

## A Constructional Approach to Conjunctions of Cause/Reason in English

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In order to give an integrated account to conjunctions of causation or reason, i.e. *because*, *since* and *for*, I propose the Causal Construction (C Construction) and the Reasoning Construction (R Construction), and I argue that syntactic and semantic differences should be attributed not only to the lexical properties of each conjunction but also to the properties of the constructions they are used in.

The meaning of the C Construction is “a situation *P* causes another situation *Q* in the real world” and the meaning corresponds to either syntactic form, [*S*<sub>2</sub> *because* *S*<sub>1</sub>] or [*Because* *S*<sub>1</sub>, *S*<sub>2</sub>]. The meaning of the R Construction, on the other hand, is that “the knowledge that *P* causes the speaker’s conclusion that *Q*” and it corresponds to either syntactic form, [*S*<sub>2</sub>, *because* *S*<sub>1</sub>], [*Since* *S*<sub>1</sub>, *S*<sub>2</sub>], [*S*<sub>2</sub>, *since* *S*<sub>1</sub>], and [*S*<sub>2</sub>, *for* *S*<sub>1</sub>].

What is important is that *P* and *Q* in the C Construction combine tightly together, composing one proposition as a whole, whereas those in the R Construction are independent of each other, so that they behave like two independent clauses juxtaposed. Compare the interrogative of the C Construction as in (1a) with that of the R Construction as in (1b):

- (1) a. Is the ground wet because it has rained?  
 b. Has it rained, because the ground is wet.

As the intonation contours and the punctuations suggest, (1a) asks whether the rain has caused the ground to become wet, whereas (1b) only whether it has rained or not. The *because*-clause in (1a) is a part of the propositional content asked, but that in (1b) is not. Hence, the different intonation and punctuation patterns. In this relation, it should be noted that in the R Construction, the reason clause and the conclusion clause each has a status as an independent clause (cf. Nakau (1994)). Compare (1b), where the main clause is an independent speech-act of question, with (2), where the *because*-clause contains a speech-act construction.

- (2) We should go on a picnic, because isn’t it a beautiful day!

(Lakoff (1987:474))

Because a speech-act construction such as the one embedded in the *because*-clause in (2) occurs only in an asserted clause (cf. Hooper and Thompson (1973)), it follows that the *because*-clause in the R Construction is asserted as an independent clause. The *because*-clause in the C Construction, when preposed, is presupposed, and when it is postposed, the cause and effect are both presupposed and only the causal relation between them is asserted (e.g. Lambrecht (1994:58)). For example, (3a) is odd, while (3b) is fine as an answer to a question such as *why isn’t John coming to class*:

- (3) a. ??Because John is sick, he isn't coming to class.  
 b. John isn't coming to class because he is sick.

In (3a), the reason for John not coming to class is presupposed, not asserted, making the utterance odd. (3b) is fine, since the causal relation between John's being sick and his not coming to class is asserted. These two instances of the C Construction are thus differentiated in terms of their information structures.

According to Quirk et al. (1985:928), *for* is a coordinator except that it does not allow a conjunction reduction as demonstrated in (4), and therefore they refer to *for* as a "semi-coordinator", which has properties of both a subordinator and a coordinator.

(4) He did not want it, for \*(he) was obstinate. (Quirk et al. (1985:924))  
 However, given that *for* is related only to the R Construction, it is a requirement from the nature of the construction that *for* must connect two full clauses. If an elliptical clause is connected to another clause, the sequence of the events seems to denote one combined process. This is incompatible with the nature of the R Construction. We thus no longer employ a term such as a semi-coordinator by saying that *for* is a coordinator used only in the R Construction. Then, the fact that *for* can connect two speech-act constructions as in (5) can be explained quite straightforwardly.

- (5) Do it yourself, for who else can!

Since *for* is a coordinator and is used in the R Construction, two clauses can be asserted simultaneously.

*Since* is a subordinator that only occurs in the R Construction. Therefore, a *since*-clause, unlike *because*- and *for*-clauses, can occupy either a sentence-initial or sentence-final position. A *since*-clause can be asserted whether it is postposed as in (6a) or preposed as in (6b):

- (6) a. I'd better leave, since here comes my bus! (Lakoff (1984:478))  
 b. ... since in no real sense could they be said to have had the opportunity of availing themselves of the action project, they are omitted ... from most of the following analysis. (BNC)

This is precisely because of the property of the R Construction. That is, two clauses are independent from each other. Note also that it is this constructional property that requires the comma intonation between the main clause and the *since*-clause.

In this work, I have proposed two construction schemas that I call the C Construction and the R Construction. *Because* is used both in the C and R Constructions. *Since* and *for* are used only in the R Construction. The former is a subordinator, and the latter a coordinator. The division of labor among the three conjunctions is thus obvious, and syntactic and semantic behaviors should be attributed to the property of each construction these conjunctions are used in.