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## On the Structural Aspect of Textual Hyperthemes

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The paper aims to present a complex and delicate hierarchy of Textual Hyperthemes, interlacing at least the Global Theme, Paragraph Group Themes and Paragraph Themes. It focusses on their structural aspect. Using an authentic newspaper sample, the paper demonstrates some of the conspicuous recursive tendencies detected in the build-up of the textual Macrostructure. It attempts to show that, although largely the same patterns recognized by Daneš (1995) for the build-up of paragraphs may be found on all the levels of the posited hierarchy, the build-up of the Higher-Rank Hyperthemes need not match the build-up of the Lower-Rank ones.

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The paper follows and elaborates the treatment of paragraphs and Paragraph Themes proposed by Daneš (1995). On the textual (i.e., cognitive, factual, semantic) level, it posits a **hierarchy of Hyperthemes** (“*HTs*”), interlacing at least the Global Theme (“*G-theme*”), Paragraph-Group Theme (“*PGr-theme*”) and Paragraph Theme (“*P-theme*”, i.e., the most elementary HT). For the sake of simplicity, it ignores other varieties of Textual HTs.

The G-Theme, holding the whole text together, is further elaborated by the Lower-Rank Hyperthemes (“*LR-HTs*”, various PGr-themes and P-themes). They may handle the subject matter corresponding to the G-theme from a variety of standpoints or aspects. They may also grasp its modifications, types, development in time, etc. Their particular scopes follow from their respective labels. Thus, the PGr-theme is an analogue of the G-theme on the level of a group of paragraphs. The P-theme, on the other hand, represents an analogue of the PGr-theme on the paragraph level.

In what follows, the above theoretical concepts will be analysed using an **authentic journalistic text sample**. The choice of the register is by no means coincidental. Actually, their brevity notwithstanding, the newspaper articles offer a welcome opportunity to demonstrate the interplay of many varieties of HTs.

Theatre of Dreams

BY JOHN NAISH

I

1 LONDON's theatres have suffered a rough start to the 21<sup>st</sup> century: troubles with rotten transport, pricey tickets and dodgy productions have been exacerbated by plunging post-September 11 audiences that have closed five hit shows.

A

II

2 Adversity is nothing new to London's theatres, however, whether be it in the form of fire, bankruptcy, neglect or even riot. 3 Many succumbed, but London still harbours the world's finest concentrated group of theatres. 4 These surviving *grandes dames* stand like ageing matinee idols; full of anecdote, grandeur and a glitz that shines above debt and decay.

III

5 The buildings' fantastical interiors were born of a marriage between art and commerce; crafted to excite the imagination, to invoke the muse and to help spin a few bucks. 6 They surround audiences with sweeping vistas, half-naked gods, goddesses, fauns and satyrs – a pantheon to charm theatregoers into forgiving the odd patch of damp or peeling paintwork.

IV

7 All that wood and plaster helps make them actors' favourites, Donald Sinden explains. 8 "It makes a superb sounding-board. 9 At Drury Lane, you can whisper and be heard throughout the auditorium. 10 Modern concrete theatres are hideous by comparison; they crash, echo and reverberate."

B

V

11 He loves the Haymarket most: 12 "It's London's second-oldest, but the size, audibility and audience view are the best," he says. 13 The Palladium, he adds, is "worth visiting for the brasswork in the foyer alone".

C

VI

14 For Penelope Keith, appearing at the Apollo Shaftesbury, "The horseshoe shape of what I call 'real' theatres creates an amazing sense of the audience being with you, which you don't get with modern auditoriums. 15 That intimacy is tremendously important for an actress."

D

VII

16 The photographer Alberto Arzoz has spent months recording London theatres' masterful detailing; touches often half-glimpsed by people dashing into auditoriums late from work or jostling for drinks in the interval. 17 Arzoz says of the photographs: "I tried to bring light into those details and views that stand in the dark in auditorium, ceilings and corridors; despite going almost unnoticed by the audience, they make a theatre a place of magic."

VIII

18 Theatres have often proved as ephemeral as their productions. 19 Most of those built between the 17th century and the early 19th were unstable and prone to fire.

IX

20 Her Majesty's Theatre has had a life that could outdo *Evita* for tragedy. 21 It has been rebuilt four times since it opened in 1705. 22 An angry employee burnt down the first one in 1789. 23 The second went bust in 1852, stood empty for four years, then re-opened but burnt down in 1867. 24 MT III was dark for six years, thanks to debt, then open for 15 years until penury struck again and it was demolished.

E

X

25 The Royal Opera House has thrice suffered fire. 26 After the first disaster, in 1808, the replacement's construction was funded by a 6d ticket price increase that provoked 67 days of rioting. 27 Nine years later it burnt down.

F

XI

28 Not all disasters are ancient history. 29 Between the 1950s and early 1980s, legions of theatres fell to the wrecking ball to make way for office blocks and shopping centres. 30 Possibly the greatest loss was the New Gaiety Theatre, with its exterior by Norman Shaw.

XII

31 Thirty years ago, the campaigning group Save London's Theatres was born. 32 It has successfully saved 20 buildings, its director, John Levitt says: 33 "That includes all the old ones in Covent Garden."

XIII

34 But successful theatres are living entities, not museums, and even the most artistically appointed must change, he says. 35 "Expert minds are worrying how these fine interiors can be preserved while making them more comfortable. 36 Theatregoers are physically bigger now than

century ago and people must have needed far fewer loos in those		G	
days," he says.			
XIV			
37 "Modern cinemas offer far more luxurious facilities, and we will		I	
have to match them if these old buildings are to be around in			
another 100 years."			
XV			
38 Levitt cites the Lyric Hammersmith as a lesson in how original			
auditorium can be saved. 39 This building, designed in 1895 by Frank			
Matcham, was demolished, but a public inquiry demanded the			
auditorium be dismantled and re-used. 40 Matcham's splendid interior			
now hides behind an unappealing 1970s foyer, but the accommodation			
is larger.		H	
XVI			
41 Matcham, who designed or rebuilt more than 150 theatres between the			
mid-1870s and 1913, died in 1920 from blood poisoning caused by			
overzealously cutting his fingernails. 42 Just the sort of ill-advised			
hacking that his surviving creations will, it is hoped, be spared.			
The Times      05 January 2002			

In the sample, the following **notation** was adopted. Each paragraph group ("PGr") was lettered, each paragraph was assigned a Roman numeral, and each utterance was given an Arabic number. A reporting clause attached to the reported direct speech utterance counted as a single utterance. Since more reporting clauses may theoretically appear in a single paragraph, the remaining direct speech utterances were considered to have the reporting clauses ellipsed.

The sample of sixteen continuous paragraphs depicts the past and present situation of London theatres, and to some extent contemplates their future fate. It contains nine PGrS, each composed of at least two paragraphs. All the PGrS are continuous. Most of them are opened by a PGr Topic Sentence ("PGrTS") of their own, these primarily coming in the PGr-initial utterances (1, 5, 7, 18, 19, 33, 40). However, there are two PGrS, namely C and I, whose respective PGr-themes, rather than being explicitly stated and introduced by the corresponding PGrTSs, remain only implied.

Most of the involved PGrS are **major**, their boundaries coinciding with those of the enclosed paragraphs. By contrast, three PGrS, namely E, G, and H, exemplify minor PGrS since, apart from complete paragraphs, they also include at least one paragraph fragment each. The respective PGrTSs triggering them fall on utterances (19), (33) and (40). These minor PGrS are marked by somewhat more blurred, and arguably partly arbitrary PGr boundaries.

All the P-themes are explicitly launched by the respective **Topic Sentences** ("TSs"). Interestingly, most P-themes are advertized rather regularly at paragraph-initial positions, presumably in order to provide a skimming reader with a quick and comfortable orientation in the sample. The tendency may be illustrated using such P-Theme labels as "Her Majesty's Theatre" in paragraph IX, or "The Royal Opera House" in paragraph X.

Some PGrS (A, D, F, I) follow in pure **linear** succession, whereas all the others are meticulously hierarchized. Of the latter group, most enter a two-rank **hierarchy** (PGrS E/F; G/I; H/I), while the others enter a three-tier one (PGrS B, C, D).

Compared to the PGr-themes, the **P-themes** operate more locally. The cohesive chains proceeding from their respective TSs, tend to interlink only paragraph-internal utterances and are soon discontinued. Short cohesive chains always initiated and discontinued at paragraph boundaries result in sharp, and arguably unambiguous paragraphing. For instance, whereas paragraph VII shows a paragraph-internal chain "Arzoz", the chain "Sinden" is paragraph external, interlacing all of PGr B.

Studying the **build-up of macrotextual units**, it seems that essentially the same patterns recognized by Daneš for the build-up of paragraphs exist also above the paragraph level, in PGrS or even in whole texts, i.e., in the macrotextual organization of texts. Apparently, the text build-up displays a recursive character. Naturally, such recursiveness

need not always be absolute. Since there may be a number of arrangements combined in particular texts, the recursiveness may come in various impure forms. However, the build-up selected for one level of the HTs need not match the one adopted for another level of the posited hierarchy.

Altogether, the scrutinized sample satisfies the Global content frame pattern. Generally speaking, **Static Frame G-theme** texts are concerned with topics which may be relatively looser, broader, less clearly delimited, diffuse, implied, sometimes to be reconstructed at the intersection of (the majority of) the LR-HTs. These G-themes are characterized as scenarios, frames, or scripts. Such a Frame G-theme may be distilled at the intersection of the largest proportion of LR-HTs. It may also be presupposed by the LR Themes and tends to remain for the most part of the text fully retrievable. This overall common ground or frame produces a stabilizing effect and thus it embodies the centripetal force, from which the LR-HTs radiate. By way of contrast, the LR-HTs/Local Themes tend to display considerable diversity and dynamism, resembling loose associative relationships to the common ground embodied by the G-theme, through which they all hang together. As for cohesion at the HT-level, parallelism and contiguity appear to prevail. Generally, this pattern seems to be characterized by stability of the frame exclusively.

The text as a whole features the characteristics of the **content frame G-theme**. This, however, may, but also need not, imply the same build-up in the lower units of textual macrostructure, i.e., in PGrS or paragraphs. Actually, there are texts, whose HTs of all ranks display largely homogenous build-ups, but there are also others, whose hierarchy of HTs is structurally heterogenous, and whose tendencies at one level of macrostructure are counterbalanced by other tendencies detected at different levels.

The passage examined clearly shows a whole **variety of PGr build-up patterns**. More specifically, PGr B and G embody a stable pattern, PGrS A, C and E represent PGrS whose HTs are unfolded, and PGrS D, F, H and I reflect the content frame pattern.

Analogously, there need not be any correspondence whatsoever between the build-up of a particular PGr and that of the **contained paragraphs**. By way of illustration, the sample under scrutiny displays mostly paragraphs whose P-themes are stable (I, III, IV, V, VI, VII, XIII, XIV), followed by paragraphs whose P-themes are unfolded (II, VIII, IX, X) and finally several content-frame paragraphs (XI, XII, XV, XVI).

Moreover, it may be worthwhile examining the horizontal, i.e., linear arrangement of the HTs in the sample. Putting aside the top levels of macrostructure, marked in this text by the greatest degree of structural instability of all (i.e., content frame) it appears useful to inquire into the distribution of the LR-PGr-themes and P-themes. The stable paragraphs and PGrS tend to associate with the introduction of new Discourse Subjects on the scene of the discourse, prevailing initially in the story. Unfolded HTs in the text are employed particularly to suit the purposes of exemplification or particularization. Most of them, both P-themes and PGr-themes, appear in the middle of the story. Content frame build-up is found in all the top ranks of hierarchized PGrS. At LR-PGrS and P-theme level, the content frame arrangement may be detected in the second half of the text, with the two largely dynamic content frame paragraphs, (i.e., the least static arrangements of all) located only text-finally. This may be correlated with the final somewhat dramatic climax of the story, offering a slight glimmer of hope.

Presumably, this analysis shows that on the whole, the paragraphs and LR-PGrS across the sample are gradually gaining momentum. Moreover, the linear increase of instability in the P(Gr) build-up, although imperfect, may be matched with the gradual shift from the more descriptive to the more narrative mode.

Scrutinizing the distribution of the **build-ups vertically**, at individual levels of macrostructure, we may observe some noteworthy tendencies. Of the 16 paragraphs of the

story, half are stable. Of the nine PGrS of the text, however, only two are stable, and, significantly, both are LR ones. It should be noted that among the LR-PGrS, the stable build-up is outnumbered by the unfolded pattern. With the Higher Ranks (“*HRs*”) of the Macrostructure, the share of the static element decreases further, making way to a considerable degree of instability. More precisely, both the G-theme and the majority of the HR-PGr-themes fall into the content frame category.

The generally prevalent paradigmatic **coherence** appears to be more essentially associated with P-themes and LR-PGr-themes. This shows that in the sample, the links between the LR-HTs are much closer, more direct (and thus more predictable for the reader) than those among HR-HTs. The former are characterized by cohesive identity, equivalence and inclusion, the latter, more tenuous ones, largely by parallelism and contiguity, connoting freer associations. By way of an example, the various LR-HTs, stemming from the G-theme, range from the more directly connected ones (e.g., interiors of London Theatres; cohesive inclusion) to some, only loosely associated ones (e.g., director of a group set up to save London Theatres; cohesive contiguity).

The most salient content element of the **Global Theme** is arguably the “London theatres”. It is launched by the GTS, appearing in the very initial utterance (1) of paragraph I, although, arguably, it is alluded to already in the headline. It integrates the whole text, holding it together. It also embodies the most static content core of all. This common ground directly facilitates the reception of the sample as a coherent communicative unit. Therefore, it is taken for granted throughout the text. Due to the operation of the Maxim of Relation/Principle of Relevance, this most salient content dominant anticipates, predicts and justifies the choice of the LR-HTs (Hausenblas’s prospective function). Conversely, it is through the diversity of the LR-HTs that the extent of the content frame is basically defined, or at least tentatively delimited. The LR-HTs represent in fact a whole range of loose radiations, and associations, from the above mentioned core.

Thus, in terms of the content aspect, the G-theme is foregrounded, remaining the centre of attention throughout the discourse. The LR-HTs, serving largely to illustrate the G-theme, are ousted to less significant, subservient, marginal or ephemeral roles, and are kept in the cognitive background.

**Structurally**, (i.e., in terms of the overall text build-up), the G-theme is not foregrounded, being mostly superseded by the LR-HTs. The G-theme, however, remains activated at least to some extent, thanks to the complex mechanism of distance bridging. Therefore, in terms of the structural build-up, the G-theme is the least static of all the featured HTs, its frame character pressing on a significant LR Thematic diversity and change. As a result, the story displays a considerable LR Thematic turnover. In the sample, though, the high degree of structural instability at HRs of Textual Macrostructure is partly counterbalanced with the LR-HTs, P-themes, which feature a significant degree of the inner build-up stability. (It should be noted that half of the PGr-themes are stable, and a quarter of them are unfolded types.) But it is particularly the conspicuous Thematic turnover at P/PGr level that pushes the communication significantly forward. This Thematic turnover can be illustrated using PGr C spanning in all four paragraphs, including a LR-PGr B, verging on a single notional paragraph as well as the remaining two isolated paragraphs (VI, VII).

Therefore, to elucidate the interplay of all the HTs, **the concepts of foregrounding and backgrounding** appear to be of value. **Structurally**, throughout the text the LR-HTs tend to be foregrounded. Many explicitly manifested ones enter a web of various thematic progressions and cohesive chains. In fact, it is only rarely that they concede from this text role, stepping to the background and giving way to the ephemerally more foregrounded implementations of the G-theme (i.e., utterances 1, 2, 18). The LR-HTs, embodying the centripetal force, are marked by a considerable degree of variability and diversity, as against

the G-theme, representing their integrative background. Conversely, from the **content** point of view, critical for the coherent reception of the text, the G-theme assumes the dominant, foregrounded role, relegating the LR Themes to the content and cognitive background.

Since in this short text sample, three distinct modes of macrostructure build-up may be detected, whatever their positions in the hierarchy of HTs, it might be useful, in conclusion, to examine briefly their stylistic impact. Stylistically, the **Stable Textual HTs** appear useful whenever we want to dwell on a single Discourse Subject (“*DS*”) for some time, when we want to focus on it, giving it some priority or highlighting it, when we want to arrest and captivate the reader’s attention and immerse him/her in contemplating a particular matter, when we need to familiarize the reader with a new DS, establishing it firmly on the scene of discourse, and also when we want to give the reader some rest from constant motion. Therefore, it appears to connote focus, concentration, and continuation.

**Unfolded HTs**, displaying a somewhat increased measure of instability, appear useful when we want to treat a phenomenon by breaking it down into simpler constituents or when we want to examine some of its noteworthy parts, defining features or special types, each of these appearing in the spotlight at a time, parading in succession. It may be employed when we intend to narrow the reader’s attention to some of the element’s integral constituents, portions, varieties, embodiments, implementations, etc., when we aim at classification, enumeration, exemplification, typology, etc. It connotes an in-depth analysis, thorough scrutiny, decomposition and demonstration, which may come in useful for a number of reasons, including pedagogical or expository ones.

**Content Frame HTs**, marked by a considerable degree of instability, appear suitable in cases when the writer wants to overview a number of interrelated elements (local topics) swiftly, sketching out a whole kaleidoscope of loosely related phenomena; when s/he wants the reader to continually shift attention, to follow the longer or complicated path, to capture the procedure and to experience the motion. It may also come in useful whenever the readers need step-by step guidance to see the connection or a line of reasoning, for a multitude of reasons (e.g., children’s cognitive capacity, difficulty of the matter, etc.). It connotes dramatic developments, enlivening an undesirable monotony.

These outlined tendencies, however, should always be contextualized and **contexturized**. In other words, they may assert themselves only with respect to the position the particular HT enjoys in the overall hierarchy of Textual Macrostructure. This position, among other things, suggests the extent of their foregrounding or backgrounding.

## References

- Daneš, F. (1995) ‘The Paragraph – A Central Unit of the Thematic and Compositional Build-up of Texts’ in Warvik, B., Tanskanen, S.K., Hiltunen R. (eds), *Proceedings from the Turku Conference*, Turku: Anglicana Turkuensia 14: 29-40.