

## Semantic Field Network Overview

On this site you will find information about networks relating to nine semantic fields. These are:

1. Equivalence. Divided into:
  - a. Being
  - b. Construal
  - c. Becoming
2. Logical Relations. Divided into:
  - a. Relations between entities
  - b. Relations between actions/events
3. Causation
4. Change
5. Creation
6. Possession Transfer
7. Movement
8. Cognition. Divided into:
  - a. Emotion
  - b. Thought
  - c. Perception
9. Communication. Divided into:
  - a. Exchanging action
  - b. Exchanging information

The fields bear some relation to the process types proposed by Halliday (see, for example, Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 211-358). The relation is shown in this table:

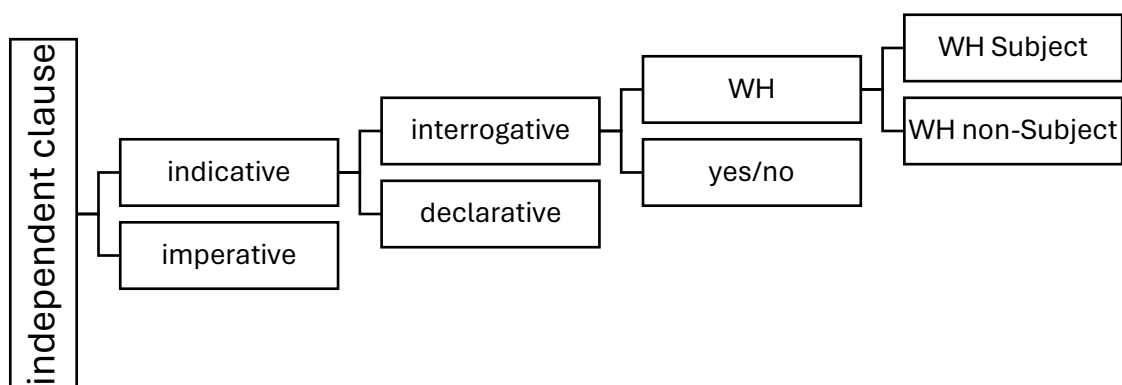
Relational processes	Material processes	Mental processes	Verbal processes
Equivalence Logical relations	Causation Change Creation Possession transfer Movement	Cognition	Communication

The other documents on this site given three kinds of information for each of the sub-fields. These are:

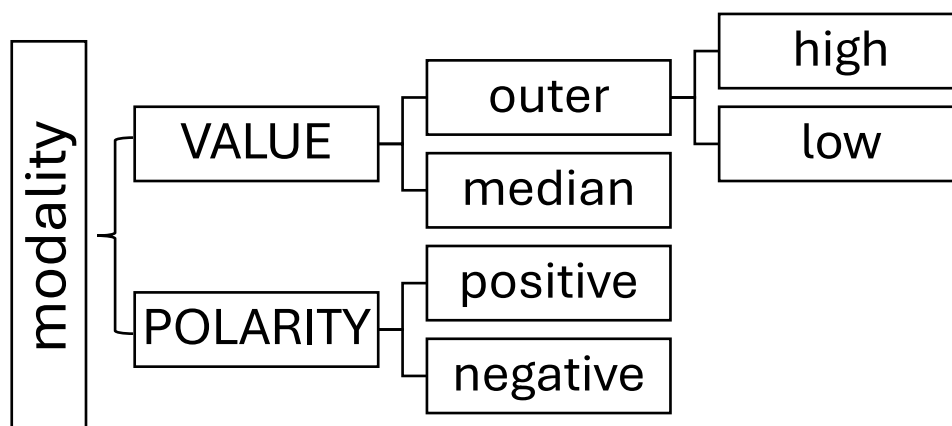
1. A **Semantic Field Description** that gives a narrative account of the networks. In essence, the semantic field shows the meaning network as a bullet-point list that is easier to read than the meaning network. It also illustrates each part of the list with examples. The description also explains what is in the systemic network.
2. A **Meaning Network** which plots a route from the semantic field to the set of constructions. Although this is a single network, showing it in one diagram would mean it was illegible, so the network is divided into sections, each one shown separately. The meaning network is a diagrammatic version of the semantic field description. It is a visual representation of how the constructions that express a semantic field are related to each other.
3. A **Systemic Network** which shows the range of contrasting features that are at play in the derivation of the meaning networks. Where necessary to make it legible, the systemic network is also divided into sections. The Systemic Network represents a set of

simultaneous choices between language resources. Each construction could be seen as the consequence of choices from several options simultaneously, but the systemic network does not show how the choices lead to the constructions.

The concept of network owes much to Systemic Function Grammar, which models language as the outcome of a series of alternative resources or ‘choices’. For example, Thompson (2014: 38) represents the mood system in English as a choice between indicative and imperative; if indicative, then a choice between interrogative or declarative; if interrogative, then a choice between wh- and yes/no; and if wh-, then a choice between the wh-word as Subject, or non-Subject. This can be shown diagrammatically as:



An individual instance such as *Who is ringing the doorbell?* can be seen as the outcome of choosing indicative, interrogative, WH and WH Subject. The example *She is ringing the doorbell* is the outcome of indicative and declarative. The diagram effectively organizes the available resources in a meaningful way. Importantly, however, most choices cannot be represented as a simple left-to-right. When discussing meanings associated with modality, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 180) show that some choices occur independently of one another, or simultaneously. An example they give – *that can't be true* – is the outcome of two choices: between levels of certainty or value (*can't be true* or *might not be true*) and between positive and negative polarities (*can't be true* or *must be true*). They represent this with brackets formatted to show simultaneous choice:



Matthiessen (2023) argues that all levels of language can be accounted for in terms of system networks such as these. He distinguishes between unidimensional and multidimensional networks. Unidimensional networks are in effect taxonomies and do not show how an instance of language might be the consequence of several choices. Multidimensional networks are the true systemic networks, showing that an instance of language is the outcome of a number of simultaneous choices. The problem with unidimensional networks, then, is that in many cases they fail to represent the true nature of the language model. The problem with multidimensional networks is that they become extremely complex and difficult to read (see, for example, Hasan 1987). The compromise adopted on this site is to show the two separately. The meaning networks are unidimensional taxonomies of constructions. The systemic networks are multidimensional representations of the choices involved in producing constructions in a given semantic field.

#### References

- Halliday M.A.K. and Matthiessen C.M.I.M. 2014. *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. London: Routledge.
- Hasan R. 1987. The grammarian's dream: lexis as most delicate grammar. In M. Halliday and R. Fawcett (eds.) *New Developments in Systemic Linguistics*. Vol 1. London: Pinter. Pp 184-212. Reprinted in R. Hasan 1996 *Ways of Saying: Ways of Meaning* (Edited by C. Cloran, D. Butt and G. Williams) London: Cassell. Pp 73-103.
- Matthiessen C.M.I.M. 2023. *System in Systemic Functional Linguistics: A system-base theory of language*. Sheffield: Equinox.
- Thompson G. 2014. *Introducing Functional Grammar*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London: Routledge.