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Discourse coherence: a case study of the French connector *tandis que*

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the role of connectors in the degree of discourse coherence. Starting from Dik's (1997: ch. 18) discourse model, I examine the extent to which connectors can adequately be accounted for in the theory of Functional Grammar through the study of the French particle *tandis que*. At the semantic level, *tandis que* is characterized as a circumstantial satellite marker be it locally or in a more global scope. As for pragmatic functions, it is argued that the Parallel Focus function singled out by *tandis que* can also be assigned to more than one element of a parallel construction when the contrast is not a binary relation. The last part of my paper is devoted to the textual functions of the discourse marker *tandis que*, which is relevant as a coherence-promoting device in introducing Topics or in signalling discourse discontinuity.

1. Introduction

Dik (1997) considers connectors to be one of the main factors that contribute to the degree of coherence of a discourse. Moreover, this type of linguistic phenomena, which cannot be accounted for adequately in sentence-oriented models, is motivating current attempts to develop the FG model in a discourse grammar (cf. Kroon 1997). However, few accounts are reserved in FG framework to such a category referred to as discourse markers, connectors ...

To enrich this field, I will concentrate in the present paper on the question of the extent to which connective particles are required in coherent discourse (Schiffrin 1987, Roulet et al. 1985, Jadir in print). A case study of the French connector *tandis que*¹ will serve as an illus-

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tration.

First I will give an overview of the discourse model sketched in Dik (1997: ch. 18). Then, after a characterization of the semantic properties of *tandis que* as a marker introducing a predicational (and circumstantial) satellite, I will discuss the appropriate pragmatic function of this kind of \hat{O}_2 satellite: a Parallel Focus or a subtype of Discourse Topic? The last section will be devoted to the textual roles of *tandis que* in French narrative (*L'Assommoir* (ASS), *La Fortune des Rougon* (FR) and *La Curée* (CU) of Zola). Attention will be given, *inter alia*, to the local and/or global coherence established by this marker, to the informational 'central/subsidiary' status (Kroon 1995) of *tandis que* with regard to a preceding unit, and to the contribution of *tandis que* to the topical continuity of a discourse, i.e. to its coherence.

2. Toward a functional grammar of discourse

2.1. Three perspectives

Dik's (1997: ch.18) discourse model serves to approach problems of the production, organization and interpretation of discourse from three perspectives: global discourse decisions (2.1.1) global structures in discourse (2.1.2) and discourse coherence (2.1.3).

2.1.1. Global discourse decisions

In developing a discourse, S(peaker) takes many decisions which affect the whole stretch of discourse rather than a single clause. In this respect, various *global discourse decisions* or settings have to be distinguished. The first and primary decision concerns the (non-)entering into a discourse event. According to Hymes (1972), a discourse event is defined as a social, interpersonal event governed by parameters such as parti-

¹ In traditional French grammar (cf. Grevisse 1991: 1653, among others), the connective particle *tandis que* is described as combining two values: time (simultaneity) and opposition, as is shown in (i):

- (i) *Les pintades sauvages s'envolaient devant eux, tandis que les perdreaux, écrasés par la chaleur, se contentaient de s'écarter un peu* (J. et J. Tharaud)

where the opposition is established between the terms *les pintades sauvages* and *les perdreaux*, while the simultaneity is taken place between the two actions *s'envolaient* and *se contentaient (de s'écarter un peu)* as proved by the use of the *imparfait* ('imperfective past').

participants (S and A (addressee)), their rights and duties with respect to interaction and content, and the time, place and setting of speaking.

After this initial step, S has to choose a discourse type and a discourse style. As for the discourse type, its choice is co-determined at least by the following parameters: the medium, the participation, the participant relation, the formality and the communicative purpose. For Dik, the choice of a type imposes certain limits on the *style* which can be used in implementing the discourse type.

Furthermore, embedding is relevant not only at the clause level but at the discourse level as well. The author distinguishes for example between the illocutionary value fixed per clause and what he terms *discourse illocution*. Likewise, a similar parallel can be made as regards temporal decisions. Temporal specifications on individual clauses do not depend on decisions taken per clause. Rather, they depend on tense decisions on a whole discourse.

2.1.2. Global structures in discourse

The discourse has a hierarchical, layered structure when considered as a finished product. This structure may be compared to the layered clause structure in both the layering and the recursion. Just as layers discerned within the structure of the clause, Dik (1997: 425) makes the following distinctions at the discourse level:

- (1) 0. Discourse event
 1. Interpersonal layer
 - 1.1 Interactional: concerning all those aspects of the discourse which relate to the interaction between S and A.
 - 1.2 Attitudinal: concerning all those aspects of the discourse which relate to the (emotional or critical) attitude towards or evaluation of the discourse by S and A.
 2. Representational layer
 - 2.1 Organizational: concerning all those aspects of the discourse which relate to the way the content is organized.
 - 2.2 Contentive: concerning all those elements of the discourse in which the actual content is transmitted, i.e. the Facts and States of Affairs dealt with in the discourse, including the participants in such Facts and SoA.

The second kind of complexity in discourse is due to recursion. According to Dik, “recursion is involved in any situation in which a unit of type U may contain a sub-unit of the same type U, so that, within U, the organization typical of U may return” (1997: 427).

After having looked at the structure of discourse from a structural point of view, Dik considers this structure from a relational point of view. The author assumes that all intraclausal nucleus-satellite relations can be projected onto the interclausal/discourse level. He gives the following examples:

- (2) The interpersonal level
 - a. U_1 motivates U_2
 - b. U_1 provides background for U_2
 - c. U_1 gives an antithesis to U_2
 - d. U_1 gives a solution for U_2
- (3) The representational level
 - a. U_1 elaborates on U_2
 - b. U_1 enables U_2
 - c. U_1 specifies a condition for U_2
 - d. U_1 specifies the purpose of U_2
 - e. U_1 specifies a circumstance of U_2
 - f. U_1 is a concession in relation to U_2 .

2.1.3. Discourse coherence

“When a discourse is properly construed it will be coherent in the sense that the different constitutive parts will follow each other in a natural, interpretable way. This holds both for the local sequencing of clauses (*local coherence*) and for the sequencing of more global discourse units (*global coherence*)” (Dik 1997: 433). Several factors contribute to discourse coherence. The first is the “frame”, i.e. the organized knowledge concerning what can be done and said within a given institutional setting. The second is provided by certain default principles of iconic sequencing (*Temporal iconicity*). The third is discourse topical continuity. Dik (1989,1997) distinguishes the following strategies: (i) Introducing a New Topic (New Top) into the discourse; (ii) Maintaining a Topic, once introduced, as a Given Topic (Giv Top); (iii) Inferring a Sub-Topic (Sub Top) from a Topic; and (iv) Reviving a Topic as a Resumed Topic (Res Top). Dik mentions three other devices for creating coherence

such as Focality, Tail-head linking² and Connectors which occur in patterns of the form:

- (4) Preceding Clause(s). Connector, New Clause.

2.2. Two directions

The hierarchical structure of the clause as conceived of in FG framework (Dik 1989, 1997) consists of five layers called ‘nuclear predication’, ‘core predication’, ‘extended predication’, ‘proposition’ and ‘illocution’. These layers are claimed to be relevant to the analysis of natural languages; they designate various types of entities which are listed in Table 1 (Dik 1989: 50, 1997: 93):

Table 1 Entity types

ORDER	STRUCTURE	TYPE	VARIABLE
0	predicate	Property/Relation	f
1	first order term	Spatial entity	x
2	predication	State of Affairs	e
3	proposition	Possible Fact	X
4	clause	Speech Act	E

Recently, the development of the current, sentence-oriented FG model into a more discourse-oriented one has been a subject of a certain amount of debate. However, there are two particularly emphasized directions for expanding the actual FG model: first, the one termed *upward layering* (cf. Hengeveld 1997; Moutaouakil 1993, 1998; Jadir 1998), whereby a higher textual layer is added to the underlying clause structure, i.e. the rhetorical level. Second, the one interpreting E (Dik 1989) as the product of a speech event, i.e. an utterance (Bolkestein 1992, 1998, Vet 1998). These authors propose a separate *pragmatic module* within which pragmatic aspects of language should be handled.

² Tail-Head Linking (cf. De Vries 1989, Dik 1997) plays a role in co-determining the coherence of a discourse. In this strategy a clause starts with a constituent which briefly summarizes a crucial part of the preceding clause or context. This may be done, for example, through an anaphorical term, as in:

(ii) *After a long journey they come to a small village. In that village/ there they found a place where they could spend the night.*

In this analysis of the French marker *tandis que*, I will adopt an expanding approach (cf. Moutaouakil 1998). This approach consists of extending Cuvalay's (1997) model of underlying expression structure so as to enable it to house the representation of discourse notions such as *Récit* and *Discours* (Benveniste 1966). The author proposes to call such an extension "Underlying Text Structure". It can be roughly represented as in (5):

$$(5) \quad \pi_6 T_1 : [P_i : [\text{Expression}]] (\acute{O}_6)$$

Where T_1 is the text variable, which is specified by a textual π_6 - operator and \acute{O}_6 - satellites. The function of the π_6 - operator is to indicate the type of text (R (= *Récit*) or D (= *Discours*)). As for \acute{O}_6 satellite category, it subsumes expressions fulfilling various textual tasks such as initiating, modalizing or ending a text with respect to other texts. P_1 (Passage) is an intermediate entity introduced between clause and text. Moutaouakil's upward layering approach not only accounts for features of clause structure but also predicts certain co-occurrence properties of clauses and even whole passages of text.

3. Semantic properties

In FG (Dik 1989, 1997) level 2 satellites (\acute{O}_2) represent the lexical means through which the SoA designated by the nuclear predication can be located with respect to spatial, temporal, and cognitive dimensions. The most important types of \acute{O}_2 satellite are: Location, Time, Circumstance, Result, Purpose, Reason and Cause. We restrict ourselves here to briefly exemplifying the two types which interest us:

Time (at which, from which, until which):

- (6) a. *Peter left the office at three o'clock*
 b. *John did his homework from eight o'clock until eleven o'clock.*

Circumstance: an SoA presented as obtaining concurrently with the SoA expressed in the core predication.

- (7) a. *John was reading a book, while Peter was watching TV*
 b. *No more matters arising, the meeting was closed.*

There are good reasons to believe that the semantic function of Circumstance as defined above perfectly corresponds to the subordinate clause introduced by the French connector *tandis que*. Indeed, in such an example as:

- (8) *La fruitière retirait sa dernière poêlée de pomme de terre, tandis que le charcutier remettait en ordre des assiettes débandées de son comptoir...*(ASS: 42)

the predication embedded by *tandis que* provides no precise specification about the beginning or the end of the SoA expressed in the matrix predication, in that the SoA expressed in the former is concurrently obtained to that expressed in the latter. In other words, the subordinate construction *tandis que le charcutier remettait...* specifies a circumstance of the principal construction *La fruitière retirait...*, the two actions expressed in them occurring simultaneously.

It follows that the adverbial clause of Circumstance introduced by *tandis que* pertains to the second order entities, in the sense that it expresses an SoA and not, e.g. a Possible Fact. In other words, the *tandis que*-clause belongs to the predicational layer as it presents an SoA carried out concomitantly with that expressed in the main predication without any commitment on the part of the participant. Witness the following modifications (8' a-c):

- (8') a. *La fruitière retire sa dernière poêlée de pomme de terre, tandis que le charcutier remet en ordre des assiettes débandées de son comptoir.*
- b. **La fruitière retirait sa dernière poêlée de pomme de terre, tandis que le charcutier remettra en ordre...*
- c. **La fruitière retirait sa dernière poêlée de pomme de terre, tandis que le charcutier pouvait remettre en ordre...*

(8' a) is grammatical since, unlike (8'b), the SoA simultaneity condition required by the marker *tandis que* is fulfilled in this case. The grammaticality of (8'c) reveals that if temporal modifications are allowed (e.g.(8'a)), the expression of propositional attitudes are proscribed; such a linguistic test provides confirmation of the predicational status of the clause introduced by *tandis que*.

Accordingly, the semantic function assignment of the Circ(umstance) at the level of the predicational layer can be represented as follows (cf. Hengeveld 1996):

- (9) (Sim π_2 e $\dot{\iota}$) Circ Predication

Where Sim is a temporal operator indicating simultaneity and π_2 is a predicational operator.

4. Parallel contrast

In FG, the pragmatic function of Focus is conceived of as pertaining to the focality dimension of discourse. Dik (1978: 130, 1989: 277-282, 1997) defines the focal information in a linguistic expression as “that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by S to be most essential for A to integrate into his pragmatic information”. The Focus is sub-categorized into New (Completive, non contrastive) Focus and Contrastive Focus which subsumes ‘counter-presuppositional (Replacing, Expanding, Restricting and Selecting) Focus’ and ‘Parallel Focus’ (Par Foc). In the former, “the information presented is opposed to other, similar information which S presupposes to be entertained by A”. The latter is involved “when Focus is assigned to corresponding constituents in parallel constructions”.

In addition to its function of marking the concurrent aspect of the SoA expressed in the subordinate predication (Circumstance) to that expressed in the core one, *tandis que* can also be characterized as a focusing device. Its role consists in emphasizing some constituents by means of contrast or parallelism. In the FG framework, the constituent singled out by *tandis que* receives Par Foc function.

Most commonly, the corresponding elements in a parallel construction are noun phrases (NP) as can be seen from the following example:

- (10) *Les dames, sanglées dans leur corsage, avaient des bandeaux de pommade, où le jour se reflétait; tandis que les messieurs, assis loin de la table, bombaient la poitrine et écartaient les coudes, par crainte de tacher leur redingote (ASS: 199-200).*

In (10) the NP *les messieurs* is assigned the pragmatic function of Contrastive Focus (Par Foc) by virtue of the contrast established between *Les dames* and *les messieurs*. The same holds for the above passage (8), in which *la fruitière* and *le charcutier* function as Parallel Focus elements.

Likewise, verbal predicates can make the subject matter of contrastive parallelism, as in (11):

- (11) *Par moments, un ouvrier s'arrêtait court, rallumait sa pipe, tandis qu'autour de lui les autres marchaient toujours, sans rire, sans une parole dite ... (ASS: 14)*

where there is a double contrast: besides the contrasted elements *un ouvrier/les autres*, the verb phrase *marchaient toujours* in the second member of the parallel construction marked by *tandis que* is opposed to the verb phrase *s'arrêtait court*.

It happens that, in the same parallel construction, the opposition may involve various constituents pertaining to different grammatical categories. (12) may serve as an example:

- (12) *Puis, à gauche, un morceau de fromage blanc nageait dans un plat creux tandis que, dans un autre plat, à droite, s'entassaient de grosses fraises meurtries dont le jus coulait* (ASS: 208).

In spite of the fact that, in the use of *tandis que* as a focalizing particle, the contrast always implies a strict opposition between two alternatives³, here, once more, the syntactic parallelism strategy involves more than one pair of contrasted elements with various grammatical categories. The contrast is established between two NPs *un morceau de fromage blanc/de grosses fraises meurtries*, two adverbs *à gauche/ à droite*, two verbs *nageait/s'entassaient* and two prepositional phrases *dans un plat creux/dans un autre plat*.

Since, in this type of instances, the contrast relation is maintained between almost all constitutive elements of the parallel construction, and since the Focus function, contrary to Topic whose assignment concerns only terms (cf. Dik 1978, 1989, 1997; Siewierska 1991)⁴, is ascribed to all constituents of a clause, a question arises: among the constituents in the second part of the parallel construction are there some which are more accessible to receive preferentially Par Foc function? or is it possible to assign Par Foc to the whole component given that the parallelism marked by *tandis que* is total?

Most certainly, if one resorts to a hierarchy of accessibility to Par Foc, the element *de grosses fraises meurtries* might be viewed as hav-

³ As pointed out in Martinez Caro (1998: 233): "The most important difference between strict opposition and parallelism concerns the nature of the relationship between the two contrasted elements. This relationship includes the feature [+ negative] in the strict opposition, whereas it implies a positive comparison in the case of the parallelism". (cf. also Taglicht 1984).

⁴ 'Topic assignment to entities or terms' is one of the major issues with respect to which FG authors manifest diverging opinions (cf. Bolkestein 1998). Thus, as opposed to Dik (1989) and Siewierska (1991), Keizer (1992) and Helma Dik (1995), for instance, argue that predicates may just as well be Topics.

ing priority to bear this pragmatic function by virtue of its saliency, but there are good reasons to believe that predication's Par Foc assignment seems to exhibit here a high degree of acceptability. This kind of assignment can be roughly schematized as in (13):

- (13) [R T_i : [e_i : Predication (e_i)] , [e_j : Predication (e_j)] Par Foc]

Where 'R' indicates the discourse type (i.e. Récit) where *tandis que* occurs.

'T' stands for the text variable.

In certain examples, though less frequent, the constituents singled out by the focalizing *tandis que* happens to be in contrast with two preceding constituents. In other words, the contrast involved in such contexts is not a binary contrast in that it implies an opposition between more than two elements. To illustrate this type of contrast at issue here, consider the following passage⁵:

- (14) *Peu à peu, pourtant, le bruit avait dû se répandre qu'une noce visitait le Louvre, **des peintres** accouraient, la bouche fendue d'un rire; des curieux s'asseyaient à l'avance sur des banquettes, pour assister commodément au défilé; **tandis que les gardiens**, les lèvres pincées, retenaient des mots d'esprit (ASS: 77).*

In this context, it seems that the SoA marked by *tandis que* is presented as obtaining concurrently with the two SoAs expressed in previous predications, i.e. *des peintres accouraient...* and *des curieux s'asseyaient...* It would, hence, be possible to presume that the Circumstance semantic relation is established between the three existing predications. Likewise, the element *les gardiens* focused by the highlighting device *tandis que* contrasts with the prior emphasized items, that is, *des peintres* and *des curieux*. In other words, contrary to what it is commonly admitted, the contrast is not always a binary relation, it can be tripartite as it is attested by instances of type (14).

In the same vein, Geluykens (1992) introduces the function of Listing as a subtype within the dimension of contrastiveness. Adopting this proposition in her study of Contrastive Focus in spoken Spanish and

⁵ For Rasmussen (Personal Communication) this example could also be interpreted as involving a binary contrast. This relation is established between *des peintres accouraient.../ des curieux s'asseyaient à l'avance...* on the one hand and *les gardiens retenaient des mots d'esprit* on the other hand. That is, the contrast is between interested and non interested people in the wedding-party.

spoken English, Martinez Caro (1998: 234) suggests that “a pragmatic function of Listing should be recognized within the same dimension of contrastiveness, as a subtype of Par Foc”. As in the above French example, natural languages make considerable use of parallel constructions although this kind of focality is frequently expressed by means of various syntactic devices. Compare the following instances:

- (15) *Spanish* (Martinez Caro 1998: 236)

(about the institution where the speaker works)

*Claro que tengo que decirte que somos nada mas que dos personas y éramos cinco, o sea, que te puedes imaginar...pues porque **una señora esta enferma, otra se ha casado y otra se ha dado de baja.***

‘But of course I have to tell you that we are only two persons and we used to be five, so you can imagine... because one of the ladies is ill, another has got married and another is on leave’.

- (16) *English* (Martinez Caro 1998: 234)⁶

Everybody made their contribution from all over the senior common-room about their point of view about eggs [...]some would rather have them much too soft than much too hard and some people would rather not leave an egg at all and some people thought the thing to do was just put them in the water and take them out again and then let them go on cooking without cracking their heads.

- (17) *Latin* (Kroon 1995: 30)

*Ea tanta est urbs ut ex **quattuor urbibus** maximis constare dicatur; quarum **una** est ea, quam...(extensive description). **Altera autem** est urbs syracusis, cui nomen Achradina est... **tertia** est urbs quae...**quarta autem** est quae...*

‘So large is the city that it is described as being **four great towns** joined together. **One of these** (una) is the Island... Then there is a **second town** (altera autem) in the city, called Achradina... There is a **third town** (tertia est urbs),... And there is a **fourth town** (quarta autem est), which...’

Moreover, it should be noticed that Parallel Focus constituents introduced by *tandis que* are topical elements in that they are given or inferable information. As such, they can function as one of the Discourse

⁶ In this example taken from Martinez Caro (1998) I have not marked symbols and abbreviations used in the corpora for the prosodic prominence.

Topic (D-Top) subtypes, that is, a New Topic (New Top), a Sub Topic (Sub-Top) or even a Resumed Topic (Res Top). The following instances may serve as an illustration:

- (18) *Claude, qui avait huit ans, ... respirait d'une haleine lente, **tandis qu'**Etienne, âgé de quatre ans seulement, souriait, un bras passé au cou de son frère (ASS: 12).*
- (19) *Une famille, d'ailleurs, barrait le palier; **le père** lavait des assiettes sur un petit fourneau de terre, près du plomb, **tandis que la mère**, adossée à la rampe, nettoyait le bambin avant d'aller le coucher (ASS: 55).*
- (20) *Trois semaines plus tard, vers onze heures et demie, un jour de soleil, Gervaise et Coupeau, l'ouvrier zingueur, mangeaient ensemble une prune... Lorsque **le zingueur** eut allumé sa cigarette, il posa les coudes sur la table [longue distance]. Et elle disait ces choses en femme résolue, ayant son plan de vie bien arrêté, **tandis que Coupeau**, qui ne lâchait pas son désir de l'avoir, plaisantait, tournait tout à l'ordure, lui faisait sur Lantier des questions crues...(ASS: 37-41).*

The corresponding constituents in (18) exhibit some properties which support their candidature to receive New Top (or 'futur Topic'/'Topic-to-be' in Bolkestein's (1998) terms) function. They constitute, on the one hand, "the first presentation" (Dik 1989: 267) of D-Topics *Claude* and *Etienne*, and, on the other hand, they combine the two dimensions of *topicality* and *focality*; they are topical in the sense that they characterize those entities 'about' which the author narrates, and they are focal by virtue of their introduction for the first time into the discourse.

In example (19) the parallelism is established by means of the marker *tandis que* between two inferrable entities, i.e. *le père* and *la mère*; the latter are derived, on the basis of our common knowledge, from the D-Topic *une famille*. Thus, they can be viewed as SubTops. Besides, in the above Latin example borrowed from Kroon (1995), there is a first announcement of the "supertopic" of the passage and there are four "subtopics", two of them are marked by *autem*.

Most commonly, the element singled out by *tandis que* is a ResTop. In FG, the constituent bearing this function consists in re-establishing a Given Topic after a (long) disappearance. Thus, the connective particle in (20) "revives" and re-introduces the Giv Top *Coupeau* after a considerable referential distance. Such a re-introduction might, as in this case, constitute the starting point of a new topical chain. Besides its function

as a resuming marker, *tandis que* is apt to achieve further discourse or organizational roles which will be accounted for in the following.

5. Discourse functions of *tandis que*

As ensues from the earlier examples, *tandis que* can be applied locally or with a more global scope. It is, hence, used as a marker of Parallel Focus or as a marker of textual organization. Though, statistically speaking, the local use of *tandis que* as a focus marking device seems to prevail as compared to the global one in the narrative; investigated data show that the two particle's uses overlap more frequently.

It is noticeable that in recent functional literature (e.g. Kroon 1995, Dik 1997) discourse coherence or discourse continuity is not to be conceived of as depending only on Topic continuity. It involves rather various types of continuity (i.e. settings) such as temporal continuity, locational continuity and other circumstantial continuities and action continuity. These sub-strings may enrich Givon's (1983, 1989) tripartite hierarchy (theme continuity, action continuity and topic continuity) as schematized in (21):

- (21) *Discourse continuity sub-strings hierarchy*
Theme continuity > Action continuity > Settings > Topic continuity

Most often *tandis que* coincides in its global text organizational use with D-Topic shifts, but it can also signal the interruption of the other forms of continuity. We can, thus, speak of a marker of discourse discontinuity rather than of a mere marker of Topic shifts. Examples (12) and (22) which serve as an illustration corroborate this analysis:

- (12) *Puis, à gauche, un morceau de fromage blanc nageait dans un plat creux tandis que, dans un autre plat, à droite, s'entassaient de grosses fraises meurtries dont le jus coulait (ASS: 208).*
- (22) *(Dans le grand silence du quartier endormi), on entendait seulement les sanglots d'enfant d'un ivrogne, couché sur le dos, au milieu du boulevard; tandis que, très loin, au fond de quelque restaurant, un violon jouait un quadrille canaille à quelque noce attardée, une petite musique cristalline, nette et déliée comme une phrase d'harmonica (ASS: 52).*

In these examples, the use of the organizational particle *tandis que* coincides with a topical discontinuity and a locational discontinuity. As for Topic discontinuity, the transition indicated by *tandis que* involves

a shift from *un morceau de fromage blanc* to *de grosses fraises meurtries* on the one hand ((12)), and from *les sanglots d'enfant d'un ivrogne* to *un violon* on the other hand ((22)). Concerning the shifted locational settings in (12) and (22), the changes of spaces are made respectively from *à gauche, dans un plat creux* to *dans un autre plat à droite* and from *au milieu du boulevard* to *très loin, au fond de quelque restaurant*. Note that these types of breaks marked by *tandis que* frequently yield a minor discourse discontinuity since other kinds of continuity especially the most important one (viz. Theme continuity) are being maintained.

Another instance supporting that discourse discontinuity is not confined to Topic switching is (23) in which *tandis que* is used to signal an interruption of the action chain (while Giv Top *Pierre* is being continued):

- (23) *Pierre se souvint du sang qui couvrit les mains de Silvère. Il eut un léger mouvement de recul... Et, tandis qu'il maudissait tout bas son indigne famille, il déclara solennellement que...*
(FR: 298).

The clause introduced by *tandis que*, which carries a subsidiary message, can yield a temporary break of discourse continuity to the extent that it is added to the mainline of the narrative. Action discontinuity has as linguistic coding the variation of the tenses used: foregrounded text parts are described in the Perfect tense (i.e. *passé simple*) while backgrounded ones (*tandis que*-clause) are described in the Imperfective tense (i.e. *imparfait*) (cf. Vet 1994, 1996).

Moreover, as stated earlier (sect. 3) *tandis que* is analyzed as a marker of circumstantial satellite (\acute{O}_2) at the predicational (local) level. Once used globally, the particle has a quite similar role in that it introduces information of minor and subsidiary importance which often interrupts the development of the narrative. Such an interruption more frequently coincides with a shift to constituents with low topicality, viz. to secondary D-Topics which do not exhibit a highly persistent recurrence.

Adopting Dik's (1997) assumption that all intraclausal nucleus-satellite relations can be projected onto the discourse level, we can say that in its text organizing use *tandis que* marks a textual satellite (\acute{O} -T) which specifies a circumstance of the main preceding text parts. This

functional parallel of the connector *tandis que* at the local and global level can be represented as in (24 a-b):

- (24) a. DECL E_i : [π_3 X_i : [(Imperf π_2 e_i), (Sim π_2 e_j) C_{irc}]]
 b. RT : [DECL [Discourse - Episode]], (\acute{O} -T) C_{irc}

Where DECL = declarative, E_i is an illocution variable, X_i is a proposition variable, π_3 is a propositional operator and 'Discourse-Episode' (Dik 1997) refers to a whole (section of a) discourse taken in the scope of the *discourse illocution* DECL.

In the same vein, the two members connected by *tandis que* may, in certain cases, convey a subsidiary message in the sense that they tend together to provide, for instance, an explanation, or an exemplification for the preceding passage. Consider (25) and (26):

- (25) *Ils faisaient les choses proprement. Même le soir, au repas qui eut lieu chez les Coupeau, ils ne se présentèrent point les mains vides. Le mari arriva avec un litre de vin cacheté sous chaque bras, tandis que la femme tenait un large flan acheté chez un pâtissier de la chaussée Clignancourt, très en renom. Seulement, les Lorieux allèrent raconter leurs largesses dans tout le quartier; ils... (ASS: 103).*
- (26) *Les rez-de chaussée étaient aménagés en immenses ateliers, fermés par des vitrages noirs de poussière: la forge d'un serrurier flambaient; on entendait plus loin des coups de rabot d'un menuisier; tandis que près de la loge, un laboratoire de teinturier lâchait à gros brouillons ce ruisseau d'un rose tendre coulant sous le porche (ASS: 48).*

To reveal the subsidiary status of the parallel construction in (25), it is possible to interpret it in two different ways. First, it may be viewed as conveying a supplementary information which serves to extend/explain the previous clause marked by the connector *même*, i.e. each part of the parallel contrast (*le mari arriva avec un litre de vin.../ la femme tenait un large flan...*) restricts itself to give more information about the behaviour of the Coupeau family (*Même le soir ... ils ne se présentèrent point les mains vides*). Second, the parallel construction as a whole might keep its accessory role even in case of the absence of the precedent contiguous sentence (*Même...*) in that it might constitute in such a case a separated causal segment, susceptible, eventually, of being accompanied by an appropriate (causal) marker (e.g. *en effet* 'indeed') as is shown in (25'):

- (25') *Ils faisaient les choses proprement. (En effet), le mari arriva avec un litre de vin cacheté sous chaque bras, tandis que la femme tenait un large flan...*

Likewise, in example (26) the parallel established between *des coups de rabot d'un menuisier* and *un laboratoire de teinturier* functions as a mere example in the list of examples (e.g. *la forge d'un serrurier*) cited after the colon (:) to illustrate the super term *immenses ateliers*.

Anyway the particle *tandis que* keeps its function of a discourse discontinuity marker. The discontinuity in the earlier mentioned passages is due to Sub-Topics shifts (*le mari/la femme* and *des coups de rabot d'un menuisier/un laboratoire de teinturier*) and to the shifted locational setting in (26), viz, the change of scenes (*plus loin/près de la loge*).

Furthermore, in a series of non-persistent Topics *tandis que* marks only the last member as opposed to Latin *autem* which may single out more than one element as we saw in (17). Compare:

- (27) *La loge, enfumée, emplie de meubles noirs, avait une humidité et un jour livide de cave; devant la fenêtre, toute la lumière tombait sur l'établi du tailleur (...); tandis que Pauline, la petite des Boche, une enfant rousse de quatre ans, assise par terre, regardait sagement cuire un morceau de veau, baigné et ravie dans l'odeur forte de cuisine montant du poêlon (ASS: 124).*

The last and not the least remark about *tandis que* is the following: as stated with the majority of mentioned examples *tandis que* is prone to occur before a full NP, that is compatible with its discourse function as a thematic discontinuity marker. Though it is a very rare case, *tandis que* may be combined with an emphasized pronoun as in the following context:

- (28) *Les Mignon et Charrier avaient complètement rompu avec lui (Aristide Saccard). S'il les accusait, c'était par une rage sourde de s'être trompé, en faisant bâtir sur sa part de terrains, tandis qu'eux vendaient prudemment la leur. Pendant qu'ils réalisaient une fortune, lui restait avec des maisons sur les bras, dont il ne se débarrassait souvent qu'à perte (CU: 179).*

In (28) the use of the pronoun *eux* is due to the competition between the two D-Topics *Les Mignon et Charrier* and *il*. The role of *tandis que*, hence, is to indicate the contrast between the concerned elements and to avoid the topical ambiguity which is likely to occur in the case of the use of the unstressed anaphoric pronoun (e.g. *ils*) instead of *eux*. The

same holds for *lui* (in *lui restait...*) whose occurrence may be explained by the ‘switch reference’ (*ils/lui*).

6. Conclusion

Starting from Dik’s (1997) model, my aim in this study is to examine to what extent the connector *tandis que* contributes to the degree of discourse coherence in French. The main conclusions arrived at here are:

- (i) Although *tandis que* can be employed locally or in a more global scope, the two uses more frequently coincide;
- (ii) At the predicational level, *tandis que* introduces \acute{O}_2 satellite with the semantic function of Circumstance; at the discourse level, this particle marks a textual \acute{O}_2 satellite which specifies the Circumstance of the preceding mainline stretches of the narrative;
- (iii) Parallel Focus function indicated by the highlighting device *tandis que* can be assigned to one element or to the whole sentence when the contrast is established between all members of a parallel construction. The notion of Listing seems to be appropriate for French since the use of *tandis que* may involve opposition between more than two elements on the list;
- (iv) The French connector *tandis que* is relevant as a coherence-promoting device in introducing New Topic or Sub-Topic or in signalling discourse discontinuity due to a Topic (setting or action) shift;
- (v) Introducing a subsidiary text part and being a discourse discontinuity marker, *tandis que* is not frequent in Récit-texts. Statistically speaking, *tandis que* (7.54 %) is less recurrent as compared to *mais* (36.75%) in narrative (e.g. *L’Assommoir*). This can be explained by the fact that (i) this type of text has usually a much higher degree of discourse continuity and that (ii) *mais* and *tandis que*, though being together discourse discontinuity markers, behave differently in that *tandis que* introduces subsidiary text parts, while *mais* introduces the most important ones.

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