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The English Cause-Focused Causal Construction

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Abstract

The primary aim of this paper is to analyze the resultative adjunct clause, i.e., (thus/thereby/hence) ~ing participle and provide explicit syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic explanation on the question what causes the cause-focused causal construction with resultative (thus/thereby/hence) ~ing participle in English. What comes first is either cause or effect clause. This study explores the recent style shift of causal constructions from the effect-focused pattern to the cause-focused pattern. In this study, we argue that the increasing number of the cause-focused main clause with a resultative ~ing participle clause shows the process of the style evolution improving speech/wring style in many respects including syntactic simplification, clarification of the sentence meaning with impact on the focused clauses, and improvement of the flow of speech/writing. The style shift found in the English resultative adjunct clauses, i.e., (thus/hence/thereby) ~ing participle constructions prove to be the style evolution from syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic point of views.

Keywords: Style Evolution, Cause-Focused Causal Construction, Resultative Adjunct Clause, (Thus/Hence/Thereby) ~ing Participle Clause

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the use and distribution of English causal constructions and discusses the main causes for English causal constructions from syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic point of views. The causal relations are a type of connection between states of affairs in the real world. The cause is why something happens and the effect is result, what happens due to the cause. Therefore, cause-and-effect essays establish a relationship between events with a focus on either of them. The speaker/writer may form mental representations of the causal relation between the different states of affairs involved in the connection. We can say that the connection that holds between the states of affairs illustrates a "prototypical ontological causal situation" [1].

We will discuss the cause of a given effect as well as the effect of a given cause. When we say that A is the cause of B, the principle of causality asserts that every phenomenon has a cause. Causality (i.e., cause and effect) is the influence where the cause is partly responsible for the effect, and the effect is partly dependent on the cause. What comes first can be either cause or effect. To use Aristotle's definition of the term αἰτία, the word "cause" is a specialized technical term meaning "explanation" or "answer to a 'why' question". A particular effect is the consequence of some specified cause, why, i.e., for what kind of reason. The style evolution of the cause-focused clauses starts with focusing on causes, instead of effect/result. The cause-focused or effect-focused causality supplies the motivation for the speech act and decides which goes where:

focused clause is the main clause.

In this paper, we compare the effect-focused causal clause with the cause-focused causal clause. The effect-focused causal clause subordination occurs with an adverbial linkage (*because, for, as, since, as a result, therefore, thus, therefore*, etc) in the order: [causal subordinate clause] + [resultative main clause]. However, the cause-focused causal main clause has been getting popular to put the focus on the cause in the switched order of linkage: [causal main clause] + [resultative subordinate clause]. We concentrate on the cause-focused causal construction where a causal clause is a main clause and a resultative clause comes after as a resultative adjunct clause in the form of (*thus/hence/thereby*) *~ing* participle.

The primary aim of this paper is to analyze the resultative *(thus/thereby/hence) ~ing* participle clause and provide explicit syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic explanation on the question what causes the cause-focused clause in English. The growing number of English resultative adjunct clauses, (*thus/hence/thereby*) *~ing* participle constructions shows the style evolution in the cause-effect constructions that language users can utilize the style shifting depending on syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic reasons. The cause-focused causal clause with a resultative *~ing* participle clause shows the evident style evolution improving speech/wring style in many respects including syntactic simplification, effective impact on the focused elements add clarification of the sentence meaning.

2. Causal Relations from Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Perspective

2.1. Linguistic Realization of Causal Relations in English

Causality in language is not a clear-cut, unified concept, but includes several relationships between the causal clause and its reference clause such as cause and effect, reason and consequence, motivation and result, and circumstance and consequence [2]. A basic way of connecting two states of affairs in a causal relationship is by overtly marking the relation by a causal link. A speaker/writer can express causal relations in the multitude of forms the expression of a causal relationship can take.

The English language allows the causal and resultative relations to encode in the relationships between adverbial subordinate clauses and independent main clauses as shown in the following examples:

(1) Because corona virus disease (COVID)-19 has spread globally, (therefore) many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.

(2) Since COVID-19 has spread globally, many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.

(3) As COVID-19 has spread globally, many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.

(4) For COVID-19 has spread globally, many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.

(5) COVID-19 has spread globally. Therefore, many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.

(6) COVID-19 has spread globally. As a result, many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.

(7) COVID-19 has spread globally; so many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.
(8) COVID-19 has spread globally, and many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine. .

(9) COVID-19 has spread globally. Many countries are imposing a mandatory quarantine.

(10) COVID-19 has spread globally, resulting in many countries imposing a mandatory quarantine.

Causality is primarily expressed by adjunct adverbial clauses. Writers often use transitions or signal words to signal specific relationships among ideas. The signal words as causal links include subordinators like *because, since, as, for, as a result, therefore, so,* etc. In the above examples, the causal relations have been explicitly marked, through a subordinator (subordinating conjunction) in (1-4) or a conjunct in (5-7). The coordination in (8) and juxtaposition (with a period mark) in (9) also imply causal relations. Regarding

individual subordinators, *because* (especially the abbreviated form *'cause*) overwhelmingly dominates in conversation, while the conjunction *for* is only found in written texts, where it is almost as common as *because* [3]. The other subordinators, *since* and *as*, are more frequent in written texts than in the spoken data [4].

The sentences in (1-8) put a minor focus on the subordinate causal clause with more focus putting on the resultative main clause. Since the subordinators, *as* and *since* are ambiguous conjunctions, these subordinators express the cause/reason relation partly (for example, *as*: 1.8%; *since*: 70%) since Early Modern English [5]. Then, to produce the cause-focused clause, we need a style shift, switching from the subordinate cause clause to the subordinate result clause. In order to achieve this goal, *~ing* participle is used with optional adverbs for reinforcement, *thus, thereby,* and *hence*. We call this "style evolution" since it is an improved style shifting for spoken/written expressions.

The resultative *~ing* participle adjunct clause as shown in (10) is a style shift since it has a different syntactic structure from the other sentences: syntactically a causal main clause and semantically cause-focused reinforcement.

2.2. Cause-Focused Clause or Effect-Focused Clause

2.2.1 Analysis of the Resultative *~ing* Participle in English

With complex relationships, multiple causes and effects can happen. An effect may have more than one minor cause or reversely a major cause may have more than one effect. The cause always takes place before the effect: Something happens, which leads to a result. However, the cause and effect do not have to come in chronological time order in the passage. The causal clause may come first either in a main clause or in a subordinate clause. When a causal clause is a main clause, it has a cause-focused impact, while a causal clause is a subordinate clause; it has a result-focused impact. The corpus data shows a growing number of the cause-focused main clause followed by a resultative *~ing* participle clause. The increasing number of the cause-focused main clause with a resultative *~ing* participle clause shows the style evolution improving the flow of speech/wring in many respects including syntactic simplification, effective impact on the focused elements add clarification of the sentence meaning.

The concepts of cause and effect are used both for defining simultaneous events, events that are contiguous in time, and events whose effect is born with the cause. In addition, cause and effect are sometimes qualified as phenomena divided by a time interval and connected by means of several intermediate links as shown in the following resultative *~ing* participle examples.

(11) Over two billion people speak English, *making* English the largest language by number of speakers, and the third largest language by number of native speakers. (Wikipedia, 2020)

(12) One college student went viral on TikTok after posting a video in which she said that a test proctoring program had flagged her behavior as suspicious because she was reading the question aloud, *resulting in* her professor assigning her a failing grade. (Business Insider, 2020)

(13) Monica Araya takes us on a world tour of urban areas that are working to fully electrify their transportation systems over the next decade, *shifting* to emission-free motor cycles, cars, buses, ferries and beyond. (TED, 2020)

(14) Basic intuition says tariffs make imports more expensive, *pushing* domestic consumers to shift toward domestically produced goods. (The Korea Herald, 2020)

(15) South Korea ranked 20th in the gross domestic product per capita among the 37 members of OECD, *outstripping* Japan and Spain. (The Korea Herald, 2020)

(16) North Korean troops opened fire at propaganda balloons flying toward their territory, *triggering* an exchange of fire that caused no known casualties. (The Korea Herald, 2020)

(17) A formidable online army of K-pop fans has embraced the Black Lives Matter movement, *raising* funds and *drowning out* anti-black hashtags with memes and videos of their favorite groups. (The Telegraph, 2020)

(18) The film made history as the first non-English language movie to win the Oscar for best picture on Sunday, *thus prompting* South Korean social media to erupt in celebration. (VOA News, 2020)

(19) The black comedy "Parasite" is a tale of two South Korean families – the wealthy Parks and the poor Kims, *thus mirroring* the deepening inequality in Asia's fourth-largest economy. (VOA News, 2020)

(20) It is the handover of important information and duties from one administration to the next, *thus ensuring* the president-elect and their team are up-to-speed when they get to the White House. (BBC news, 2020)

(21) In Middle English, the present participle suffix changed from *–ende* to *–ing*, *thus coinciding* with the marker of the gerund. (Fonteyn & Cuyckens, 2013)

(22) The sermons differ from trials not only in that only one person, *thus enabling* a line of argumentation to run through the whole text, delivers them. (Claridge & Walker, 2001)

As in the examples above, resultative clauses come in the form of an adverbial clause of *thus/hence/thereby ~ing*. The adverbs, *thus/hence/thereby* are optional since they are to reinforce the resultative meaning. These adverbs mean the same as *so,* a conjunction meaning *and for that reason* or *and because of that*, but *thus/thereby/hence* are all rather formal and much more common in writing than in everyday conversation. To see the data in the Corpus of Contemporary American English, the descending order of frequency is *thus/hence/thereby*. The most frequent adverb *thus* is to link reasons with results, with the meaning of *for this reason* or *because of this/that*. The use of *thus* after *and* (without comma) is to introduce a result relation achieved by means of an action stated in the first part of the same sentence. The resultative *~ing* clause comes by changing the verb in *~ing* participle, deleting its subject and using comma instead of a conjunct *and* as in the following:

(23) Over two billion people speak English *and (thus) it makes* English the largest language by number of speakers, and the third largest language by number of native speakers.

(24) Over two billion people speak English, *(thus) making* English the largest language by number of speakers, and the third largest language by number of native speakers. (Wikipedia, 2020)

In (23-24), *thus* is optional since it has the same function of reinforcement strategy. In a sentence (2), an adverb *therefore* often occurs in semi causal conjunctions, where it introduces the following main clause with a minor focus on the cause. Just as the optional adverb *therefore* in (2) serves the function of making the causal relationship more explicit, this reinforcement strategy is performed by the optional adverbs *thus/thereby/hence* in the resultative *~ing* participles [6].

Here, let us see why *~ing* participle construction is adopted for a resultative clause. The -*ing* suffix is a highly multifunctional form with nominal, adjectival, adverbial, prepositional and verbal uses since the suffixes of present participle *–ing*, gerund *–ing* and progressive *-ing* are identical [7]. The resultative *~ing* clause with a highly multifunctional form proliferates especially in media English since it can maximize the progressive liveliness of sequential actions and economy principle syntactically.

The causal clause with an adverbial linkage (*thus, hence, thereby*, etc.) and subordination (*because, as, since*, etc) occur in the order: [causal subordinate clause] + [resultative main clause]. In contrast, that of the resultative clause is in the opposite order: [causal main clause] + [resultative subordinate clause]. In the reverse order, the resultative clause put reinforced causal force on the main causal clause.

2.2.2 Style Evolution: Cause-Focused Main Clause and Resultative Subordinate *~ing* Clause

We can distinguish the structure of the reason-oriented clauses and result-oriented clauses: in a reason-oriented clause, the main clause marks the reason; while in a result-oriented clause, the main clause marks the result. In short, the causality is in either a main or a subordinate clause. When a main clause is a reason-oriented clause, resultative *~ing* adverbial clause follows. In Present-day English, resultative *-ing* clauses are getting more frequent in spoken/written expressions with the impact on the causal clause. To put the impact on the focused element is a quite common cause for the style shift as in the recent increasing number of grammatical split infinitive clauses [8]. This style shifting is a kind of style evolution since it improves the flow of speaking/writing, simplifying syntactic structure and clarifying 'which is focused, cause and result.' To be short, the increasing number of the cause-focused main clause with a resultative *~ing* participle clause shows the evident style evolution improving speech/wring style in many respects including syntactic simplification, effective impact on the focused elements add clarification of the sentence meaning.

2.3. Sociolinguistic Realization of Causal Relations in English

We can find several factors regarding why the cause-focused constructions frequently occur in Present Day English. The sociolinguistic factors of causal relations will be examined for the high frequency of the resultative *~ing* participles. First, we suggest the style shifting for cause-focused thinking is the major reason for the resultative *~ing* participles. The style shifting principle works here since there are no 'single-style' speakers of a language [9]. Each individual controls and uses a variety of linguistic styles and no one speaks in exactly the same way in all circumstances. Therefore, there must be several styles to express cause and effect. In a context of multiple causes and effects, the tendency to put emphasis on the cause than the result brings about the cause-focused main clause in a form of the resultative *~ing* participle. This is a clear stylistic patterning, i.e., style shift.

To see social factors for this style shift to the cause-focused approach, we can think of the recent social trend to put focus on the problem or the reason why a problem emerged (problem focused thinking). The current problem-based approach like the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model works effectively everywhere in our society as the vehicle to promote the learning of concepts and principles as opposed to direct presentation of facts and concepts. The PBL model focuses on the active role of learners by exposing them to a problem to actively solve existing problems and then draw conclusions [10]. The cause-focused approach leads to the currently prevailing perspective of the cause-focused or problem-oriented thinking. To theorize the resultative *~ing* participle, it is a style shifting reflecting the dominant cause-focused approach in various fields of our society.

Second, there are contrasts between the pragmatic and the rhetorical use of causal clauses: cause-focused clause for giving immediate reasons or motivations for people's actions in the texts [11]. So, the resultative *~ing* constructions produce compact and concise impact in spoken/written communications, providing the useful tool which is different from the conventional causal adverbial clauses. Therefore, the use of the resultative *~ing* constructions improves the flow of speaking/writing in a syntactically simplified form. The realization of the resultative *~ing* constructions combines syntactic, semantic and social reasons.

3. Conclusion

This study investigate the use and distribution of English causal constructions and discusses the main causes for English causal constructions from syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic point of views. So this paper analyzes the resultative adjunct clauses, i.e., (*thus/thereby/hence*) *~ing* participle and provide explicit syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic explanation on the question what causes the cause-focused main clause in English. What comes first is cause clause or effect clause. The style shift has been from the effect-focused pattern to the cause-focused pattern. As a result, the increasing number of the cause-focused causal construction with a resultative *~ing* participle clause shows the process of the style evolution improving speech/wring style in

many respects including syntactic simplification, clarification of the sentence meaning with impact on the focused elements, and improvement of the flow of speech/writing. The style shift found in the English resultative adjunct clauses, i.e., (*thus/hence/thereby*) *~ing* participle constructions prove to be the style evolution from syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic point of views.

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