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Discourse structure is investigated from the point of view of topic shifts. The paper focuses on the French adverb *autrement*, an important tool in such operations. It requires an antecedent, the topic to be shifted, which it generally finds among salient elements such as topicalized noun phrases or frames. However, since there might be several such elements in the left context, other devices are used to ensure that interlocutors clearly understand which topic is being shifted, i.e. what the antecedent of *autrement* is. These devices are mostly: stating the new topic, which is similar in many respects (syntax, semantics) to the previous one; the repetition of an overarching topic is also an important way to clarify discourse structure. In cases where such markers are absent, it is hypothesized that topics exist at least covertly. On the whole, discourse structure, and especially the left context, must be highly organized if *autrement* is to work properly. Thus, the study of *autrement* offers an interesting perspective on discourse structure as a whole, including the Right Frontier constraint: not only does *autrement* find its antecedent on the Right Frontier, it also shapes it by closing topics and modifying the availability of discourse referents.

Keywords: *autrement*, discourse structure, topics, anaphor, Right Frontier

Cet article étudie la structure du discours du point de vue des changements de topiques, et plus précisément en se concentrant sur l'adverbe autrement et son rôle central dans une telle opération. Ce marqueur nécessite un antécédent, le topique qu'il ferme, qu'il trouve généralement parmi les éléments saillants du discours tels que les groupes nominaux topicalisés et les cadratifs. Cependant, comme il peut y avoir plusieurs éléments de cette sorte dans le contexte gauche, d'autres procédés sont aussi employés pour s'assurer que les interlocuteurs comprennent clairement quel topique est fermé, c'est-à-dire quel élément est l'antécédent d'autrement. Ces procédés sont essentiellement l'introduction du nouveau topique, similaire à bien des égards (syntaxe, sémantique) au précédent; la répétition d'un topique d'ordre supérieur est aussi un moyen important pour clarifier la structure du discours. Dans les cas où il n'existe pas de tels marqueurs, on fait l'hypothèse que les topiques existent au moins implicitement. D'une manière générale, la structure du discours, et particulièrement le contexte gauche, doivent être fortement organisés pour permettre à autrement de fonctionner correctement. Par conséquent, l'étude d'autrement offre un point de vue intéressant sur la structure du discours prise comme un tout, y compris sur la contrainte de la Frontière Droite: non seulement autrement trouve-t-il son antécédent sur la Frontière Droite, mais qui plus est il contribue à la façonner en fermant des topiques et en modifiant la disponibilité des référents de discours.

Mots clés: *autrement, structure du discours, topiques, anaphore, Frontière Droite*

1. Introduction

- 1 If we define quite bluntly discourse topics as what a discourse segment is about, then discourse topics are obviously vital to the correct understanding of any extended piece of speech. Investigating what they really are and how they emerge from discourse is

an important part of discourse theory, however there is one fact that has been less often studied, namely that speakers *change* topics. Indeed, conversations, provided they are long enough, never address one and only one subject, but instead regularly turn to different topics or split big ones into smaller parts, which themselves are topics, albeit subordinate ones.

2 This seemingly natural process requires extensive use of linguistic devices to help interlocutors keep track of what is being said. In this paper I focus on one such device, the French connective *autrement*, but I will show that it relies on discourse structure on a larger scale and requires that the left context be properly organized. In other terms, although the marker is crucial, it still needs discourse structure as a whole to work correctly. The latter in turn is shaped by topics and topic shifts, and *autrement* sheds an interesting light on its mechanisms.

3 This study is based on seven oral corpora (see Isambert, 2010, for details), out of which 179 occurrences of *autrement* in the use investigated here have been extracted and annotated. Sections 5 and 6 emphasize the results pertaining to anaphora resolution. Here is what was annotated; not all categories are relevant for the use investigated here:

- Type of the antecedent;
- Position of *autrement*;
- Type of the predicate modified by *autrement*;
- Tense (of the proposition hosting the antecedent and of the proposition hosting *autrement*);
- Use of negation in the host proposition;
- Scope of the adverb;
- Use of a conjunction before the adverb (and type, if any);
- Discourse relation between the propositions conjoined by *autrement*;
- Markers closing the previous topic;
- Markers introducing the new topic.

2. Three uses of *autrement*

4 The French adverb *autrement* has three main uses, which constitute three steps on a grammaticalization path (Isambert, 2010). First, it is an adverb of manner modifying a verb phrase:

[1] Nous avons tenté pendant longtemps de faire cette explication par des voies démocratiques, pacifiques. Malheureusement, ça n'a pas marché et certains Ivoiriens ont décidé de s'expliquer autrement.

'We've been trying for a long time to give that explanation in a democratic and pacific way. Unfortunately, that didn't work and some Ivorians have decided to explain themselves in another way.'

(AFP)

5 In this use *autrement* takes an antecedent from which it derives a different “manner”. In [1] the antecedent is *par des voies démocratiques, pacifiques* and *autrement* thus means *par d’autres voies*, that is in a way that is neither democratic nor pacific.

6 The second use, the most investigated by scholars (Inkova-Manzotti, 2002; Lamiroy, Charolles, 2005; Isambert, 2006, among others) is as a connective:

[2] Ne viole pas la règle, autrement tu seras viré.
 ‘Don’t break the rule, otherwise you’ll be fired.’
 (Internet)

7 Here *autrement* denotes “negative hypothesis”, i.e. it makes the assumption that a previously stated condition (generally in the form of a deontic proposition) is not fulfilled; the proposition that follows states what would ensue. This connective is often used to justify the antecedent, either proving a point or stressing the desirability of a state of affair (in [2] for instance, the interlocutor should see to it that she does not break the rule).

8 Finally, *autrement* can also be used to shift topics of conversation, either globally, as in [3], where the proposition could follow anything (hence the ellipsis), or more specifically, as in [4], where a sub-topic (soccer) is introduced under the heading of a larger one (sports).

[3] [...] Autrement, ça va?
 ‘[...] Apart from that, how are you doing?’

[4] Je joue beaucoup au tennis. Autrement, j’aime bien le foot.
 ‘I play tennis a lot. Apart from that, I like soccer.’

9 Despite many differences, the three uses share some central properties. First, *autrement* is always an anaphor, and thus requires an antecedent to make sense; anaphor resolution is no simple task, and it is especially complex with *autrement*, due to its ability to derive a representation from many kinds of contexts (Isambert, 2010). Second, *autrement* builds a representation from its antecedent and does not simply carry it on; in other terms, it triggers an *accommodation* (Lewis, 1979) which would require substantial morpho-syntactical modifications of the antecedent if such a representation were to be uttered (at least an inverted polarity, and generally the transformation of an independent clause into an *if*-clause, as in [2], where *autrement* turns *don’t break the rule* into *if you break the rule*).

10 These properties allow us to reconstruct the grammaticalization of *autrement* as a classical transformation of an intra-sentential adverb into a discourse organizer, where semantic bleaching is counterbalanced by new, metalinguistic functions (Lamiroy, Charolles, 2004), tending to subjectification (Traugott, 1995). In this paper, I will focus on the third use, where the antecedent is a topic and *autrement* organizes the flow of discourse.

3. Anatomy of an example

- 11 The following example is taken from an oral corpus (CLAPI); it is an extract from an interview between a linguist (L) and a priest (P). Numbering is set in order to stress the structure of the dialogue; barring the middle ellipsis, the example is one continuous piece of dialogue.

[5] a L: Oui bon alors on va parler de la profession, alors, qu'est-ce que vous pouvez me dire justement, un petit peu comme ça librement, tout ce qui vous intéresse sur votre... sur votre profession là, sur la vôtre.

'L: Well, we're going to talk about your job, so, what can you tell me, just like that, freely, everything you find interesting in your job?'

b P: Oui oh ben disons beaucoup de choses bien sûr, tout est intéressant dans la mesure où on a affaire à des gens qui sont intéressants.

'P: Well, let's say, many things of course, everything is interesting as long as we're dealing with interesting people.'

c [Recounts example: 3min+]

'[Recounts example: 3min+]

d On est pris un peu comme un syndicat d'initiative, distrayez-nous pendant un petit moment.

'People tend to take us for a tourist office: entertain us for a little while!'

e Voilà! [Pause: 2s]

'That's it! [Pause: 2s]'

f Autrement, les choses intéressantes c'est: pour tous ceux qui essaient de faire quelque chose, je vois, on essaye de, aujourd'hui de mettre en place ce qu'on appelle une sorte de concile; on est en train de faire une espèce de concile local.

'Apart from that, interesting things are: for those who try to do something, I can see, we're trying to set up a kind of council; we're doing a kind of local council.'

(Corpus CLAPI)

- 12 The topic of this extract is explicitly stated by the interviewer in [5a] as the interesting things in the interviewee's job, repeated by the priest in [5b] and reintroduced in [5f] (*les choses intéressantes*). Thus this topic is clearly negotiated and acknowledged. It leads to a detailed narration (skipped over in [5c]), more than three minutes in length. The duration is important: an extended discourse segment occurs, not just a pair of propositions. [5d] is actually part of the example recounted in [5c]. I have singled it out here only because it clearly summarizes the entire narration (about people marrying in the church without real faith) by generalizing over a single case. Similarly, *voilà* in [5e] is an important marker that ends the discourse

segment, backed up by a silence. Finally, *autrement* in [5f] definitely switches to a new sub-topic, the local council; most importantly, the main topic, the interesting things, is mentioned again, so that the topic switch is properly located.

- 13 This example illustrates the use of *autrement* to organize discourse (Isambert, 2008a). However, discourse management does not rely on *autrement* exclusively, but on a set of devices instead (stating the main topic, introducing sub-topics, closing them); those markers, barring the repetition of the main topic, appear in the left context, and display a striking diversity, as we will see presently when we try to answer the question asked in the title of this paper. But first we shall take a look at a special instance of this use of *autrement* in order to exclude it from this study.

4. A special case: "short-sighted" *autrement*

- 14 Although clearly an instance of the third use of *autrement* in many respects (Lamiroy, Charolles, 2005; Isambert, 2010) and not of its second use (as a connective) as stated by some authors (Inkova-Manzotti, 2002), "short-sighted" *autrement*, illustrated in [6] (two people talking about farmers), displays properties that do not line up very well with the notion of topic shift investigated here.

- [6] A: Ils font pas de fruits.
 B: Des fraises.
 A: Ah si que les fraises oui, autrement ils font pas de fruits.
 'A: They don't do fruits.
 B: Strawberries.
 A: Oh yes only strawberries yes, apart from that they don't do fruit.'
 (Corpus de la Parole)

- 15 The question raised by this use, called "*autrement* de complémentarité" by the authors just mentioned, is whether this use is topical or not. Admittedly, there is a main topic (fruits, itself a sub-topic in the conversation), an instance of which is singled out in a sub-topic (strawberries) only to be discarded by *autrement*. Although this might be considered discourse structure on a small scale, the absence of other markers to organize this "micro-segment" casts doubt on the nature of such examples. Moreover, there is an additional meaning attached to *autrement* here: one does not just switch topics, one also excludes an element (strawberries) from an ensemble, or deems it irrelevant to a situation, thus leading in [6] to an apparent contradiction: the farmers grow strawberries without doing fruits. *Autrement* here is meant to accommodate such a contradiction. This implies that a specific discourse relation holds between the two propositions (*they do strawberries* and *they don't do fruits*), namely contrast or opposition, whereas pure topic shift is meant to acknowledge and negotiate the absence of a relation between discourse segments.

- 16 Other examples, however, do not depart so clearly from the prototypical use of *autrement* as a topic shift:

[7] A: Est-ce que vous sauriez me dire comment on fait une omelette chez vous?
 B: En cassant les œufs, ça c'est sûr. Mais autrement, la cuisine ce n'est pas mon rayon.
 'A: Could you tell me how one makes an omelette at your place?
 B: You break eggs, for sure. But apart from that, I don't know much about cooking.'
 (Corpus de la Parole)

- 17 [7] displays mixed properties, functioning semantically as described above, yet retaining characteristics of the topic shift, for instance the mention of the (implicit) main topic "cooking". Its prefixing with *mais* must be taken into account, since *mais* is a hallmark of "short-sighted" *autrement* which does not occur easily with the topical use.

- 18 This example is evidence that the distinction between the topical use and the "short-sighted" use of *autrement* is not clear-cut and that they have overlapping properties; it should be noticed that the latter use feeds on lists or sets of elements (e.g. strawberries are members of the set of fruits), and as we will see presently, lists are a major topical organization of discourse; on the other hand, as has been said above, "short-sighted" *autrement* could also qualify as a small-scale discourse marker (hence the name I have given it). For the rest of this paper I will focus on clear cases of topical *autrement*, but one should keep in mind that they are only prototypical instances in a continuum of uses from the pure connective to the pure discourse marker, a conclusion in line with the general theory of grammaticalization: the topic shift has evolved out of the connective but intermediate uses still exist (Isambert, 2010).

5. Antecedents

- 19 In all its uses, the antecedents to *autrement* are quite diverse, and the topic shift is no exception (one may also consider that there is only one type of antecedents, namely discourse topics, and that they are quite diverse in their realization; the distinction is immaterial here). In this section I will review the most usual ones; unsurprisingly, all rely on discourse structure. Here are the kinds of antecedent found in corpora:

- Topicalized noun phrases (outside lists): 12%;
- Enumerated items: 40%;
- Discourse segments (without explicit topic): 30%;
- Frames: 8%;
- Others: 10%.

20 How such antecedents are resolved is investigated in the next section.

5.1. Topicalized noun phrases

21 Quite often (12% of the occurrences), the antecedent to *autrement* is a topicalized noun phrase, where “topicalized” here is meant to denote a syntactic property, although semantics obviously follows suit. The property at stake is what Jacobs (2001) calls “informational separation”, where the topic is first introduced, and then the predication. In French, informational separation is generally marked by left dislocation (Lambrecht, 1994), as illustrated by [8], where the antecedents to *autrement* is *les paramètres*:

[8] Donc **les paramètres**, c'est heu c'est plus général sur le heu le logiciel dedans y a heu la promotion la les dates de stage, parce que les les dates de stages sont connues pour tous les étudiants mais elles changent tous tous les ans quoi en fait en fonction du calendrier, le heu dernier numéro du contrôle continu d'examen, T.P. de la matière enseignant, ça c'est renseigné automatiquement chaque fois qu'on fait la saisie dans le logiciel, mais on peut les modifier si on a besoin d'intervenir sur quelque chose. Voilà, donc qu'est-ce qu'y a d'autre autrement, heu gestion des mots de passe, donc on peut créer un autre utilisateur si on veut.

'So parameters, that's more general, in the software there's the class, training dates, because training dates are known for all students but they change each year depending on schedule, the last number of the exam test, practical work for teaching subject, this one is filled automatically every time you give data to the software, but you can change them if you have to modify something. That's it, so what else apart from that, well password management, so you can create a new user if you want.'

(Corpus PIC)

22 The phrase *les paramètres* is clearly topicalized: it appears on the left of its host sentence, in which it does not play a direct syntactic role. It plays the role of a local topic, detailed in the discourse that follows, and is itself a sub-topic to the more general subject of conversation (computers). *Autrement* targets it and switches to another topic, namely passwords; the discourse on parameters has been previously closed with *voilà*, and *autrement* itself is backed up by *qu'est-ce qu'il y a d'autre*, where one cannot miss the marker *autre*, the morphological root of *autrement*.

5.2. Enumerated items

23 Lists are another structure where *autrement* occurs very frequently (up to 40% of the examples); they are not incompatible with topicalized elements seen in the previous section, quite the contrary: lists often involve topicalization, and topicalized elements often constitute implicit lists. The following example is taken from the same interview as [5] above.

[9] L: Justement quand vous avez le temps **quelles émissions de télévision** vous regardez? Est-ce qu'il y en a que vous regardez habituellement?

P: Non pratiquement, **le film** des fois le vendredi soir quand j'ai le temps d'en prendre un morceau ou le dimanche soir des fois, et j'aime pas quand ils sont sous-titrés. Alors c'est celles-là que je regarde le plus. Autrement **les informations** quand je peux avoir soit les informations euh de onze heures ça dépend à quelle chaîne ou ça dépend à quel moment on est là, et puis autrement j'ai pas une émission précise précis non.

'L: Precisely, when you have time, what kind of programs do you watch? Are there some you usually watch?

P: Not really, movies sometimes on Friday nights when I have time to catch part of them or on Sunday nights sometimes, and I don't like subtitles. So that's what I watch most. Apart from that the news, when I can get news at eleven, it depends on the channel or it depends on the time you're home, and then apart from that I don't have a particular program, no.'

(Corpus CLAPI)

24 In this example, the list as a structural device is clearly elicited by the interviewer's question about TV programs; the interviewee is thus led to review kinds of programs in turn, and first mentions movies and then news, articulating the two with *autrement*. List items are generally short in content, and do not require additional markers (like *voilà*) to delimit sub-topics: the structure of the list is ensured by syntactic relations between the items and the overarching topic; namely *le film* and *les informations* answer the question *quelles émissions de télévision vous regardez?* (*what programs do you watch?*) and are objects to an implicit predicate *je regarde* (*I watch...*) derived from the question. In both cases, the list item starts as sentence fragments (an object and a subordinate clause headed by *quand*) and not as a full sentence. Thus, the relation of each item to the list as a whole is preserved, and *autrement* is simply used as a minimal articulation. The last sentence of the example is also headed by *autrement*, which is halfway between a short-sighted use (the speaker has just mentioned particular programs, thus stating that he does not watch anything particular is a possible contradiction) and a topic shift use (considering other kinds of program, the speaker asserts that he does not watch anything).

5.3. Frames

25 Frames are major devices in discourse structure. They often consist in adverbial or prepositional phrases setting the spatial and/or temporal circumstances of what is to come (they are generally topicalized) and delimitating thematic units (Charolles, 2003, 2005). Like topicalized noun phrases, they are easy targets for *autrement*, thanks to their visibility and role.

[10] À **vingt ans** mon dieu c'était la guerre, la guerre de Quatorze, c'était bien terrible tout ça. Je me rappelle que j'étais j'avais vingt-deux ans j'étais à Paris et la Bertha

nous tombait sur la tête vous savez la euh comment je veux dire ce que les z- les Allemands nous envoyaient vous avez pas jamais entendu parler de la guerre de de quator- si mais la Bertha c'est Paris. Alors on allait dans les caves naturellement j'étais chez mes patrons, ils étaient bien gentils du reste et fallait c'était la guerre fallait aller courir au charbon rue de la gare du Nord moi j'étais rue Richelieu presque au Palais Royal alors fallait courir chercher des kilos de charbon à la gare du Nord sous son bras. On était gelés gelés gelés ça c'est ma vie à Paris vous savez c'était les bombardements c'était tout ça. Oui ça là-dessus j'ai regretté bien des choses parce que je me plaisais à Paris j'avais des patrons très gentils tout ça c'était des Juifs pourtant mais enfin ils étaient très bons pour moi question de ça autrement avant de avant cette guerre j'étais domestique dans les campagnes euh enfin dans mon au tous alentour de mon pays quoi.

'When I was twenty my god it was war, the 1914-1918 war, that was terrible. I remember I was twenty-two, I was in Paris and the Bertha was falling on our heads, you know I mean, what the Germans sent us, you've never heard about 1914 war, yes but Bertha, it was Paris. So we went to the cellar, naturally, I was at my bosses', they were very nice by the way, and it was war, we had to run after coal, rue de la Gare du Nord, I was rue Richelieu almost Palais Royal so we had to run after kilos of coal at the Gare du Nord under your arm. We were freezing, that's my life in Paris, you know it was bombing and all. Yes on this point I've missed many things because I liked it in Paris, I had very nice bosses, they were Jews nonetheless but still they were very kind to me. Apart from that before that war I was a servant in the country, I mean around my land.'

(Corpus de la Parole)

- 26 Here the antecedent is *à vingt ans* and it heads the discourse that follows up to *autrement*, which is used to switch to another temporal setting (before the war), and thus introduces a new discourse segment with its own thematic unity. The length of the first segment and the absence of any closing device is remarkable: the discourse relies only on frames articulated by *autrement* to be segmentally structured, which shows how powerful such markers can be.

5.4. Discourse segments

- 27 Discourse segments are organized sequences of propositions, linked by discourse relations (Asher, Lascarides, 2003) and elaborating on a common topic (Asher, 2004a). They frequently constitute antecedents of anaphora (Consten, Knees & Schwarz-Friesel, 2007), and *autrement* is no exception (30% of the examples). Note that the antecedents reviewed in the previous sections also involve discourse segments, but explicit markers (the antecedents proper) could be targeted by *autrement*; here no such devices are used. This is illustrated by the following example:

- [11] Et puis après j'ai travaillé dans un bureau dans lequel se trouvait mon mari, c'était pas très pas très autorisé parce que il était plus, **il était gradé malgré tout alors euh**

y avait des jalousies y avait des, vous savez ce qui se passe dans dans les bureaux c'est souvent des des jalousies et des méchancetés, j'en ai j'en ai encaissé pas mal, ouais alors je avec ça j'étais pas mal souffrante et j'avais j'avais hâte vraiment de lâcher. Ben autrement c'était pas désagréable de de remplir ces fiches de de s'occuper du personnel.

'And then after that I worked in an office where my husband was, it was not really allowed because he was somewhat highly ranked anyway, so there was envy, you know how it goes in offices, there often is envy and meanness, I took a lot, besides I was unwell and I was really eager to quit. Well apart from that it wasn't bad to fill those cards and be in charge of employees.'

(Corpus de la Parole)

28 Here the antecedent is the entire discourse in bold. The main topic is the speaker's job at her husband's office, and a sub-topic is how hard it was, illustrated by envy and the speaker being sick. She then turns to another aspect of the job, articulating both parts with *autrement*.

29 When the antecedent is a discourse segment, it is not necessarily headed by an explicit discourse topic. In [11], the speaker does not introduce the part in bold with something like *here's the unpleasant part*. Instead, topicality emerges from discourse structure itself; although this point is debated in discourse theory, discourse cohesion cannot be readily accounted for without (Asher, 2004a, 2004b). Although it is impossible to settle anything definitely here, it should be remarked that the ability for discourse segments to function as antecedents to *autrement* is an argument in favour of "emerging topics", since *autrement* takes topics as antecedents elsewhere, as shown in the previous sections; if we did not assume such a topic to exist in [11], this would imply that *autrement* works differently here, which is not the case in other respects. The segment must have some kind of unity to work properly with *autrement*, and this unity must be thematic (Isambert, 2010; see also the references by Asher against referential chains as a sufficient device to ensure discourse cohesion, and Isambert, 2008b, for experimental data).

6. Delimitating topics

30 So far I have said that the antecedent to *autrement* is a (possibly implicit) topical element in the left context. However, this poses a problem: there might be (and there generally are) several active topics in a given context. I have mentioned topics and sub-topics, for instance. The question is: how does *autrement* target the right topic? In other words, how are wrong anaphor resolutions avoided? Given the schematic structure below, how does one know what topic is closed?

Topic ... Sub-topic ... Sub-sub-topic ... *autrement* ... new ((sub-)sub-)topic?

31 One obvious answer is that the discourse following *autrement* is at the same level as the antecedent. While this answer is sensible, it does not suffice, for two main

reasons: first, because “being at the same level” is not a clear linguistic property, although it makes intuitive sense; second because most examples do contain explicit markers that help speakers follow the right track.

6.1. Closing devices

32 First, let us see how topics are closed in the first place. Example [5] above is replete with markers indicating that the current topic is to be closed: first a kind of summary statement in [5d] brings the narration to a conclusion; it is followed by *voilà* (itself prefixed with a short, perhaps insignificant pause) and then a two-second silence. *Voilà* also occurs in [8] to close the current sub-topic, and [11] contains the less obvious *ben* just before *autrement*.

33 In more than 20% of the utterances, *autrement* is preceded by such a marker (besides *voilà*: *oui*, *d'accord*, *ok*). Also, *autrement* frequently occurs at the beginning of a turn (25% of the utterances), either after a short (one-word) interruption by the interlocutor, or precisely as a mean for the interlocutor to interrupt the speaker.

34 Those markers, although they appear quite frequently in such positions, are not unambiguous: they might appear elsewhere. They must be important clues nonetheless, otherwise they would not occur with such regularity. They are also strictly speaking unnecessary: in several examples they do not occur. But what seems redundant in retrospect makes more sense at production time, especially in oral speech: discourse structure is an “emergent” property of speech and signalling it redundantly probably ensures it is understood correctly.

35 Those closing devices do not automatically ease the discovery of the right antecedent for *autrement*, and as we will see presently other strategies are used. However such devices are sometimes more explicit and prepare the ground for a new (sub-)topic level with the one they close. This happens in [8], where *qu'est-ce qu'il y a d'autre* (*what else*) occurs between *voilà* and *autrement*. The interrogative form indicates that more is to come, whereas *autre* links the upcoming topic to the previous one. Here, *autrement* seems redundant, especially after the morphologically related *autre*, but even if we choose to ignore the remark on redundancy above, *autrement* seems to become a reflex when shifting topic: it isn't mandatory yet, and will perhaps never be, but it does occur with higher frequency than what might be expected from sheer superficial “economy”, including contexts where the topic shift is made clear by other means.

6.2. Syntactic and semantic similarity

36 Let us now turn to the question of finding the right antecedent. Obviously *autrement* alone does not suffice, and here we will see how our intuition about topics at the same level makes linguistic sense. The more frequent strategy (40% of the examples) is to state the new topic immediately after *autrement*; from the point of view of discourse structure, this new topic is on a par with the previous one because it has most, if not all, the syntactic and semantic properties of the antecedent to *autrement*.

If the antecedent is a topicalized noun phrase, then the new topic is one too, as in [8] above, where the antecedent to *autrement* is the topicalized *les paramètres* and the new topic, *gestion des mots de passe*, is also topicalized. In [9], *le film* (antecedent) and *les informations* (new topic) are both sentence fragments working as answers to the question and as objects to the implicit predicate *I watch*. Finally, in [10] the antecedent is the framing prepositional phrase *à vingt ans* and the new topic is *avant cette guerre*, a framing prepositional phrase too.

37 As might be expected, semantics plays an important role too. For instance, in [9], *film* (movie) and *informations* (news) are both hyponyms of *émissions de télévision* (TV programs); thus, they are lexically equal, one more clue to their being on the same discursive level. In other terms, the range of possible antecedents to *autrement* is narrowed to those similar to the new topic, and in all cases there is only one such element available in the preceding discourse. In [10], it is crucial that *à vingt ans* and *avant cette guerre* are both temporal frames, otherwise the latter would not easily replace the former (Charolles, Vigier, 2005).

38 Thus, for a new topic to be at the same level as the antecedent of *autrement* is not only intuitively satisfying, it is also backed up by data. Interestingly, whereas we started by asking how *autrement* could target the right antecedent, we now might ask the opposite question: given that topics match each other so clearly, what is the need for *autrement*? In other words, since a new topic obviously replaces the previous one, why does one need an additional topic shift marker at all? Interestingly, redundancy does not explain it all: in some of the examples above, removing *autrement* does not just decrease redundancy, it also decreases acceptability (in [5] and [9], for instance), unless other means are used (strong closing devices as described in the previous section); even the frames in [10], which are generally thought as strong discourse organizers at least in written text (Charolles, 2005), do not make discourse structure clear enough to dispense with *autrement*.

39 In still other cases, relations between topics are actually shaped by *autrement*. It is the case for instance in [11], where the discourse without *autrement* would be contradictory, the speaker asserting that her workplace was at once pleasant and unpleasant. In the following (literary) example, a similar contradiction would ensue without *autrement*:

[12] Juste au bord des eaux qui baissent chaque jour, une teinte verte persiste aux branches; autrement, n'importe où l'on regarde, c'est, dirait-on, la rouille de l'arrière-automne, ou les grisailles de l'hiver.

'Near to the dwindling waters, a green hue remains to the branches; elsewhere [autrement], wherever one looks, it looks like the rust of after-autumn, or winter's greyness.'

(Pierre Loti, *L'Inde sans les Anglais*, 1903)

40 The interesting point here is that while *juste au bord des eaux qui baissent chaque jour* and *n'importe où l'on regarde* are both frames and thus could stand on a par, the latter would be understood as included in the former (i.e. *wherever*

one looks falls under the scope of *near the dwindling waters* by default) but for the presence of *autrement* which prevents such an interpretation: the speaker has switched topics, and *near the dwindling waters* is excluded from the new one, despite its generality.

- 41 Thus, in cases where *autrement* is required as well as in those where it seems redundant, there is a constant trade-off between what is contributed by relations between topics and what by *autrement*. There is a strong tendency for both sets of clues to occur together, and expectations stemming from studies of written text or artificial examples should be revised when it comes to oral speech: redundancy is in the eye of the beholder and with such frequency and motivation it is hardly redundancy anymore.

6.3. Repetition of the overarching topic

- 42 Yet another way for *autrement* to find its antecedent without ambiguity is to mention the topic hierarchically superior to the one being shifted (i.e. the antecedent itself; this accounts for 40% of the examples). This is exemplified in [5f], where *les choses intéressantes* follows *autrement* immediately, that noun phrase repeating the explicit topic of the current conversation turn as stated by the interviewer under the form *tout ce qui vous intéresse*. The following example is clearer still:

[13] A: Alors est-ce que est-ce qu'on peut parler de **votre région**? Qu'est-ce que ça évoque pour vous?

B: Oh ben **la région** euh y a j'ai toute ma famille qu'habite là alors euh... c'est je trouve ça bien quoi. Et euh on habite euh tout euh, j'ai mes grand-mères et tout ça qui habitent dans le même village à part euh j'ai un oncle qui a qui est parti habiter ailleurs à cause de son travail, alors euh parce que ici il peut pas faire le travail qu'il fait alors euh voilà. Euh autrement **dans la région** y a c'est surtout l'agriculture.

'A: So can we talk about your region? What does it mean to you?

B: Oh well, the region, all my family lives here so... I think it's nice. And we live, well, my grandmothers and all, they live in the same village, except an uncle, he left to live elsewhere because of his job, because here he can't do the job he's doing, so that's it. Apart from that in the region it's mostly farming.'

(Corpus de la Parole)

- 43 The interviewer explicitly asks the interviewee about a specific topic (the interviewee's region), which the latter then splits into sub-topics (his family and the region's economy), articulated by *autrement* and introduced by a predication on the main topic itself. Accounting for this strategy can be done along the following lines: the speaker shifts topics with *autrement*, which implies that *autrement* finds an antecedent; the question, once again, is: how is this antecedent unambiguously selected? Let us suppose that topics are hierarchically ordered (i.e. a topic is either the main topic or a sub-topic to another one); since the speaker reinstates the topic *la région* after *autrement*, obviously that is not the topic he chooses to close;

he cannot close a topic hierarchically higher either, otherwise *la région* would be automatically closed too (Isambert, 2008a, and next section). The only remaining candidate is a sub-topic to *la région*, in this case the speaker's family.

44 If we indulge in some speculation at this point, it seems to be the case that repeating an overarching topic after *autrement* closes *all* subtopics. In [13], the speaker talks about his family (a sub-topic to *la région*) and then more precisely about his uncle (a sub-topic to the family topic); we know that *autrement* shifts a topic, we know it must be a sub-topic to *la région*, but there is no *a priori* reason that it be the immediately subordinate one (the speaker's family) instead of one lower still (his uncle). Nonetheless, both in [5] and [13], and in other examples as well, the repetition of a topic implies that all sub-topics are closed, and it never happens that the speaker closes some sub-topic and leaves other open. It is as if the overarching topic were not reinstated only for convenience, leaving the possibility that sub-topics are still active: instead, such a move means that the speaker goes on building discourse structure from the point indicated by the reinstated topic. This implies some strong assumptions about discourse structure that I investigate in the next section.

7. What it means to close a topic

45 In what precedes I have made some implicit assumptions in order to carry on the analysis of topic shifts with *autrement*. One is that the antecedents to *autrement* are available for anaphor resolution. Another assumption is that closing a topic forbids any further reference to what was introduced under its heading. Both assumptions address the much-discussed issue of the Right Frontier in discourse structure.

7.1. The Right Frontier

46 The notion of Right Frontier (Polanyi, 1985; Asher, 2005; Isambert, 2008b) is meant to account for the (un)availability of discourse referents at a given point in discourse. It is assumed that referents on the Right Frontier are available as antecedents to anaphora, whereas others are not. What exactly is on the Right Frontier is a difficult matter: the last proposition, of course, and any points higher in the structure, i.e. propositions to which the last one is related more or less directly by a subordinating relation as theorized in SDRT [Segmented Discourse Representation Theory] (Asher, Vieu, 2005). In contrast, coordinating discourse relations makes the point where the relation attaches unavailable. Things are not so straightforward, however, and some referents seem to be able to percolate upward and remain available even though the proposition where they occur has become unavailable, at least when those referents have sufficient importance to be considered topical (for instance, main characters in a narrative).

47 The availability of the antecedents to *autrement* implies that they belong to the Right Frontier. Since the proposition where they first appeared is often far

away in the left context, this in turn implies that they have some special place in the discourse structure. Such distinction has often been considered a hallmark of elements such as topicalized phrases and frames, whose scope has been shown to exceed the sentence where they belong (Charolles, 2003; Combettes, 2005). It is thus no surprise that the antecedents to *autrement* frequently turn up to be topicalized phrases and frames.

48 The importance of *macropropositions* should not be ignored either (Guindon, Kintsch, 1984). Such propositions play the role of summaries of what is to come, and in our example are generally found in a question by an interviewer (e.g. [5], [13]). They remain longer in memory and shape the discourse that follows. In terms of discourse relations, macropropositions are elaborated by the propositions they introduce, and such elaboration is considered a prime example of a subordinating discourse relation (Asher, Vieu, 2005). Consequently, macropropositions remain available when discourse proceeds, i.e. they stay on the Right Frontier. It is again no surprise that *autrement* relies on such propositions, or their important part (e.g. *your region* in *can we talk about your region?*), when anchoring the topic shift.

49 Thus, *autrement* does not bring new insights on the Right Frontier, but it does bring further evidence to its reality. Furthermore, when *autrement* seems to rely on invisible clues like emergent topics in [11], one is justified in thinking that such topics indeed exist in discourse structure, because there is no good reason why *autrement* should behave differently in those examples.

7.2. Closed topics and the Right Frontier

50 Since topics are like headings over discourse segments, i.e. they are elaborated by discourse segments, if they are closed and replaced with a new one, they should not be available anymore for anaphora resolution, nor should the discourse segments that depend on them. That is, they leave the Right Frontier and the referents they contain cannot be antecedents anymore. Is this the case?

51 Assessing such an assumption with corpora is no simple task, and psycholinguistic experiments have a word to say. Without such data at hand (Isambert [2008b] presents an experiment about the accessibility of topics, but not about *autrement* precisely), one can nonetheless gather some clues in real utterances. For one thing, there is negative evidence: it never happens that a speaker refers to an entity introduced in a discourse segment headed by a topic that has been closed by *autrement*. I.e. one never finds an example like [14] below, a modified version of [13] where the proposition containing *autrement* makes reference to an entity introduced under the previous topic (the uncle's speaker).

[14] Oh ben la région euh y a j'ai toute ma famille qu'habite là alors euh... c'est je trouve ça bien quoi. Et euh on habite euh tout euh, j'ai mes grand-mères et tout ça qui habitent dans le même village à part euh j'ai un oncle qui a qui est parti habiter ailleurs à cause de son travail, alors euh parce que ici il peut pas faire le travail qu'il fait alors euh voilà. Euh autrement dans la région #il a tous ses amis.

‘Oh well, the region, all my family lives here so... I think it’s nice. And we live, well, my grandmothers and all, they live in the same village, except an uncle, he left to live elsewhere because of his job, because here he can’t do the job he’s doing, so that’s it. Apart from that in the region he has all his friends.’

52 One never finds such examples, but does it mean they are unacceptable (as noted here)? It seems that the only way to make sense of [14] is that *autrement* does not shift the “family” sub-topic but one deeper yet, namely the speaker’s uncle’s job. This is in contradiction with the overarching topic (*la région*) being repeated, but then the hearer might still accommodate the prepositional phrase *dans la région* as a detached element without topical force, hence not a repetition of the topic *per se*, despite the referential identity. Such considerations might be taken into account to make sense of the [14], but it requires quite a lot of processing, and this may explain why the example does not sound good.

53 Other examples may be clearer, and it seems for instance impossible to retrieve anything about *movies* in [9] once the speaker has turned to *news*. The list structure of this example, where topics are managed thanks to strong syntactic-semantic means, probably plays some role: the sounder the structure, the harder it is to violate it. Thus, *autrement* seems to be a strong structural device, but as we have said above, it works all the better with other markers.

8. Conclusion

54 While *autrement* is not the only marker used to manage the topical structure of discourse (others include similar devices such as *sinon*, *à part ça...*), and while it often comes accompanied by other markers, it remains crucial in an operation quite simple, yet vital to discourse: changing the matter of conversation. In doing so it is a valuable window on discourse structure, since it exhibits mechanisms that have been more often investigated with regard to discourse referents than to the apparently more fleeting discourse topics.

55 An interesting fact, not addressed in this paper, is that this use of *autrement* is almost non-existent in written text, which is all the more striking as it is extremely frequent in oral discourse. The reason for this is that *autrement* is still perceived as colloquial and thus outside the written norm, a fact that probably betrays its youth: the grammaticalization that has created it from the uses mentioned at the beginning of this paper must be quite recent.

56 Another factor might be that discourse structure in written texts is often made as clear as possible by other means, framing expressions being for instance used more systematically, not to mention titles and paragraphs. Thus the apparent redundancy displayed by oral utterances is unnecessary, and generally considered as “bad grammar”. In oral speech, the situation is quite different; for one thing, the hearer cannot reprocess a discourse segment by reading it again. Means similar to

those in writing are used (pauses, for instance), but they are transient, and often ambiguous or ambiguously used; *autrement*, on the other hand, is clear, because it has no other function but to shift topics.

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