Abstract: I will describe the structural and semantic characteristics of the Spanish causal conjunctions como (as, since), ya que (as, since), and pues (for). I will argue that, unlike predicative causal conjunctions like porque (because), they function as speech event markers. This difference will be related to Peirce''s semiotic distinction between symbolic and indexical signs. A speech event will be defined as a three-dimensional event, including a modal, interpersonal and sequential dimension. The three justificational conjunctions give the same indication at the sequential dimension: they identify the speech event as an act of justification. I will show that what further distinguishes the three conjunctions from each other can be analyzed in terms of the other two dimensions. I will argue that pues activates both the modal and the interpersonal dimension, that ya que activates the modal dimension but de-activates the interpersonal dimension, and that como de-activates both the modal and the interpersonal dimension. I will show that this analysis can explain certain typical pragmatic effects, for instance why pues marks the information that follows as new, why ya que allows special uses like irony or is frequently used to introduce quotations, and why como presents the information as taken for granted. In the concluding section, I will argue that the framework is not only suited to describe Spanish causal conjunctions, but has a broader theoretical and descriptive scope.

Language: English