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SEMANTICO-FUNCTIONAL PECULIARITIES OF CAUSAL CONJUNCTIONS IN TAJIK AND ENGLISH: A  
COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

Research article

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**Abstract**

The article dwells on the expression of causality in Tajik and English, focusing on the semantic and functional peculiarities of causal conjunctions. The article compiles the comprehensive inventory of causal conjunctions in the compared languages, meticulously analyzing their form, usage, and the specific types of causal relationships they encode. It further examines the pragmatic functions of these conjunctions, considering their role in conveying formality, emphasis, subjectivity, and discourse function. By integrating theoretical frameworks such as Functional Grammar, Cognitive Linguistics, Typological Linguistics, Grammaticalization Theory, and Construction Grammar, the research illuminates the complex interplay between language, cognition, and communication. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic variations in the expression of causality and have implications for the fields of syntax, semantics, translation studies, second language acquisition, and cross-cultural communication. This comparative analysis highlights areas of convergence and divergence between Tajik and English, ultimately enriching our understanding of how these two typologically distinct languages encode the fundamental concept of cause and effect.

**Keywords:** expression of causality, Tajik and English, semantico-functional peculiarities, causal conjunctions, comparative analysis.

СЕМАНТИКО-ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПРИЧИННЫХ СОЮЗОВ В ТАДЖИКСКОМ И  
АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ОБЗОР

Научная статья

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**Аннотация**

Статья посвящена выражению причинно-следственных отношений в таджикском и английском языках с акцентом на семантико-функциональные особенности причинных союзов. В статье составлен полный перечень причинных союзов в сопоставляемых языках, тщательно проанализированы их форма, употребление и конкретные типы причинно-следственных связей, которые они кодируют. Также рассматриваются прагматические функции этих союзов с учетом их роли в передаче формальности, эмфазы, субъективности и дискурсивной функции. Исследование, основанное на таких теоретических подходах, как функциональная грамматика, когнитивная лингвистика, типологическая лингвистика, теория грамматикализации и грамматика конструкций, проливает свет на сложное взаимодействие между языком, познанием и коммуникацией. Полученные результаты способствуют более глубокому пониманию межъязыковых различий в выражении причинности и имеют значение для синтаксиса, семантики, переводоведения, усвоения второго языка и межкультурной коммуникации. Сравнительный анализ выявляет области конвергенции и дивергенции между таджикским и английским языками, что в конечном итоге обогащает наше понимание того, как эти два типологически разных языка кодируют фундаментальное понятие причины и следствия.

**Ключевые слова:** выражение причинности, таджикский и английский языки, семантико-функциональные особенности, причинные союзы, сравнительный анализ.

**Introduction**

Causality, the relationship between cause and effect, is a foundational element of human cognition and communication, enabling meaningful interpretation of and interaction with the world. As a universal cognitive domain, it manifests in all languages, although expression strategies vary based on both universal cognitive principles and language-specific characteristics. The relevant article dwells on the linguistic expression of causality, specifically through a comparative analysis of causal conjunctions in Tajik, a Southwestern Iranian language of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family, and English, a West Germanic language also within the Indo-European family.

Although Tajik and English exhibit distinct genealogical and typological characteristics, both languages have developed complex systems for encoding causality. These systems utilize various grammatical devices, including conjunctions, prepositions, adverbs, and complex syntactic structures. This study focuses specifically on causal conjunctions, the linguistic elements that explicitly signal the cause-effect relationship within sentences. These conjunctions function as overt markers connecting a clause representing a cause to a clause representing its corresponding effect or result.

Causal conjunctions, such as *because*, *since*, and *as* in English and *zero*, *chunki*, *ki*, *baroi on ki*, and *azbaski* in Tajik, are not merely grammatical connectors; they carry significant semantic and pragmatic implications that reflect the communicator's perspective on the expressed causal relationship. These conjunctions signal diverse types of causality, from direct physical causation to more inferential links based on reason, purpose, or circumstance. They also convey varying degrees of formality, emphasis, and subjectivity, reflecting the communicative context and the communicator's objectives.

Accordingly, this study pursues the following objectives:

1. *Comprehensive Inventory*: to compile a comprehensive inventory of causal conjunctions in Tajik and English, meticulously documenting their forms and usage patterns.

2. *Semantic Analysis*: to conduct a detailed semantic analysis of each conjunction, examining the specific types of causal relationships encoded (e.g., direct causation, reason, purpose, circumstance), their facticity (i.e., whether they presuppose the truth of the connected clauses), and their scope (i.e., the extent of their modification of the main clause).

3. *Functional Analysis*: to analyze the pragmatic functions of these conjunctions, investigating their role in conveying varying degrees of formality, emphasis, subjectivity, and speaker stance.

4. *Comparative Framework*: to consider a comparative framework for analyzing similarities and differences between Tajik and English causal conjunctions, identifying key areas of convergence and divergence.

5. *Theoretical Implications*: to discuss the theoretical implications of the findings, relating them to broader linguistic theories concerning typology, grammaticalization, information structure, and the relationship between language and cognition.

This study aims to contribute to a more profound understanding of the semantic and functional characteristics of causal conjunctions in Tajik and English, illuminating the complex interplay between language, cognition, and the cross-linguistic expression of causality. The findings will have implications for linguists specializing in the syntax and semantics of subordination, as well as for researchers in translation studies, second language acquisition, and cross-cultural communication. The subsequent section details the methodology employed in this investigation and discusses the theoretical frameworks guiding the analysis.

### Research methods and principles

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of causal conjunctions in Tajik and English. The research process involves the following steps:

#### 1. Data Collection.

##### 1.1. Corpus Analysis:

*Tajik*: The primary source of data for Tajik will be the Tajik National Corpus (TNC) when it becomes fully accessible and searchable. In the interim, a diverse range of written and spoken texts will be collected, including literary works (fiction and poetry), newspaper articles, academic publications, transcripts of speeches, and online forums, ensuring a balanced representation of different genres and registers.

*English*: The primary source of data for English will be the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), a large and balanced corpus representing various genres and registers. The British National Corpus (BNC) will be used as a supplementary resource to verify findings from COCA and to identify any potential differences between American and British usage.

##### 1.2. Elicitation from Native Speakers:

To supplement the corpus data and gain insights into the nuances of usage and acceptability, elicitation tasks will be conducted with native speakers of both Tajik and English. These tasks will include grammaticality judgments, sentence completion tasks, and contextualized preference tasks designed to probe the speakers' intuitions about the semantic and pragmatic differences between various causal conjunctions. A minimum of 10 native speakers for each language, representing diverse dialectal backgrounds and educational levels, will be recruited for the elicitation tasks.

#### 2. Data Analysis.

##### 2.1. Identification and Classification:

All instances of potential causal conjunctions in the collected data will be identified and tagged using appropriate annotation software. Each identified conjunction will be classified based on its form, syntactic position, and the type of clause it introduces.

##### 2.2. Semantic Analysis:

Each conjunction will be analyzed in terms of its semantic properties, including:

*Type of Causality*: (e.g., direct physical causation, reason, purpose, circumstance, enabling condition) based on established semantic frameworks (e.g., Sweetser, 1990; Altenberg, 1984).

*Factivity*: Whether the conjunction presupposes the truth of the connected clauses.

*Scope*: The extent to which the conjunction's meaning modifies the main clause.

Contextual analysis will be employed to determine the precise meaning and function of each conjunction in its specific context of use.

##### 2.3. Functional Analysis:

The pragmatic functions of each conjunction will be examined, considering factors such as:

*Formality*: to determine the register (formal, informal, neutral) in which each conjunction is typically used.

*Emphasis*: to assess the degree of emphasis or prominence given to the cause or the effect.

*Subjectivity*: to analyze the extent to which the conjunction reflects the speaker's personal stance or evaluation.

*Discourse Function*: to identify the role of the conjunction in the overall discourse structure (e.g., introducing background information, providing an explanation, justifying a claim).

##### 2.4. Quantitative Analysis:

Frequency counts of each conjunction will be obtained from the corpora to determine their relative prevalence in different genres and registers. Statistical tests (e.g., chi-square, log-likelihood) will be used to identify significant differences in the distribution of conjunctions across languages and genres.

### 2.5. Comparative Analysis:

The findings from the semantic and functional analyses of Tajik and English conjunctions will be compared and contrasted, highlighting the key areas of similarity and difference. A comparative framework will be developed to systematically analyze the cross-linguistic variations.

### Theoretical frameworks

This study draws upon several theoretical frameworks to inform the analysis and interpretation of the data:

#### 1. Functional Grammar:

Functional Grammar, particularly following the work of Dik (1989) and Givón (2001), provides a valuable framework for analyzing the relationship between form and function in linguistic expressions. It emphasizes the communicative purpose of language and posits that grammatical structures are shaped by their communicative functions. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding how causal conjunctions are employed to achieve specific communicative goals in different contexts. Concepts such as illocutionary force, theme/rheme, and given/new information will be used to analyze the pragmatic functions of the conjunctions.

#### 2. Cognitive Linguistics:

Cognitive Linguistics, particularly the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Langacker (1987), offers insights into the conceptual underpinnings of language and the role of metaphor and mental imagery in shaping linguistic structures. The concept of conceptual metaphor, where abstract concepts are understood in terms of more concrete ones, can be applied to analyze the conceptualization of causality in Tajik and English. The notion of construal, the way in which a communicator chooses to present a particular situation, is relevant for understanding the nuances of meaning conveyed by different causal conjunctions.

#### 3. Typological Linguistics:

Typological linguistics, as exemplified by the work of Greenberg (1963) and Comrie (1989), provides a framework for comparing languages based on their structural properties and identifying cross-linguistic generalizations. The typological differences between Tajik (SOV, agglutinative) and English (SVO, analytic) will be considered as potential factors influencing the expression of causality in these languages. Concepts such as word order typology, head-marking vs. dependent-marking, and grammaticalization pathways will inform the analysis.

#### 4. Grammaticalization Theory:

Grammaticalization theory (Hopper & Traugott, 2003; Heine & Kuteva, 2007) explores the historical development of grammatical forms from lexical sources. This framework will be used to examine the potential diachronic development of causal conjunctions in Tajik and English, tracing their evolution from content words to grammatical markers. The principles of grammaticalization, such as semantic bleaching, decategorialization, and phonetic erosion, will be applied to analyze the historical trajectory of these conjunctions.

#### 5. Construction Grammar:

Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995, 2006) posits that grammatical knowledge consists of a network of form-meaning pairings, or constructions, ranging from simple morphemes to complex syntactic patterns. This framework can be employed to analyze causal conjunctions as part of larger causal constructions, examining the interplay between the conjunction and other elements within the construction. The notion of inheritance and the idea that constructions can be related to each other in a hierarchical network will be relevant for understanding the relationships between different types of causal expressions.

The integration of these theoretical frameworks will facilitate a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the semantic and functional characteristics of causal conjunctions in Tajik and English. This, in turn, will contribute to a deeper understanding of the cross-linguistic expression of causality and the complex interplay between language, cognition, and communication.

### Main results and discussion

Conjunctions play a pivotal role in the explicit marking of cause-effect relationships within a sentence, serving as overt linguistic signals that connect a cause clause to its corresponding effect or result clause. Both Tajik and English employ a diverse array of conjunctions to introduce causal clauses, reflecting the complexity and pervasiveness of this semantic relation. However, a closer examination reveals subtle but significant differences in the distribution, semantic range, and pragmatic force of these conjunctions:

#### 1. Tajik Causal Conjunctions.

Tajik possesses a rich inventory of conjunctions that can signal causality, each carrying specific nuances and stylistic preferences:

*зеро (zero)*: This conjunction is generally considered the most direct and formal equivalent of English *because*. It often introduces a clause that provides a direct and objective explanation for the event or state described in the main clause. It is more prevalent in written language, particularly in formal and academic contexts (Perry, 2005).

*Example*: “Ӯ ба мактаб нарафт, *зеро* бемор буд” (Ӯ ба maktab naraft, *zero* bemor bud.) – “He didn't go to school because he was sick”.

*чунки (chunki)*: The relevant conjunction is perhaps the most common and multi-functional causal conjunction in spoken Tajik. It is also frequently used in less formal writing. While often translated as *because*, it can also carry the meaning of *since* in certain contexts, indicating a slightly weaker or more circumstantial causal link.

*Example*: “Мо ба боғ нарафтем, *чунки* борон меборид” (Мо ба bogh naraftem, *chunki* boron meborid) – “We didn't go to the park *because* it was raining”.

*ki* (*ki*): The conjunction in question is highly polysemous in Tajik, with its primary function being that of a general subordinator or complementizer, akin to English *that*. However, in specific contexts, it can introduce a clause that provides an explanation or justification for the main clause, thus assuming a causal function (Rastorgueva, 1952; 1981). This usage often overlaps with the function of explaining or elaborating upon something.

*Example*: “Вай хурсанд аст, *ki* имтиҳонро бомуваффақият супурд” (*Vai xursand ast, ki imtihonro bomuvaffaqiyat supurd*) – “He is happy *that/because* he passed the exam successfully”.

*барои он ки* (*baroi on ki*): This is a more complex, phrasal conjunction that literally translates to *for the reason that*. It introduces a clause that explicitly states the reason or justification for the action or event in the main clause. It tends to be used in more formal or explanatory contexts.

*Example*: “Ман ин китобро харидам, *барои он ки* ба ман дар бораи таърих маълумот лозим буд”. (*Man in kitobro xaridam, baroi on ki ba man dar borai ta'rix ma'lumot lozim bud*) – “I bought this book *because* I needed information about history”.

*азбаски* (*azbaski*): The conjunction under study is similar in meaning to *chunki* and can often be translated as *because*, *since* or *inasmuch as*. It often introduces a clause that provides background information or a premise that leads to the event or state described in the main clause. It is more frequent in written language than in colloquial speech.

*Example*: “*Азбаски* ӯ дер монд, ба автобус нарасид” (*Azbaski ũ der mond, ba avtobus narasid*) – “*Since/Because* he was late, he missed the bus”.

## 2. English Causal Conjunctions.

English also offers a variety of conjunctions to express causal relationships, each with its own distribution and semantic-pragmatic properties:

*because*: This is the most general and unmarked causal conjunction in English. It introduces a clause that provides the direct reason or cause for the event or state described in the main clause (Quirk et al., 1985).

*Example*: “He didn't go to school *because* he was sick”.

*since*: The relevant conjunction often implies a weaker or more inferential causal link than *because*. It frequently suggests that the causal clause presents information that is already known or assumed by the listener/reader (Quirk et al., 1985). It can also have a temporal meaning.

*Example*: “*Since* you're already here, you might as well stay for dinner”.

*as*: Similar to *since*, *as* can introduce a causal clause, often indicating a less direct or more circumstantial cause. It can also have a temporal sense, meaning *while* (Comrie, 1989).

*Example*: “*As* it was getting late, we decided to head home”.

*for*: The conjunction in question introduces a clause that provides an explanation or justification for the preceding statement, often presenting the cause as a deduction or inference made by the speaker (Quirk et al., 1985). It is more common in formal writing and has a somewhat archaic flavor.

*Example*: “The streets were deserted, *for* it was past midnight”.

*in as much as*: This is a formal and somewhat literary conjunction that introduces a clause specifying the extent or respect to which the main clause is true. It often implies a limiting or qualifying condition (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005).

*Example*: “The research was valuable *inasmuch as* it provided new insights into the problem”.

*due to the fact that*: This is a phrasal conjunction that is generally considered verbose and is often avoided in formal writing. It is synonymous with 'because' but is stylistically marked (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005).

*Example*: “The game was canceled *due to the fact that* it was raining”.

## 3. Comparative Observations and Theoretical Implications.

While both Tajik and English demonstrate a comparable range of causal conjunctions, several key differences emerge:

1. *Formality and Register*: Tajik exhibits a clearer distinction between formal and informal causal conjunctions. *Zero* is preferred in formal written discourse, while *chunki* dominates in colloquial speech. English *because* is more versatile across registers, although conjunctions like *inasmuch as* are clearly marked for formality.

2. *Polyfunctionality*: The Tajik conjunction *ki* displays a high degree of polyfunctionality, serving as a general subordinator and also assuming a causal function in specific contexts. This contrasts with English, where causal conjunctions are generally more specialized in their function. This multifunctionality of *ki* can be related to the broader typological characteristics of Persian languages, as discussed by Lazard (1989).

3. *Phrasal Conjunctions*: Tajik makes greater use of phrasal conjunctions like *baroi on ki*, which explicitly express the notion of *for the reason that*. While English has its counterpart *due to the fact that*, its usage is less frequent and often stylistically disfavored.

4. *Strength of Causal Link*: English conjunctions like *since* and *as* often imply a weaker or more inferential causal link compared to *because*. Tajik seems to rely more on context and the inherent semantics of the conjunctions like *chunki* and *azbaski* to convey such nuances.

5. *Pragmatic Force*: The English conjunction *for* carries a distinct pragmatic force, often presenting the cause as a deduction or justification made by the speaker. This function is not directly mirrored by a specific conjunction in Tajik, although the context and the choice of other conjunctions can imply a similar meaning.

These differences raise intriguing questions about the relationship between language structure and the conceptualization of causality. The more pronounced register distinctions in Tajik causal conjunctions may reflect a greater sensitivity to formality in social interactions within Tajik-speaking communities. The polyfunctionality of *ki* suggests a potentially more holistic or less granular approach to clause linking in Tajik, where the specific semantic relation between clauses is often inferred from context rather than being explicitly marked by specialized conjunctions.

Further research is needed to explore the cognitive implications of these linguistic differences. Do Tajik speakers perceive causal relationships differently due to the structure of their language? Does the polyfunctionality of *ki* influence their ability to

distinguish between different types of subordinate clauses? Cross-linguistic experimental studies could shed light on these questions, potentially revealing subtle but significant differences in the way speakers of different languages process and reason about cause-and-effect relationships.

### Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive investigation into the intricate world of causal conjunctions in Tajik and English, shedding light on the nuanced ways in which these two typologically distinct languages encode the fundamental concept of cause and effect. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining corpus analysis and native speaker elicitation, we have documented a rich inventory of causal conjunctions in both languages, revealing a complex interplay of form, meaning, and function. The semantic analysis has demonstrated that while both Tajik and English possess conjunctions that express a wide range of causal relations, from direct physical causation to more abstract links based on reason and circumstance, there are notable differences in the specific semantic nuances conveyed by individual conjunctions.

The comparative framework developed in this study has allowed us to pinpoint areas of convergence and divergence between Tajik and English, revealing both universal tendencies in the expression of causality and language-specific preferences shaped by typological features and grammaticalization pathways.

Theoretically, this research has underscored the value of integrating multiple frameworks – Functional Grammar, Cognitive Linguistics, Typological Linguistics, Grammaticalization Theory, and Construction Grammar – to achieve a holistic understanding of linguistic phenomena.

The findings of this study have implications for a range of linguistic disciplines. For syntacticians and semanticists, it contributes to a deeper understanding of subordination and the cross-linguistic expression of complex semantic relations. For translation studies, it provides valuable insights into the challenges of accurately conveying causal nuances across languages.

While this study has provided a detailed analysis of causal conjunctions in Tajik and English, it also opens up avenues for future research. Further investigation into the diachronic development of these conjunctions in both languages, drawing on historical corpora, would provide a more complete picture of their grammaticalization pathways. Additionally, expanding the scope of the study to include other types of causal expressions, such as prepositional phrases and complex syntactic constructions, would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the full range of resources available for encoding causality in Tajik and English.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Рецензия

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### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

### Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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