

Transitivity

— theory and practice



The grammar of experiences: types of process
in English (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p.172)

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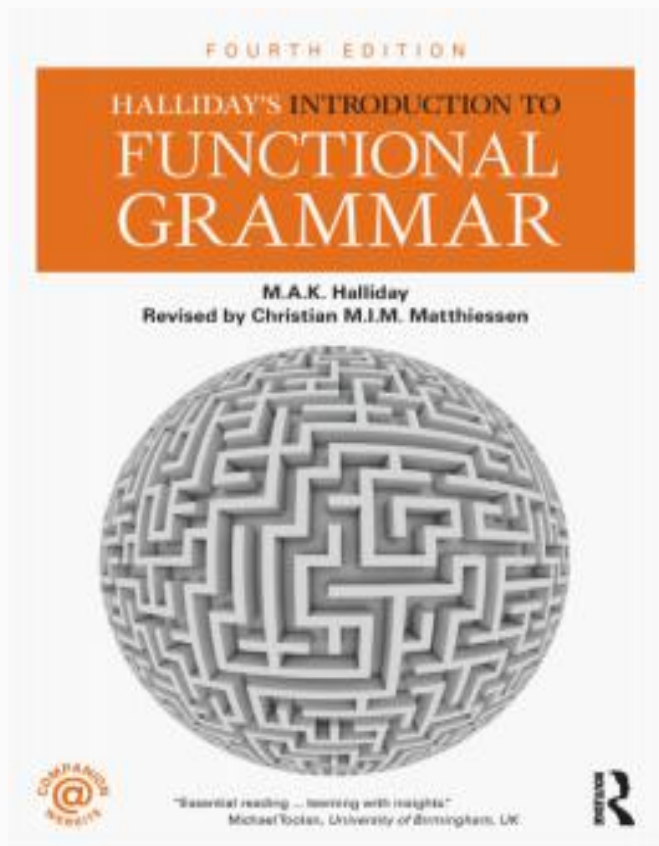


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I. Preparatory ideas



The **grammar** of a language is interpreted as system network or a network of systems (Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009, p. 42; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 23).

System is paradigmatic relations in language, patterning in “what could go instead of what” and a **system** is comprised of alternative features, one of which must be chosen when a condition of entry to this system is satisfied (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 22-23).



II. Transitivity and its four stages

①Preparing stage

M. A. K. HALLIDAY—————

Categories of the Theory
of Grammar

structure, system,

class and unit

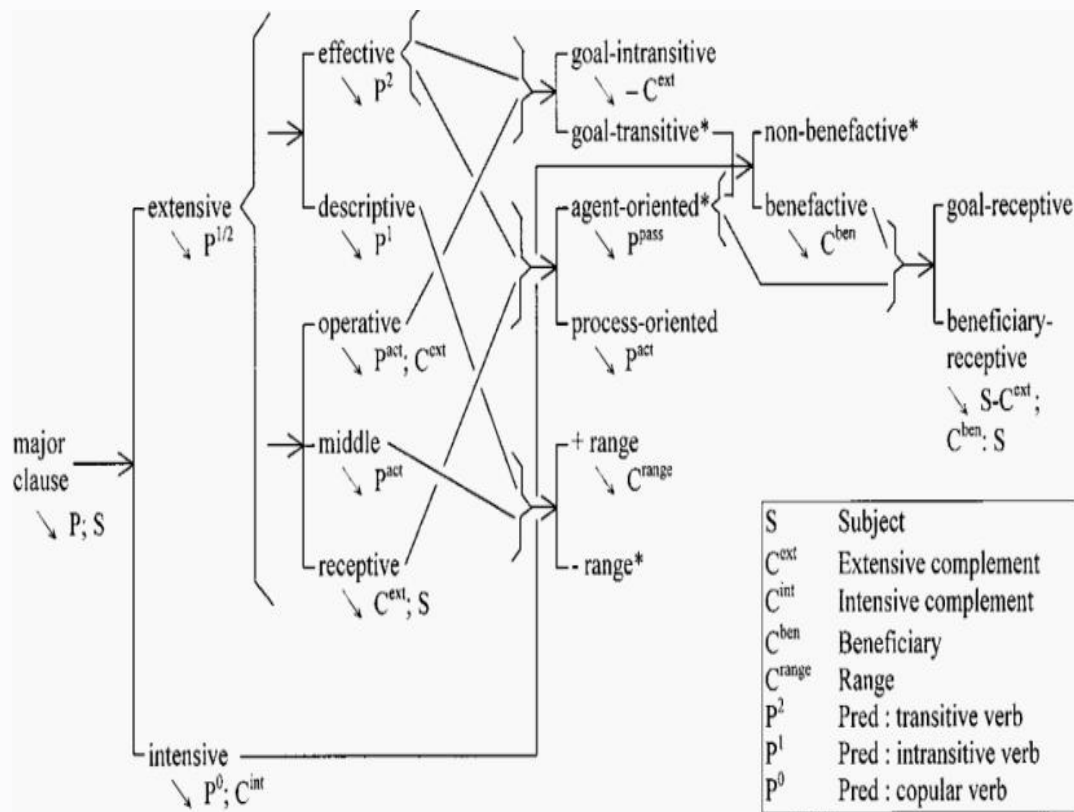
rank, exponence and delicacy

Halliday (1961)

II. Transitivity and its four stages

② Initial stage

Transitivity was taken as a system network concerning clause (major) and its components are predicates, subjects and complements. However, its configurational patterns and elements in them are still under development.



Transitivity

Halliday (2002, p. 136)



II. Transitivity and its four stages

③ Forming stage

a. Separating transitivity from other system networks

Transitivity is a name for one of the three system networks whose entry conditions are major clause and the names for the other system networks are Mood and Theme system networks (Halliday, 1967).

b. Viewing transitivity as a configuration of 4 components and classifying it by process types

Transitivity is a configuration formed from process types, participants of clauses and attributes and circumstantials associated with them.

4 process types: doing (perception & ascription) and being (description & identification),

5 participants: actor, initiator, goal, attributant and attribute,

4 circumstantials: beneficiary, range, attribute and condition.

(Halliday, 1967)



II. Transitivity and its four stages

③Forming stage

c.Renaming process types and adding more participants

Halliday (1968) renamed three process types as action, relational and mental process, adding participants such as identifier, identified and phenomenon.

d.Treating transitivity as one component of ideational metafunction

Transitivity is taken as grammatical resources to encode human experiences in physical and mental world. Its configuration is made up of linguistic expressions such as processes, and participants (circumstantials associated with them). (Halliday, 1970, quoted from Halliday, 2002).

e. Adding more process types

Added verbal process and enlarged relational process (Halliday 1977, quoted from He & Wei, 2016).

II. Transitivity and its four stages

④ Establishing stage

It is seen within **experiential metafunction** and encodes experiential function of a language into doing/happening, sensing, being, behaving, saying and existing (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p.311-314).

It is seen as a full **configurations of processes, participants and circumstantials** and the configurations are categorized into different process types with configuration of each type assigned **distinct functional labels** (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p.311-314).

Process Type	Meaning	Configuration		
		core elements	other participants	circumstances
material (action/ event)	doing (doing /happening)	actor + material process (+goal)	scope /recipient /client /attribute	extent /location /manner /cause /contingency /accompaniment /role /matter /angle
mental (perception /cognition /desideration /emotion)	sensing (seeing /thinking /wanting /feeling)	senser + mental process + phenomenon	inducer	
relational (attribution /identification)	being (attributing /identifying)	carrier + attributive process + attribute identified + identifying process + identifier	attributor /beneficiary assigner	
behavioral	behaving	behave + process (+behavior)		
verbal	saying	sayer + verbal process	receiver /verbiage / target	
existential	existing	process+ existent		

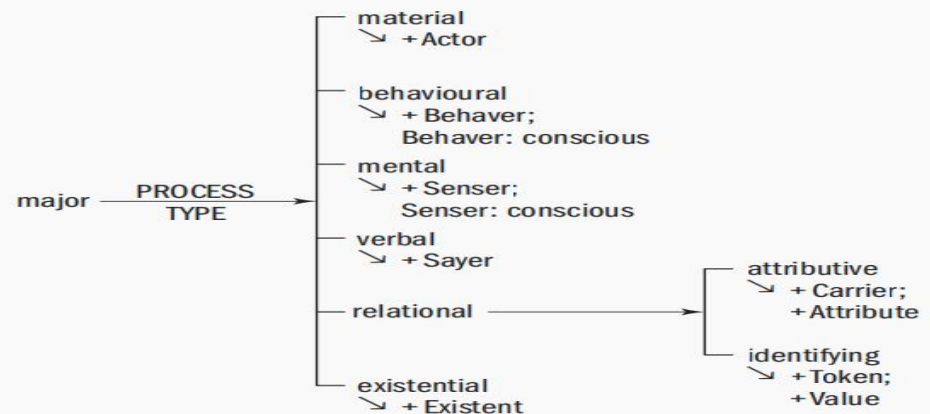
the configurations of processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p.311-314)

II. Transitivity and its four stages

④ Establishing stage

An updated definition

... a grammatical system providing human beings lexicogrammar resources to transform events flow into quanta of changes (figures) via clauses, thus construing human experiences into different figures - configurations comprising three essential elements: processes, participants and circumstantials attached to them and providing different schemata for different figures (Halliday, 2014, p. 213-220).



TRANSITIVITY: PROCESS TYPE represented as system network

(Halliday, 2014, p. 219)



III. Its Application

Discourse Analysis

To examine discourse in terms of process types, different roles participants take and circumstantials to ... (Huang, 2001).

Translation Studies

To examine how and why meanings in original and translated texts approximate or deviate each other by ... (Huang, 2006).

English Language Teaching

To relate lexico-grammar teaching to language contexts and functions (Hang & Xin, 2012).



IV. Achievements and shortcomings

giving birth to millions of researches

the problems in defining and judging types and modes in relational processes **Cheng (2002)**

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Thank you!