Unit 1

Theoretical Introduction and Overview of English grammar

within the SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL model of language

Slides for the session of
Exploring English Grammar – the world of clauses
held on
16.xi.2020 / 26 brumaire CCXXIX

Robert Spence
LangSciTech
Saarland University

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Theoretical Introduction and Overview of English grammar

Goals

About grammar

- Prescriptive vs descriptive grammar
- Lexicogrammar
- Functional vs formal grammar
- Systemic vs structural grammar

Some choices involved in producing a clause

- Strata: semantics vs grammar vs phonology/orthography
- 'Functional components' a.k.a. 'metafunctions'
- Clause as interaction: MOOD
- Clause as representation: TRANSITIVITY
- Clause as message: THEME

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The learning goals for today's session are:

1. To understand four choices we'll make about how to 'do' grammar:
    1. Descriptive vs prescriptive grammar
    2. Lexis + Grammar = Lexicogrammar
    3. Functional vs formal grammar
    4. Systemic vs structural grammar
2. To introduce some concepts useful in studying grammar

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Descriptive vs prescriptive (and/or proscriptive) grammar

1. Lay people often say grammar is about prescribing what is good, or proscribing what is bad.
2. A modern grammarian just describes how people actually use language (rather than how they think they do, or claim to do)
3. Grammatical "rules" therefore need to be reinterpreted as something like "laws of nature" (like gravity, or conservation of energy, or evolution by means of natural selection): generalized statements of observed fact.
4. We'll try to work with real examples taken from linguistic corpora; but sometimes, when trying to illustrate a particular grammatical point, it can be convenient to use (carefully) constructed examples.

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Lexis + Grammar = Lexicogrammar

1. Some approaches treat lexis (vocabulary) separately from grammar
2. We will treat both together, as “lexicogrammar”
3. Lexicogrammar covers all the knowledge in the dictionary plus all the knowledge in the grammar book
4. With this knowledge, you can produce and understand very many sentences
5. But you still need to know about the context before you can really use or understand lexis and grammar appropriately.

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Functional vs formal grammar

1. Consider the simple sentence: “Socrates runs”.
2. A formal grammar might analyze this by saying that it consists of a noun followed by a verb.
3. A functional grammar might analyze it by saying that it consists of:
    1. a subject, of which something is predicated
    2. an actor, who is involved in a process of doing something
    3. a theme (specifying the topic), followed by a rheme (conveying a message about the topic)
4.

5. From now on, we’ll use initial capitals for function labels.
6. We’ll also include information from formal grammar as well:

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S	P
Actor	Process
Theme	Rheme

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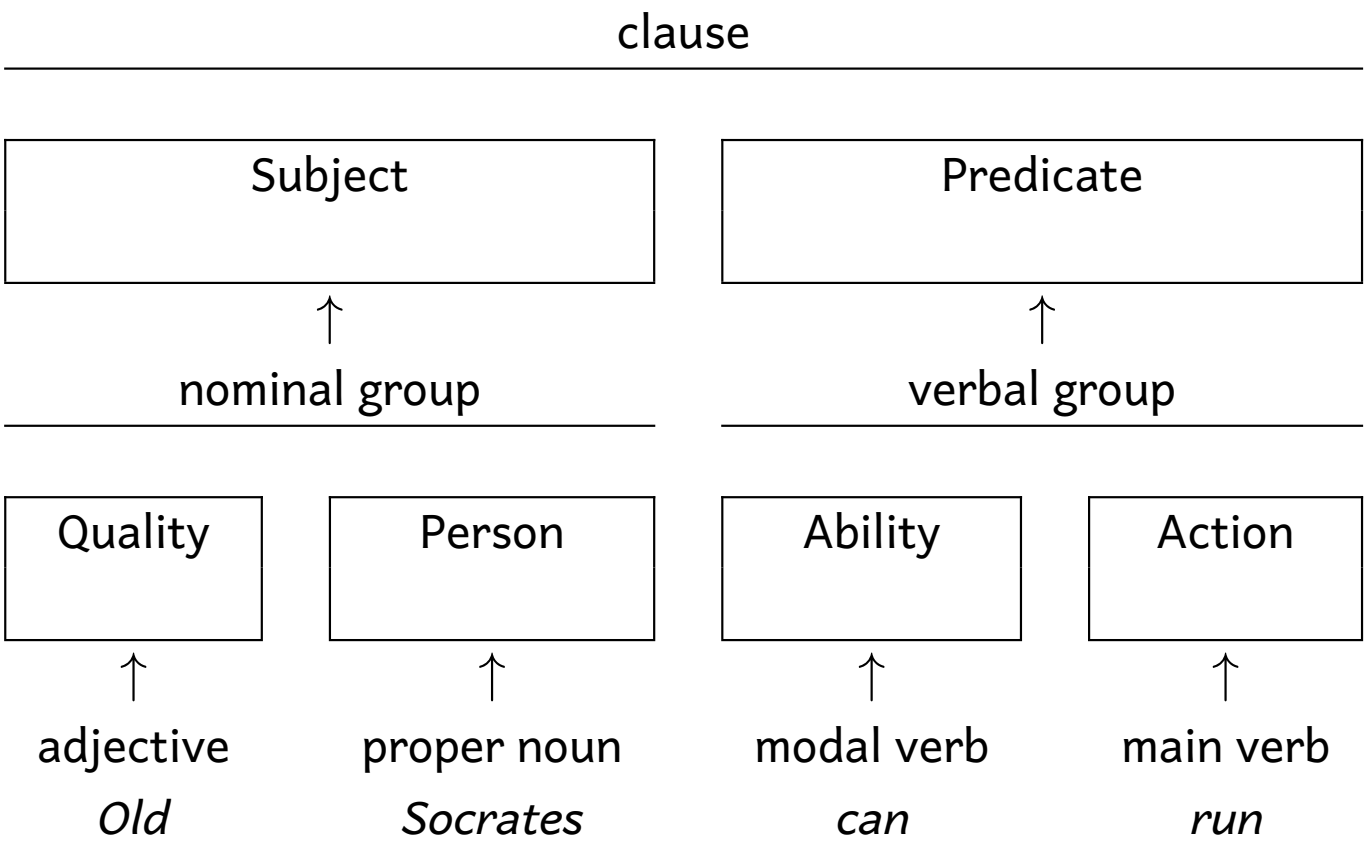
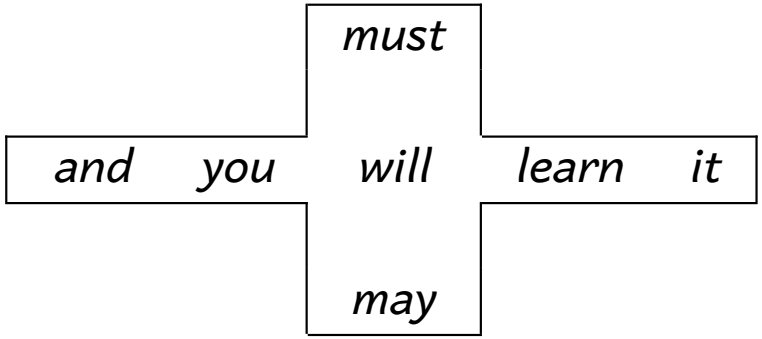
Functional and formal grammar combined



Systemic vs structural grammar



1. A structural approach is interested in the horizontal (syntagmatic) relations: what is connected to what, and how?
2. A systemic approach gives priority to the vertical (paradigmatic) dimension: what choices are available, and how do they differ from each other?
3. Once the focus has been shifted from structure to system, the choices available can be stated in a more abstract way:

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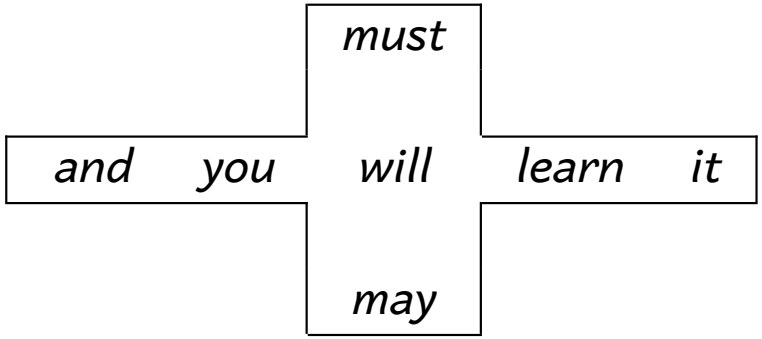
Systemic vs structural grammar



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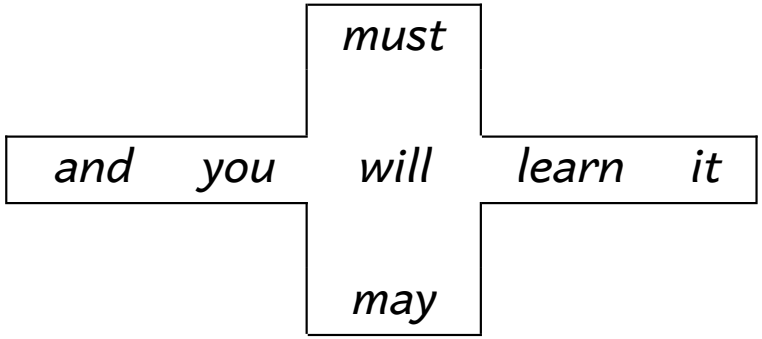

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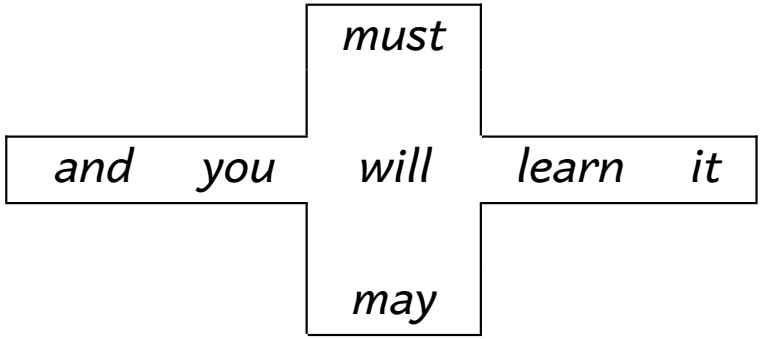

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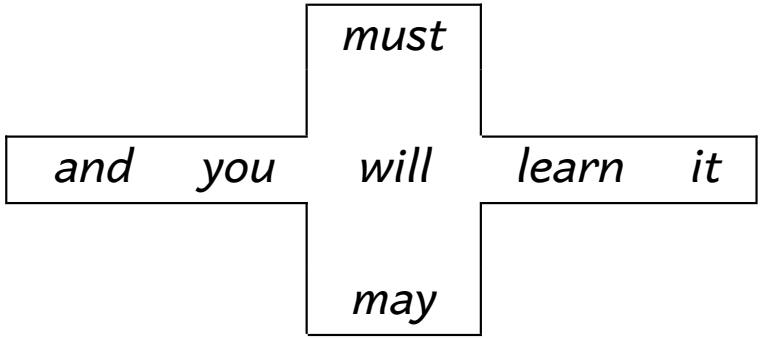

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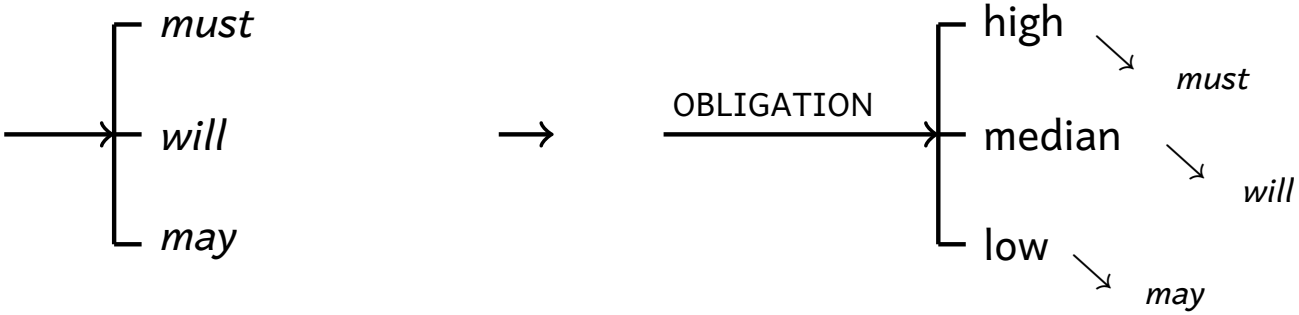

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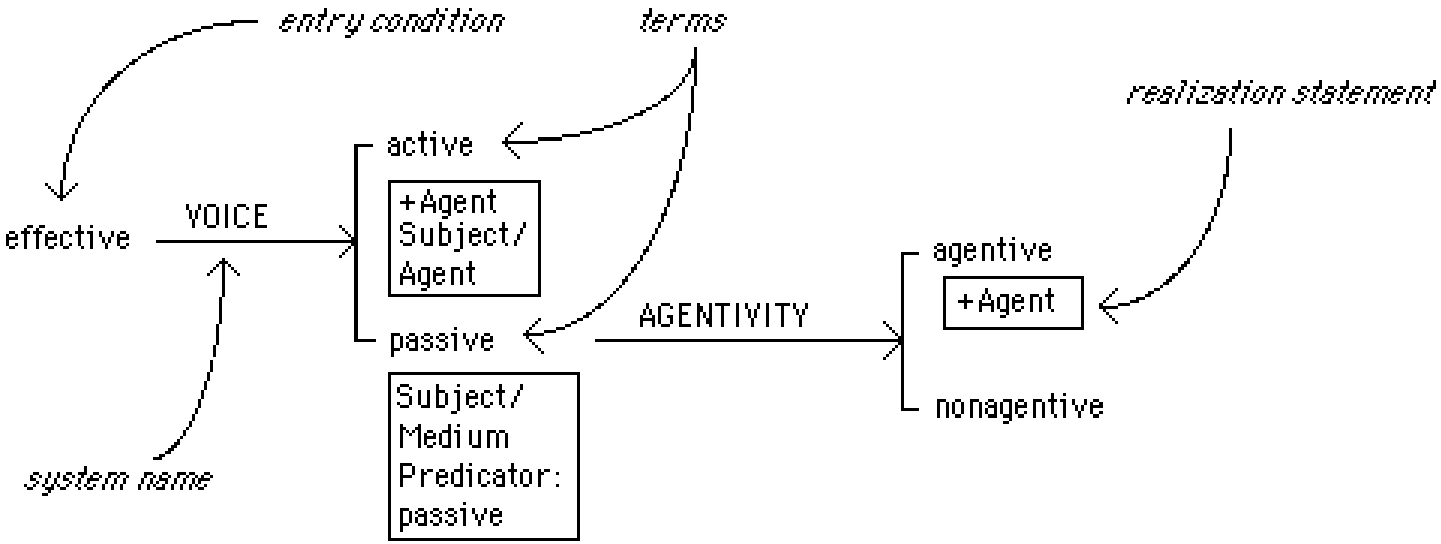

Oswald	shot	Kennedy
Subject/ Agent	Predicator	Medium

Kennedy	was shot	by Oswald
Subject/ Medium	Predicator: passive	Agent

Kennedy	was shot
Subject/ Medium	Predicator: passive

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Some choices involved in producing a clause

1. In winter semester you tried to guess a clause that I was thinking of; you asked ‘closed’ questions (e.g. ‘yes/no’ for binary choices, or ‘wh-’ questions for sets of choices with three or more terms).
2. Some of the results from that experiment can be generalized.

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Strata:

- “Is it a question?”
- ⟶
- “Does it function as a question?”
- OR:
- “Does it have the grammatical structure of a question?”
- OR:
- “Does it sound like (/ Is it written like) a question?”

Strata:

- “Is it a question?”
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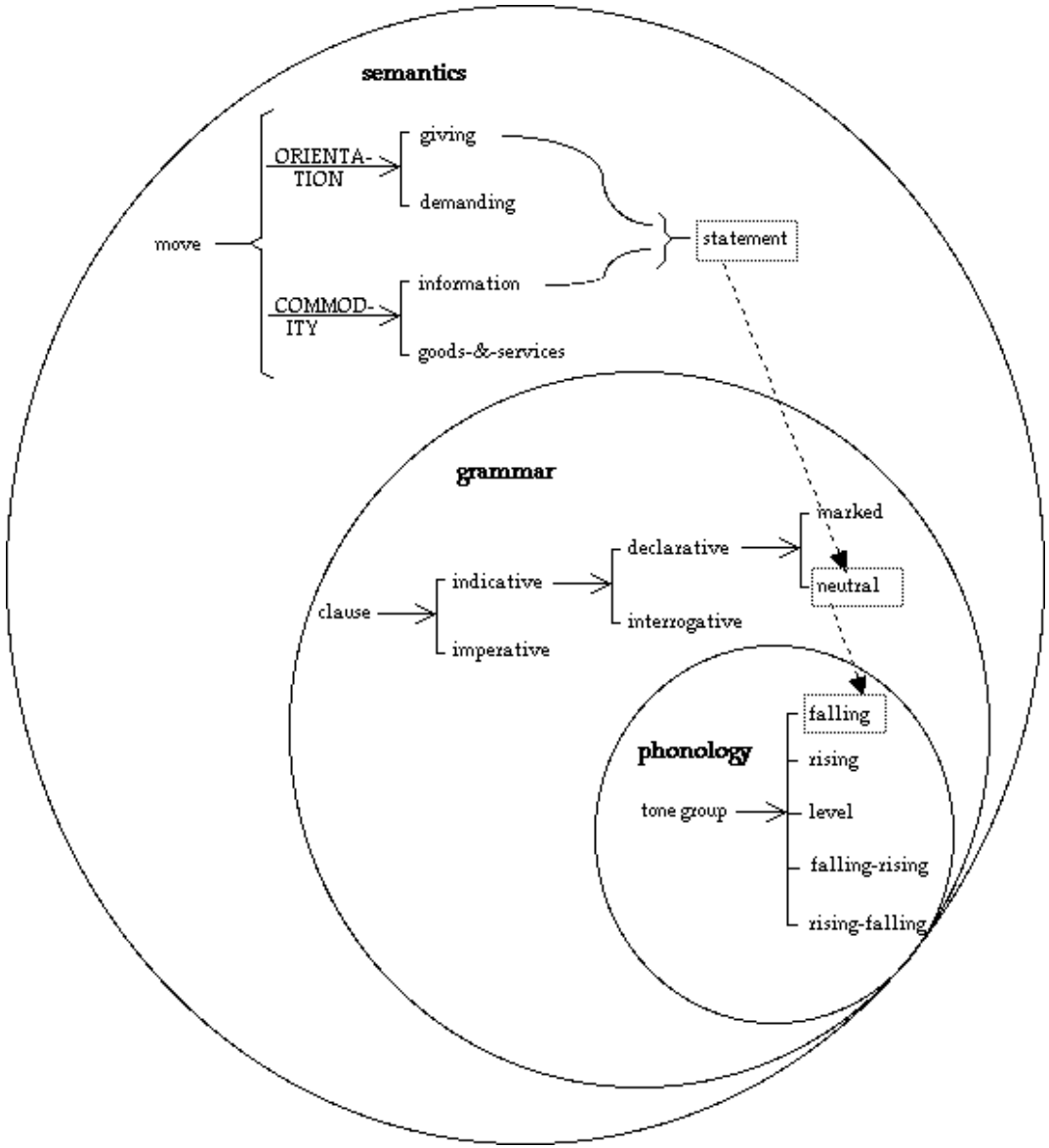

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‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’

1. Clause as interaction:
   grammatical systems of MOOD
   — enacting social relationships
2. Clause as representation:
   grammatical systems of TRANSITIVITY
   — construing a model of reality
3. Clause as message:
   grammatical systems of THEME
   — creating relevance to context
4. These three sets of choices are simultaneous to and independent of each other (i.e. they are ‘in parallel’)

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‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’

1. Clause as interaction:
   grammatical systems of MOOD
   — enacting social relationships
2. Clause as representation:
   grammatical systems of TRANSITIVITY
   — construing a model of reality
3. Clause as message:
   grammatical systems of THEME
   — creating relevance to context
4. These three sets of choices are simultaneous to and independent of each other (i.e. they are ‘in parallel’)

Goals

About grammar

Prescriptive vs descriptive grammar

Lexicogrammar

Functional vs formal grammar

Systemic vs structural grammar

Some choices involved in producing a clause

Strata: semantics vs grammar vs phonology/orthography

‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’

Clause as interaction: MOOD

Clause as representation: TRANSITIVITY

Clause as message: THEME

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

Do	cats	eat	bats?

Mood	Residue	MOOD
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY

Theme	Rheme	THEME

Who	shot		the sheriff?
Mood		Residue	
Subject/Wh-	(did) Finite	Predicator (shoot)	Complement
Actor/ Agent	Process: material		Goal/ Medium
Theme	Rheme		

I	have		a dream.
Mood		Residue	
Subject	(do) Finite	Predicator (have)	Complement
Carrier/ Medium	Process: relational: ascriptive/possessive		Attribute/ Range
Theme	Rheme		

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

Do	cats	eat	bats?

Mood		Residue		MOOD
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement	

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY

Theme	Rheme	THEME

Who	shot	the sheriff?

Mood		Residue	
Subject/Wh-	(did) Finite	Predicator (shoot)	Complement

Actor/ Agent	Process: material	Goal/ Medium

Theme	Rheme

I	have	a dream.

Mood		Residue	
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Theme	Rheme

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Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement	

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY

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Actor/ Agent	Process: material	Goal/ Medium

Theme	Rheme

I	have	a dream.

Mood		Residue	
Subject	(do) Finite	Predicator (have)	Complement

Carrier/ Medium	Process: relational: ascriptive/possessive	Attribute/ Range

Theme	Rheme

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

Do	cats	eat	bats?

Mood		Residue	
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement

MOOD

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'

TRANSITIVITY

Theme	Rheme

THEME

Who	shot	the sheriff?

Mood		Residue	
Subject/Wh-	(did) Finite	Predicator (shoot)	Complement

Actor/ Agent	Process: material	Goal/ Medium

Theme	Rheme

I	have	a dream.

Mood		Residue	
Subject	(do) Finite	Predicator (have)	Complement

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Theme	Rheme

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

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Mood		Residue		MOOD
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement	

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY

Theme	Rheme	THEME

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Mood		Residue
Subject/Wh-	(did) Finite	Predicator (shoot) / Complement
Actor/ Agent	Process: material	Goal/ Medium
Theme	Rheme	

I	have	a dream.
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Carrier/ Medium	Process: relational: ascriptive/possessive	Attribute/ Range
Theme	Rheme	

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

Do	cats	eat	bats?

Mood		Residue		MOOD
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement	

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY

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Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

Do	cats	eat	bats?

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Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement	

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY

Theme	Rheme	THEME

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Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

Do	cats	eat	bats?

Mood		Residue		MOOD
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement	

Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY

Theme	Rheme	THEME

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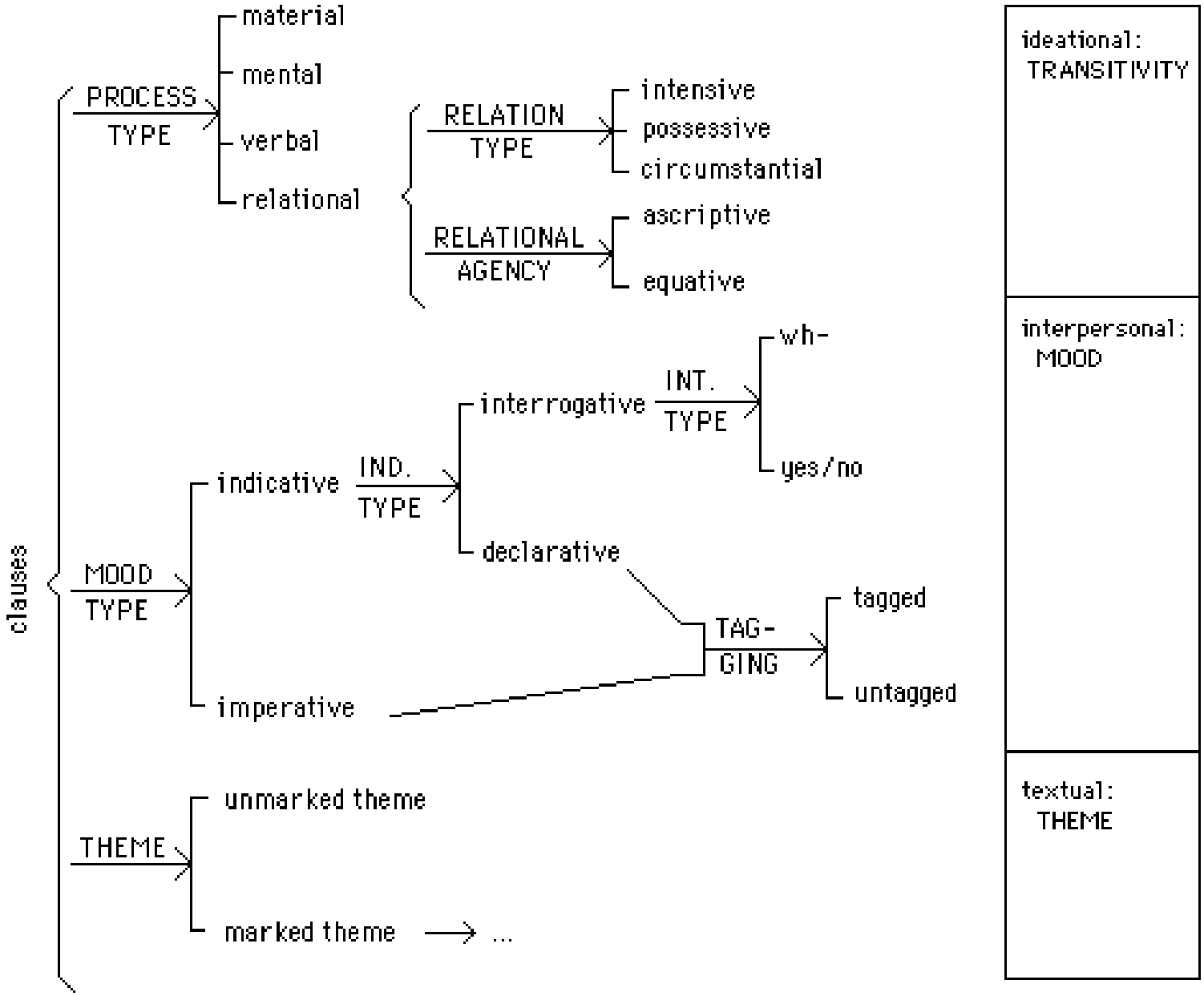
Subject	(do) Finite	Predicator (have)	Complement
Carrier/ Medium	Process: relational: ascriptive/possessive		Attribute/ Range
Theme	Rheme		

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (2): paradigmatic view



Clause as interaction: MOOD (1)

MOOD TYPE:

- either ‘imperative’ or ‘indicative’,

Theoretical Introduction and Overview of English grammar

Goals

About grammar

Prescriptive vs descriptive grammar

Lexicogrammar

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Systemic vs structural grammar

Some choices involved in producing a clause

Strata: semantics vs grammar vs phonology/orthography

‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’

Clause as interaction: MOOD

Clause as representation: TRANSITIVITY

Clause as message: THEME

Clause as interaction: MOOD (1)

MOOD TYPE:

- either ‘imperative’ or ‘indicative’,
  - if ‘indicative’, then either ‘declarative’ or ‘interrogative’,
    - if ‘interrogative’, then either ‘polar’ or ‘WH’

Clause as interaction: MOOD (1)

MOOD TYPE:

- either ‘imperative’ or ‘indicative’,
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      if ‘WH-’, then ‘WH-subject’ or ‘WH-other’.

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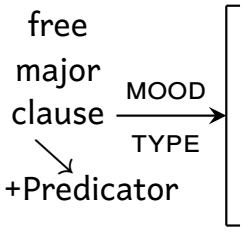
    - if ‘interrogative’, then ‘yes/no’ or ‘WH-’,
      if ‘WH-’, then ‘WH-subject’ or ‘WH-other’.

clause

major
clause
↘
+Predicator

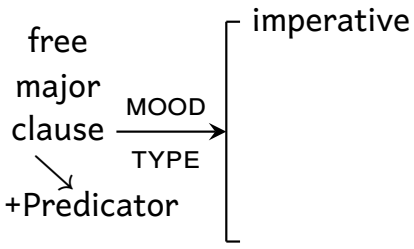
Close

↑
Pred



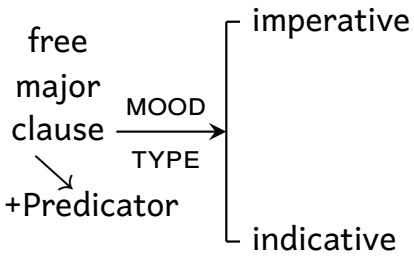
Close

↑
Pred



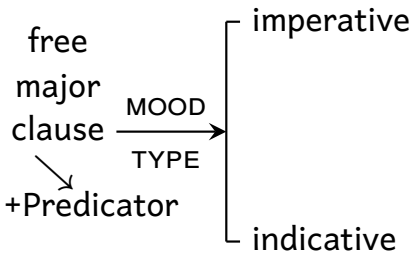
Close

↑
Pred


free
major
clause
MOOD
TYPE
+Predicator
imperative
indicative

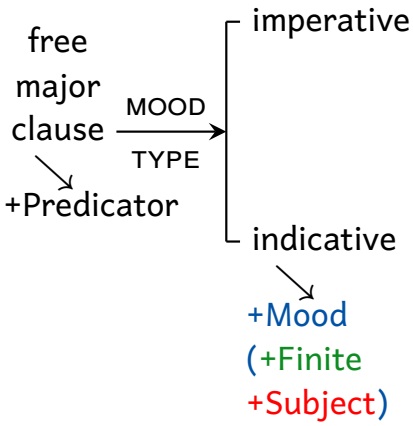
Close

↑
Pred



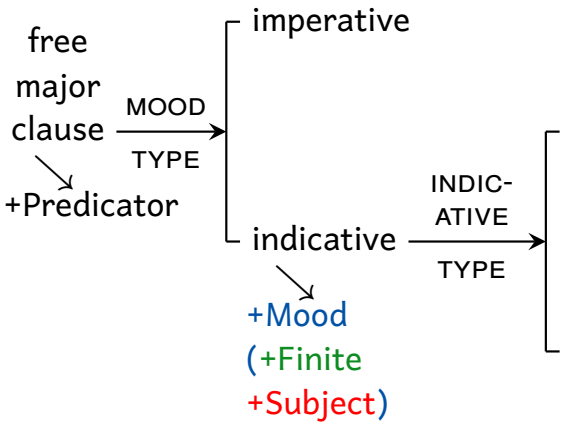
Close the window!

↑ ↑
Pred Complement



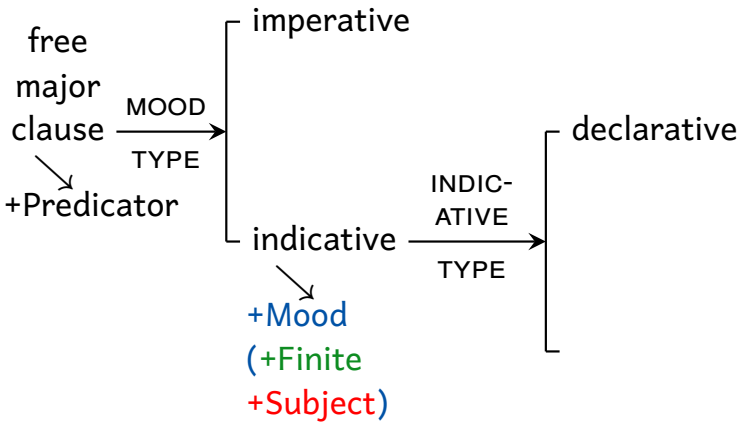
Close the window!

Mood Pred Complement



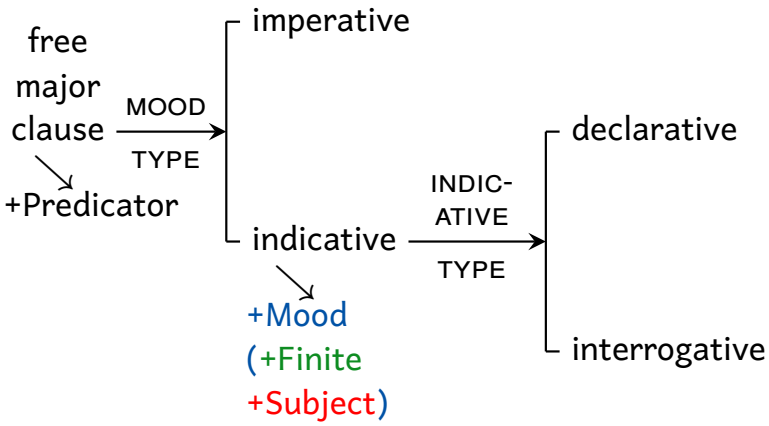
Close the window!

Mood Pred Complement



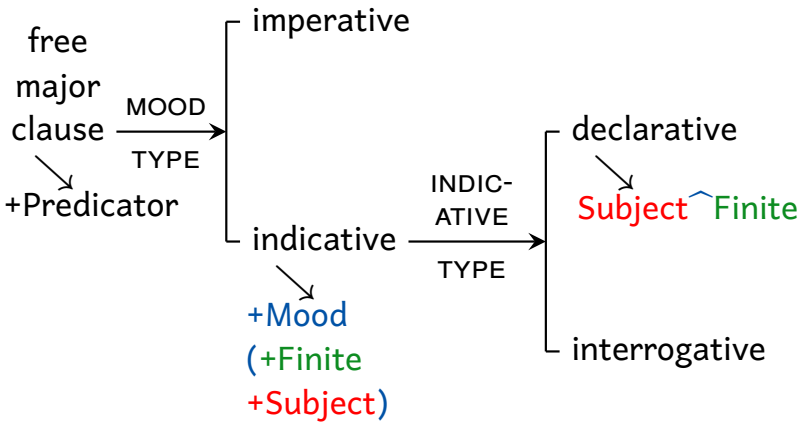
Close the window!

Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

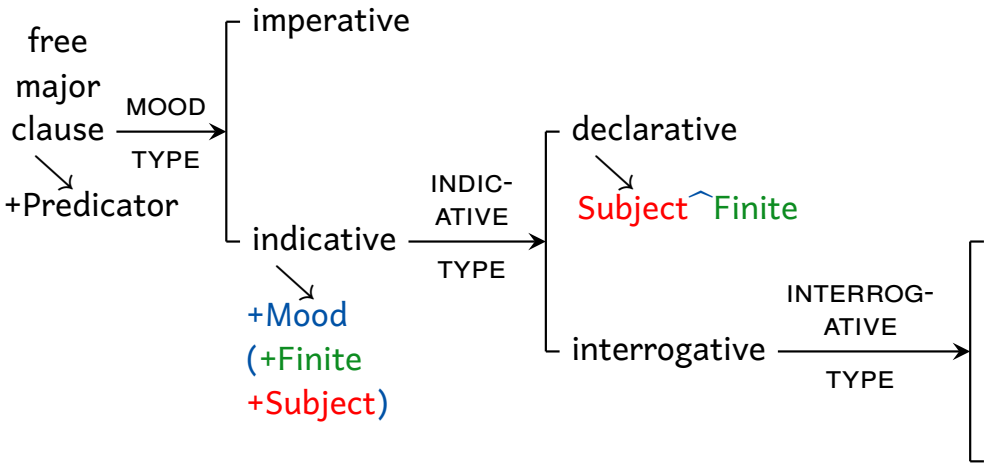
Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

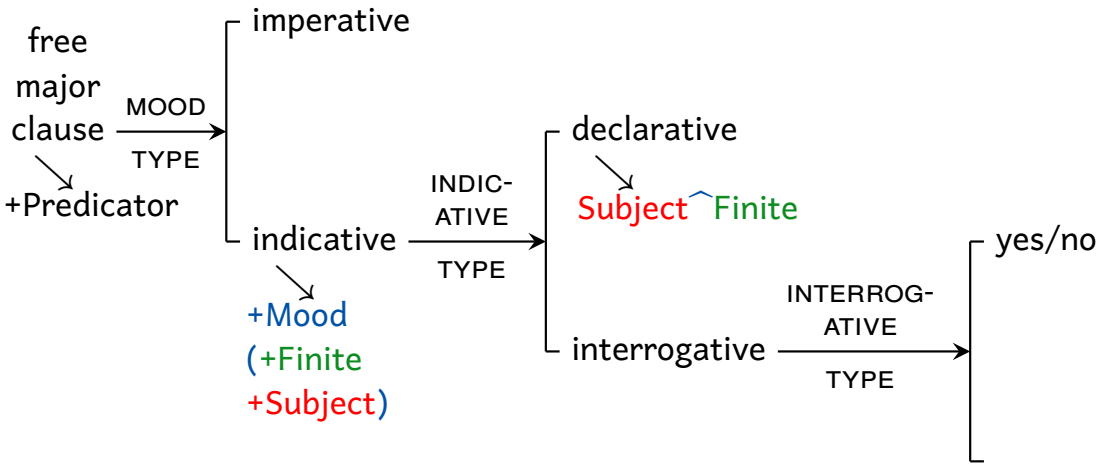
Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

Mood Pred Complement



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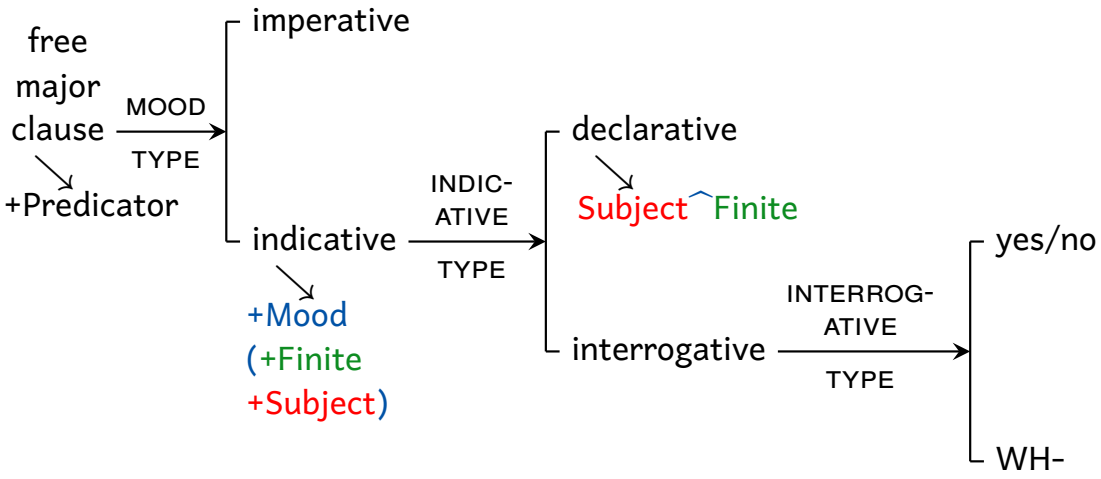
He is closing the window.

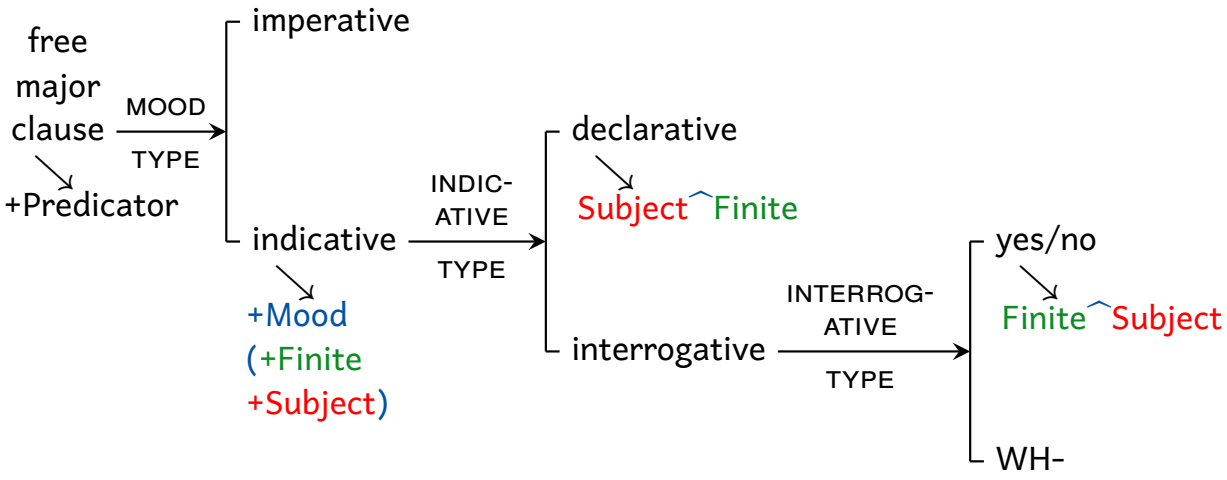
Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

Mood Pred Complement

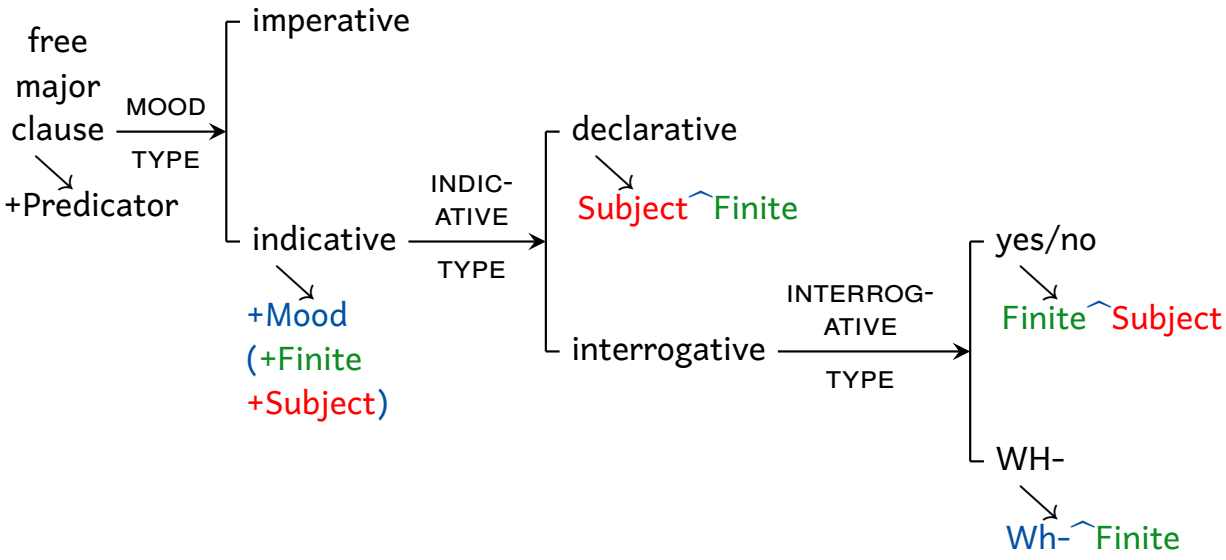


Close the window!

He is closing the window.

Is he closing the window?

Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

Is he closing the window?

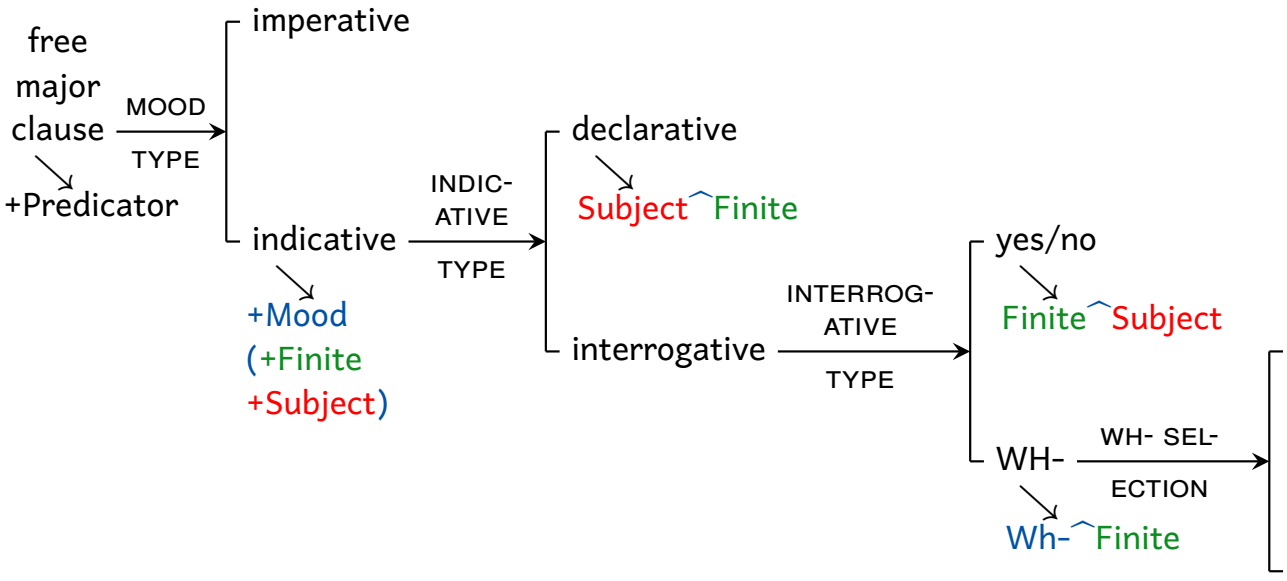
Wh is

Wh is

Wh is

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

Is he closing the window?

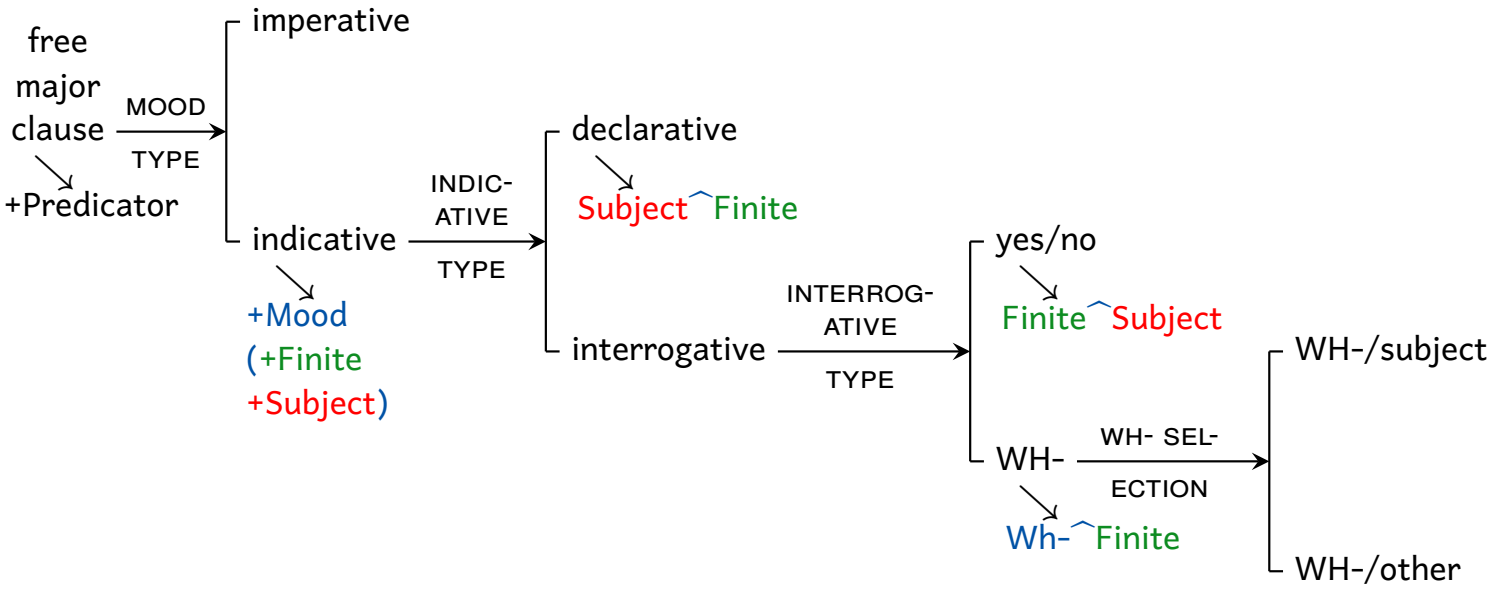
Wh is

Wh is

Wh is

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

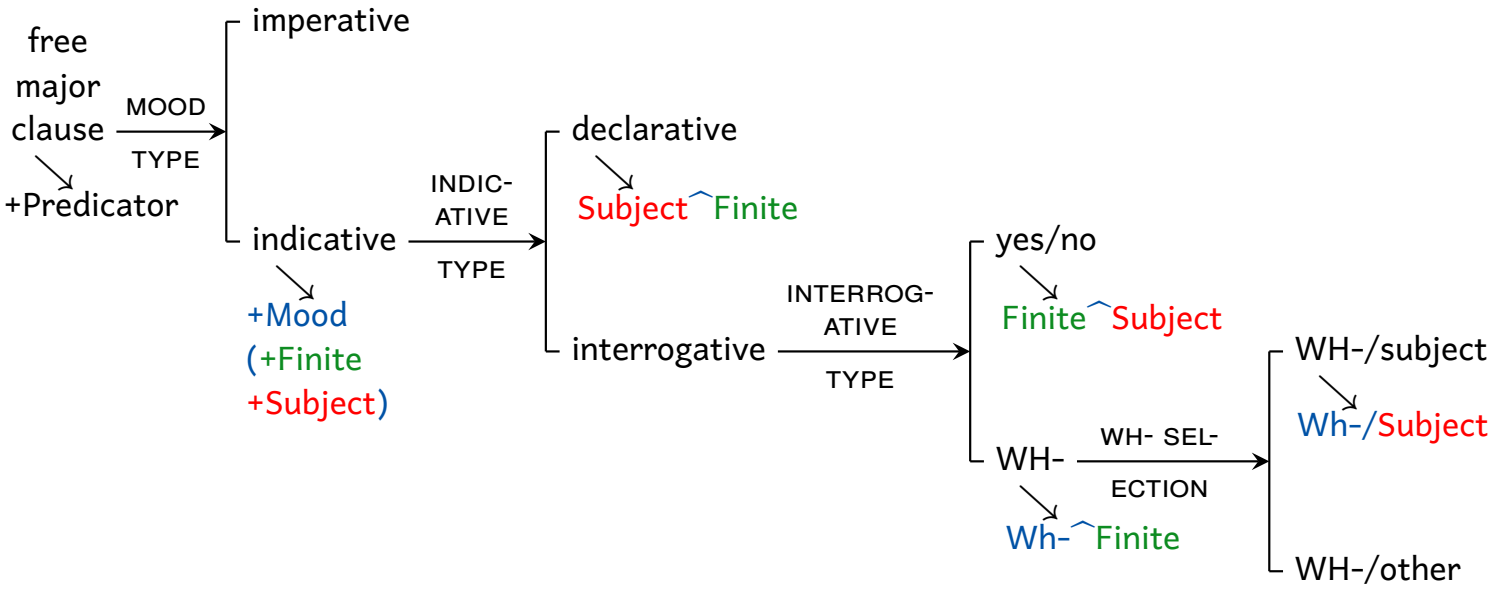
Is he closing the window?

Wh is

Wh is

Wh is

Mood Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

Is he closing the window?

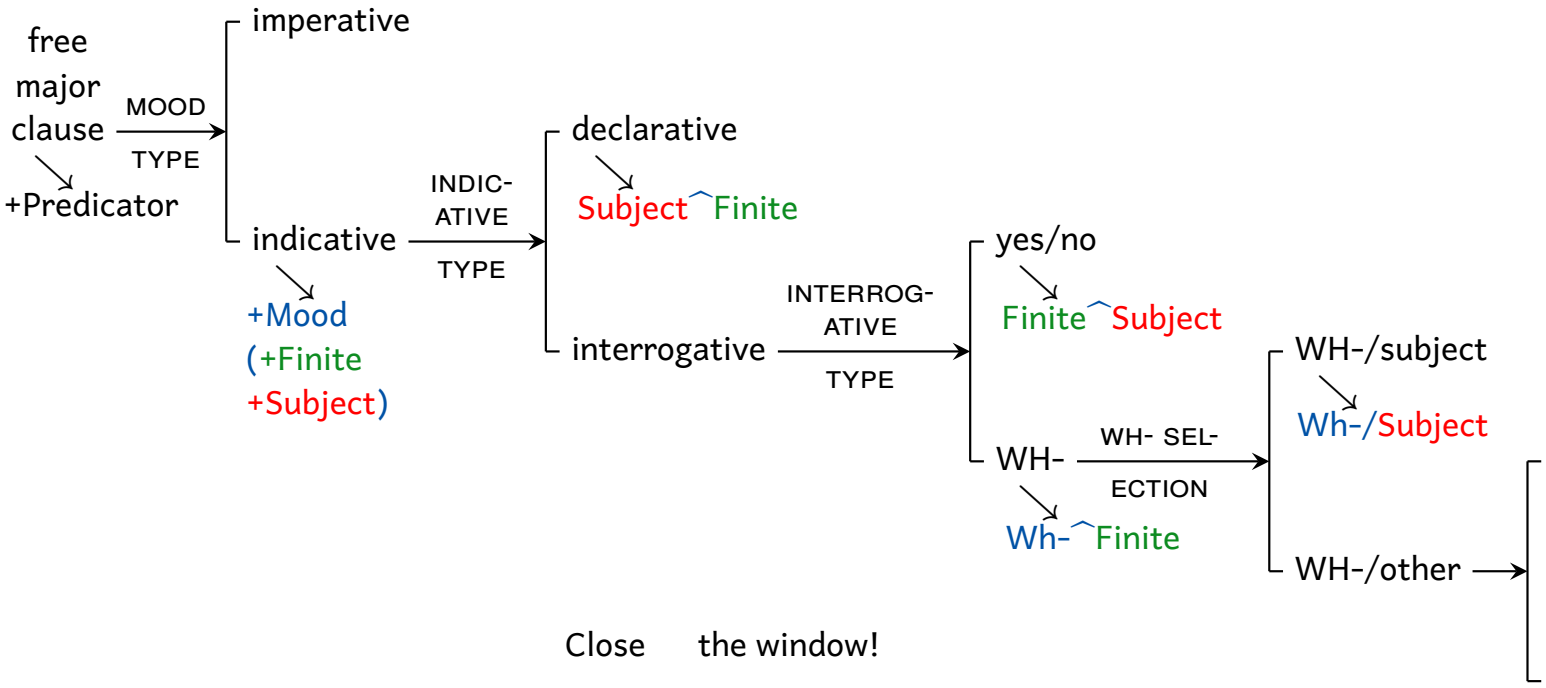
Who is closing the window?

Wh is

Wh is

Mood

Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

Is he closing the window?

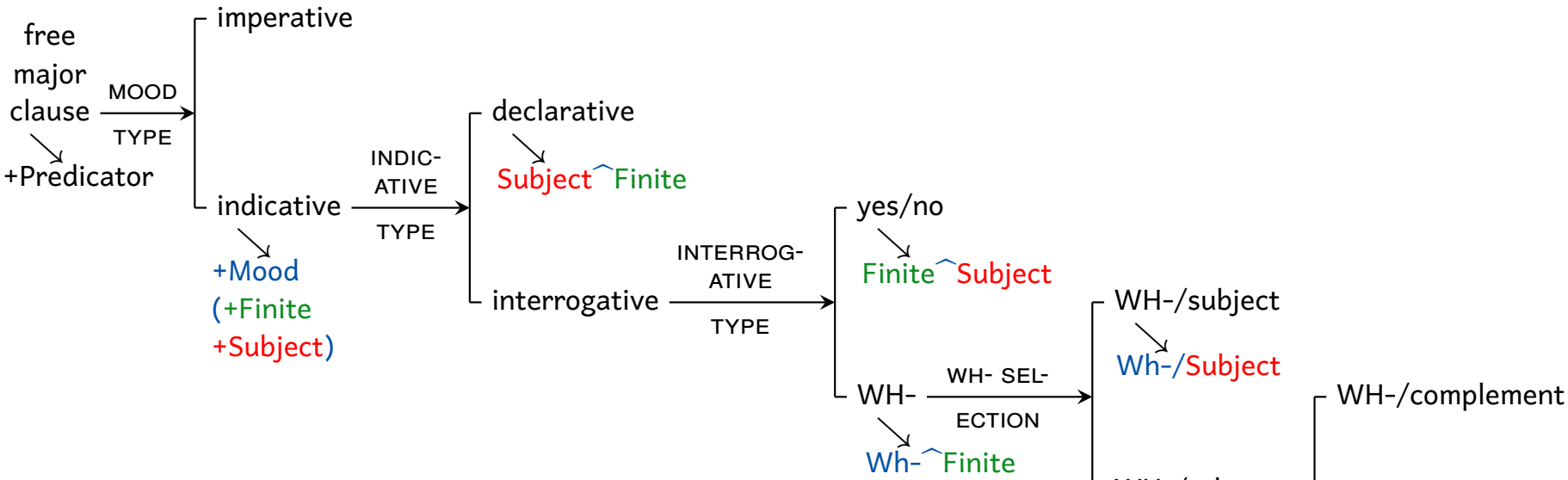
Who is closing the window?

Wh is

Wh is

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Mood Pred Complement



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He is closing the window.

Is he closing the window?

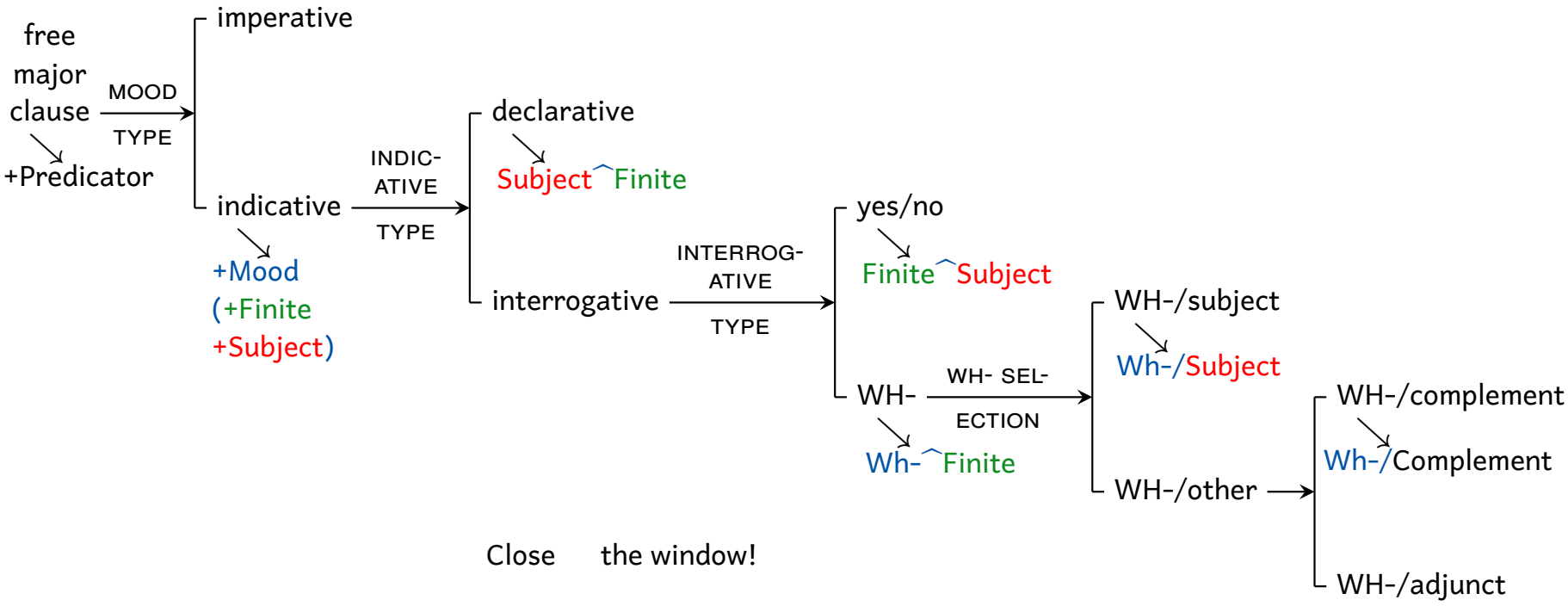
Who is closing the window?

Wh is

Wh is

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Mood Pred Complement



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

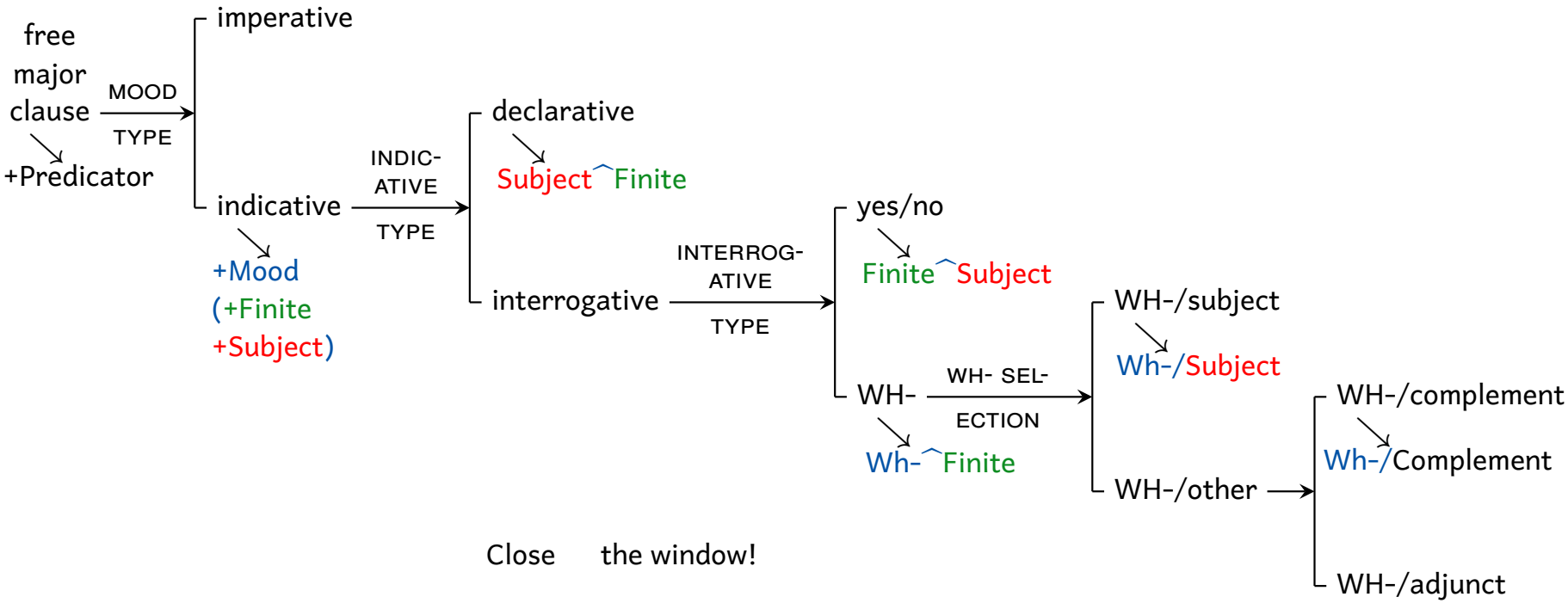
Is he closing the window?

Who is closing the window?

What is
Wh is

Complement ↑ ↑ ↑ Pred ↑ Complement

Mood



Close the window!

He is closing the window.

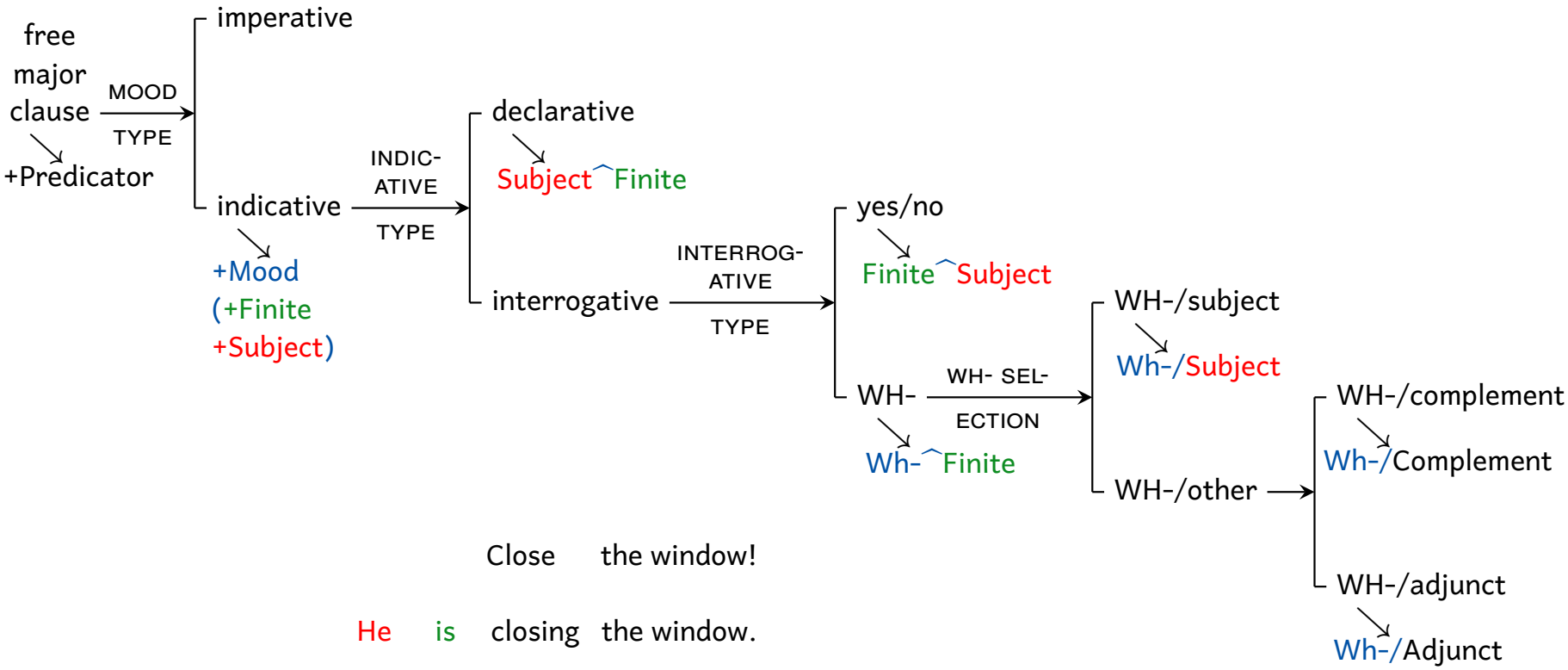
Is he closing the window?

Who is closing the window?

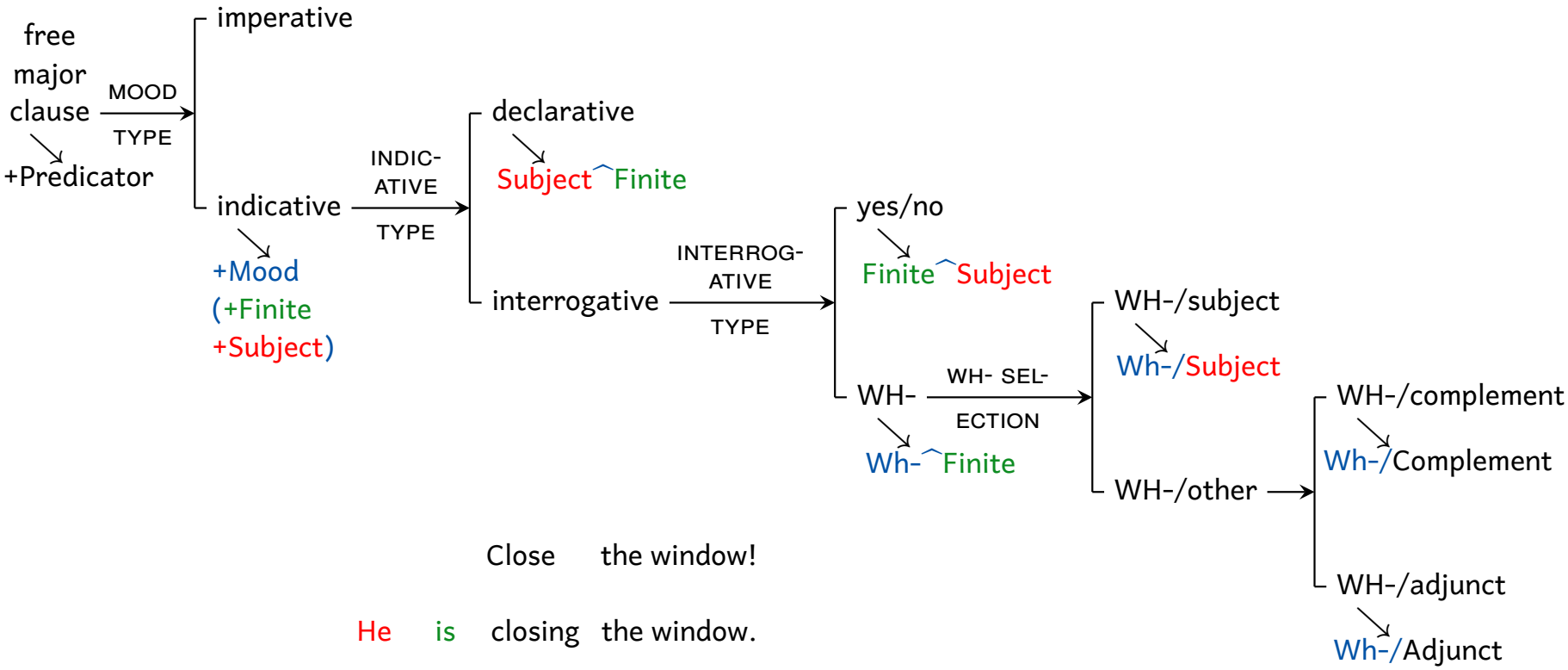
What is he closing?

Wh is

Complement ↑ Mood ↑ ↑ Pred ↑ Complement



			Close		the window!
		He	is	closing	the window.
		Is	he	closing	the window?
		Who	is	closing	the window?
	What	is	he	closing	?
Why		is			
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Adjunct	Complement	Mood		Pred	Complement



			Close		the window!
		He	is	closing	the window.
		Is	he	closing	the window?
		Who	is	closing	the window?
	What	is	he	closing	?
Why		is	he	closing	the window?
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Adjunct	Complement	Mood		Pred	Complement

- non-finite or finite
- bound (e.g. reported speech)
- major
- clause
-
-

[free]	([free])	[bound]		
Close the window!	(She told me)		to close the window.	[non-finite]
He is closing the window	(She told me)	he was	closing the window.	[finite]
Is he closing the window?	(She asked me)	whether he was	closing the window.	[finite]
Who is closing the window?	(She asked me)	who was	closing the window.	[finite]
What is he closing?	(She asked) me	what he was	closing.	[finite]
Why is he closing the window?	(She asked me)	why he was	closing the window.	[finite]

- non-finite or finite
- bound (e.g. reported speech)
- major
- clause
-
-

[free]	([free])	[bound]		
Close the window!	(She told me)		to close the window.	[non-finite]
He is closing the window	(She told me)	he was	closing the window.	[finite]
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Who is closing the window?	(She asked me)	who was	closing the window.	[finite]
What is he closing?	(She asked) me	what he was	closing.	[finite]
Why is he closing the window?	(She asked me)	why he was	closing the window.	[finite]

- non-finite or finite
- bound (e.g. reported speech)
- major
- clause
-
-

[free]	([free])	[bound]		
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Who is closing the window?	(She asked me)	who was	closing the window.	[finite]
What is he closing?	(She asked) me	what he was	closing.	[finite]
Why is he closing the window?	(She asked me)	why he was	closing the window.	[finite]

- non-finite or finite
- bound (e.g. reported speech)
- major
- clause

[free]	([free])	[bound]		
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Who is closing the window?	(She asked me)	who was	closing the window.	[finite]
What is he closing?	(She asked) me	what he was	closing.	[finite]
Why is he closing the window?	(She asked me)	why he was	closing the window.	[finite]

- non-finite or finite
- bound (e.g. reported speech)
- major
- clause
-

[free]	([free])	[bound]		
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Who is closing the window?	(She asked me)	who was	closing the window.	[finite]
What is he closing?	(She asked) me	what he was	closing.	[finite]
Why is he closing the window?	(She asked me)	why he was	closing the window.	[finite]

- non-finite or finite
- bound (e.g. reported speech)
- major
- clause
-
-

[free]	([free])	[bound]		
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Who is closing the window?	(She asked me)	who was	closing the window.	[finite]
What is he closing?	(She asked) me	what he was	closing.	[finite]
Why is he closing the window?	(She asked me)	why he was	closing the window.	[finite]

Clause as interaction: MOOD (2)

SUBJECT PERSON:

- either 'non-interactant' or 'interactant',

Clause as interaction: MOOD (2)

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    - *You kenn say You to me.* :-D

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Clause as interaction: MOOD (3)

FINITE TYPE:

- either 'temporal' (primary tense) or 'modal';

	[past]	*she knew* ('yesterday')
PRIMARY TENSE	[present]	*she knows* ('now')
	[future]	*she will know* ('tomorrow')
	[high]	*she must know* ('surely')
MODALITY	[median]	*she will know* ('probably')
	[low]	*she may know* ('perhaps')

Clause as interaction: MOOD (3)

FINITE TYPE:

- either 'temporal' (primary tense) or 'modal';
  - if 'temporal', then PRIMARY TENSE: 'past' or 'present' or 'future';
  - if 'modal', then MODALITY: 'high' or 'median' or 'low'.

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Prescriptive vs descriptive grammar

Lexicogrammar

Functional vs formal grammar

Systemic vs structural grammar

Some choices involved in producing a clause

Strata: semantics vs grammar vs phonology/orthography

‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’

Clause as interaction: MOOD

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Clause as interaction: MOOD (4)

POLARITY:

- either 'positive' or 'negative';

POLARITY MARKING:

- if 'positive' or if 'negative', then either 'marked' (emphatic) or 'unmarked'.

	[unmarked]	[marked]
[positive]	*he closed it*	*he did close it*
[negative]	*he didn't close it*	*he did not close it*

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Clause as representation: TRANSITIVITY

1. A "GOING ON" consists of
   - PROCESS +
   - PARTICIPANTS +
   - CIRCUMSTANCES
2. PROCESS TYPE:
   - material ('doing')
     - *Lola runs.* [intransitive]
     - *Tom films Lola.* [transitive]
   - mental ('sensing')
     - *Mary liked the gift.* ['like' type]
     - *The gift pleased Mary.* ['please' type]
   - relational ('being')
     - *Mary is a teacher.* [ascriptive]
     - *Mary is the teacher.* [equative]
   - (plus other minor types)
3. TWO WAYS OF MODELLING REALITY:
   - *Pat cooked.* [intransitive] — MODEL 1 IS THE
   - *Pat cooked the rice.* [transitive] — 'TRANSITIVE' MODEL
   - *The rice cooked.* [middle] — MODEL 2 IS THE
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Clause as message: THEME

1. THEME SELECTION
   - Theme = Predicator (*Close the **window**!*)
   - Theme = Adjunct (*In summer the students drink lots of **beer**.*)
   - Theme = Subject (*Maria likes **Mozart**.*)
   - Theme = …
2. THEME FOCUSSING
   - THEME PREDICATION
     - *it was Oswald who shot Kennedy*
   - THEME IDENTIFICATION
     - *the one who shot Kennedy was **Oswald***
     - *Oswald was the one who shot **Kennedy***
   - … probably VOICE belongs here, too:
     - *Oswald shot **Kennedy***
     - *Kennedy was shot by **Oswald***
3. INTERPERSONAL THEME
   - *surely Anne*
4. TEXTUAL THEME
   - *oh but in that case*

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- To be continued …