discourse Relations.
Laurence Delort

To cite this version:

HAL Id: halshs-00081521
https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/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.
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.