**Topics in English Grammar**

**Class activities: Week 3**

**System in Systemic Functional Grammar**

**Concept questions**

It is important to understand why SF grammarians try to map out grammatical systems. Before you start mapping your own systems, make sure you can answer these key questions.

1. What is a system in SFG?
2. What criteria should you have to distinguish different members of a system?
3. What is the final objective of mapping out a grammatical system?

Think about the answers in relation to the number system for nouns in English. How do we arrange concepts like ‘mass/countable, singular/plural’? What criteria do we use to identify different concepts like ‘mass/count’? What makes them different in English? Can we map out a system for nouns in English that indicate things like ‘long/short nouns’ or ‘dangerous/safe nouns’?

**Make your own systemic networks**

The activities below give you some practice in constructing your own – simpler! – systemic networks for other parts of English grammar, and reading the more complicated parts of a systemic network.

**Constructing a systemic network for mood**

You are going to devise a systemic network for the mood system in English: i.e. those forms of the clause which determine the roles of speaker and hearer. Think of the options available to speakers of English, given below. Match them up with possible labels and organise them into a systemic network for mood.

*Possible realisations*

Close the door! Let’s have dessert.

Where have you been? Have you seen my phone anywhere?

We’re from Sao Paulo.

*Possible labels*

open imperative exclusive declarative

closed interrogative inclusive indicative

**Reading more complex networks**

Look at the Intention Process/Supervention Process part of the transitivity network, given below (Berry 1975: 188). (Supervention usually describes an action process where no intention is implied, eg *Lucas broke the window*). Explain how the network for this part of the transitivity system (ie material processes) might explain the following realisations:

 1. *Fiona bumped into the table.*

 2. *Fiona flowed elegantly into the ballroom.*

 3. *Fiona punched the barman.*

 4. *Fiona cascaded helplessly down the stairs.*

 action process

 intention process

 event process

 supervention process

 typical animacy

 untypical animacy

*Figure: Detail of the transitivity network: intention/supervention.*

How would you explain, in simple terms, the following notation for *complementary entry* into a system?

 x

 a

b

 y