

Causation Description

The term ‘Causation’ refers to those constructions that indicate that some person or entity brings about a state, thought, or action.

There are 105 constructions that express this meaning, drawing on 26 verb complementation patterns.

The Systemic Network. The Systemic Network shows independent choices in meaning and form, though the distinction between them is somewhat arbitrary. Under the heading of ‘form’ there are two independent choices: the pattern, and the Subject type, which may be the cause or the affected entity. This is the difference between ‘Gerald co-opted Brian on to the committee’ and ‘Brian’s place on the committee resulted from Gerald’s support’.

The ‘meaning’ part of the network shows four independent choices. The first is the distinction between congruent and metaphoric representation types. Congruent constructions make all elements explicit e.g. ‘The meal made Brian ill’. Metaphoric constructions leave one or more elements inexplicit e.g. ‘The committee promoted Brian’, where the caused state (Brian is in a new job) is inexplicit. Then there are distinctions in the outcome of the causation. The type of outcome may be a state, a thought or emotion, or an action or event. This is the distinction between ‘The press hounded the minister out of office’ (a state is brought about), ‘The events aroused intense jealousy in Brian’ (an emotion is brought about), and ‘The minister talked Brian into leaving’ (an action is brought about). There is also a distinction between bringing about a positive change and leaving a situation without change (‘shoot someone dead’ or ‘keep someone safe’). The third choice is between participant types: a person or an entity may be the cause or the affected entity. An instance of person as cause is ‘The press hounded him out of office’, while an instance of entity as cause is ‘The events aroused jealousy’. Finally, the ‘means of cause’ distinguishes between constructions where an action causes something, as in ‘The press hounded him out of office’, and those where communication causes something, as in ‘The minister talked him into leaving’.

The full Systemic Network can be seen in the document ‘Causation Systemic Network’.

The Meaning Network. The Meaning Network combines choices from ‘meaning’ and ‘form’. The primary distinction made depends on the outcome type: state, thought/emotion, and action/event. Below are the main distinctions, with examples. These are shown under the headings ‘Cause state’, ‘Cause thought/emotion’ and ‘Cause action/event’.

The ‘Cause state’ Meaning Network: choices and examples

- Congruent: the outcome is explicit
 - Patterns with a phrase
 - V n adj
 - Positive: a change is made
 - Cx7 e.g. ‘They made the fence stronger.’
 - Cx8 e.g. ‘Joan pushed the door open.’
 - Cx9 e.g. ‘Brian wiped the surface clean.’
 - Cx11 e.g. ‘Joan cranked the volume louder.’
 - Cx12 e.g. ‘Brian coloured the sky blue.’
 - Cx15 e.g. ‘Joan shot her partner dead.’
 - Negative: a change is not made
 - Cx10 e.g. ‘Brian kept his partner safe.’
 - Cx10 e.g. ‘Joan left her partner alive.’
 - V n n. Cx14 e.g. ‘They elected him President.’ and Cx15 e.g. ‘They held him prisoner.’
 - Patterns with a preposition

- Outcome as Subject
 - V from n. Cx11 e.g. ‘Brian’s success resulted from the changes.’
 - V out of n. Cx6 e.g. ‘Brian’s success arose out of the changes.’
 - Affected as Subject
 - V to n
 - Cx38 e.g. ‘The victim bled to death.’
 - Cx39 e.g. ‘The train ground to a halt.’
 - Cx40 e.g. ‘Joan dropped off to sleep.’
 - Cx41 e.g. ‘Brian coasted to victory.’
 - Cause as Subject
 - V to n. Cx37 e.g. ‘The changes led to Brian’s success.’
 - V n as n. Cx7 e.g. ‘The committee elected Joan as chair.’
 - V n in n. Cx21 e.g. ‘The publicity landed Brian in trouble.’
 - V n into n
 - Cx13 e.g. ‘The committee co-opted Brian into the role.’
 - Cx14 e.g. ‘The team dragged the car into place.’
 - Cx16 e.g. ‘The publicity plunged Joan into trouble.’
 - V n out of n
 - Cx8 e.g. ‘The press hounded Joan out of office.’
 - Cx9 e.g. ‘The committee shut Brian out of the discussion.’
 - Cx10 e.g. ‘Joan bailed Brian out of jail.’
 - V n to n
 - Cx12 e.g. ‘The court deported Brian to Canada.’
 - Cx 15 e.g. ‘Brian promoted Joan to vice-president.’
 - Cx18 e.g. ‘Joan condemned Brian to a boring job.’
 - Metaphoric: the outcome is inexplicit
 - Patterns with a phrase
 - V n (Material)
 - The cause and affected entities are physical
 - Cx4 e.g. ‘Jo broke the glass.’
 - Cx5 e.g. ‘Jo repaired the glass.’
 - Cx6 e.g. ‘Dora painted the room.’
 - Cx20 e.g. ‘The committee appointed Debs.’
 - The cause and/or affected entities are abstract
 - Affected entity is abstract
 - Cx8 e.g. ‘They changed the conditions of the sale.’
 - Cx9 e.g. ‘Laura solved the problem.’
 - Cx10 e.g. ‘They ended the war.’
 - Cause is abstract
 - Cx11 e.g. ‘The changed conditions affected his health.’
 - Cx12 e.g. ‘The new treatment helped his condition.’
 - V n n
 - Cx16 e.g. ‘The publicity caused Brian harm.’
 - Cx17 e.g. ‘The company charged Joan £200.’
 - Cx18 e.g. ‘The decision saved Brian £200.’
 - Patterns with a preposition
 - V from n
 - Cx9 e.g. ‘Brian benefitted from the change.’
 - Cx10 e.g. ‘Joan suffered from the change.’

- V of n. Cx4 e.g. ‘Joan died of a broken heart.’
- V on n. Cx25 e.g. ‘The car failed on three counts.’
- V n into n
 - Cx15 e.g. ‘Brian introduced another factor into the situation.’
 - Cx17 e.g. ‘Joan’s enthusiasm breathed life into the situation.’
 - Cx18 e.g. ‘The committee built breaks into the timetable.’
- V n of n. Cx1 e.g. ‘Joan deprived Brian of his freedom.’ and Cx2 e.g. ‘Joan rid Brian of his fear of flying.’
- V n to n. Cx13 e.g. ‘Joan shackled the lock to the door.’ and Cx14 e.g. ‘Brian broadened the discussion to the issue of racism.’
- V n with n
 - Literal: change to a physical object
 - Cx13 e.g. ‘Brian decorated the tree with baubles.’
 - Cx14 e.g. ‘Joan coated the cake with icing.’
 - Cx15 e.g. ‘The children flooded the area with water.’
 - Cx16 e.g. ‘Brian sweetened the punch with honey.’
 - Cx17 e.g. ‘Joan peppered the dish with cloves.’
 - Cx18 e.g. ‘Brian stocked the larder with tins.’
 - Figurative: change to an abstract entity
 - Cx19 e.g. ‘Brian imbued the situation with menace.’
 - Cx20 e.g. ‘The situation beset Brian with problems.’
 - Cx21 e.g. ‘Joan tempered her criticism with humour.’

The ‘Cause thought / emotion’ Meaning Network: choices and examples

- Cause a change in thought
 - Construction includes a Cogniser
 - The Cogniser is the clause Object
 - There is no expressed thought content
 - V n (Cognition). Cx8 e.g. ‘The argument convinced Sam.’
 - The context of the thought is expressed
 - V n that. Cx4 e.g. ‘Sam persuaded Clint that the sky was green.’
 - V n against n. Cx3 e.g. ‘Sam’s argument decided Clint against demonstrating.’
 - V n on n. Cx10 e.g. ‘Sam’s argument decided Clint on leaving.’
 - The Cogniser is the Object of the prepositional phrase
 - V n out of n. Cx13 e.g. ‘The thought of Mary blocked the idea of Sam out of Clint’s mind.’
 - Construction does not include a Cogniser
 - V n on n. Cx11 e.g. ‘The new evidence cast doubt on the verdict.’
- Cause a change in emotion
 - Construction includes an Emoter
 - The Emoter is the clause Object
 - V n (Cognition). Cx7 e.g. ‘The new evidence interested Sam.’
 - V n out of n. Cx12 e.g. ‘The letter shook Sam out of her apathy.’
 - V n with n. Cx22 e.g. ‘Sam amazed the audience with her singing.’ and Cx23 e.g. ‘Clint confronted Sam with the evidence.’

- The Emoter is the Object of the prepositional phrase
 - V n in n. Cx13 e.g. ‘The film aroused strong feelings in Clint.’
- Construction does not include an Emoter
 - V n (Cognition). Cx9 e.g. ‘Sam’s singing left a deep impression.’

The ‘Cause action/event’ Meaning Network: choices and examples

- Congruent: the elements are explicit
 - Patterns with a clause
 - V n inf
 - Cause is a person
 - Affected thing is a person. Cx3 e.g. ‘Rose helped Max cross the road.’ and Cx4 e.g. ‘Rose made Max cross the road.’
 - Affected thing is an entity. Cx5 e.g. ‘Max helped the situation calm down.’ and Cx6 e.g. ‘Max made the results appear logical.’
 - Cause is an entity. Cx7 e.g. ‘The price reductions helped/made customers buy more.’
 - V n -ing
 - Positive: an action/event is caused. Cx6 e.g. ‘Rose sent the stone spinning across the lake.’
 - Negative: an action/event is prevented. Cx7 e.g. ‘Max stopped the rocket leaving the launchpad.’
 - V n to-inf
 - Cause is a person
 - Action is caused by communication. Cx14 e.g. ‘Rose persuaded Max to leave the room.’
 - Action is caused by a specific action
 - Cx16 e.g. ‘Max forced Rose to leave the room.’
 - Cx18 e.g. ‘Rose tempted Max to break the rules.’
 - Cx24 e.g. ‘Rose prepared Max to run the marathon.’
 - Cx25 e.g. ‘Max assigned Rose to run the marathon.’
 - Action is caused by a non-specific action or influence
 - Cx19 e.g. ‘Rose caused Max to join the army.’
 - Cx20 e.g. ‘Max needed Rose to help him.’
 - Cx21 e.g. ‘Rose helped Max to join the army.’
 - Cx22 e.g. ‘Max allowed Rose to help him.’
 - Cx23 e.g. ‘Max enabled Rose to join the army.’
 - Cause is an entity. Cx27 e.g. ‘The rise in prices caused Max to go broke.’ and Cx28 e.g. ‘The fall in prices enable Rose to save money.’
 - Patterns with a preposition
 - Positive: an action/event is caused
 - V n into n/-ing
 - Action is caused by communication
 - V n into -ing
 - Cx1 e.g. ‘Raj talked Lucy into leaving.’
 - Cx2 e.g. ‘Lucy bullied Raj into leaving.’
 - Cx3 e.g. ‘Raj frightened Lucy into leaving.’

- Cx5 e.g. ‘Lucy charmed Raj into helping her.’
 - Cx6 e.g. ‘Lucy persuaded Raj into helping her.’
 - V n into n
 - Cx 7 e.g. ‘Raj talked Lucy into crime.’
 - Cx8 e.g. ‘Lucy pressured Raj into crime.’
 - Cx9 e.g. ‘Raj intimidated Lucy into betrayal.’
 - Cx11 e.g. ‘Raj charmed Lucy into an unwise course of action.’
 - Action is caused by action
 - V n into -ing. Cx4 e.g. ‘Lucy tricked Raj into stealing the money.’
 - V n into n. Cx10 e.g. ‘Raj trapped Lucy into a life of crime.’ and Cx12 e.g. ‘Lucy’s words jolted Raj into action.’
 - V n to n. Cx17 e.g. ‘Debs incited Lucy to violence.’
 - Negative: an action/event is prevented
 - V n from n
 - Cause is a person. Cx20 e.g. ‘Lucy restrained Debs from violence.’
 - Cause is an entity. Cx21 e.g. ‘Debs prevented Lucy from entering.’
 - V n out of n. Cx11 e.g. ‘Lucy talked Debs out of leaving.’
- Metaphoric: at least one element is implicit
 - V n (Relational). Cx18 e.g. ‘Additional investment ensured the continuation of manufacture.’
 - V n (Material)
 - Affected entity is non-human. Cx21 e.g. ‘Stu drove the car.’
 - Affected entity is a person. Cx22 e.g. ‘The police moved the crowd along.’
 - V that
 - Cause is a person. Cx19 e.g. ‘Debs arranged that the band would play at 10.’
 - Cause is an entity. Cx20 e.g. ‘Circumstances dictated that the party end early.’
 - V wh
 - Cause is a person. Cx19 e.g. ‘Raj influenced what happened to the leader.’
 - Cause is an entity. Cx20 e.g. ‘Circumstances determined what happened to the leader.’
 - V n to n. Cx16 e.g. ‘Debs delegated the most difficult task to Raj.’ and Cx19 e.g. ‘Lucy applied herself to finishing the painting.’