

## A Systemic-Functional Analysis of ἐπεὶ and ἐπειδὴ in Attic

This paper employs systemic functional grammar as a framework for identifying the difference between the causal uses of ἐπεὶ and ἐπειδὴ in Attic. I argue that (1) there is a clear functional difference between these two conjunctions, and (2) that this functional difference has given rise to an additional difference in their tone, with ἐπειδὴ being more polite than ἐπεὶ.

In grammars and textbooks of ancient Greek, these conjunctions are treated as equivalent insofar as they have a temporal as well as a causal nuance. “Since” is a common translation of both conjunctions, and appropriately captures this dual meaning. While this translation is convenient, it does not shed light on speakers' reasons for choosing one or the other of these near synonyms for use in a causal clause.

At first sight, the very presence of -δὴ might seem to differentiate the meaning of ἐπειδὴ from ἐπεὶ. I argue that this, with further elaboration, is ultimately correct in Attic, as it is in Homer (Chantraine 1963: 255; Schwyzer-Debrunner 1959: 658). This is in contrast to Albert Rijksbaron, whose book on ἐπεὶ and ὡς in Herodotus is the most thorough treatment of these conjunctions. Rijksbaron identifies separate “inferential” and “motivating” uses for ἐπεὶ and ἐπειδὴ. An inferential clause contains information that has already been introduced in a text (“Well **since** you said that...”), while a motivating clause introduces new material (“We shouldn't do that, **since** I've just remembered...”). Rijksbaron argues that it is the placement of an ἐπεὶ/ἐπειδὴ clause either before or after its main clause, along with the tense of the verbs in each clause, that determines whether one of these conjunctions will be motivating or inferential. On his model, ἐπειδὴ and ἐπεὶ work in essentially the same way, with the former being an infrequent variant of the latter.

Rijksbaron's conclusions are primarily based on data from Herodotus, but he also claims

that his findings hold for Attic prose. In this paper I present data from Thucydides, Lysias, Isocrates, Plato, and Attic inscriptions to show that this is not true. I argue that clause order has no bearing on the meaning of causal ἐπειδή in Attic, and that one difference between ἐπεὶ and ἐπειδή is a functional one: ἐπεὶ has become specialized as a motivating conjunction, while ἐπειδή is inferential, and is so regardless of clause order.

This functional distinction is not the only difference between the two conjunctions, however, and this is where systemic functional grammar is useful. This approach to language views meaning as being created on three different levels (Caffarel 2015). At the ideational level, different words classify and order our experience of the world. For example, the terms “boy” and “girl” organize the broader class of “children” along gendered lines. At the interpersonal level, different words express different attitudes toward the things that we experience, with the word “darling” expressing a positive attitude toward a child, and the word “brat” a negative one. Finally, at the textual level, words orient a statement within a larger text. We can see this orientation in the difference between ἐπειδή, which directs the addressee to recall information that has already been mentioned, and ἐπεὶ, which signals that new information is coming.

I argue that ἐπειδή, as a result of its distinction from ἐπεὶ on the textual level, has also developed a distinction at the interpersonal level. More specifically, ἐπειδή is primarily found in contexts that encourage interaction, where speakers invite their addressees to reach a consensus based on information that is agreed upon by the group. ἐπεὶ, on the other hand, expresses the independence of its speakers from their addressees by introducing material that the group has not considered. As a result, ἐπειδή has come to be a conjunction that expresses politeness, and is significantly restricted in the environments in which it can appear as a result. This restriction does not hold for ἐπεὶ. These conjunctions need not have obtained such a difference in tone; they

do have distinct meanings, and it would have been possible for them to continue as two neutral terms, each with its own function. Nonetheless, a review of the passages in which the two occur shows that such a distinction has indeed arisen, and this can inform us as to Athenian cultural norms regarding influence and persuasion.

### Bibliography

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