

NOTES ON

**HEARER PRESUPPOSITIONS AND
THE ART OF LANGUAGE BASED PROFILING**

Section 7

The Brokaw Anthrax Letter: An Extended Example

1. TEXT OF BROKAW ANTHRAX LETTER

09 – 11 - 01

This is next

Take Penacilin Now

Death To America

Death To Israel

Allah is Great

1.1. In Section 8, following, a holographic copy of this letter is exhibited, which affords a richer base for our analyses than does the above machine printed display of its content.

2. PROFILING PROCEDURE

2.1. It will be recalled that a hearer presupposition (HP), associated with a hearer's understanding of a given utterance U having the utterance feature UF and understood relative to the hearer's understanding of the context C in which that utterance is produced, is an hypothesis made by the hearer regarding those beliefs and intentions of S which appear (to the hearer) to underlie S's making the utterance U in the context C.

2.2. As it pertains to the Brokaw Anthrax letter, the hearer has the role of profiler, and the understandings U* of the utterances U and the understandings C* of the context C are those of the profiler. The HPs identified in the letter relative to the profiler's understandings of the utterances and of the contexts in which they occur provide the basis for developing a profile of the writer (S) of the letter. We describe that profile in terms of HPs associated with UFs which have instances in that letter, and the implications (IMPs) of those HPs.

2.3. The profile of the writer of this letter is elaborated in Sections 8 through 11, and is summarized in Section 12. The four Sections 8 through 11 correspond, respectively, to results obtained in analyses centering about HPs and IMPs associated with occurrences of the four types of UFs that occur in this letter: Formatting (Section 8), Stylistics (Section 9), Thematics (Section 10), and Reasoning (Section 11).

2.4. In Sections 8 through 11, HP Levels are indicated (see Section 4) as "Level 1 HP," "Level 2 HP," and so on, indicating the pattern of their dependencies, and their implications are indicated by the abbreviation, "IMP." We do not attempt to order IMPs in levels to indicate the pattern of their dependencies though that could have been done on the same basis as was done for HPs. Also, we do not go as far in indicating HP levels beyond Levels 1 or 2 as we might have inasmuch as higher level HPs would be leveraged too far to be intuitively compelling. Judgments regarding HP dependencies and the IMPs drawn from them are largely intuitive, and the reader may well have different assessments of various of them.

2.5. One way of organizing HPs into levels is to arrange them as Alternating HP Branch structures, such as those we have described in Section 4 as Alternating Branch Structures of Type A. Other types of branch structures are clearly possible. This brings us to the purpose of discussing this letter in such detail, namely to illustrate the kinds of structures which the profiler could use in other profiling applications.

3. RECALL THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HPs AND IMPs

3.1. HPs are hypotheses regarding the speaker's beliefs or intentions in making an utterance evidencing a given UF in a given context which the hearer makes for the purpose of identifying the beliefs or intentions of the speaker in making it.

3.2. IMPs, on the other hand, are inferred from the HPs associated with UFs evidenced in S's utterances, not as hypotheses regarding the speaker's beliefs or intentions in making those utterances, but as further consequences issuing from them. If the hearer regards the speaker to have intended that the hearer infer a given IMP, it would be listed as an additional HP ascribable to the speaker, inasmuch as it would be inferred as one of the speaker's intentions.

3.3. For example, if a speaker made an utterance which was false (a reasoning UF), one HP the hearer might make was that the speaker believed it was true, and a different HP might be that the speaker did not believe it was true. An IMP of the HP that the speaker believed the utterance was true might be that the speaker is not knowledgeable about that of which he speaks; an IMP of the HP that the speaker did not believe that the utterance was true might be that the speaker intended to deceive the hearer, hence possibly to have an agenda other than that which the hearer has heretofore believed.

4. A CAVEAT

The choice of UFs we note in Sections 8 through 11 as occurring in the Brokaw Anthrax Letter, as well as the HPs and IMPs we associate with them, are those which appear reasonable to this analyst in profiling its writer. It would not be expected that other analysts would (or should) arrive at the same choices as the ones made here or arrive at the same or similar profile as the one presented here. These choices are those which appeared intuitive to me, and are forwarded here as an illustration of the approach to profiling we propose could be applied to an actual case. Its components and rationale have been given in some detail below in order to render the workings of this approach sufficiently clear to be used for other applications of interest to the reader.

5. ORGANIZATION OF FOLLOWING SECTIONS

5.1. In Sections 8 through 11 we indicate the HPs and IMPs respectively associated with the four types of UFs (Formatting, Stylistic, Thematic, and Reasoning) occurring in the Brokaw Anthrax letter. In doing so, we note the following: (i) IMPs associated with a given HP or HP chain are listed directly following that HP or HP chain; (ii) An HP can be associated with a single UF or with a combination of UFs; if the latter, we use the plural expression “UFs” rather than the singular expression “UF”; (iii) An HP associated with a given UF which is not dependent on a prior HP associated with that UF is indicated simply as “Level 1 HP”; (iv) Designations of UFs are enclosed in quotation marks; Explanations and/or definitions of UFs are enclosed in parentheses immediately following their designations.

5.2. In Section 12, we draw together the HPs and IMPs indicated in Subsections 8 through 11 to form a summary of the profile of the writer of the Brokaw Anthrax letter.

5.3. We note that we use the term “profiling” in this paper in the sense of “psychological profiling,” by which I mean developing hypotheses regarding a speaker’s beliefs and intentions which may have inclined the speaker to make particular utterances in particular contexts, solely on the basis of examining those utterances and contexts. *The problem to which this paper is*

addressed is that of structuring the inference from a given utterance made by a speaker in a given context to a hypothesis of the likely beliefs and intentions of the speaker which inclined him to make that utterance in that context? We propose a way for structuring such an inference which, while inevitably somewhat imprecise, may yet be useful as a guideline for individuals doing profiling.