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Temporal and spatial dimensions of discourse organisation

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ABSTRACT

Time is generally recognised as a ubiquitous component in the way discourse is organised: the discourse-level analysis of time has led to numerous studies, mostly focused on verb tense and temporal adverbials. The discourse role of space seems less obvious: not only is space not systematically marked in the sentence, but it does not lead in itself to any discourse relation.

In addition to 'classical' approaches, which all deal with connection between (groups of) clauses, we present another approach: Discourse Framing. A discourse frame is described as the grouping together of a number of sentences which are linked by the fact that they must be interpreted with reference to a specific criterion, realised in an initial introducing expression.

We suggest a distinction between two major modes of discourse organisation: whereas connection looks backwards toward previous text, discourse framing, or forward-labelling, looks ahead and provides instructions for the interpretation of forthcoming text. Within the discourse framing perspective, the asymmetry noted earlier between time and space seems to subside to give way to similar structuring roles for both dimensions.

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'Les notions initiales les plus générales, et par cela même les plus usitées, sont les rapports de temps et de lieu, connus de tout le monde, espèces de cases de l'esprit, dans lesquelles il classe facilement tout ce qu'il peut apprendre'.

(Weil, H. (1844), *De l'ordre des mots dans les langues anciennes comparées aux langues modernes. Question de grammaire générale*. Paris: Didier Erudition, réédition 1991.)

1 COHERENCE, COHESION, CONNECTION AND FRAMING

The interpretation of discourse is governed by a very general principle of coherence which applies as a default on condition that the units entering into the construction of discourse are materially close (cf. Charolles, 1983; 1995). The material conditions of presentation play a crucial role in determining the interpretation of continuities and discontinuities (or shifts). Imagine you are sitting in the back of a car. A and B are sitting in the front. A says: 'The car's making a funny noise'. Immediately afterwards, B says: 'I haven't got my wallet'. Either you think A and B are each following their own train of thought and wording completely independent ideas, or you consider they are engaging in discourse, in which case you need to calculate a relation in order to understand how what B said connects with what A said. For example, B has interpreted A's utterance as indicating that the car will need attending to, with the implication that money will be required. This process is well researched within the domain of pragmatics, along the paths opened by Grice's *Cooperative Principle* (1975; 1978), Searle's *Indirect Speech Acts* (1975), Clark's *Bridging* (1977), and Sperber and Wilson's *Relevance* (1986) *inter alia*. Linguists have tended to focus less on the general high-level principles governing the interpretation process, involving complex interweaving between different types of knowledge, than on the linguistic means which the speaker/writer can call upon to guide the hearer/reader in the job of constructing a coherent interpretation, i.e. cohesion markers.

Amongst the schemes proposed for the classification of cohesion markers, perhaps the most influential – still close to grammatical categories – is Halliday and Hasan's (1976) account of cohesive devices in terms of *reference*, *substitution*, *ellipsis*, *conjunction* and *lexical cohesion*, further refined by Martin (1992). Other research, closer to the formal semantics and computational linguistics communities, has centred on accounting for coherence in terms of discourse relations: *Rhetorical Structure Theory* or *RST* (Mann and Thompson, 1986; 1988); *Segmented Discourse Representation Theory* or *SDRT* (Asher, 1993; Asher and Lascarides, 1994; Busquets *et al.*, 2001). At a very general level, a broad consensus started emerging early on (cf. Reinhart, 1981) distinguishing between two types of coherence: *referential* coherence, concerned with connection between units via reference to the same object (which may be inferable), and *relational* coherence, concerned with connection between text segments via coherence relations (cf. Sanders and Spooren, 2001).

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One of the objectives of this thematic issue is to present detailed studies of connection in the domain of temporal and/or spatial discourse organisation. It will emerge that time and space are strongly asymmetrical in their ability to establish connection. A second important objective is to illustrate a theoretical proposal, whereby another form of coherence is suggested. Whereas connection has mostly to do with backward-looking ties, we suggest that there also exists another type of link working in the opposite direction, which we will call 'forward-labelling' or 'discourse framing'. It will appear that within this discourse framing perspective, the asymmetry noted earlier between time and space gives way to similar structuring roles for both dimensions.

2 TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL CONNECTION

2.1 *Temporal connection*

The temporal dimension in connection has been the object of numerous studies, which have mostly tended to focus on verb tense and temporal adverbials. On verb tense, from a very extensive list of references, one may cite Kamp and Rohrer (1983) and Kamp and Reyle (1993) (see also Vetters, 1996, for a useful synthesis). The present study will focus on connection via temporal adverbials, which have also been much researched but not necessarily in a connection perspective. Most researchers on temporal adverbials have limited their scope to the sentence, whether in a syntactic perspective – focusing on the degree of integration within the proposition – or in a semantic perspective – focusing on calculating the time interval where an eventuality is located. This lack of concern with the link to preceding context has much to do with the fact that studies of elements seen as proper 'connectives' frequently excluded temporal adverbials – with their referential potential – in order to concentrate on markers specialised in discourse relations. Nølke (1990) exemplifies this type of approach, with a definition of discourse connectives excluding any reference to the spatio-temporal context (*ibid.*: 20): in this perspective, it is impossible for a temporal adverbial to be a connective, and the notion of 'temporal connective' in itself becomes meaningless.[1] Other authors (cf. Gosselin, 2001) regard as a temporal connective any temporal adverbial with an inter-proposition relational function. We favour an intermediate approach: among the vast set of adverbials establishing a temporal (or aspecto-temporal) relation between propositions (or rather between the eventualities described by these propositions), we consider as connectives only those which entail at the same time a logico-pragmatic relation – i.e. which play a role at the level of discourse relations (cf. Bras *et al.*, 2001; Borillo *et al.*, in press).[2]

[1] We must point out that Nølke's views have evolved since this initial definition (personal communication).

[2] There is a further disagreement in the very use of the term 'temporal connective', as some authors (cf. Heinämäki, 1974) take it to refer to temporal subordinating conjunctions (such as *when, before, after*, etc.), introducing presupposed clauses. Other authors (Sandström,

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It is worth stressing that, according to this definition, not all temporal inter-propositional adverbials can act as connectives. For example Borillo *et al.* (in press), in a comparative study of *puis* and *un peu plus tard*, show that only *puis* has a direct role in the establishment of discourse relations. They demonstrate that *puis* necessarily entails a Narration relation (as defined in the formal framework of Segmented Discourse Representation Theory, or SDRT); *puis* also combines perfectly with the relation of Contrast, whereas it strictly forbids a Result relation (despite having the same requirement as Narration in terms of temporal succession). On the other hand, *un peu plus tard* is not a connective as it conveys none of these discursive constraints, but only retains its temporal meaning of close succession. As an illustration of these contrasting discourse roles, the following examples aim to show the respective influence of *puis* and *un peu plus tard* on the inference of a Result relation. If *puis* is associated with lexical markers of Result, a conflict arises and it becomes difficult to construct an interpretation:

(1) L'acide tomba dans le liquide. ??Puis cela provoqua une explosion.

If the Result relation is not lexically signalled (and therefore needs to be inferred by default), the presence of *puis* cancels the possibility of a Result relation and imposes a Narration relation instead, as can be seen if one compares (2) and (3):

(2) L'acide tomba dans le liquide. Une explosion se produisit.
(3) L'acide tomba dans le liquide. Puis une explosion se produisit.

In both cases, the events may be ascribed an objective cause-effect relation (calling upon world knowledge related to an archetypical chemical experiment script). What is meant by the claim that *puis* blocks the Result relation is that by using *puis* the speaker makes it clear that this is not the discourse relation s/he wishes to express. In example (3), unlike in (2), the speaker adopts a totally exterior viewpoint on the succession of events (Narration), with no commitment whatsoever to a possible causal relation. In contrast, *un peu plus tard* exerts no influence on the inference of a Result relation, as can be seen from (4):

(4) L'acide tomba dans le liquide. Un peu plus tard, une explosion se produisit.

With no discourse impact – it neither entails nor blocks the Result relation – *un peu plus tard* must be seen as expressing solely a temporal relation of succession.

Puis can be seen as representing the prototypical temporal connective as it went through a process of grammaticalisation, in the course of its diachronic evolution, which made it closer and closer to a coordinating conjunction (cf. Hansen, 1995). A noteworthy aspect of this evolution is that 'its position is now fixed clause-initially, whereas Old and Middle French adverbial *puis* could occupy various positions in

1993) stress, on the contrary, that temporal connectives should not be confused with subordinating conjunctions, as the latter do not relate two clauses of equal status, but mark one of them as a temporal adverbial, to be used in the interpretation of the other. We only deal here with entities which do not result in hypotactic constructions.

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the clause.' (*ibid.*: 33).[3] And it is generally well recognised that initial position is particularly propitious to the playing of a connective role. Clearly, initial position in itself is not sufficient to give connective status to a compositional adverbial such as *un peu plus tard*. But a number of simple adverbs appear to be better candidates to this status.

Thus, when sentence-initial, aspecto-temporal adverbs *aussitôt* and *soudain* have been shown to have a stable impact on discourse relations (i.e. independent of semantico-pragmatic circumstances, cf. Le Draoulec, 2005). As regards *aussitôt*, the idea of immediate temporal succession is associated with a logical order in the unfolding of the connected eventualities: they are in some way interdependent, the first being presented as having to be realised before the second. This minimal form of consecutivity – being prior to – seems to be a major element in the use of *aussitôt*, as illustrated by the difference in acceptability between (5) and (6):

(5) Il s'endormit. Aussitôt il se mit à ronfler.
(6) Il sortit du couvent. ?Aussitôt, un arc en ciel illumina l'horizon.

In (6) it is difficult to interpret the presence of the rainbow as being linked in any way to the fact that the character came out of the convent.[4] In many cases, however, where there is *a priori* no dependence link between the utterances, it is possible to construct one when *aussitôt* is used. See for instance:

(7) Pierre rentra chez lui. Aussitôt, le téléphone se mit à sonner.

In order to retrieve an interpretation whereby the first eventuality is a precondition for the second, one may imagine that somebody spies on Pierre, and waits for him to come home to phone him, or that Pierre is so much in demand that he can never get a moment's peace (as soon as he gets home the phone rings). What emerges from these examples is that, when there is no obvious dependence link, *aussitôt* forces one, with more or less felicitous results. This sort of constraint on interpretation is precisely in the nature of a connective.[5] The case of *soudain* will not be developed here, but it was clearly shown to act as a discourse break (even when pragmatic conditions do not *a priori* lend themselves to this), constructed via an opposition relation close to the SDRT Contrast relation.

Finally, it should be noted that the analysis of temporal initial *alors* (cf. Hybertie, 2000; Le Draoulec and Bras, 2004) leads to conclusions similar to those concerning

[3] It should also be noted, following Hansen (1995: 33), that 'in contemporary spoken French, the temporal meaning of *puis* seems to have more or less disappeared, yielding to a use of the marker as essentially an additive conjunct'. Hansen's study is essentially devoted to this non temporal *puis*, often in combination with *et* (*et puis*), with semantic-pragmatic properties which strengthen its status as a discourse connective.

[4] Furthermore, the impression of strangeness produced by the example is clearly linked to the use of *aussitôt*, since replacing it with *à cet instant* or *un instant plus tard* suffices to remove it.

[5] It remains to be clarifed how the gradation introduced in the consecutivity relation (from a minimal to a strong form) could be interpreted in terms of known discourse relations: where does it fit, for instance, with respect to the Narration and Result relations in SDRT?

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aussitôt. And the role of other temporal adverbs such as *après* or *ensuite* remains to be explored in the same way.

As a synthesis, the position adopted here is that temporal connectives belong to a more general class which includes all adverbials establishing any kind of temporal relation between propositions. And as was mentioned above, much work remains to be done in order to circumscribe the subset of adverbs which conform (to a lesser or greater degree) to the definition we gave of (discursive) temporal connectives. As concerns the general class, the relationship between 'inter-propositional' and 'anaphoric' temporal adverbials must be refined. The notion of 'anaphora' implies an obvious link with the preceding linguistic context: for instance, *un peu plus tard*, *le lendemain* and perhaps *aussitôt* (etymologically at least, cf. *aussi-tôt*) are anaphoric elements insofar as they need a referential antecedent for their interpretation. *Puis* or *soudain*, on the other hand, are not lexically anaphoric: the only antecedent they may need is a discursive one. But all these adverbials have in common the property of being inter-propositional adverbials. We will conclude this section with some additional distinctions. Temporal connectives (also designated as 'pure binding' adverbials, cf. Borillo *et al.*, in press), as well as temporal anaphoric adverbials such as *un peu plus tard*, *trois jours jours plus tard* or *un jour après* (also designated as 'relational' adverbials, *ibid.*) set a relation between eventualities, but do not introduce any temporal referent. The second category, however, provides more clues on how to locate such a referent. The last category is made up of temporal anaphoric adverbials introducing a temporal referent (and as such distinguished as 'referential' adverbials, *ibid.*): adverbials composed of a nominal or prepositional phrase, like *le jour d'après*, *le lendemain, la veille, la semaine suivante*, *au début de la semaine suivante*, etc.

2.2 *Spatial and spatio-temporal connection*

As regards the spatial dimension, it seems difficult to talk about spatial connectives. There are anaphoric spatial locating adverbials. Some have clear anaphoric uses (*là*; *trois kilomètres plus loin*); others involve various part-whole relations expressed by locating nouns (*sur le bord*), or names for parts of objects which involve associative anaphora (*sous le porche*). As for expressions made up of a definite noun phrase (*devant la maison*), their anaphoric status is less clear. According to van der Sandt (1992), the presuppositional status of such definite NPs makes them anaphoric either with respect to a linguistically explicit antecedent, or to an implicit or 'accommodated' one: either the existence of the house has already been mentioned in the preceding context, or it is part of common knowledge (and if not, readers are able to add it to their knowledge base – i.e. to 'accommodate' the existence of the house). All these types of adverbial expressions contribute to some extent to discourse cohesion, especially when they appear in initial position, but they cannot be said to involve discourse relations.

A rough parallel can nevertheless be established between the spatial and temporal domains as regards connection. Spatial locating adverbials (like their temporal counterparts) can be classified along a scale going from pure connectives to relational

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and then referential adverbials. We suggest that certain uses of *là*, in utterance-initial detached position, in a particular text-type ('route descriptions', cf. Ricalens, Sarda and Cornish, this volume) may lose their referential potential, and just act as a link between two segments of text corresponding to two subsequent steps along the itinerary. Further work is needed to establish whether such spatio-temporal uses of *là* involve particular discourse relations and could therefore be considered as connectives in the same way as the temporal adverb *puis*. Spatial markers with implications for discourse relations seem very rare indeed: in fact, only *là* – and only in special uses – seems to be a candidate for the status of connective along the same lines as *puis* or *alors*. The reasons why this should be so remain to be explored in detail. Several elements of explanation may already be put forward: in particular the fact that no discourse relation rests on spatial indications; and also the fact that spatial markers lose their referential function less easily than temporal markers.

On the other hand, spatial (or spatio-temporal) relational adverbials such as *un peu plus loin* lend themselves well to a parallel with temporal relational adverbials. As in the temporal domain, they help to calculate a spatial reference point.

Finally, spatial referential adverbials such as *sur le bord*, *au coin, sur le clavier, sous le porche* may be compared with temporal ones (cf. *le lendemain*): in order to be interpreted, these expressions need to be situated in a reference frame – previously given in, or inferred from, the preceding context. After this linking procedure, moreover, they denote a specific spatial region.

3 FRAMING

In Charolles' discourse framing hypothesis (Charolles, 1997), a discourse frame is described as the grouping together of a number of propositions which are linked by the fact that they must be interpreted with reference to a specific criterion, realised in a frame-initial introducing expression. For instance, as regards 'evidential' or 'mediative' framing (Charolles, 1997; Péry-Woodley, 2000; Schrepfer-André, in press), *Selon X, . . .* provides an essential element for the interpretation not just of the proposition which follows, but also potentially of several subsequent propositions – as frame-introducing expressions are characterised by their ability to extend their scope beyond the sentence in which they appear. *Selon X, . . .* therefore opens a frame, a sort of 'file' into which a number of elements can be gathered under the 'index' (or 'label') it provides.[6] Frame introducers are described as playing 'a fundamentally procedural and cognitive role' (Charolles, 1997: 24) on two distinct levels: a) they serve to regulate the processes of 'knowledge mobilization' required for the step by step interpretation of relations between propositions (which may include suspending stereotypical beliefs); b) they distribute propositional contents into homogeneous blocks or chunks. Initially formulated for French, Charolles'

[6] What Charolles calls in French 'indexation' can be rendered as 'indexing' or 'forward-labelling'.

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insight is likely to hold similar explanatory power for other languages, though this has yet to be put to the test.

As was mentioned earlier, temporal adverbials are better able than their spatial counterparts to act as connectives. When referring to a time interval or to a space area, and in sentence initial position, both are, however, equally capable of opening a frame for the states of affairs denoted by the propositional content not only of their 'home-sentence', but also of one or several subsequent sentences. As an illustration, we first propose an example of temporal framing:

(8) **En juin 1992**, 747 500 candidats se sont présentés à l'examen, [. . .]; près des trois quarts ont été reçus; mais pour les candidats individuels le taux de réussite a été à peine de 50%. Pour la série collège [. . .], 76% des candidats des établissements scolaires ont obtenu le brevet [. . .].
En 1989, tant les collégiens du privé que ceux du public ont de meilleurs résultats dans les départements des académies de l'Ouest où les élèves du privé sont nombreux, [. . .]. Dans le Nord-Ouest, en Ile-de-France et dans l'Est, les taux de réussite des élèves des collèges publics sont généralement inférieurs à la moyenne nationale, [. . .]. **À la session 1991,** ce sont les académies de Rennes, Grenoble, Dijon, Nantes, Clermont-Ferrand qui obtiennent les meilleurs résultats [. . .], alors que celles du Midi méditerranéen n'atteignent pas 70%.

In (8), the frame opened by *In June 1992* contains several propositions and is closed by a new frame (introduced by *In 1989*), which in turn is closed by the third temporal expression (*A la session de 1991*). This very simple opening-closing of frames with the appearance of a new temporal expression incompatible with the ongoing time reference illustrates one of the three major markers identified as signalling the right boundary of a frame (other markers include change of verb tense and change of paragraph, cf. Le Draoulec and Péry-Woodley, 2001). Temporal framing raises a number of questions, in particular as regards its interaction with the discourse relation of Narration (cf. Le Draoulec and Péry-Woodley, 2003). Since in other respects it functions very much in the same way as spatial framing, and since we have dealt with temporal organisation at some length earlier in this article, we will now focus on several examples containing spatial – and spatio-temporal – frame introducers.

The intention to adopt a spatial organisation is extremely obvious in the following account of signs of politeness:[7]

(9) En général, les gens se serrent la main droite quand ils se rencontrent ou se séparent, ou bien ils s'embrassent. Hello, bonjour, namaste ! **Chez nous**, un baiser est surtout une preuve d'amour et de tendresse à l'égard de quelqu'un de cher, mais **chez certains peuples**, c'est un salut courant. **En Inde**, les gens se saluent mains jointes sur la poitrine, comme s'ils priaient. **Au Japon**, les gens s'inclinent à plusieurs reprises, face à face, en joignant les mains. **En**

[7] Collected from a leaflet inserted in a chocolate packet.

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> **France**, les hommes faisaient le baisemain aux femmes mariées en signe de respect, et les jeunes filles la révérence, mais cette coutume se perd de plus en plus.

If one compares (9) with a possible alternative version with the adverbials in sentence-final position, it becomes clear that by placing spatial adverbials in initial position the writer introduces an order in the information presented. Though the different elements are all concerned with one and the same discourse topic announced in the title ('Signes de politesse'), they refer to behaviours so diverse that the writer feels the need to structure them. The indexing criterion chosen has to do with an easily accessible dimension of the state of things, the fact that they are associated with a spatial zone. This dimension is already announced in the brief introductory paragraph preceding (9): *chaque pays a ses traditions, ses mots et ses attitudes pour exprimer le respect, l'amitié, la gratitude*.

In this context, the indication *Chez nous* is sufficient to lead the reader to expect, by contrast,[8] the subsequent indication *chez certains peuples*, itself announcing the different locations listed in the course of the text. The projection of one or several parent frames can also be observed with the *En général* which opens the text. This adverbial introduces a generic frame which is specified within the introductory paragraph as equivalent to 'everywhere'. This contextual specification is confirmed by the appearance of *Chez nous*, with a unification effect. The opening adverbial *En général* projects a subordinate parent frame ('in particular') to which the frame opened by *Chez nous* is immediately assimilated, as will be the ones which follow throughout the text.

These operations are liable to revision, as can be seen in (9) with the passage introducing an imperfect tense: *En France les hommes faisaient le baisemain* [. . .] *et les jeunes filles la révérence*. The change in verb tense leads the reader to re-interpret the initial *En général*: it becomes clear at this point in the text that it was to be understood as 'everywhere-today'. This retrospective specification simultaneously leads to the opening of an implicit temporal parent frame ('in the past') destined to integrate elements of information only valid for that period. This temporal frame subordinates the spatial frame initiated by *En France*, whose scope extends to the end of the text, despite the return to the present tense which closes the ongoing temporal frame to return to what happens nowadays.

These mechanisms – projection of parent frames, unification and subordination among frames –, which can be inferred through a simple textual analysis, regulate the setting up of frames as the text proceeds.[9] Concerning these operations, it can also clearly be seen in (9) that the decision to close an ongoing frame depends on the occurrence of a new frame-introducing expression of the same type and on the reader's background knowledge. The opening of the frame initiated by *Au Japon*

[8] The fact that sentence-initial adverbials acquire a contrastive meaning has often been noted and is a direct result of their position (Charolles, 2003).

[9] For a detailed study of the introduction of frames as the text proceeds, cf. Charolles (1997, which may be accessed on the website http://www.lattice.cnrs.fr/).

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thus results in the closing of the frame previously opened by *En Inde*, whilst there would be subordination if instead of *Au Japon* we had 'in Bombay'. Furthermore, if *Au Japon* was removed, the information that 'les gens s'inclinent à plusieurs reprises, face à face, en joignant les mains' would be understood as applying to India: this clearly shows that readers apply a default principle whereby they tend to attach an incoming utterance to the ongoing frame, and as a consequence expect the writer to explicitly signal a change of frame.

The next example, as well as providing another illustration, presents a more complex situation where a spatial frame involves a temporal dimension and invites the reader to infer a progression in time:

(10) Pauline, une adolescente, est confiée à sa cousine Marion le temps de quelques jours de vacances d'été $_{(C1)}$. **[Sur la plage**$_{(PP1)}$**,** Marion rencontre Pierre, un ancien soupirant$_{(C2)}$. Il lui présente Henri $_{(C3)}$, qui invite tout le monde à manger puis à danser $_{(C4)}$**]. [Au casino**$_{(PP2)}$**,** Pierre fait une déclaration brûlante à Marion $_{(C5)}$, qui le repousse$_{(C6)}$ pour se jeter dans les bras d'Henri $_{(C7)}$ . . . . (TV magazine, summary of the film: *Pauline à la plage*)[10]

In (10) the sentence initial adverbial *Sur la plage* provides a label for C2, C3 and C4, and *Au casino*, for C5, C6 and C7. The opening of the second frame results in the closing of the first, which leads to the inference that the events denoted by C2, C3 and C4 all took place on the beach. This inference is directly linked to the framing adverbial: if PP1 was removed, the reader would have no reason to think that these events were happening in one and the same place; if PP1 was moved to final position in C2 (*Marion rencontre Pierre, un ancien soupirant, sur la plage*), the inference that the events were located in the same place would be optional, whereas the original wording makes it compulsory.

The definite NPs included in PP1 and PP2 (*la plage, le casino*) require a contextual anchor. PP1 is understood by association as designating a stereotypical part of the summer holiday resort where Pauline is entrusted to Marion. Such linkage with previous context is a very common occurrence in framing adverbials: the placement of a referentially non-autonomous PP in sentence-initial position signals a thematic link with previous text. (cf. Charolles, 2003 for a fuller discussion). Such a link is, however, in no way obligatory, particularly with spatial or temporal PPs. In (9), it would be perfectly possible to remove C1 and replace the definite NP of PP1 with an indefinite NP (*Sur une plage*). The definite NP in PP2 (*Au casino*) plays a different role insofar as it has to do with the action of dancing and not only with the holiday location (a definite NP would be required even in the version with no C1 and an indefinite PP). This is worth noting as it becomes clear that the purpose of PP2 is not just to indicate a change of location. This change of location ushers in a narrative ellipsis. Whilst PP1 situates only the invitation (to eat then to dance), not the eating or the dancing, PP2, by alluding to the place where the evening out takes place, forces the reader to move ahead with the narrative up to this episode.

[10] PP = prepositional phrase; C = clause.

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Both PPs in (10) could be taken out without loss of intelligibility: the spatial information provided by the adverbials is not absolutely needed for comprehension; what is at stake is a choice on the writer's part to distribute the information s/he wants to convey according to referential criteria, in this case the place where the events referred to occur. This strategic choice (Enkvist, 1981, 1987; Virtanen, 1992a and b) may be seen as resulting from a desire to guide the reader. The criterion selected to classify the information corresponds to an intrinsic dimension of events, and from this angle, (scene-setting) framing PPs come under Halliday's ideational metafunction (Halliday, 1985), yet their discourse-organising role places them also in the realm of the textual metafunction (cf. Thompson, 1985; Redeker, 1991; Maier and Hovy, 1993; Degand, 1998).

The reader expects the initial positioning of such PPs (together with their frequent detachment) to go hand in hand with the greatest possible exploitation of their forward-labelling potential: if the writer finds it necessary to set one or several pointers before moving on to what each is meant to locate, it may be in order to link up with what has come before, but also – and most importantly – because s/he needs these pointers to situate elements of information. Thus, unlike connectives and anaphora which mostly connect via backward-looking ties, framing PPs introduce forward-looking ties. Furthermore, as well as referential links, spatial and temporal framing adverbials signal textual links ('sequential' links for Redeker, 1991 and Goutsos, 1996). Indeed frames should probably be seen as corresponding to a meta-level of discourse organisation, whereby text blocks are constituted on the basis of one of the possible referential criteria. From this organisational perspective, the propositional contents recorded in frames are packaged together on the basis of their equal status as regards the criterion in question, and simply listed.

In their framing usage, temporal and/or spatial PPs are exploited both for their referential content and their organisational potential. Their exploitation at the organisational level is likely to promote a loss of semantic content. This loss of semantic content is quite obvious in frame introducers such as *un jour*, frequently used as a simple episode marker. (11) gives an illustration:

(11) Trisha Rawlings, la quarantaine, a tout pour être heureuse : une maison à Beverly Hills, des voitures, des voyages et un mari fortuné. [**Un jour**, elle découvre que ce dernier la trompe$_{(C1)}$. Elle s'installe dans leur petite maison sur la plage avec son chien, bien disposée à demander le divorce$_{(C2)}$.] **Peu après,** elle revoit Strip, un plagiste, dont elle avait fait la connaissance lorsqu'elle l'avait engagé comme valet pour une soirée . . . . (TV magazine, summary of the film: *Le temps d'une romance*)

If one studies this text from the reader's point of view, three hypotheses are possible:

a) the reader integrates the information contained in both C1 and C2 within the frame initiated by *Un jour*, and understands *Peu après* as linking with the day in question;

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b) after reading C2 the reader decides that the frame initiated by *Un jour* stops with C1 and interprets *Peu après* as referring to the (unidentified) moment when the main character moves into the house on the beach;
c) the reader understands (as in b) that the main character had not yet moved into the house on the beach on the day when she found out that her husband was cheating on her, but dismisses this difference, considering that what matters is the episode labelled by *Un jour* (as in a), and that therefore *Peu après* refers back to *Un jour*.

In their extensive study of cohesion in English, Halliday and Hasan (1976) do not make any reference to framing adverbials. In the detailed analysis of an extract from Yeats provided as an illustration of their approach (*ibid.*: 345–48), they do not include among the cohesion devices examined a sentence-initial 'one day', although this expression, through providing a 'forward label' for a series of subsequent sentences – which have to be understood with reference to this label –, surely contributes to the text's cohesion. As for the three major models of coherence relations which Bateman and Rondhuis (1997) confront in their meta-analysis – SDRT, RST (Rhetorical Structure Theory, Mann and Thompson, 1988) and CR (Conjunctive Relations, Martin, 1992) –, the analyses they propose for sentence-initial detached adverbials are shown by these authors to diverge considerably. In RST, the definition of a specific relation – the Circumstance relation – is stated in terms reminiscent of framing: the satellite 'sets the framework within which the reader is to interpret the situation in the nucleus'. The concern of RST being with inter-propositional relations however, non-clausal adverbials tend to be seen as part of their home-sentence, and their potential discourse role is not perceived. Goutsos (1996) on the other hand, whose focus is the sequential organisation of text, does refer to framing, which he describes as a technique the writer can call upon 'to shift the scene by setting a new domain for the following text' (*ibid.*: 508). The function of this technique, which is optional – as is 'closure', used to signal the closing of a continuation span –, is seen as facilitating the 'introduction' of new discourse topics (which is obligatory). Goutsos envisages the role of framing expressions solely with respect to the management of discourse topics, which is too specific in our perspective: framing adverbials, in the narrower yet fairly wide acceptation we give them, serve first and foremost to distribute incoming propositional contents into files labelled by a particular introducing expression (Charolles, 1997). The operations which can be performed by the writer are: opening, closing, and nesting these files as the text proceeds, according to the contents s/he wishes to convey. The criteria selected for labelling these files will most of the time only allow the constitution of text chunks concerned with the ordering of segments on a fairly local level: chunks of relatively limited scope follow each other as the discourse progresses. This sporadic mode of organisation comes on top of the typically backward-looking relations which are signalled by connectives, discourse adverbials (Webber *et al.*, 2003) and anaphora, with any number of interactions which certainly require further study.

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4 CONCLUSION

In this very general presentation of different approaches to spatial and temporal aspects of discourse organisation, a major distinction has been put forward between, on the one hand, devices having to do with connection, and on the other hand a less studied phenomenon for which terminology is not yet fully fixed: framing, indexing, forward-labelling are tentative notions which attempt to convey a new insight into an organisational process whose specificity is to affect forthcoming text. Further study is needed to better delineate the originality of this approach in comparison with others already dealing with speaker/writer strategies in the organisation of text chunks.

We are well aware that we may in these pages have over-emphasised the distinction between connection and framing/forward-labelling. This dichotomy is a 'thinking device' adopted here for the sake of clarity. There is of course frequent interplay between the different modes, an interplay which motivates several ongoing studies (cf. Schrepfer, in press; Le Draoulec and Péry-Woodley, 2003, forthcoming; Ricalens *et al.*, this volume; Vieu *et al.*, this volume).

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