Causal Clauses

Several conjunctions can begin Causal Clauses in Latin. A Causal Clause answers the question, “Why was the main clause verb done?” Of these conjunctions, some begin a Causal Clause which is authoritative, and contain indicative verbs. Some begin a Causal Clause which is less authoritative, and they contain subjunctive verbs. Theoretically, you will be able to tell how secure Caesar is with his facts, based upon what conjunction he has used to begin his subordinate clause!

Causal Conjunctions:

1. *quod* normally is followed by an indicative verb.

   Copiae in proelio victi sunt [*quod* satis cibi non *habebant*.]  
The troops were defeated in the battle [*because* they did not have enough (of) food.]
2. *Quia* normally takes the indicative.

   Dux urbem dedidit [*quia* hostes extra portas *erant.*]  
The general surrendered the city [*because* the enemy were outside the gates.]

3. *Quoniam* normally takes the indicative.

   Dux urbem dedidit [*quoniam* hostes extra portas *erant.*]

*NOTA BENE:* If *quod* or *quia* is followed by a subjunctive verb, it is to be assumed that the information within the Causal Clause is in doubt or turned out to be in error.

   Dux urbem dedidit [*quia* hostes extra portas *essent.*]  
The general surrendered the city [*because* (he thought) the enemy were outside the gates (but he was mistaken).]
4. *Cum*, when it means “because” or “since,” always is followed by a subjunctive verb.

Dux urbem dedidit [*cum hostes extra portas essent.*]
The general surrendered the city [*since* the enemy were outside the gates.]

Decima Legio victa est [*cum dux captus esset.*]
The Tenth Legion was defeated [*because* its general *had been captured.*]
The rule is more complex than that used for Purpose and Result Clauses. Note that there are three possible time relationships between the Subjunctive Verb and the main clause verb.

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<th>Primary Sequence:</th>
<th>Before MV</th>
<th>Same as MV</th>
<th>After MV</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main clause verb is Present Indicative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future Indicative</td>
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<td>Future Perfect Indicative</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Main clause verb is Imperfect Indicative</td>
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<td>Perfect Indicative</td>
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<td>Pluperfect Indicative</td>
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Special Notes about Causal Clauses

1. Whether or not a Latin Causal Clause contains a subjunctive mood verb, always translate the verb as though it were *indicative*.

2. Note that the word “since,” as used in English to denote a temporal clause, did not exist in Latin; “since” was always *causal*.

3. Cum Causal Clauses are often difficult to identify in Latin, because they may share the same formula with *cum* Circumstantial and *cum* Concessive Clauses. The best guide to determine whether a *cum* clause is causal is *context*.

Quiz #22: The vocabulary in the Words to Master list on Page 113.