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Comments on the Thurman Chart (Band Analysis): A Technique for Seeing How
Various Kinds of Information are Marked in Discourse

Austin Hale

If one has no hypothesis, charting can be a very discouraging exercise
or even a total waste of time. If one does have a set of hypotheses charts
can greatly facilitate the testing of these hypotheses. For this reason it
is important to be aware of the basic insights upon which a charting technique
is built. The purpose of this brief comment is to make clear the basic
hypotheses (assumptions or insights) that are basic to the Thurman Chart.
In so doing I hope to make it possible to use the technique more fruitfully
and with less frustration.

The basic hypothesis behind the Thurman Chart is that there are various
kinds of information in discourse and that these different kinds of informa-
tion are systematically differentiated from one another in the surface struc-
ture of discourse. Grimes (1971, 1975) has distinguished seven kinds of
information which are often differentiated in this way: Events, Identifica-
tions, Settings, Background, Evaluations, Collateral, and Performatives.

1) Events. Events are contrasted with non-events in the following ways:
a) they actually occur (as opposed to negatives, questions, modals, verbs in
projected time); b) they are overt (as opposed to psychological processes
(see, hear, feel, cannot be events--look, listen, touch can be)); c) they
occur at the 'now' point on the time line (as opposed to flashbacks and
previews). See Gleason, 1968 for more discussion. The implicit Thurman
Chart hypothesis is that events and non-events are differentiated in some
way within discourse. The question such a chart should help answer is: 'Is
there such a difference in the language under consideration and if so, what
devices mark this difference?' 'How are the relations between events
marked?'

2) Identification of Participants and Props. Participants and props
are related to events by role relations. They key problem is that of keeping
track of who did what. A key question here would be: 'What surface struc-
ture devices are used to keep the participants properly identified?' (Gender,
number, case, agreement categories, verbal cross-reference, topic patterns,
...).

3) Settings. Settings generally involve time and space. An initial
setting may serve to take the hearer from the I-thou-here-now speech setting
to the then-there-they of a story. What surface devices are employed to dis-
tinguish settings from other kinds of information in discourse?

4) Background. This includes straightforward explanation. It results
from the speaker's estimate of the hearer's knowledge. It includes happen-
ings that are off the main event line--displaced sequences, information of
all sorts that the hearer needs to benefit from the full impact of the speech
act but which he is presumed not to have. (Grimes: A good ethnography could
be written consisting primarily of facts that native participants in a culture
omit from discourse when speaking to one another but which must be supplied
for a non-native participant to get the full impact of the discourse.)

5) <u>Evaluations</u>. Evaluations may be explicit or implicit (choice of vocabulary), they may reinforce a claim, build a complication, state a moral, or disclaim responsibility for a statement. They are often related to focal content. For some purposes they may be viewed as a kind of background information. The implicit Thurman Chart hypothesis is that in some languages evaluations will be distinguished by certain devices from other kinds of information in discourse. The key question is 'How are they distinguished?'

6) <u>Collateral</u>. Collateral tells what might have happened but didn't, what might happen but hasn't yet. It presents a range of possibilities so that what actually happens (events) stands out by contrast. It includes negatives, futures, modals, questions, predications, and in most cases, quotations (though quotations can imply events and evaluation can also take the form of a quotation).

7) <u>Performative</u>. Where the utterance is also the doing, one has a performative. In English the utterances with 'hereby' are included as performatives: 'I hereby pronounce you man and wife.' 'I dare you to jump off the roof.' 'I hereby inform you that fish like mosquitoes.' Performatives are 'I' to 'you' statements in which the mood or speech act is made explicit in the main verb.

<u>Summary</u>: The normal conclusion from a Thurman Chart of discourse is the following: <u>Certain grammatical phenomena tend to be limited to certain kinds of information in discourse.</u> Choices that are not determined by lower level grammar, whether free variants within a unit or construction on the one hand or the choice between alternative constructions on the other— such choices are the stuff of which discourse is made. Anything that can be said using a transitive verb can also be said in a topic-comment construction. (I read the book. The book was what I read.) The difference between the two may be determined by the type of discourse information involved. The following set of pairings is intended as a rough characterization of frequently found patterns:

Transitives and true intransitives	typically mark	Events
Statives and equatives	typically mark	Identifications
Locatives	typically mark	Settings
Purpose, result, implication	typically mark	Background
Quotations, questions, negatives, predictions, modals	typically mark	Collateral

<u>What a Thurman Chart Looks Like</u>: The chart has a vertical column for each type of information under study. I find that four columns is about as much as I can handle. I would have three columns with headings from the list of information types given above plus one column (usually on the right) for everything else. I generally keep the text in its original order and enter it in the chart. (A specific example can be found given in Joe Allison's Abunawas paper.)

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