

Causal Clauses in the Greek Language of Polybius

The present study aims to analyse the usage and distribution of causal clauses in the variant of Post-Classical Greek used by Polybius, a historian of 2nd c. BC, and to explain the puzzling disproportion of two types of causal clauses, infinitival and participial, being considerably more frequent than finite embedded causal clauses, regardless of their diversity. The analysis is built on the 3rd book of *Histories* by Polybius, containing 285 occurrences of causal clauses.

Table 1 (below) represents three classes of causal clauses based on the type of verbal form used, which could be participles, substantivised infinitives, or finite verbal forms, as well as the variety of cause prepositions and conjunctions in the constructions.

Table 1. The structures occurring in the causal clauses in the Greek of Polybius

Participial		Infinitival		Finite	
single participles	106	inf. + <i>diá</i> 'through, by'	51	<i>gár</i> 'for'	62
Gen. Abs.	53	inf. in Dat.	3	<i>hótan</i> 'since'	2
		inf. in Gen.	1	<i>hóti</i> 'for that'	2
				<i>dióti</i> 'because'	1
				<i>epei</i> 'since'	1
				<i>epeidè</i> 'since'	1
				<i>hóte</i> 'seeing that'	1
				<i>hōs</i> 'since, because'	1
Totals	159		55		71

As can be seen from Table 1, two constructions (clauses with single participles and infinitival clauses with *diá*) are more than 90% more frequent than finite embedded clauses. It is worth mentioning that sentences with *gár* should be considered separately, since this is a

particle, not a conjunction, and causal clauses are not embedded, but separate sentences. One can find the examples below:

Participial causal clause

(1)	megalopsúkhōs	dè	<u>khṛēsámenos</u>	toĩs	hupotattoménois <...>
	generously	PTC	treat.PTCP.PST.M		DET conquered.PL
	pollèn éúnoian	kaì	megálas	elpídas	eneirgásato
	many favour	and	big	hopes	arouse.PST.3SG
	taĩs dunámesi.				
	DET army				

‘Since he was treating generously the conquered <...>, he aroused in the army the deep favour and bold hopes.’ (Plb. 3.13.8)

Infinitival causal clause with diá

(2)	polloĩ	dè	kat’	autòn	tòn	potamòn	hupò	tõn	hippéon
	many	PTC	in	itself	DET	river	by	DET	cavalry
	apólonto	<u>diá</u>		<u>tò</u>	<u>krateĩn</u>	mèn	mállon	toũ	rheúmatos
	perish.PST.3PL	because		DET	cope.INF	PTC	better	DET	current
	toũs híppous								
	DET horses								

‘Many were killed right in the river by cavalry because it was easier for horses to cope with the current.’ (Plb. 3.14.7)

To find the ground of distribution, one may note that (1) and (2) differ, in particular, from the perspective of syntactic order: in (1) the causal clause precedes the main one, in (2) it goes after that (more on the order of causal clauses can be found Diessel & Hetterle (2011), claiming that cross-linguistically causal clauses tend to be final). Furthermore, the causal clause in (1) has a subject coreferent to that of the main one, in contrast to (2). Therefore, the parameters of preceding/subsequent causal clause order and its subject coreference may define the distribution of causal constructions. They both are considered typologically relevant by Zaika (2019). Other parameters offered by her are the time reference of the causing event, tense of the verbal form in a causal clause, and presuppositional or non-presuppositional meaning (cf. correspondingly English *since* and *because*, French *puisque* and *parce que*). Another factor relevant to the distribution of causal clauses can be the semantic level of the cause: causal meaning itself, illocutive meaning (referring to the speech act) or epistemic meaning (evidence-based); cf. Sweetzer (1990), Jędrzejowski & Fleczonek (2023) for details. The results of examining the data according to the chosen parameters can be seen below in Table 2:

Table 2. Possible interpretations of distribution of the cause clauses in the Greek of Polybius

Parameters	Participial	Infinitival	Finite
Causing event in past	-	-	-
Past tense	-	±	+
Preceding the main clause	±	-	-
Coreferent to the subject of the main clause	+	±	-
Illocutive/epistemic cause	-	-	±
Presuppositional cause	+	-	-

One may note that participial clauses are opposed to finite ones on most parameters, and infinitival clauses seem more neutral, while participial and infinitival clauses share some tendencies contrary to finite ones, e.g., subjects coreference, and rejection of illocutive/epistemic cause.

A possible reason for the resemblance between participial and infinitival clauses could be their nominal properties. It corresponds to the idea that nominal cause constructions are unlikely to express illocutive/epistemic cause (Say, to appear). Further analysis might reveal more explanations for the distribution of causal clauses.

References

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