

Unit 51 - Expressing cause

1 Conjunctions

1.1 *Parce que* - *because*

Je suis rentré à la maison **parce que** j'étais fatigué
I went back home because I was tired

Note also the expressions *c'est parce que* or *c'est que*, serving to reinforce the explanation being given, usually in a spoken informal context :

Si je suis rentré à la maison **c'est (parce) que** j'étais fatigué
If I went back home, it was because I was tired

Parce que can also be used at the beginning of a sentence, with the same sense of *comme* (see section 1.2 below) :

Parce qu'il y avait tellement de candidats, les entretiens ont eu lieu sur 2 journées
Because there were so many applicants, the interviews were held over 2 days

1.2 *Puisque* - *since* ; *comme* - *as*

Puisque, like *since* in English, presents a cause in an emphatic manner, and as such it is often used when expressing opinions, justifying courses of action etc. :

Puisque ça vient de lui, ce doit être vrai
Since it comes from him, it must be true

Comme, however, like *as* in English, expresses cause in a more neutral manner : as such it is used more for making descriptions than for expressing opinions. Note that *comme* always comes before the main clause :

Comme elle n'avait rien de prévu, nous l'avons invitée chez nous
NOT *Nous l'avons invitée chez nous, **comme** elle n'avait rien de prévu
As she had nothing planned, we invited her to our house

Puisque and *comme* are often interchangeable :

Puisque / **comme** j'avais la grippe, je ne suis pas allé(e) au bureau
Since / as I had flu, I didn't go into the office

Du moment que : this can mean *since* or *provided that*

Du moment que tes devoirs sont finis, tu peux regarder la télé
Since you've finished your homework, you can watch TV

1.3 *Vu que*, *étant donné que*, *du fait que* - *seeing as*, *given that*

Vu que la nuit tombait, nous sommes rentrés chez nous
Seeing as night was falling, we went home

Étant donné que tu te sens mieux, tu peux maintenant aller à l'école
Seeing as you're feeling better, you can go back to school now

Du fait qu'il ne travaille plus pour la société, il n'a plus de voiture de fonction
Given that he no longer works for the company, he no longer has a company car

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- 1.4** *Car - for, as* : this is used mainly in written French to explain a fact already mentioned. It is never used at the beginning of a sentence :

Il n'est jamais allé en Amérique **car** il a peur de l'avion
He's never been to America as he's afraid of flying

- 1.5** *En effet* : this is commonly used in written French with the same sense of *car*. Note that it can also have the senses of "that is true / indeed" and "in fact / actually" :

J'aime bien ce magasin, **en effet**, il est pratique et bon marché

I like this store because it's convenient and cheap

- Tu as encore raté le train ce matin ? - **En effet**

"You missed the train again this morning ?" "Yes I did"

Ma voiture est **en effet** plus rapide que la sienne

My car is in fact / actually faster than his / hers

2 Prepositions

- 2.1** *A cause de - because of*

A cause de la neige, l'école est restée fermée

Because of the snow, the school stayed shut

- 2.2** *En raison de - owing to, due to*

En raison des intempéries, le vol a été annulé

Owing to the bad weather, the flight has been cancelled

- 2.3** *A la suite de / par suite de (formal) - following, as a result of*

A la suite de la publication du livre, les éditeurs ont été assaillis de plaintes

Following the book's publication the publishers were besieged by complaints

Par suite d'encombrement, nous ne pouvons pas faire suite à votre appel

Our lines are busy at the moment - please try again later.

Note the expression *suite à* which is generally restricted to formal administrative letters :

Suite à votre lettre du 9 mai... - *Further to your letter of 9 May...*

- 2.4** *Grâce à - thanks to, because of ; à l'aide de - with, using*

C'est **grâce à** sa recommandation qu'il a obtenu le poste

It was because his / her recommendation that he got the job

A l'aide d'un bon manuel, tu pourrais le faire toi-même

With a good manual you could do it yourself

- 2.5** *Faute de - for lack of*

Le procès a été abandonné **faute de** preuves

The trial was abandoned for lack of evidence

Il a échoué, mais ce n'était pas **faute d'**avoir essayé

He failed, but it wasn't for lack of trying

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- 2.6** *A force de - through* : used to express either repetition or intensity
A force de travailler, vous réussirez vos examens
If you work hard enough you'll pass your exams
A force de tirer sur le rideau, l'enfant l'a déchiré
The child was pulling so hard on the curtain that he / she tore it
- 2.7** *Vu - in view of, étant donné - given, compte tenu de - in the light of*
Étant donné son âge, il est étonnant qu'il conduise encore
Given how old he is, it's surprising he's still driving
Vu le temps qu'il faisait, ils ont décidé de rentrer chez eux
In view of the weather, they decided to go home
Compte tenu de la conjoncture actuelle, la banque a augmenté ses taux d'intérêts
In the light of the current economic climate, the bank has increased its interest rates
- 2.8** *Pour [+ noun or infinitive] - for*
Il a été critiqué **pour** son mauvais comportement
He was criticized for his bad behaviour
Il a été critiqué **pour** ne pas avoir réagi plus vite
He was criticized for not having reacted more quickly
- 2.9** *En fonction de - according to*
En France les partis politiques reçoivent une subvention de l'état, calculée **en fonction de** leurs résultats aux élections législatives
In France political parties receive a subsidy from the state, calculated according to their performance in the elections to the National Assembly
- 3 Verbal expressions**
- 3.1** *S'expliquer par - to be explained by*
Les pertes de la société **s'expliquent par** la chute du cours du dollar
The company's losses can be put down to the fall in the rate of the dollar
- 3.2** *Avoir pour cause - to be caused by*
Sa mauvaise humeur **avait pour cause** ses difficultés financières
His / her bad mood was caused by his / her financial problems
- 3.3** *Tenir à - to be due to*
La mauvaise qualité tient le plus souvent à la négligence
Poor quality is most often due to negligence
- 3.4** *Résulter de - to result from, be the result of*
Les problèmes qui ont **résulté du** krach boursier se font toujours sentir
The problems that resulted from the stock exchange crash can still be felt
- 3.5** *Être dû à - to be due to*
Ses mauvaises notes **sont dues à** son manque d'effort pendant l'année scolaire
His / her poor marks are due to a lack of effort during the year

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Note that there is no conjunction *dû à* in French as there is in English :

Due to administrative problems, it has been necessary to postpone the meeting

En raison / à cause de problèmes administratifs, il a été nécessaire de reporter la réunion

In fact, the conjunction *due to* is disliked by some English users : as *due* is an adjective, technically it should modify a preceding noun, as in *inefficiency due to poor management* or *the problem was due to...* Whatever one's English usage, however, it is important to note that *dû* in *être dû à* is **always** an adjective, and therefore cannot be used as a conjunction.

4 Participles and adjectives

4.1 Present participle - same subject

Étant fatigué, j'ai décidé d'aller me coucher

As I was tired, I decided to go to bed

4.2 Present participle - different subject

Le syndicat d'initiative **étant** fermé, j'ai décidé d'aller me renseigner à l'Hotel de Ville

As the tourist office was closed, I decided to ask at the Town Hall

4.3 Gerund

Il s'est cassé la jambe **en jouant** au football

He broke his leg playing football

4.4 Past participle

Choquée par la violence du film, elle a éteint la télé

Shocked by the violence of the film, she turned the TV off

4.5 Adjective

Lasse de toujours se répéter, elle a décidé de l'écrire au tableau

Tired of always having to repeat herself, she decided to write it down on the blackboard

5 Juxtaposition

Cause can be expressed by means of the theme rather than the structure of language. In this case, punctuation can serve to highlight the relationship between two main clauses :

Je l'ai trouvée de bonne humeur : elle venait d'être augmentée

I found her in a good mood : she had just got a pay rise