

NOTES ON

HEARER PRESUPPOSITIONS AND THE ART OF LANGUAGE BASED PROFILING

Section 10

Thematic UFs in Brokaw Anthrax Letter And Their Associated Hearer Presuppositions And Implications

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. In this Section, we illustrate the proposed approach as it relates to thematic UFs, noting HPs associated with selected *Thematic UFs* in the Brokaw Anthrax letter. In the following Section 11, we remark on hearer presuppositions associated with selected *Reasoning UFs* in this Brokaw letter. We indicate, as we did for Formatting and Stylistic UFs in Sections 7 and 8, various HPs associated with each UF selected.

1.2. As in Sections 7 and 8, HPs are associated with selected thematic UFs of the utterance U relative to the hearer's understanding U* of U and understanding C* of the context C in which U occurs which includes the understanding of C as a letter:

1.3. Recall that Thematic UFs are intended to profile the way that S structures and interrelates himself/herself, explicit or implied actions,

explicit or implied target(s), and events with respect to each other and with respect to spatial and temporal relationships that hold among them.

1.4. For easy reference, we repeat the text of the Brokaw Anthrax Letter:

"9-11-01

This is next.

Take penacillin now.

Death to America.

Death to Israel.

Allah is great."

2. THEMATIC UFS IN BROKAW ANTHRAX LETTER AND THEIR ASSOCIATED HPS

We discuss instances of Thematic UFs and their associated HPs under six headings: (i) those relating to the temporal pattern of events, (ii) those relating to the spatial pattern of events, (iii) those relating to the nature of the agent, action, and target referenced in events, (iv) those relating to the relative emphasis of content elements in the text, (v) those relating to the nature of entities referenced in text, and (vi) those relating to the structure of relations referenced in the text.

2.1. Thematic UFs Relating to the Temporal Pattern of Events.

(a) **Thematic UF: "Event is Recurrent."** (Comment: This UF is implied in the first two lines of the Brokaw letter, and the fourth line, "Death to America.")

Level 1 HP: *S's intent (in the first two lines - "9-11-01/This is next,") is to convince H that the Brokaw letter is a second salvo –i.e., one following the WTC attack – perpetrated against U.S. interests.*

Level 2 HP: *S's intent (in the first two lines - "9-11-01/This is next,") is also to convince H that there will further attacks against U.S. interests.*

Level 3 HP: *S's intent (In the fourth and fifth lines - "Death to America," and "Death to Israel") is to convince H that further U.S.- related targets will be targeted in further attacks of these kinds.*

Level 4 HP: *S's intent (In the sixth and last line- "Allah is great") is to convince H that these attacks are being perpetrated by religious Islamic groups with a common purpose.*

Level 5 HP: *S believes that his intent, as expressed in Levels 1 – 4, above, will be taken seriously by H.*

(b) Thematic UF: "Event Is Frequent." (Comment: This UF is implied in the first two lines of the Brokaw letter, "9-11-01/This is next.")

Level 1 HP: *S's intent is to convince H that attacks of the kind typified by the known event (WTC incident) and the current and not-yet-fully-known event typified by the present Brokaw letter will continue to occur after brief intervals similar to those separating these first two events.*

Level 2 HP: *S believes that H will believe this.*

(c) indicated with certain of their associated HPs. Thematic UF: "Letter Recipient Is Not the Intended

Target." (Comment: This UF is implied in the following admonition: "Take penacillin now")

Level 1 HP: *S's intent (in the third line – "Take Penacillin now") is to prevent Brokaw, the projected recipient of the letter, from falling victim to Anthrax exposure.*

Level 2 HP: *S believes that Brokaw himself, as survivor and near-victim of the Anthrax mailing, thus spared by S, would be a useful vehicle for disseminating information regarding it.*

Level 3 HP: *S believes that the choice of Brokaw as letter recipient would enable wide media exposure owing to Brokaw's position.*

(d) Thematic UF: "Incomplete Sequence of Events." (Comment: The meaning of this UF, in the context of the Brokaw letter, is that there is a sequence of planned assaults which is incomplete, open-ended, and unresolvable by any means to which its victims have access.)

Level 1 HP: *S intends to put a threat in place which is to remain so indefinitely.*

(e) Thematic UF: "Temporal Sequencing of Individual Events." (Comment: This UF is implied in the first two lines of the Brokaw letter, "9-11-01/This is next")

Level 1 HP: *S intends to convince H that the WTC incident (signified by the date: "9-11-01) is only the first attack on U.S. interests, and that present Brokaw letter (signified by "This" and which follows as "next") is the second.*
Level 2 HP: *S intends to convince H that further such attacks will follow.*

2.2. Thematic UFs Relating to the Spatial Pattern Of Events.

(a) **Thematic UF: "Spatially Confined Single Events."** (Comment: The meaning of this UF is that single events are geographically confined, that is, whose physical disruption is local. In the first two lines of the Brokaw letter ("9-11-01/This is next"), S refers to a past event which was spatially confined, i.e., confined to the area immediate to the WTC towers, and to a present event, the Brokaw letter itself, located at Rockefeller Plaza, which is also spatially confined, and both of which are confined to a fairly limited geographic region (Manhattan).)

Level 1 HP: *S intends to convince H that the WTC attack and the Brokaw letter are "direct hits."*

Level 2 HP: *S intends to convince H that he is a competent and operationally effective adversary.*

2.3. Thematic UFs Relating to the Nature of the Agent, Action, and Target:

(a) **Thematic UF: "Unspecified Agent."** (Comment: S does not specify the agent of a referenced action. In the context of the Brokaw letter, we Section that S does not specify the agent either of the WTC assault or of the Brokaw letter mailing to Brokaw.)

Level 1 HP: *S believes that his threat is enhanced by not identifying himself to H.*

(b) **Thematic UF: "Unspecified Action."** (Comment: The meaning of this UF is that S does not explicitly identify an action but allows it to be inferred from context. In the context of the Brokaw letter, S never explicitly mentions the action (destruction of the WTC and damaging of the Pentagon) which the dating "9/11" signifies, nor does he specify the action of including anthrax in the Brokaw letter, which he leaves to the recipient and authorities to determine.)

Level 1 HP: *S believes that leaving it to H to determine the nature of an action enhances the perceived severity of the threat it poses.*

(c) Thematic UF: "Unspecified Target." (Comment: The meaning of this UF is that S does not explicitly identify the target of his Anthrax mailing but allows it to be inferred from other wording or from context. In particular, S never explicitly mentions the previous targets, the WTC and the Pentagon, or the present symbolic target, Tom Brokaw. S allows the former targets to be inferred from the phrase "9-11," and the present target to be inferred from the addressee hand-printed on the envelope.)

Level 1 HP: *S intends to exploit the notoriety of the WTC assault and of the current threat to Brokaw to make a statement of his own in expressing disdain for the "system."*

Level 2 HP: *S believes that the perceived severity of his threat is enhanced by indirect reference to its targets.*

2.4. Thematic UFs Relating to Relative Emphasis of Content Elements in Text.

(a) Thematic UF: "Decreasing Gradient of Importance." (Comment: These are UFs by which S indicates the relative importance of the various content elements in his message text by their relative placement. In the Brokaw letter, the main focal placement is the initial one, namely the first line which, in a sense, "announces" the heading of the message, and that line is "9-11-01." The next important focal placement is the second line, asserting "This is next," which announces the relevance of the message to the heading "9-11-01." The combined import of these first two lines is that the attack on the WTC and its "follow-up" threat implied in this Brokaw letter were the most important elements in the letter. Of lesser importance was the warning to Brokaw implied in the third line, "Take penacilin now." And of least importance were the rhetorical exclamations of the fourth, fifth, and sixth lines: "Death to America/Death to Israel/Allah is great.")

Level 1 HP: *S intends to emphasize a link between the events of 9/11 and his letter rather than to warn Brokaw.*

Level 2 HP: *S's intention to warn Brokaw is of lesser importance than the implied link between the WTC attack and his Brokaw letter.*

Level 3 HP: *S's intention to express support for or affiliation with militant Islamic interests is of the least importance to S.*

(b) Thematic UF: "Temporal Case Precedes All Other Cases."
(Comment: S mentions the time that something occurred, before mentioning anything else.)

Level 1 HP: *S's primary intention is to link this Brokaw letter to the events of 9/11.*

2.5. Thematic UFs Relating to Nature of Entities Referenced in Text.

(a) Thematic UF: "Unique Entity." (Comment: S refers to an entity that is unique, i.e., one-of-a-kind. In the context of the Brokaw letter, S uses a number of nouns which designate particular entities, namely the nouns, "9-11-01," "This," "penacilin," "America," "Israel," and "Allah," which respectively designate a date, the letter and its contents, a country, another country, and a deity.)

Level 1 HP: *S believes that focusing on particulars "rivets" H's attention.*

Level 2 HP: *S believes that such limitation to particulars forces H to "fill in the blanks," that is, to supply their connections, and thereby to be more impacted by the threat implied in the letter.*

(b) Thematic UF: "Static Entities." (Comment: S refers to an entities that are not evolving, i.e., that are static and fixed. No change in any entity is expressed or implied. Everything is a given, the threats are pronouncements of a fixed state of affairs. *S does not refer to any entity that is evolving, unfolding, changing, and so on. In the context of the Brokaw letter, all of the nouns designate static entities which are not undergoing any sort of change.*)

Level 1 HP: *S does not intend to cause a change in anything other than to initiate or destroy it.*

(c) Thematic UF: "Entity is dominant in medium." (Comment: S describes an entity as being the most important thing in its immediate environment. In the context of the Brokaw letter, the entities referred to by the various nouns already referenced above are all dominant in their respective mediums.)

Level 1 HP: *(1) S intends to be maximally impactful by using terms that render their references dominant in their mediums.*

Level 1 HP: *S intends to be dominant and controlling over H as his victim.*

(d) Thematic UF: "Entity is surrounded by medium." (Comment: S characterizes an entity as surrounded by a medium in which it is a focal element.)

Level 1 HP: *S intends to present this very brief and "bare bones" letter as the center piece of H's visual field, and to present the WTC attack as the center piece of the letter.*

2.6. Thematic UFs Relating to Structure of Relations Referenced in Text.

(a) Thematic UF: "Relation is Simple." (Comment: S refers to a relation that is simple in the sense that the verb which it denotes it has no modifiers. In the context of the Brokaw letter, the only relation referred to in the letter is that designated by the verb "is," and has no modifiers or qualifiers of any kind.)

Level 1 HP: *S intends his declarations to be maximally simple and unadorned.*

(b) Thematic UF: "Representation Relation." (Comment: S cites or implies a relationship that signifies that a given entity represents, stands for, or symbolizes another. In the context of the Brokaw letter, S implies that "America" and "Israel" are entities that represent or symbolize "death" and so are deserving of being annihilated, while "Allah" represents the opposite of "death," that is, represents life and is deserving of praise.)

Level 1 HP: *S intends to convince H that he is writing for a higher purpose than that of contaminating a particular letter recipient, namely, a purpose involving a battle between good and evil, the represented objects.*

(c) Thematic UF: "Stative Relation." (Comment: S uses verbs which simply connect entities rather than express any action between them. These verbs simply preserve the existing state between entities without having these entities changed in any way by the (stative) relation that holds between them. Such verbs are referred to as "stative," and are contrasted with so-called "dynamic" verbs which express a transfer of energy or force from one entity to another. Stative verbs include verbs like "is", "appears", "becomes", "has", "knows", "believes", and so on. In the context of the Brokaw letter, S uses verbs which signify passivity and inaction. These occur in each of the sentences, "This is next," and "Allah is great," and in each case transfers no energy from or to any of the named entities.)

Level 1 HP: *S may have no intention of doing anything more than to write letters with anthrax spores such as this one.*

Level 1 HP: *S intends that he would never be identified as the writer of this (or other) Brokaw letters.*

Level 2 HP: *S does not believe that he would ever be identified.*

(d) Thematic UF: "Concrete Relation." (Comment: S uses expressions which signify some concrete relation, like striking, placing, sitting, and so on. A concrete relation is one that involves a physical manipulation of some object. In the context of the Brokaw letter, S uses only one verb signifying a concrete relation, namely "Take," as it occurs in the imperative sentence, "Take penacilin now." It is interesting that S uses only two different verbs in this letter, namely "Take" and "is," which gives the letter a profoundly static quality. Another way to see the nature of the static feature is to Section that of the six lines in the letter, only three contain verbs, and two of these are the static verb "is," and the third is the verb "take" made in the context of a "helpful" imperative.)

Level 1 HP: *S does not intend to commit himself to any action beyond that of mailing such Brokaw letters.*

Level 2 HP: *S's rhetorical comments ("Death to America"/"Death to Israel"/"Allah is great") are intended to provide a political "cover" for his Anthrax mailings rather than as expressions of political or religious beliefs.*