

Towards a framework for assessing written threat texts for forensic linguistic purposes

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Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts in English* at the North-West University

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Graduation: May 2020

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Dear Ms Surmon

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This is to confirm that I edited your dissertation, *A framework for assessing the legitimacy of threat texts*, and that I indicated the grammatical and stylistic corrections that need to be made.

Please contact me if there are any queries or if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely



A van der Merwe

PREFACE

Language, word choice and interaction have always been aspects I have found interesting. From a young age, I've been drawn to analysing what people say and how they say it. My other passion being music, I enrolled at university to study Music and Society. The course required a subject in language at a first-year level. The English classes were interesting, and the content intrigued me, encouraging me to continue with English in my second year. Dr Van den Berg introduced the class to the field of Forensic Linguistics, prompting me to explore. So, I read more and watched criminal investigation programs. The more I came to know, the more I believed that this is an important field to pursue in South Africa. I then enrolled for a double major in Music and in English in my third year. Choosing the latter, my focus shifted to linguistics in English Honours, with my mini dissertation serving as the foundation for the research done in this dissertation. In addition to my studies, the passion that I have for justice and correct outcomes in a trial has grown during the hours I spent time at the Potchefstroom Correctional Services volunteering as an assistant for arts and crafts classes. Using the linguistic evidence found in criminal communication can add to a more accurate outcome to ensure justice for the victim. This is the reason that I chose to focus on threat texts, whether it be a ransom note, a bribe letter or hate mail, aiming to measure the intention and legitimacy of the text in order to aid legal inquiry and ensure justice is served.

In my journey to achieve this, I depended on the people around me for support. Hence, I include the following notes to express my gratitude to each of them:

- The inspiration for this study came from my Heavenly Father. To Him I give the glory for the outcome of this dissertation. To Him I give all thanks for keeping me strong, for leading me through the research and for giving me the courage to take on the task of working toward justice.

Psalm 37:28 – “For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His saints”

Psalm 37: 30 – “The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”

- Dr Van den Berg, you introduced me to the topic of Forensic Linguistics at the end my second year, changing the direction of my studies. Thank you for introducing this intriguing subject to me. It has been a fascinating journey. Thank you for being the most supportive lecturer that I could ask for, allowing me to break down every now and then, but then always guiding me to stand up stronger. Thank you for constant support, pushing me for the best quality work, encouraging a spirit of excellence and setting an example of a hard-working and successful woman. Without your support and guidance this would not have been possible.

- A special thank you to Johann Van Der Walt who assisted me in the writing of the proposal. Thank you for guiding me to produce a proposal that was accepted without hesitation.
- To my parents, Mark and Cathy, thank you so very much for supporting my dreams in every way possible. You have both inspired me to pursue my purpose and set the example to give nothing less than your best. To my parents, my siblings, Keren, Michael and David, and my aunt, Barbara, your support, phone calls, love, prayer and encouragement meant the world to me. Thank you so much.
- To my brother, Michael, you deserve a special thank you as your help in calculating the level of legitimacy in the text improved the analysis. I appreciate the time you took to write a formula that increased the overall accuracy of my research results.
- A special thank you to Channele, Suné, Karli, Dalena, Kaylee, Veronique, Vlooi, Tammy, Christoff and Callie. Thank you for endless support, coffee and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This research project titled “Towards a framework for assessing written threat texts for forensic linguistic purposes” aims to answer the following research question: “How can the linguist conduct an objective and systematic linguistic analysis of threat texts to inform the legitimacy of threatening texts for forensic purposes?” This question is answered, based on a thorough literature review and stylistic analysis (using ATLAS.ti, 2019 computer software) focused on linguistic choices made by the authors of a range of thirty authentic threat texts. The research that informed this framework was based in linguistic theory of language in use, recognising that “threat” manifests on various linguistic planes. This research takes the definition of “threat” as an intentionally directed criminal act through means of communication, making it relational and socially conditioned. Such an act declares harmful intentions, either directly or indirectly, toward a recipient, instilling fear of undesirable consequences that will likely result from a lack of compliance to the demand presented (Collins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2003:659; Solan & Tiersma, 2005:223-225; Fitzgerald, 2005:2; Yus, 2013; Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99). Furthermore, categorises threat texts according to salient linguistic features. As a result of this research, a framework is proposed for assessing written threat texts to aid forensic linguistic investigations by establishing the level of legitimacy of the threat.

The framework incorporates four main categories: idiolectal features often found in threat texts; social contextual features that affect meaning in communication; linguistic elements of threat; and pragmatic features of threats as speech acts. This framework is applied to the sample, illustrating how the level of threat may be scaled, based on the ration of salient features per category in the framework. Two sets of results are tabulated: one showing the absolute frequency of the features characteristic to threats and the second showing the relative frequency of the characteristic in the text in question in relation to the number of words found in total in the text. These results show that even shorter texts may display a high level of legitimacy as the relative frequency of characteristic features is higher than that calculated for some of the longer texts. These results also suggest that one word or phrase may fulfil more than one linguistic purpose in the text. This too may increase the level or degree of threat communicated by a certain text. Therefore, this research project suggests that the linguist can conduct a more objective, systematic analysis relating to the level of legitimacy within a text for forensic purposes by applying the proposed framework. Following the application of the suggested framework to identify, classify and describe salient linguistic elements of threat, one can rank the level of threat, expressed linguistically to inform and support police investigation of such crimes.

Limitations of this study include the sample size of the texts analysed. Also, though the texts were authentic examples of threats, none of them were sourced from the South African context as a repository was not readily available to draw on for the purpose of this study. Further research is therefore warranted to explore linguistic characteristics of threats in this multilingual context, and in others. This study contributes to the limited, but growing, body of linguistic literature on threat and threat assessment. The proposed framework may serve as a starting point for further research in this context. It may also inform current linguistic practice in threat assessment.

Key Terms

Conversational implicatures, cooperative principles, forensic linguistics, functional linguistics, illocutionary act, linguistic markedness, linguistic profiling, speech act theory, threat.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingsprojek, getiteld *Die saamstel van 'n raamwerk vir die assessering van geskrewe dreigementtekste vir forensies linguistiese doeleindes* het ten doel om die volgende navorsingsvraag te beantwoord: "Hoe kan die linguïstiese objektiewe en sistematiese linguistiese analise doen van dreigementtekste om lig te werp op die egtheid van dreigementtekste vir forensies-linguistiese doeleindes?" Die antwoord op hierdie vraag word gebaseer op 'n uitgebreide literatuurondersoek, asook 'n hoofsaaklik stilistiese analise met 'n fokus op die taalkundige keuses wat outeurs uitoefen in 'n versameling van 30 dreigementtekste. Die stilistiese analise is met behulp van die rekenaarsagteware *Atlas.ti*, (2019) uitgevoer. Hierdie ondersoek neem in ag dat 'n "dreigement" op verskeie taalkundige vlakke realiseer. Die studie lei verder tot 'n definisie van "dreigement" as 'n opsetlik gedirigeerde kriminele daad wat plaasvind deur middel van kommunikasie, en is dus relasioneel en sosiaal gekondisioneer. So 'n taalhandeling verklaar skadelike bedoelings, hetsy direk of indirek, teenoor die ontvanger: die skep van vrees vir ongewensde nagevolge as gevolg, sou die ontvanger nie gestelde voorwaardes nakom nie (Collins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2003:659; Solan & Tiersma, 2005:223-225; Fitzgerald, 2005:2; Encyclopaedia of Applied Linguistics:3427; Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99). Verder lig hierdie navorsing ook die kategorisering van dreigementtekste ten opsigte van onderskeidende linguistiese kenmerke toe. Na aanleiding van hierdie navorsing word 'n raamwerk voorgestel vir die assessering van geskrewe dreigementtekste as hulpmiddel tydens forensiese ondersoeke deur die vlak van legitimiteit van 'n dreigement te bepaal.

Die raamwerk sluit vier hoofkategorieë in: i) idiolektiese kenmerke wat dikwels in dreigementtekste gevind word; ii) sosiaal-kontekstuele kenmerke wat die kommunikatiewe betekenis affekteer; iii) taalkundige elemente van dreigemente; en iv) pragmatiese kenmerke van dreigemente as taalhandeling. Hierdie raamwerk is toegepas op die data om die mate te illustreer waartoe die vlak van dreigement geskaleer kan word. Twee stelle resultate word in tabelformaat aangebied: Die een tabel lewer verslag van die absolute frekwensies van kenmerkende eienskappe van dreigemente. Die ander tabel gee die relatiewe frekwensies van die tekstuele eienskappe in verhouding tot die totale aantal woorde van die versameling tekste weer. Hierdie resultate wys dat korter tekste wel 'n hoë mate van legitieme dreigement kan toon, met 'n hoër relatiewe frekwensie as sommige van die langer tekste. Hierdie resultate dui verder daarop dat 'n enkele woord of frase meer as een linguistiese funksie binne die teks gelyktydig kan vervul. Dit mag verder bydra tot die werklikheidsvlak van dreigement wat gekommunikeer word deur 'n bepaalde teks. Daarom dui hierdie navorsingsprojek daarop dat die linguïstiese objektiewe en sistematiese analise kan onderneem, spesifiek in verband met die vlak van legitimiteit van dreigementtekste vir forensiese doeleindes, deur die voorgestelde raamwerk toe te pas. Volgens

die toepassing van die voorgestelde raamwerk om die kenmerkende linguistiese eienskappe van dreigementtekste te identifiseer, klassifiseer en te omskryf, kan mens die vlak van dreigement, soos linguisties uitgedruk, rangskik in 'n rangorde om sodoende polisieondersoeke van sulke oortredinge in te lig en te ondersteun.

Beperkings van hierdie studie sluit in die grootte van die steekproef tekste wat geanaliseer is. Verder, alhoewel die tekste wat ingesluit is, wél werklike voorbeelde van geskrewe dreigemente was, is geen van die tekste afkomstig vanuit die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks nie, aangesien 'n plaaslike versameling nie geredelik beskikbaar of geskik is vir die doeleindes van hierdie studie nie. Hierdie studie dra by tot die beperkte, maar groeiende, versameling van taalkundeliteratuur oor dreigemente en die assessering van dreigemente. Die voorgestelde raamwerk mag ook dien as beginpunt vir toekomstige navorsing in hierdie verband. Dit mag ook huidige taalkundepraktyk rondom dreigementassessering inlig.

Sleuteltermes

Dreigemente, dreigementassessering, dreigetekste, forensies linguistiek, gespreksvoorwaardes, illokusionêre handeling, linguistiese profilering, taalhandelingsteorie.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CP: Cooperative Principle

HU: Hermeneutic Unit

SAT: Speech Act Theory

SFG: Systemic Functional Grammar

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextualisation

Forensic linguistics pertains to linguistic analysis and how it can be used as supporting evidence in legal investigation; as well as how it is used in legal discourse (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:1). It can broadly be described as “the interface between language and the law” (Gibbons & Turell, 2008:1) and as such concerns any question that relates to language use in a legal context. Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014:1) describe “forensic linguistics as the “analysis of language that relates to the law, either as evidence or as legal discourse”. As such, it is a broad discipline. In this study the focus lies on the “work of the forensic linguist acting as an expert witness [...] typically providing [...] evidence in both written and spoken modes” (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010:7). Forensic linguistics departs from the premise that language can be used as forensic evidence, either to provide evidence of authorship, or on communication (Gibbons & Turell, 2008:1). Therefore, the forensic linguist aims to find evidence in the language which has been used, in order to assist in establishing the guilt or innocence of alleged perpetrator. Being a subfield of applied linguistics, forensic linguistics “draws on the scientific study of language to solve forensic problems” (McMenamin, 2002:41). This is done by applying knowledge of “the system of language” and “the underlying rules and patterns of language” and by then describing them “in languages of the world” (McMenamin, 2002:36).

Throughout this study, the focus is descriptive, as linguists aim to describe how language is used rather than to prescribe how it should be used, specifically in the context of threat texts as being part of a language-based evidence and investigative linguistics. Since linguistic features are sometime the only clues left by a perpetrator (Gales 2010:23), it is important that the field of forensic linguistics be researched in more depth in order to fill the gap in investigating forensic texts. The current developments in this regard in South Africa are still limited, with only a small community of linguists conducting research in this area. These include, but are not limited to Carney (2014) on interpreting hate speech; Ralarala (2012; 2014) on rights of language within the context of trial and translation in court respectively; Grundlingh (2018) who investigates the possibility of applying the Appraisal Theory to determine the legitimacy of suicide notes; Kotzé (2007) who investigates slander and is concerned with authorship identification, as well as Viljoen-Massyn (2018) who investigates trademarks within South Africa. Even though some studies are done in a forensic linguistic context, none have been done in South Africa in the context of measuring the level of seriousness of a threat. While the FBI in the USA and law enforcement in Australia and the UK are implementing forensic linguistics in evidence investigations and collection, it is not done in South Africa even though South Africa faces vast challenges

concerning kidnappings, threats, bribery etc. To address this gap, particularly in the South African context, this study aims to provide a foundation in the form of a baseline framework to inform linguistic analysis of written threats.

Olsson (2009:180) describes forensic text types as “any text which is the subject of police investigation or criminal procedure”. These can include “ransom demands, suicide notes, hate mail, covert police recordings, [or] threat texts” (Olsson, 2009:180). These texts have been discussed by Olsson (2008), Gales (2010a), Shuy (2014), and Solan and Tiersma (2005). Various types of forensic texts have been discussed, but there has not been a specific study of the elements of a threat text as a concept in itself. As one can see in the studies done in the paragraph above, the research done in South Africa has not included the investigation in threat texts, yet, the danger that people face when the response to a threat is not dealt with efficiently has the potential to prove life-threatening. It is therefore important that more research is done to improve the reaction of law enforcement toward a threat that is received, whether it is to an individual or a large group of people. The gap has inspired this research project, from which the justice system in South Africa in particular will benefit because this research can contribute to objective and just outcomes in court. It has therefore become a personal endeavour for the researcher to contribute to the development of the justice system of South Africa in particular, but also to make a contribution on an international scale as other countries can also apply the same method of analysis, and the concept can hopefully be applied in different languages as well.

It can be said that any threatening letters or messages fall into the category of “threat texts”. These may be sent to companies, celebrities, or any individual, threatening bodily harm or extortion. The author usually issues a threat or demand that seems sincere enough to cause a submissive response to the demand. In order to provide an objective analysis, forensic linguists need to analyse the seriousness of the threat in the text to measure the level of legitimacy of the threat. These analyses “provide law enforcement with linguistic profiles of the unknown producers of those messages based on the sociolinguistic clues that the suspects’ language provides” (Shuy, 2014:10-11). Forensic linguists are often called in to establish the severity and legitimacy of the threat, especially in first world countries such USA and UK. However, this study does not focus on the author as such, but rather on the message that is portrayed and the legitimacy of the intended meaning of the message.

In international research, for example, Nini (2017a) successfully analysed malicious forensic texts by looking at the register used within the written texts. Likewise, Picornell, (2013) analysed deception in written witness statements. Though these studies concern the broader focus of the present research, these studies are not directly relevant to the present study focusing on threatening texts. The threat texts analysed in this study generally include “malicious

communication”, which can be conveyed through any language mode, written or spoken, with the purpose to bring about “fear or distress” to the reader. Some examples include raising a false belief of danger or harm, whether it is a hoax of a false fire report, or the spreading of false information in hopes of ruining the reputation of the victim (Olsson, 2009:181). This involves an analysis of various linguistic features of a threat text. With texts being typed in an attempt to avoid detection of handwriting, it has become critical for forensic linguists to focus on language use in threats to understand it, to describe it systematically, and on account of such description, to support forensic investigation. For example, a linguist may inform the extent to which kidnapper appear committed and genuine in their actions.

One of the problems that arise in the investigation of threat texts is the lack of a general framework that can be used to analyse texts. A number of authors provide broad guidelines pertaining to aspects or features that can be noted in a threat text, as will be explained in chapter 2. Olsson and Luchjenbroers, (2014:1) provide an analysis of “attribution of authorship and the interpretation of meaning”. Through the analysis of authorship attribution and linguistic profiling, suspects are narrowed down and the legitimacy of the threat is determined. They also provide “[i]ngredients of threat texts and ransom notes”, including four main aspects that are characteristic of threat texts, namely *leverage*, *demand*, *threat* and *promise* (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:163). These four elements, however, do not provide enough linguistic evidence to ensure an accurate and objective analysis of a text to determine how the author convinces the reader that the message written in the text is sincere. Gales (2011; 2015) provides guidelines to assist in measuring the level of threat in threat texts. She analyses the stance of a threat, but like Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014), she does not provide a definite description of typical characteristic features pertaining to a threat text (Gales, 2015:1). Gibbons and Turell (2008:223) provides an outline of features found in bribe texts while Shuy (2016:20) contributes to the features of fraudulent texts. These authors provide broad outlines only. Grant (2008:223) asks the question “what type of person wrote this text?”, providing some guidelines on authorship attribution and linguistic profiling. Other authors who provide general outlines on forensic linguistics and general concerns of providing evidence in criminal activities include Coulthard and Johnson (2010:7). These authors all point out various aspects typical to threat texts, but no one provides a complete, detailed framework for the analysis of threat texts.

Any framework that can be considered to provide as objective an analysis as possible must be based on a sound linguistic theory. A threat text is a text that performs a speech act. The theory of speech acts, which falls within the functional linguistic perspective, is expounded by Searle (1965) who expands on Austin’s (1962) work (where the concepts of *locution* and *illocution* were developed). Searle (1971:44) argues that a speech act has “meaning” and that “when one speaks

one means something by what one says, and what one says the string of morphemes that one emits, is characteristically said to have meaning” (Searle, 1971:44). Speech act is “an attempt at doing something purely by speaking” (Trask & Stockwell, 2007:267). Thompson (2014), also a functional linguist, refers to Halliday’s work, influenced by Searle, and notes that “[l]anguage is as it is because of what it has to do” (Halliday, 1973:34). This refers to the way that language is used to achieve a specific goal because of what can be accomplished with language. Grice’s (1975) theory of Conversational Implicatures which comprises the Cooperative Principle and the Maxims of Speech provides tools that can be used in conjunction with speech act theory principles to provide a basis for the pragmatic analysis of threat texts, as will be demonstrated in chapter 3 of this study.

None of the authors who have analysed the semantic or stylistic aspects of texts have explicitly referred to Searle’s (1980:291-312) Speech Act Theory or Grice’s Theory of Conversational Implicature (Grice, 1975) as tools that can be used in analysing these texts. Searle (1971:41-42) analyses speech in context, explaining that people perform illocutionary acts in the context of constitutive and regulative semantical rules. The author of a threat text should also adhere to conversational implicature, as this would effectively convey the message intended, eliminating possible miscommunication (Anon, 2008:2). If these rules are adhered to, the message should be effectively transferred to the reader of the threat. The reader should then receive the intended message.

To analyse the communication effectivity, Grice (1975) provides a description of the general principles that guide cooperative communication. This describes how people communicate to ensure that both parties arrive at the intended outcome of the conversation. Grice’s Theory of Conversation Implicature makes use of the description of the Cooperative Principle which explains “how we communicate” (Anon, 2008:2) and the four “Maxims of Speech” namely *quantity*, *quality*, *relevance* and *manner* (Anon, 2008:2-3). These aspects describe the information conveyed by the author, where *quantity* refers to the amount of information provided, *quality* to the truth in the information, *relevance* to the subject at hand, and *manner* to the way the message is conveyed (Anon, 2008:2-3).

Neither of these theories have been used either alone or combined to inform an analysis of threat texts, with the result that there is a gap in the theoretical research on threat texts. Authors such as Gales (2011:28) and Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014:163) are not concerned with the believability of a threat text. Gales (2011:28) focuses on the level of seriousness of the text, while Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014:163) identify four features found in a threat text, and more specifically in a ransom note. None of the authors provide a framework that can be used to measure the level of believability within a threat text. A search with the key phrase “threat texts”

revealed that very little has been written on the subject. For the purpose of this dissertation, the term *legitimacy* is used to specifically refer to the intention of the threat; that, is whether the threat is intentionally harmful, or whether it is a hoax (as in the case of Jack the Ripper).

This discussion leads to the question: “How can the linguist conduct an objective and systematic linguistic analysis of threat texts to inform the legitimacy of threatening texts for forensic purposes?”

To answer this research question, the following sub-questions are addressed in this dissertation:

1. What is the definition of a *threat text* in the context of forensic linguistics?
2. What is the theoretical basis for the analysis of a threat text?
3. What linguistic and stylistic features are characteristic of threat texts?
4. To what extent can a linguistic framework aid the objective and systematic evaluation of the legitimacy of threat texts?

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to apply these linguistic theories to inform a linguistic framework that can be used to evaluate the legitimacy of a threat in an objective and systematic manner. By presenting such a framework, this research contributes to the body of literature on threat assessment, and shows the potential contribution of linguists as forensic experts. The framework may serve as a point of departure for future research but may also be used to improve forensic linguistic practice.

1.2 Research Aims

In order to address the main research question, the aims of this study are to:

1. investigate the nature of a threat text;
2. analyse the linguistic basis of threat texts;
3. determine typical linguistic features that are characteristic of threat texts;
4. develop a framework to assess the legitimacy of threat texts.

1.3 Methodology

A literature study was done for the purpose of obtaining information on the measuring of threat levels and on different aspects of writing. This literature study included relevant literature on

forensic linguistics (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010; Gibbons & Turell, 2008; Olsson, 2008; Solan & Tiersma, 2005); *threat texts* (Gales, 2010; 2011; 2015; Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014); *Speech Act Theory* (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1971); *Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature* (Grice, 1975); *authorship identification* and *linguistic profiling* (Olsson, 2008; 2009); and *characteristics of fraudulence* (Shuy, 2014; 2016).

The research design took the form of qualitative, inductive and deductive, and interpretative textual analysis guided by theoretical frameworks. Linguistic features such as verbs of harm, frequent use of personal pronouns, and adverbials of time, etc. were considered in the analysis, as well as semantic features that point toward certain topics discussed in the text such as violence, obsession, weapons etc. When combined in analysis, these features can help determine the seriousness and legitimacy of the threat text. The qualitative study did not include participants but was instead based on an empirical analysis of real threat texts that were collected, analysed and compared to the collection of characteristic features used in the framework, creating a type of checklist for a typified threat text.

A sample of 30 threat texts of various lengths was analysed to inform the framework. Texts analysed in this project include, among others, the text written by the "Unabomber" (Theodore Kaczynski), whose threat was published by the *New York Times*, as well as the threat text written by a perpetrator given the name "Jack the Ripper" (Anon, 2014). Relevant texts were also found online in the FBI Vault; and on a database (also available online at (<https://sites.google.com/site/tammygales/forensic-linguistic-data>) provided by Tammy Gales, a professor in Forensic Linguistics at Hofstra University in New York, who initially received the collection from the FBI. These texts were used to provide data for testing the framework that is developed in this research.

1.4 Procedure

The procedure involves three phases. Phase 1 includes an in-depth literature study in chapters 2 and 3; phase 2 entails the application of the framework for textual analysis; and phase 3 comprises a consolidation of the results with a conclusion concerning the outcomes of the results, and recommendations for further research.

1.4.1 Phase 1

The first phase in this research dissertation involves of the compilation of typical semantic, linguistic and stylistic characteristics of threat texts in the form of a checklist, based on a review of available literature.

1.4.2 Phase 2

Phase 2 is the investigation of examples of threat texts and the validation and expansion of the checklist. This phase relies on linguistic analysis following literature Coulthard & Johnson (2010), Gales (2011), (2015a), Gibbons (2003), Grice (2008), Olsson & Luchjenbroers (2014), Searle (2016), and Shuy (2016). The checklist will include all aspects of importance identified by each author. Once the checklist has been used to analyse a text, it is possible to discern the likelihood of whether the text is legitimate or not. This can be measured through noting the number of characteristic features the text has, which can be converted to an overall percentage of intentional harm relative to the length of the text, showing the legitimacy of the threat. This form of analysis follows a study of coding each identified feature provided in the literature review, placed in the framework through the use of ATLAS.ti, resulting in outcomes that point toward a measurement of the level of threat the text poses. By analysing the characteristic features one-by-one and marking the features as being present or absent on the table of the characteristics, a table presenting the number of times the features occur in their categories in relation to the text length can be presented. Once the features of the text are marked and analysed, a general conclusion can be made on the level of legitimacy found in the text based on the framework that has been developed. The design for the present study is qualitative. A small quantitative application is included to explore the potential of the framework and to explore the extent to which raw data needs to be treated more conservatively. However, the main results are based on qualitative conceptualisation, description and empirical corroboration.

1.4.3 Phase 3

The final phase entails a synthesis of the results that were obtained (the review of available literature and the empirical investigation of threat texts). By means of these results a final conclusion can be drawn and specific guidelines can be given to forensic linguists involved in the analysis of threat texts, which will make future analyses more accurate and provide an example of a way to compile a framework where the principles of the compilation can be used across a variety of text types.

1.5 Chapter Division

The dissertation is divided into 6 chapters, each compiled to achieve a particular aim. Following the introduction and contextualisation in chapter 1, chapter 2 provides a working definition for the term *threat* and outlines the linguistic characteristic features found in a threat. Chapter 3 provides an outline of possible linguistic theories that can be used to improve threat analysis, working toward an objective and systematic approach. This is followed by the research methodology in

chapter 4, which describes the methods and procedures which were applied to reach the answers to the questions stipulated in chapter 1. Chapter 5 presents the suggested preliminary framework and the results of the applied framework, including both the absolute frequency and the relative frequency of the characteristic features found in the threat texts. It then consults these results, suggesting changes, revision and improvement for the final framework to be presented. Chapter 6: “Conclusion and recommendation for further studies” concludes the research with a summary of what questions were asked as well as the answers that were obtained through the empirical analysis. This, along with recommendations for further studies, concludes the research project.

1.6 Conclusion

Chapter 1 presented a clear context in which the research project is based, creating a foundation for the reader to understand the procedure followed throughout the dissertation. It presented the central research question, as well as the sub-questions through which this central research question will be answered. In this chapter, the notion of *threat texts* has been contextualised in the field of forensic linguistics.

The notion of *threat* will be explained and defined in the subsequent chapter, providing a foundation for the reader to understand the empirical analysis which follows later in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: THE NATURE OF THREATS

2.1 Introduction

As explained in chapter 1, the field of forensic linguistics is subdivided into a number of more specific fields. With the focus of this study being on the notion of threat texts with the purpose to create a framework that can be used to measure the level of legitimacy of a threat, it is necessary to elaborate on the meaning of the concept *threat* and how it manifests in texts which are classified as forensic texts. It was mentioned in the contextualisation in chapter 1 that the term *legitimacy* is used throughout this dissertation to refer to the manner in which an author of a threat text subconsciously uses specific linguistic features that display the level of commitment toward the threat that is being made. This is an indication of whether the threat is a hoax or carries an intention to harm.

The purpose of this chapter is to conceptualise the notion *threat* and to define threat texts specifically in relation to a forensic linguistic enquiry, to attain an operational definition of the object of investigation for this study. To this end, this chapter explores general linguistic patterns found in threat texts, stance markers found in both the contextual and formal linguistic features

found in a threat text, and the rhetorical moves of a threat, as identified by Solan and Tiersma (2005), Gales (2011;2015a), Gibbons (2003), Olsson (2008), and Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014) respectively. Once each of these has been outlined, the different features are combined in a flow chart to offer one complete explanation of what is manifested in a threat text which appears legitimate. Furthermore, threat text types are outlined, with specific focus on the threat types relevant to this study and how this combined flow chart manifests in each text type. These text types include ransom notes, extortion, in the form of blackmailing and bribery, and hate mail.

2.2 Defining the Concept *Threat*

Before the nature of threat texts can be understood, the notion of a threat itself is to be defined and discussed. A threat, as defined by Collins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus (2003:659), is “a declaration of intent to harm”. In South Africa, the concept *threat* falls under the definition of the act of intimidation: “Any person who— (a) without lawful reason and with intent to compel or induce any person or persons of a particular nature, class or kind or persons in general to do or to abstain from doing any act or to assume or to abandon a particular standpoint— (i) assaults, injures or causes damage to any person; or (ii) in any manner threatens to kill, assault, injure or cause damage to any person or persons of a particular nature, class or kind” (Act No. 72, 1982). This leaves a gap of a definition for threat itself. Therefore, this section 2.2 aims to provide a working definition for threat for this research dissertation. Thus, a threat is a statement made by a perpetrator who intends to bring about undesired circumstances to the reader. Solan and Tiersma (2005:223) describe threats as being “criminal in and of themselves”. A threat is recognised as illegal when it is intended towards a specific audience to “instil fear of violence as retribution for failing to comply with a demand” (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:223). In other words, an illegal threat involves a statement which predicts that an event of harm will take place (Fitzgerald, 2005:2) i.e., intentionally bringing about “a bad state of affairs” upon someone specified or unspecified (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:225). As such, a threat is an “intentional speech act” (Yus, 2013) which constitutes a “form of expression that communicates that some undesirable state of affairs (injury) may/will befall the recipient or a third party as a consequence of another’s purposeful actions” (Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99).

Gales (2015:3; 2015:173) defines a threat as “a social practice wherein the act endows one actor with power over the other,” and asserts that “it is essential to understand threatening language as socially constructed genre since it is from the combination of the linguistic structures and social contexts of a genre as a whole that we can empirically construct our impressions, interpretations, and expectations of its use”. This approach sees the user as the determiner of how language is used to create meaning and is therefore based on the way that social context is interwoven into the textual situation. Since a threat is a speech act which takes place between two or more

persons, it may be surmised that the notion of a threat is socially constructed, and therefore, “at their core, threats are socially construed linguistic acts of power between two parties: the threatener and the threatened” (Gales, 2014:8). As a result of the social nature of the analysis of threats, the analysis can be directed from a Functional Linguistic perspective, as this approach proposes that language is used to create meaning, where the focus is on “meanings that are expressed and the ways in which those meanings are expressed” (Thompson, 2014:7).

Forensic texts (as defined in section 1.1) don’t necessarily entail a threat, but can also be in the form of texts which provide evidence which may assist in identifying someone through analysing handwriting, word choice styles, whereabouts and personal experiences in the eyes of the person in question, for example: journals, diaries, letters, e-mails, and text messages. These texts are generally modes that can be used to transfer a threat of sort. “Threatening communication” is described by Gales (2015a:1) to be a “verbalised, written, or electronically transmitted statement” which may refer to a pre-arranged event to take place which would be of harm or result in negative consequences for the recipient. Whether it personally affects the participant – making the participant both the victim and the target – or indirectly affects the recipient through harming someone of importance (victim) to the recipient (target), the threat still manipulates the reader (target) to fulfil the demands made.

Like any other genre of texts, threat texts typically display certain salient features that distinguish these texts from those with a different purpose. Even though these salient features may be identified, and even if the author might be narrowed down to a small group of suspects, linguistic evidence is usually not used in court as a factor upon which the final decision is based, instead, it is rather used as supporting evidence, or for the furthering of the investigation (Grant, 2008:224). It is important to note that in most cases where forensic linguists have been used to provide evidence, more specifically in first world countries, linguistic evidence is mainly used to direct the police in a case. Whether it is used in the investigation itself, or to identify suspects, linguistic evidence at this stage is used as supportive evidence rather than actual evidence in court. The features of a threat are represented graphically in Figure 2.1.

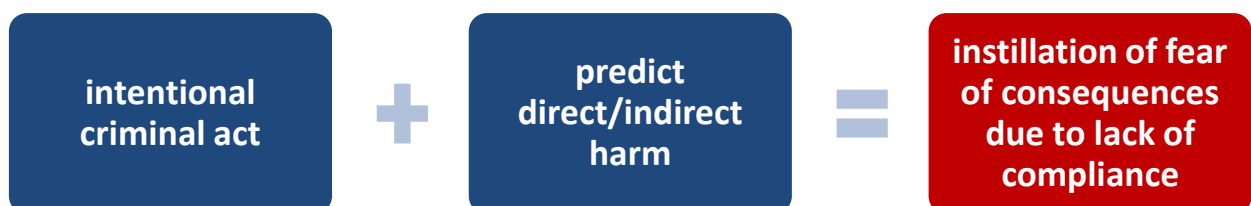


Figure 2.1: Features of a threat

Solan and Tiersma (2005:224) explain that the author of the threat usually expresses an “intention to personally commit an act”. This is labelled as an *intentional criminal act* in Figure 2.1, showing a level of personal responsibility for the act that is to take place or has taken place (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:224). This is done through *prediction* of some type of harmful event. The author should believe that the intended act would be inconvenient or disconcerting to the victim (ibid), showing intimidation through the information on the act that the perpetrator intends to commit. This threat of discomfort and harm is the *warning* (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:226). The perpetrator should believe that the message or threat will be taken seriously, and that the reader will therefore feel *intimidated* by the sender, believing that the author of the message is *sincere*. The author does not have to be sincere, but the text needs to appear sincere (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:228), making the threat and promise hold a weight that will manipulate the reader to adhere to the demand. The sincerity portrayed in the text produces fear in the reader, causing them to believe that lack of compliance will result in the promised harmful outcome. Figure 2.1 above and Figure 2.2 below, both show how the threat manipulates the target to comply with the demands made by the author.

The author has the intention to commit a criminal act. The prediction of either direct or indirect harm to an identified victim instils fear in a target regarding the consequences in the prediction. The intention is to bring about an act of harm or an unfavourable event toward the reader of the threat. This intention is predicted by the author, either in the form of a direct harmful action (harm toward the reader of the threat) or an indirect action (harm toward someone of importance to the reader, for example, a child, spouse, or friend). This then instils a level of fear of the predicted consequences if the demand is ignored, which forces or manipulates the reader to comply with the demand to protect the intended victim. The victim may either be the reader themselves or a third party which the reader (target) would wish to protect from the harmful predicted criminal act. Thus, threats generally predict future consequences if the demands are not adhered to, and are intended to bring harm (Gibbons, 2003:268; Solan & Tiersma, 2015:225).

The threat may be truthfully intended or not. In other words, the author may not actually have the intention of carrying out the threat, but makes the reader believe that the intention is sincere. A threat only needs to appear legitimate for the reader of the threat to believe that it is sincere, regardless of whether it is real or not. Therefore, whether the intention is to carry out the threat or not, the desired demand will be fulfilled by the reader. The concept of *sincerity and intention* is complex and is considered in more detail in section 3.7, where speech acts are described in terms of how they are used to convince the target of sincerity (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:228). For the purpose of this discussion, however, it suffices to note the relationship that is portrayed graphically below in Figure 2.2:

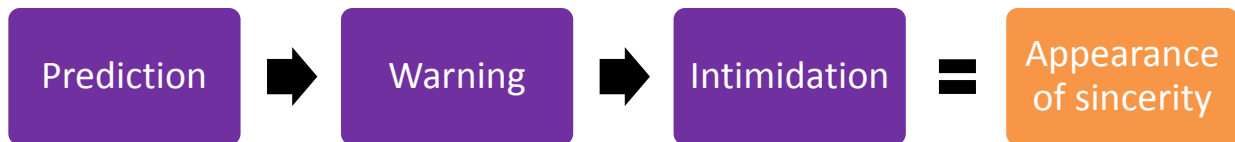


Figure 2.2: Three steps toward the appearance of sincerity

Both Figures 2.1 and 2.2 have features that align to work toward the outcome of a believable threat. The prediction in Figure 2.2 aligns with the intentional criminal act in Figure 2.1. The prediction represents the type of criminal act that the author intends to carry out toward the target, with the purpose to cause fear. The warning (Figure 2.2) not only heightens the sense of fear, but also provides a solution to avoid the intended harmful consequences, similar to the direct or indirect predictions in Figure 2.1. This can be illustrated through the example of a threat such as blackmail: the criminal states that they intend to bomb a corporate building belonging to the reader of the threat, unless the reader adheres to these demands (such as ransom payment; refusing a certain deal; accepting a certain deal, etc.). The author then warns the reader that if the reader does not adhere to the demand (for example, pay a large sum of money, decline a deal, sell the company, etc.), the author will carry out the prediction. The prediction (Figure 2.1) of the bombing manipulates and intimidates (Figure 2.2) the reader (owner of the building and company) while the warning (Figure 2.2) provides a solution to avoid the prediction (Figure 2.1) from becoming a reality. The reader is therefore led to believe that the criminal is sincere (Figure 2.2) in the threat. The reader is intimidated to comply with the demands, since the combination of the three steps (prediction, warning and intimidation) creates the appearance of sincerity, whether the author is sincere or not. Thus, even if the actual intention of the author is to instil fear, without physically harming someone, the structure of the text generally outlines a prediction of punishment which warns and intimidates the reader into complying with the demands of the text, because the three steps combined create an appearance of sincerity. The appearance may be an illusion, but nevertheless instils fear (Figure 2.1); the fear is real, and often manipulates the reader to adhere to the demands.

Depending on the level of detail included in each of these steps, threats can be divided into one of three categories: direct threats, conditional threats and indirect threats. Direct threats include the details of the threat, such as who it will influence, and when and how the threat will realise (Gales, 2010a; Solan & Tiersma, 2015). These threats are taken seriously, as the prediction is accurate, and the warning is clear resulting in a high level of intimidation. An example of a direct threat could be: “Mr. Smith, I have your daughter. Drive to the park at 24 Oak Street. Bring no one but yourself and R500 000.00 in cash. Be there at 20:00, not a minute earlier or later. If you bring the cash, I will not kill her. One wrong move and she is gone.” This example of a ransom note

includes specific details, such as a proper noun to address the reader, the threat explains who is in danger, and it also explains the consequence if the requirements of the demand are ignored. This threat also includes verbs of harm, time and place, which make it appear genuinely sincere.

Conditional threats are of a manipulative nature, attempting to force the reader to comply with a demand, with the leverage that the threat will be carried out if the demand is ignored (Gales, 2010a; Solan & Tiersma, 2015). Therefore, the prediction of the outcome seems to be dependent on the manner in which the recipient responds. A condition is made, as is often the case in blackmail. The technique is used through writing out the demand along with a condition that will determine whether the reader will be harmed or not. For example: "Do not accept the job promotion. I worked harder than you for this opportunity. I know what you did last Thursday with Miss Smith. You don't want that to become public knowledge now do you? I didn't think so. Take the job, and your story is no longer a secret. Leave it, and your secret is safe with me." This condition, to decline the job offer, results in the compensation of the reader, who now no longer must fear that his secret will be leaked.

On the other hand, indirect threats are less specific, and may be misinterpreted as an alternative speech act such as a warning or complaint etc. (Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99). Indirect threats usually lack extra detail, for example: "You know that I don't approve of this relationship. Leave her, and nothing will happen. Stay, and she might end up suffering unnecessary consequences. The choice is yours." This letter does not address anyone specific, there is no specific consequence, and the modal verb "might" lowers the level of commitment toward the action of implied harm. This threat could be interpreted as a warning rather than a threat with true intention of harm. On the other hand, it could instil fear, even though the intentions of the author are nothing more than to frighten the reader into adhering to the demand through the text alone. As shown in this example, indirect threats may not necessarily come across as a clear threat.

Thus, the concept of a threat is a complex linguistic act used to achieve a form of social manipulation enforced by one person and received by another, through constructing a speech act in a specific way. The author conveys a purposeful intent of harm, either directly or indirectly, which is undesirable but believably sincere.

The purpose of this section was to explain what a *threat* is and to provide a working definition of a threat for the purpose of this research study. A *threat* was defined as an "intentionally directed criminal act through means of communication, which makes it relationally and socially conditioned, declaring either direct or indirect harmful intentions toward a recipient, instilling fear of undesirable consequences in the event of non-compliance with the demand that is presented"

(Collins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2003:659; Solan & Tiersma, 2015:223-225; Fitzgerald, 2005:2; Encyclopaedia of Applied Linguistics:3427; Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99).

The next section will provide an explanation of those linguistic features that appear to characterise threats, according to available literature. The aim is to establish how the concept *threat*, which has been defined above, manifests linguistically to evoke fear. A compilation of the different characteristic features of a threat is applied in chapter 5 to distinguish the level of legitimacy of the threat text in question.

2.3 Characteristic Language Features in Threat Texts

In order to refine the general understanding of a threat, this section examines the features reported to be typical of authentic threat texts. These features are reviewed with the intention to inform the framework for distinguishing the level of legitimacy of the threat by identifying the relevant threat markers found in the text. Limited literature is available on the topic and the synthesis in this section therefore contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how threats typically manifest in linguistic terms. It also serves as a basis for the empirical analysis of the present study (see chapter 5).

As established above, threats convey a certain intention. It has been noted that the extent to which this intention is explicitly expressed may be tied to the level of threat legitimacy. In this regard, Gibbons (2003:268) and Gales (2011; 2015a) identify various contextual and formal linguistic features which are often found in threatening texts, such as cohesion, coherence and genre; and address, descriptive and modal verbs, and adverbials.

2.3.1 Stance Markers

As explained in section 2.2, there are three main categories of threats (direct, conditional and indirect). Threats can be classified in even more detail by determining the level of the threat as being high, moderate or low (Gales, 2012; Yus, 2013). The level of threat can be determined through analysing the type of language used in the text. The questions asked in this analysis as determined by Gales (2012) include:

- What type of emotion is conveyed?
- Is the message personalised?
- Is the message specific?
- Is there personalisation?
- What is the level of commitment suggested through the use of linguistic features?

The level of commitment may be determined by identifying the attitude that the author conveys through the letter/text. Gales (2015a) identifies language features which mark the stance (attitude) of the author, which may help to determine the legitimacy of the text and the true intention of the author.

In order to determine the stance that an author portrays toward a situation, an analysis of the language features of the text is necessary. *Stance* is defined by Gales (2011:27) as the “level of commitment to an act”, and in threat texts, these acts are generally found to be violent. Violence is often indicated through the language that is used, and often the level of predicted violence as well (Davis, 1997:2). Indications of violence may include “treating people as objects or dehumanising them” and “name-calling and launching other slurs or insults” (Davis, 1997:2), all of which are actions which require the use of language. Emotional and passionate hate speech often evolves into serious acts such as threat texts or threatening speech. Therefore, both contextual and formal linguistic features are considered. Gales (2011:28) notes that linguistic markers extend throughout the text, “possessing detailed, commanding forms that strengthen the threatener’s role or apparent commitment to the act” (Gales, 2010a; 2015b; 2011; 2015). A more physical element to note is whether multiple threats are sent, or if it is a once off threat. One should also note the frequency of the threats if they do occur more than once, along with the number of ancillary cases prior to the current threat. Previous harmful actions indicate that the author is not hesitant to carry out the threats, and the threat should be carefully managed.

Gales (2011:29) identifies three aspects that influence the language use of an individual, namely “language (grammar and discourse), social context and genre”. The focus in terms of social contextual features (Gibbons, 2003) on a discourse level is determined through the choice of genre and topic choice, established through textual cohesion and coherence along with the formal linguistic use of grammar and discourse on a syntactic level.

2.3.2 Contextual Features

Stance is depicted by the author through the context that is created by the linguistic choices made by the author who is then used to indicate their position toward the threat. There are three main aspects that should be noted in an analysis the literature used by the author: the context in which the text is written (Gibbons, 2003), the coherence and cohesion found in the text (Olsson, 2008), and the subject/genre in the threat (Gales, 2011; 2015a).

Shuy (2014:50) explains that “context is everything in text analysis” and that “decontextualisation often fails to show how the isolated expressions comport with the speech events, agendas, schemas, and conversational strategies of the authors or speakers”. Gibbons (2003) includes the

necessity to understand the context in which the words are written or spoken, because covering all methods of communication will ensure a conclusive understanding of what the intention of the text is. The context provides an indication of how serious the threat is and whether the author may have been using it to manipulate the reader or to instil fear through hate mail rather than to carry out a threat to cause physical harm. Anything written in a threatening manner should be included in the broader context of forensic texts and can be used to “provide law enforcement with linguistic profiles of the unknown producers of those messages based on the sociolinguistic clues that the suspects’ language provides” (Shuy, 2014:10-11). Very often, letters are written in a corporate situation where promotions or deals need to be made, and where there is competition between candidates. One candidate may choose to write a hate text in order to discourage another from taking the job or making the deal in order to claim it for him or herself. The author’s intention is not to truly carry out the threat, but rather to manipulate compliance by the reader of the mail. This context can often be identified through analysing additional texts which provide linguistic evidence, such as journals, text messages sent and received before and after the threat, and diaries. Therefore, the sociolinguistic impacts in the text should also be considered when the text is analysed. These sociolinguistic aspects will be further explained in chapter 3.

It should be kept in mind that a threat text is written because of a social circumstance in which one party wishes to convey implied power over another party (Gales, 2010:3), while the author of the text knows that the consequence of the threat is a “detriment to the reader” therefore giving the author “control” (Gibbons, 2003:269). Thus, the text is constructed through contextual elements as well as formal linguistic features which both need to be considered when a threat text is analysed. Gales (2010:3) suggests that the stance from which the author is writing, should therefore be analysed – that is, the “level of commitment to carrying out their threatened action” should be analysed.

Context is especially important when text messages and e-mails are analysed. In some contexts, for instance, the text may contain references which are not associated with proper nouns through the use of cohesive grammatical features. Typically, pronouns may be used instead of nouns, for example, “his” or “her” may be used instead of the proper nouns “John” or “Sally”. The names may, however, have been mentioned earlier in the communication leaving no need to repeat the name in future discussions – if that context is unknown to the analyst, the analyst may not know to whom the pronoun is referring. This may be the case when the context was given in prior communication which is not available to the analyst, such as a phone call or other means of communication (e-mail, SMS, written notes) by the author.

The measuring of threatening language must be carefully related to the norm of the social environment to ensure that it is truly a threat, and not a misinterpreted message with no harmful

intentions. In this regard, Gales (2015:3) cautions that “language gains its semiotic value only within the sociocultural context in which it is used”. Certain words may be used in one cultural group for one purpose, while it has a completely different meaning for a different cultural group. Olsson (2009:13) gives an example of possible misinterpretation when gang members’ communication in text messages is analysed. In the particular example, the gang leader used the word “bitch” to refer to his girlfriend, and this was interpreted as vile and violent. However, it later emerged that in that specific context, he used the term endearingly. Another example is the term “killed it” which is commonly used by the youth today. Teenagers and young adults often use the term to refer to something that was done with skill, for instance saying “the band killed the song in the concert last night” to denote that the band performed the song very well. This may be misunderstood in the context of a murder investigation, however, and semantic meaning therefore needs to be approached carefully when a threat is analysed. The different types of threats and contextual analysis are further explained in section 2.4.

Grant (2008:216) points out that “texts may be relatively durable and context independent” for example “wills or business letters”, or they can rely heavily on the context, for example “SMS text messages”. An example provided by Olsson (2009:13) of the communication of gangsters with one another through text messages emphasises the importance of context in interpreting the messages. SMS language, otherwise known as “textspeak”, needs to be understood in its original context in order to derive the meaning of the text. Furthermore, text messages often include slang that is specific to a particular group of people, making context the key to unlock the intended message. Texts such as text messages, journal writings and other personal writings can be used as supporting forensic evidence, as they “may be composed and edited as handwritten or word processed texts or they may originate as records of spoken language” (Grant, 2008:216). These texts assist in linguistic profiling (see 3.2.2.) and authorship identification (see 3.2.3.), which both help determine who or what type of person is responsible for the messages.

In relation to context, two aspects that Olsson (2008:73) identifies are *cohesion* and *coherence* as they link the text together. Cohesion is necessary to understand context and involves the “textual observation of grammatical data” which connects text together (Olsson, 2008:73). According to Halliday and Hasan (2014) cohesion is a semantic concept, where one element within the text is dependent on another element in order to provide the reader with context. Aspects that create cohesion within a text include reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion and conjunction. For example, a proper noun may be used at the start of the letter: “Dear Mr. Smith,” who is then further referred to by the personal pronoun “you”. Another name may also be mentioned in the letter, for example “Jane”, and this person will then be referred to as she/her throughout the text. Cohesion is not only found in terms of nouns and pronouns, but, also

regarding nouns and adverbials. In the example, “I will meet you at the park” the noun “park” may in further communication and subsequent messages be replaced with an adverb of place, such as “there”, for example “I will be there at 15:00”. This shows how cohesion is part of the key to understand the context in which the text is written. If only the responding message is available, the context concerning where the meeting is to take place, is lost. *Coherence* refers to how the text flows and whether the sequence or order of the parts of the text makes sense according to a timeline, ensuring that extra sentences or sections of texts were not added later after the original text was written, in order to alter the evidence. Van Dijk (1980:93) argues that coherence is one of topical structure, also a semantic concept, however, it focuses on the interrelation between each sentence and the interpretation of that sentence in relation to another.

Olsson (2008:69) gives an example of a case where cohesion and coherence were used to provide forensic evidence, where the suspect’s diary entries were read. The suspect in question was interrogated in relation to vandalism. The suspect’s entries in the diary were related to the crimes, but he claimed that he had written the entries after the crimes had been committed. The authorities analysed the texts written in the diaries, asking when the entries had been written. The suspect claimed that he had copied the entries from an older diary over to the new one, inserting the events of the vandalism. The analysis was approached from two perspectives, dividing information in categories of incriminating and non-incriminating evidence (Olsson, 2008:70). The non-incriminating information included personal descriptions of topics such as family, finances and other concerns such as health and relationships. Incriminating information included the slashing of tyres and the burning vehicles and sheds. Certain variations were found in the texts which did not show cohesion, as certain characteristics found in the non-incriminating text were not found in the incriminating text. Cohesion should be shown through the choices of pronouns in place of the proper nouns, and adverbials referring to *when*, *where* and *how*. Adverbials of time such as “meanwhile” were used, showing that other daily concerns were mentioned along with the criminal acts (Olsson, 2008:75). Coherence was found as events seemed to be intertwined in his daily entries and the texts referring to the criminal acts appeared in between other texts. Thus, there was in fact coherence in the text and the entries could not have been easily inserted at a later time. Cohesion and coherence can both be used to show the order of events as well as the relationship the events have with each other. This provides added evidence to the contextual analysis.

The text within the context also indicates the topic, or genre in which the text is written. The genre of a forensic text may vary according to the characteristics of the text. However, the topic often includes themes of “hopelessness, violent behaviour, fantasies, suicide, profanity, intimidating claims, obsessions about [an] object of desire, weapons, a description of the assault on the

person or property, a deadline in which the threat will be carried out, racism, behaviours for which the victim needs to be punished, and a focus on [the] self as the victim of some wrongdoing” (Gales, 2015b:4). The choice of subject or genre is broad and varied, but all the identified traits are examples of emotions that are provoked through a social situation, once again supporting the argument presented by Gales (2011:28) that “threatening communications is a socially defined genre” and the focus is interpersonal. This social perspective is further explained in section 3.1 in relation to Systemic Functional Grammar.

Although it is vital to understand the context in which the text is written, it is also imperative to analyse the formal linguistic features chosen by the author, which indicate the stance from which the author is writing the text (Gales, 2015a). This is the position of the author’s attitude, as demonstrated by Gales (2015a) and Gibbons (2003). The linguistic features identified by Gales (2015a) as well as Gibbons (2003) are presented in the following section. These formal linguistic features are considered in relation to contextual features in order to provide a clearer image of the text; of the purpose that the author chose to write the text; and of the intent with which the text is written.

2.3.3 Formal Linguistic Features

A clearer understanding of contextual features is unlocked through linguistic features found in the text. This section seeks to find “purposes of language use” and answer the questions: “what is this author (or speaker) trying to accomplish?”, “what linguistic devices are available to assist the author”, and “on what basis do they make their choices?” (Trask & Stockwell, 2007:293). Through asking these questions, it may be attempted to infer the message which the author is trying to convey through the threat. Knowledge of the linguistic choices that are made also assists in measuring the level of commitment the perpetrator holds toward the threat and leads to a classification of the type of threat the text presents. These features present cohesion and expand on the topic or genre of the text. This includes ensuring that the author is who they claim to be; the semantic meaning of the text; as well as any language used during the case, whether in court or in interrogation. All language that is used during the investigation should be considered as evidence in the case, as this will also ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the context of the text.

Gales (2011; 2015a) and Gibbons (2003) present analyses of formal linguistic features that are characteristic of a threat text found on a syntactic level, including examples of both lexical and grammatical features (Gales, 2011:27). These features assist in classifying the level of threat in the text. Gales (2015b:4-5) provides a list of linguistic features most likely to be included in a threat text, namely “obscenities, adverbials of time, verbs of harm, second-person pronoun, and

first-person pronoun". The grammatical markers protruding should be noted, including those providing evidence of the behaviour and attitude of the author of the threat text. These behaviours include "spontaneity, deception, decision, emotional expression and intimacy" and are expressed through "verbal habits" (Gales, 2015b:5), which are essentially linguistic markers. According to Gales (2010a:23), the linguistic features of a threat are sometimes the only clues left by the threatening party, and therefore an analysis of the text to understand the intent of the threat, whether indirectly or directly presented, should be prioritised and performed as soon as possible.

As explained in section 2.2, different levels of threat are distinguished. Van den Berg and Surmon (2019:260) point out that "[a]n author's intentionality and commitment can be seen through linguistic choices made, language use either being conditional or, contrastingly, determined and definite". These linguistic features are key to unlocking the level of threat in the text in question and include the proper nouns that are used to address the reader verbs (both verbs of harm and modal verbs of prediction) adverbials, and emotive language. These features are explained in detail with examples below.

Firstly, a letter generally contains a greeting or salutation, or some form of mention to which the text is addressed. This includes the use of proper nouns, the name/surname of the intended victim, along with further reference to this victim through personal pronouns such as "you" in direct speech, and "she/her" or "him/his" in indirect references (Gibbons, 2003:268). A more direct addressing of a victim generally indicates a higher level of sincerity presented by the author. Perpetrators usually use pronouns such as "I/we/us" to refer to themselves (Gibbons, 2003:26), and proper nouns to specify how the group or individual calls themselves – this – often appears at the end, in the closing and signature, such as in the letter written to the police where the murderer refers to himself as "Jack the Ripper".

Verbs of harm may suggest the level of danger, especially physical danger that the threat presents (Gales, 2015b:5). This danger is represented through the choice of verbs that indicate the actions that the author is prepared to take in order to enforce control over the victim's actions. These include specified methods of harmful actions, such as "shoot/kidnap", which carry a higher level of commitment, while vague mention of harm, such as "unfavourable consequences", portrays a lower level of commitment. Future tense verbs are also used to predict a harmful event (Gales, 2015b:5). For example, an author may use verbs such as "will shoot", "might kill", "will be kidnapped" in order to predict an intentional criminal act (as explained in 2.2). These verbs may represent the level of commitment of the author to the action of harm. Using "will/shall" suggests a high level of commitment, while "might/may" is less definite modal verbs that depict less commitment.

“Descriptive verbs” are also characteristic of threat texts as most of these verbs emphasise the author’s desire to control the situation (Gales, 2015b:5), as well as the desire to persuade the victim to comply with the conditions that may be found in the text. These descriptive verbs indicate the type or method of harm or punishment to which the author will resort if the demand is ignored. Examples include “kidnap”, “attack”, “kill”, “cut”, etc. Often coupled with these descriptive verbs are modals of prediction – for instance “will”, “shall”, “might” – which are used to provide details of the threatening act, implying the level of urgency of reaction time. There is a lower level of commitment to a threat that is voiced with a lower level modal verb such as “might” along with “harm”; whereas a high level modal verb such as “will” coupled with the descriptive verb “kill” indicates a high level of commitment.

Adverbials provide the position of the author’s priorities and also indicate how determined and committed they are to the indicated act of violence. Examples of such linguistic choices include adverbials of time, indicating the “when” of the act – such as “soon”, “immediately” or even “hourly”, - which are examples of high threats. On the other hand, there are also adverbials portraying less commitment, such as “later”, which imply a lower threat level.

These language features may help to outline the level of the threat as either being a low-level, moderate-level or high-level threat. The more detailed the threat, the higher the threat level, and in turn the vaguer, indecisive and noncommittal the threat, the less dangerous it is (Rugala & Fitzgerald, 2003).

Gales (2015b:5) describes a low-level threat to have “conditional language”, leaving an uncertainty as to whether such an act will be carried out, and vague referral to time, place and victim. These aspects indicate a possible hesitance on the perpetrator’s side, which make these types of threats low-level. A low-level threat includes implausible threats and conditional language, with non-committal modal verbs, such as “may”, “might”, “could” etc., and they lack specific details of location, time and persons involved. For example, “I might quit my job if you do not give me a raise”.

A moderate threat tends to be more plausible, and contains less conditional language, rather including forethought in carrying out the threat. Still, such threats remain vague and do not generally provide much detail. In this case, for example, there might be more specification in the moderate threat, “I might quit my job on Monday morning if you do not give me a salary increase”.

However, if the text includes a date, time, place, and person(s) involved, possibly along with reference to previous harmful outcomes, it is likely that the threat will be carried out (Yus, 2013; Gales, 2011:28). The seriousness of a threat escalates as the plausibility increases and as the

details included are more specific – this provides evidence of moderate preparation by the perpetrator. These facts conveyed by the perpetrator who is making the threat, can generally be confirmed. Lastly, if the threat is measured as a high-level threat, Gales (2015b:5-6) asserts that there will be a detailed description of the target, the time the act will take place, and other verifiable facts. These all point toward a committed author whose intentions are to carry out the punishment presented in the threat. For example, “I will quit my job on Monday morning if you do not give me an R2000.00 raise by the end of the week”. This threat includes a time frame, a date, an amount of money, and it would be possible for the speaker to actually quit. This is therefore measured as a high-level threat.

Another aspect of concern is that of “paralinguistic markers” (Gales, 2015b:7), or words which carry emotion. This way of writing generally includes threatening language, like “features of stance” (referred to in section 2.3.1.), and emotional stress/excitement due to the circumstances in which the text is written, as well as a demonstration of “high levels of commitment” which all leave the text to be interpreted as a threat (Gales, 2015:7). These markers are often used in text messaging where emoticons are added to the text to provide context and emotion. This once again supports the theory that threat texts are created through a social context as emoticons are an expressive form of emotion (Gales, 2015b:7). Words of affection can also be indicative of threat, along with emphasis through capitalisation (Gales, 2015a:176) which marks chosen words to stress the importance of the message.

Gales (2015a:176) includes punctuation as a paralinguistic marker, because it can convey the emotional state of the perpetrator. For example, the use of exclamation marks can indicate emphasis, anger and frustration. Lexical items also mark the emotions that the author is experiencing, since word choice often portrays the theme of the sentence, pointing toward a positive or negative emotion. This can indicate the stance of the author as negative words (Gales, 2015a:176) such as “prostitute”, “vandals”, “racism” etc. provide grounds for provocation to anger and offense. Culturally negative words can easily make someone feel threatened, which gives leverage to perpetrators who act in a threatening manner by overstepping culturally accepted boundaries.

To summarise, there are numerous linguistic features which may suggest the level of commitment, including specific ways of addressing the reader through the use of proper nouns (the victim’s home address, or a prospective location of attack) (Gibbons, 2003:268). Verbs that carry harmful intentions (Gales, 2015a:1) and, as mentioned above, modals of “commitment”/ “prediction” (like “will”/“shall”) and an approximate time frame in which the act will take place are also indicative of the level of danger of the threat (Gales 2015a:1; 2015b:6; Gibbons, 2003:268). Adverbials indicate the dedication or obligation to carry out the action (Gales, 2015b:6), and

emotive language demonstrates the importance of the message that is being conveyed as well as the attitude of the author (Gales, 2015b:7). These linguistic features unlock the level of threat and are especially found in e-mails and text messages. The use of paralinguistic markers also provides clarity about the stance/attitude of the author toward the presented threat, through the use of markers such as exclamation marks, emoticons and capitalisation of words/sentences for emphasis. These can all be combined to support the outcome of a threat which appears sincere and it can demonstrate the level of commitment that the author holds toward carrying out the threat, as illustrated in Figure 2.3:

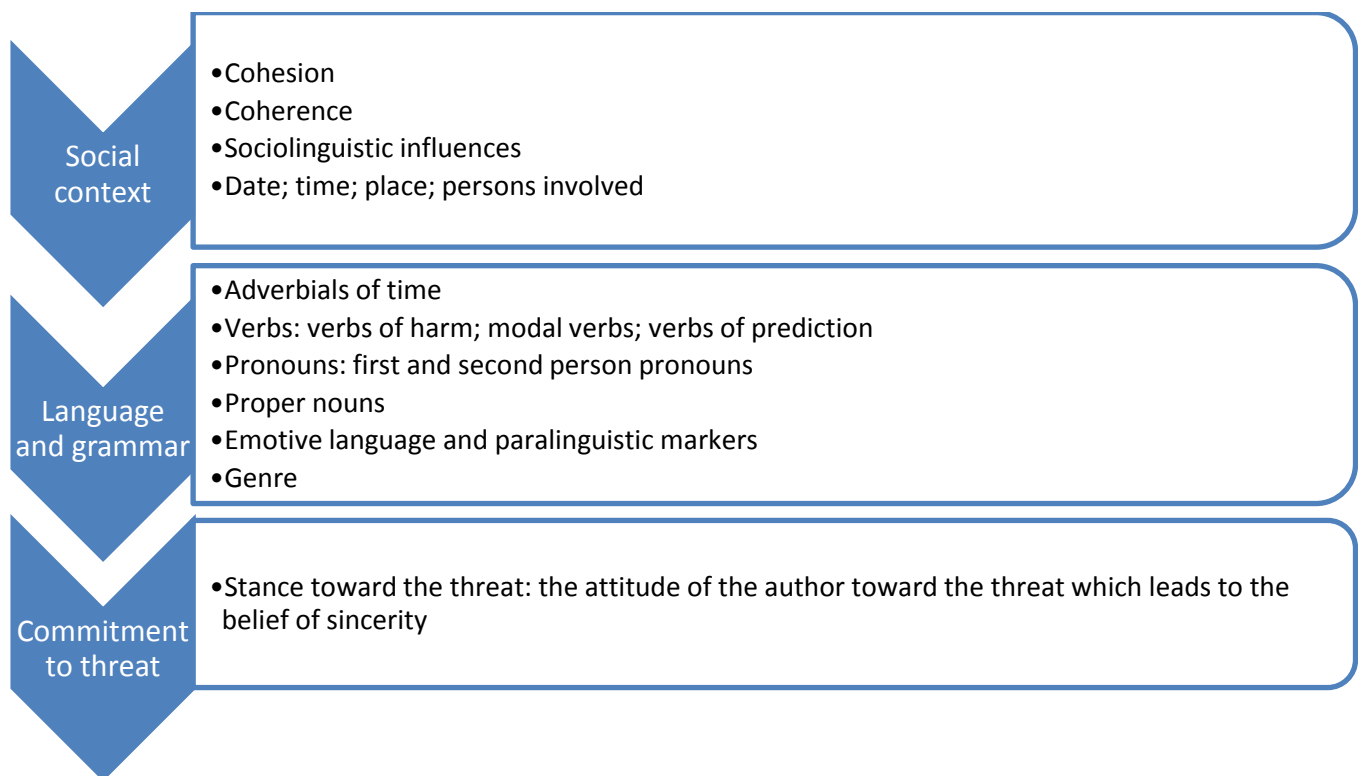


Figure 2.3: Formal linguistic and contextual features depicting stance toward threat

By including a combination of the features presented by Gibbons (2003) and Gales (2011; 2015a) in the proposed framework, a higher accuracy of threat text analysis may be achieved through noting the stance of a threat, the purpose of the text may be recognised. This relates to the idea that the perpetrator aims to ensure that the intended meaning (illocution) is clearly expressed through the underlying semantic meaning of the words; otherwise the result will be an unsatisfactorily interpreted (perlocutionary) response. Therefore, the text is first analysed at a syntactic level, where the formal linguistic features are identified in order to determine the commitment level toward the threat. Once these features are identified, there is a second aspect to be considered. This analysis is at a discourse level, where the rhetorical moves of a threat are identified. These moves may be added to the features of a threat which are illustrated in Figure

2.1, and to the appearance of sincerity which are illustrated in Figure 2.2. The rhetorical moves of a threat text, as identified by Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014), are discussed below.

2.3.4 Rhetorical Moves of a Threat

In addition to the general linguistic patterns that were identified above, Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014:163) categorise threat texts in relation to four categories or rhetorical moves. They specifically relate these four categories to ransom notes, but they are presented as textual aspects that typically appear in threat texts, and include “leverage”, “demand”, “threat” and a “promise”. Threatening authors first specify their leverage – i.e. the element of control over which they possess. This may either indicate actual control over the situation or refer to whatever notion gives the author the sense of control which, in their mind, justifies their *demand*. This demand usually includes a *threat* to convince the reader of the message that they should comply. Lastly, it includes an apparent “*promise* for safe return of the victim”, or in cases other than ransom notes, simply the safety of reader of the threat (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:163). These four traits are not always precisely stipulated, but are often implied, leaving the reader aware that he or she is disadvantaged in the situation, and therefore obliged to comply with the author’s demand. This places the author in a position of power in the situation (Van den Berg & Surmon, 2019:259).

The threat becomes a concern once the reader realises that the author has leverage over them. This leverage might be injury/harm to either the reader of the threat, or someone of importance to reader. With regard to this leverage, Olsson (2008:142) identifies a *cause* and an *effect* as part of the features of a threat. All threats generally entail both a cause (the *leverage* forcing the reader to comply with the demand) and an effect (the conditional *promise* that will be fulfilled in return for cooperation) (Olsson, 2008:142). The conditional *promise* (Olsson, 2014:163) is stated along with a sort of *leverage* that shows the reader that they have very little choice but to comply. This is followed by the demand, which stipulated with certain guidelines to direct the reader to fulfil the *demand* to the satisfaction of the author or author. This demand, in turn, is generally followed by the *threat* of the consequences that await the reader that if they fail to fully comply with all the instructions of the demand (Olsson, 2014:163). As explained above, this threat is the effect that will be carried out if the reader does not comply with the stipulated demands. Lastly, the *conditional promise* is not necessarily a guarantee or an undertaking but may also be seen as the statement of an effect that will take place if the demands are satisfactorily met. There is no guarantee that the promise will be fulfilled. This is demonstrated in the following flow chart presented by Van den Berg and Surmon (2019:258):

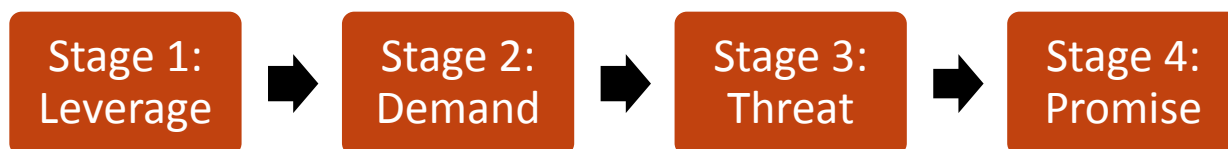


Figure 2.4: Four stages of a threat

The figure above illustrates how the features found in a threat all contribute toward creating the impression of sincerity (see 2.2), using the stance markers (see 2.3.1) that are found in the literature context (see 2.3.2). The leverage is stated and then used to create the illusion that the reader of the text has “no choice”, since they have already been creating and distributing the bombs, for example (as in Figure 2.4). A reader, who believes that they have no choice, will likely adhere to or at least consider the demand as a solution which will lead to the “reward” of the fulfilled promise. Choosing to ignore the demand, however, will lead to the threat being carried out. It is of utmost importance to analyse the language choices of the threat text (as presented in section 2.3), as these features often provide an indication of the author’s intentions with the threat and promise, as well as of the legitimacy of the threat.

The concept of a *threat* thus involves a purposeful intention which will result in a negative or harmful event which is undesirable to the reader and which will generally be performed as in response to a lack of compliance by the reader, or to manipulate future compliance of the reader. For the purpose of this research, a *threat* is thus considered as an intentionally directed criminal act, through means of communication, making it relational and socially conditioned, declaring either direct or indirect harmful intentions toward a recipient, instilling fear of undesirable consequences due to a lack of compliance with the demand presented (Collins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2003:659; Fitzgerald, 2005:2; Solan & Tiersma, 2005:223-225; Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99; Yus, 2013).

Patterns found in a threat text may be viewed collaboratively as a whole to demonstrate how various linguistic choices the author/speaker makes, are used to influence the outcome of the threat. Modal verbs (Gales, 2015a:1; 2015b:6; Gibbons, 2003:268), for example, portray a level of commitment to the action and are therefore the linguistic markers which represent the action of *predicting* (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:224). Verbs of harm (Gales, 2015a:1; 2015b:4-5; Gibbons, 2003:268) demonstrate the intention of the perpetrator and are used as a method of *warning* (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:226). Proper nouns (referral to personal names of victims) (Gibbons, 2003:268), *adverbials of time* (stating the *when* of the action) (Gales, 2015b:4-5) and the stating of *leverage* (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:163) give reason for the reader to feel *intimidated* (Solan & Tiersma, 2005). The author’s *demand*, added to the *threat* and the *promise* to drop the

threat if the demand is adhered to (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:163), along with the *prediction*, *warning* and *intimidation*, all leads the reader to believe that threat is *sincere* (see the process of creating a sincere in Figure 2.2).

In this section, three aspects of a threat have been presented. Combined, these different aspects manipulate the reader into believing that the consequences will be realised if the demands are ignored. Therefore, the features of a threat text as identified by Solan and Tiersma (2005:224-228) and Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014:163) may be considered in relation to one another as interacting facets that realise a threat. By considering these aspects in combination, a more comprehensive understanding may be obtained of how the linguistic choices an author makes, results in a believable threat. This is illustrated in Figure 2.5:

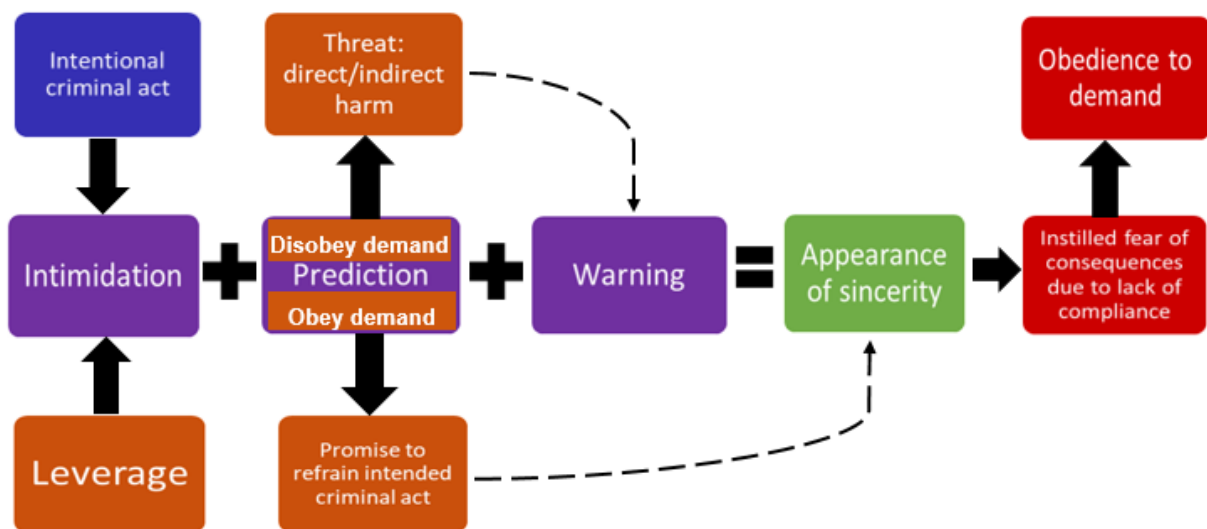


Figure 2.5: The interrelations between the elements of a threat

The diagram above depicts the interrelationship of the features identified by Solan and Tiersma (2005:224-228) and Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014:163) which are aimed toward instilling fear in the reader and thus compelling the reader to adhere to the demands. To illustrate the process, the example of a bombing of a company building will be used once again. The purpose of a threat is to convince the reader to obey the demands made by the author. Therefore, the desired result is instilled fear that manipulates the victim to obey the demand. The intentional criminal act of bombing a building is the unfavourable event. This might present direct or indirect harm toward the reader, depending on whether they are present in the building (direct: harm will befall the reader) or has an interest in the company, without being present in the building (indirect: harm will befall the employees). This unfavourable event is used as leverage to convince the reader to obey the demands. Leverage is a method of intimidation, which is then followed by a prediction. The prediction first presents the direct/indirect harm, which is ultimately the threat. It also presents

a promise to withhold the threat (for example, the bombing of the building) if the demands are adhered to. Therefore, the resulting outcome relies on the choice made by the reader: whether to obey or disobey the demand.

These demands may vary, depending on the type of threat. For example, the demand may intend to force the owner to make a deal with another company; to reject a deal with a certain company; to sell the company; to pay for silence of something that the author may know about the owner; or to instil fear in the reader. The warning assures the reader that the threat will be carried out if the demand is not met, convincing the reader that the author is sincere. This in itself also results in fear, which is intended to ultimately make the reader take measures to meet the demand in order to initiate the fulfilling of what he believes to be a sincere promise, namely to prevent the criminal act from taking place.

The above discussion shows that various markers may indicate the level of a threat. The particular combination of these choices may aid in determining the level of sincerity portrayed in the text and can help to explain different types of threat texts. Within these different types, different combinations of linguistic and literature features are chosen to create the specific threat in mind. This includes the manipulation of a victim to pay a ransom, forcing a victim to comply with the demands of blackmail, coercing a victim to accept a bribe, or understanding the difference between a high-level threat and manipulation through hate mail. The latter involves appealing to the reader's emotions rather than being a true intention of harm. The following section focuses on a variation of the process of threatening that was illustrated in Figure 2.4, with reference to specific types of threat texts.

2.4 Types of Threat Texts

In the above sections, the notion of *threat* was conceptualised, and threat texts were defined. This section will discern between different types of threat texts and how they are written. This will assist in measuring the level of legitimacy the threat may hold. These threat texts belong to a larger family of “forensic texts”. Forensic texts are texts that are relevant to a case where “anything said or written can become of evidential importance in an investigation case, criminal or civil” (Olsson, 2014:157). These forensic texts can be of criminal nature, including texts such as “threatening or abusive letters, ransom notes or sexually explicit internet conversations between middle-aged men and under-aged girls” (Grant, 2008:216). Other general texts, such as journals or letters, can also be used as supporting evidence or as an alibi (Grant, 2008:216). When a criminal case is being investigated, it is helpful to use the mundane texts as comparison material, and to analyse such texts for anything that may provide background on the suspect. By using the characteristic language features presented in section 2.3, it is possible to determine the type of threat and to

narrow the scope of forensic texts to a specific threat, where the intention of the threat can be established in order to identify the author's purpose of writing the threat. The specific focus in this study is on three main types of threats: ransom notes, extortion (blackmail and bribery), and hate mail. In this section, the interrelation of features presented in Figure 2.4 is considered in terms of how the process manifests in each of the threat text types.

Forensic texts include "black-mail, extortion, bribery, blasphemy, profanity, fraud, impersonation, perjury defamation, and incitement to racial hatred" (Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99). Because this dissertation focuses on threat texts specifically, the study analyses the characteristic features of texts in the forms of ransom notes, blackmailing and bribery, and hate mail. These text types will be outlined in the following section, in order to distinguish the general characteristic features that typify the genre. Although these text types are all different, they show the characteristics of the threat genre, and each threat text type represents a variation of the flow chart in Figure 2.4. The traits of each text type are established and serve as a framework for the empirical analysis reported in chapter 5, and they thus serve as a foundation for the empirical analysis for this dissertation. Traits identified as typical of threat text in this chapter serve to inform the framework that is proposed in this dissertation for application to threat texts with the purpose of measuring the legitimacy of the threat. With specific attention to the above-mentioned text types, the following sections unpack each type with the intention to compile a comprehensive understanding of what each text entails.

2.4.1 Ransom Notes

The Oxford Dictionary (2017) defines a *ransom note* as "A letter sent by a kidnapper or kidnappers demanding a ransom for the return of a hostage, and typically threatening harm to the hostage if the ransom is not paid." The action of kidnapping already gives the kidnapper control over the reader of the ransom note, allowing the kidnapper to "cause pain and suffering to his/her (victim) family" and can "occasionally end in death" (Detotto, McCannon, & Vannini, 2012:2). The purpose of a ransom note is to force people related to the victim to collect money in hopes of the safe return of their loved one. Kidnapping is an "economic crime designed to enrich the perpetrators" (Detotto, et al., 2012:2). Research shows that in general, most kidnappings are purposed to gain money through a ransom demand, and this demand is generally met through payment of the requested amount. Very few cases involve a rescue attempt, largely because the authorities are cautious of the victim's safety. If the rescue mission does not go well, the victim might lose his/her life, and demands are therefore often adhered to with the help of the authorities in order to protect the life of the kidnapped victim (Lobo-Guerrero, 2007:319). It is important to distinguish a ransom note from a bribe or blackmail that is added to a threat – a ransom note is instead a "threat accompanied by a demand" (Olsson, 2004:158), one that leaves little to no room for negotiation

(Olsson 2008:141-142). This is usually a more detrimental threat, as someone's life is most likely in danger in a ransom case; whereas bribes and blackmailing are often used to manipulate someone by threatening to ruin his/her reputation or by exposing a secret that would most likely not result in a loss of life.

Although the threat in a ransom note often means that someone's life is in danger, the focus of the linguist should remain on "the language of the hostage communication" (Olsson, 2014:161). In the case of a ransom note, the criminal act has already taken place, and negotiation is not an option. For example, in the Lindbergh kidnapping case, the letter was left after the baby had been kidnapped, leaving the parents to believe that the threat was sincere as the act had been committed prior to the receiving of the note. The parents were thus intimidated through the leverage that the kidnappers already held. The letter offered a promise: "The child is in gut care" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2018). The demand was adjusted three times in a total of 13 notes of correspondence, but the focus will remain on the linguistic evidence found in the first ransom note. The kidnappers made an explicit warning: "We warn you for making anything public or for notify the Police" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2018). The combination of these fulfilled aspects of a threat caused fear in the readers, which made them compliant and obedient towards the demands. It would seem as if the letter was written before the child was kidnapped. Evidence pointing toward the death of the child during the kidnapping supports the argument that the ransom note was written prior to the kidnapping, since the child would then not have been in good care (Olsson, 2008:142-143).

Olsson (2008:141) observes that most often these notes are anonymous, such as in the Lindbergh case in New Jersey, USA, in 1932, where the letter was simply signed with a symbol as a signature: 3 black punched holes, with two circles overlapping and with a dot in the centre. A main challenge in the investigation therefore is author identification, as will be indicated in more detail in section 3.2.3. The reader of the threatening note/call is disadvantaged because they do not know who the author/caller is. The most important aspect, according to Olsson's (2008:142-143; Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:161-163) method of analysing ransom notes is the actual threat communicated through the note. In terms of this, the focus should be on the resulting danger that may take place if the demand is ignored. In the case of the Lindbergh note, the threat was anonymous, holding an insincere promise claiming that the child was in good hands. Olsson (2008:142) identifies cause-and-effect relationship where the focus is on the threat of "death or injury" if the reader fails to comply with the demand.

The purpose is then to measure the level of commitment that the author has to the threat.

A South African example of a ransom case where someone's life was at stake, involved a twelve-year-old boy who was kidnapped with the demand of 15 Bitcoins (equivalent to R1.5 million) to be paid in exchange for safe his return. This underlying threat implied that if the money was not paid, there would not be a safe return, which in essence implied harm to the boy. Unfortunately, the wording of the threat text has not yet been released to the public, and therefore a thorough analysis cannot be made. However, the importance of paying the ransom to ensure his safety is evident (Shange, 2018).

Based on the perspectives on the language which is used in communication between author and threatened (see 2.3) (Gales, 2011; 2015a; 2015b; Gibbons, 2003, Olsson, 2004; 2008; Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2008; Solan & Tiersma, 2005), an analysis of the note can be attempted, in an effort to find semantics (meanings) hidden in the structure, tenses and word choices. These meanings tend to hold "promises" that will be fulfilled if the demand is met. This leaves the linguist with the challenge to analyse whether the criminal actually plans to fulfil the promise, based on linguistic features in the note. In the Lindbergh case, the linguistic features pointed toward insincerity on the part of the kidnapper, because the note was written prior to the kidnapping, leaving no certainty that the kidnapper was sincere in his promise that the child was in good care. The focus on the promise of reward if the demand is adhered to is further discussed in section 3.6. Apart from the threat itself, which contains a sort of promise of harm to the reader of the text or a third party, the text usually also contains a promise of a reward to the reader of the text (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:163; Searle, 1971:11). In the Lindbergh kidnapping mentioned above, for example, there were hidden semantic clues in the text which revealed that the author had already lied about the safety of the child, and would not hesitate to lie again (Olsson, 2008:142-143).

As one can see in the Lindbergh kidnapping (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:163), there are cases where the hostage is not returned and may even have been murdered before the letter was written. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the linguistic analysis of the note is done as quickly as possible, in an attempt to identify possible suspects by working on the identification of the author, as well as to estimate whether it is worth meeting the demand for the hostage to be returned.

This leads to the next characteristic of a ransom note/call: there are no negotiations. There are no options to change the kidnappers' terms. The use of strong commissive verbs often implies this in the letter, for example, "you *will* pay", "you *shall* comply with the instructions", and "you *will make* no contact with the authorities". The reader of the note is usually not given an opening to negotiate the circumstance of the exchange or the safety of the hostage. In these examples, the cause is specific, and the effect can be stated in the same way, "then she *will* be released". The

word “*will*” is commissive, but in some notes there is a lack of such commitment, for example, “*If you pay x amount, you might see your wife again*”. The word “*if*” remains conditional, and the verb “*might*” is non-commissive, implying that there will be no actual release of the wife at all. Thus, instead of an actual promise, the wording is typically a conditional statement, which is expressed in a “cause-and-effect” clause that means *if you do “x” then they will do “y”* (Olsson 2008:142). Olsson concludes that if a ransom note contains no cause-and-effect clause, the hostage is in extreme danger, as there may be no intention to actually return the hostage once the reader has done “x”.

Olsson (2014:163) identifies four main aspects of a “ransom” text. In most cases, there will be mention of the (1) *control* that the author has over the reader, namely, *leverage*. The word “leverage” is defined by English Oxford Living Dictionaries as “The power to influence a person or situation” (2017). This goes to show that the author of the ransom letter believes that because they have something of value to the reader, they can control the situation through using the leverage (the hostage) to manipulate the situation to play out as they planned. Since the author has this control over the reader by threatening to harm the hostage, they then feel powerful enough to (2) *demand* something from the reader. The demand, which is made, introduces the cause-and-effect concept. The cause i.e. what is demanded of the reader will bring about an effect, one that would hopefully release the hostage. The third trait is the (3) *threat*. This is the insurance policy: a promise to carry out harm to the hostage if the demand is not met on the terms the author set for the reader of the note. The threat is meant to ensure that the result which the author desires will become reality. Most often there is a (4) *promise* of returning the hostage safely if the demand is met, although this promise cannot completely be trusted. These four aspects are not necessarily made explicit in a ransom note, but may be implied (Olsson, 2014:163).

The interrelation that is portrayed in Figure 2.4 shows that the characteristics of a ransom note provide evidence of an interrelationship between threat elements. There is an *intentional criminal act* which is used as *leverage* to *intimidate* the reader of the note. This is generally done through informing the reader that someone important to the reader has been kidnapped. This immediately leads to a prediction which manifests the cause and effect system: if the reader chooses to *obey* the *demand*, the *prediction* takes form of a *promise*, which will lead to the safe return of the reader’s loved one. However, if the reader chooses to *disobey* the *demand*, there is a consequence of the threat being carried out. This generally involves *indirect harm* to the note reader, with the direct harm usually directed toward the kidnapped victim. The *warning* is presented through offering the choice to obey or not, and the consequences (the resulting threat) if the reader chooses to ignore the warning. The result of these combined features is a text that

seems to be a legitimate threat, which *instils fear* in the reader, resulting in *obedience to the demand* (which is to pay the ransom in hopes of a safe return of the kidnapped victim).

Ransom notes thus typically demonstrate the process featured in Figure 2.4.

2.4.2 Blackmailing and Bribery

Bribery has been a matter of concern for thousands of years, with evidence of bribery being condemned by the law in Biblical times (The Bible, 1982) as evident in both Exodus 23:8, “And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous” and Deuteronomy 27:25, “Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person”. Solan and Tiersma (2005:223) remark that “[t]hreats are also an intimate part of the crimes of extortion and blackmail, where the victim consents to give money or property to the extortionist, but only because of his threat to do something bad to the victim in the future”. Blackmailing and bribery are both categorised as “extortion”, which in turn is divided into two subcategories: “coercive extortion” and “extortion under colour of office” (Lindgren, 1992:1695). Since bribery and blackmailing are both forms of extortion (which present a form of either an obvious or underlying threat), they are relevant to this study. In terms of the interrelationship between threat elements, bribery and blackmailing are therefore considered together in the context of this research study.

Olsson (2004:158) warns that one should be aware of the amount of harm that can come from blackmailers as “there is no limit to what blackmailers can and will demand of their victims”. Blackmail is often referred to as “coercive extortion” (Lindgren, 1992:1696), and is generally not recorded on paper, but rather is kept as subtle as possible. However, as soon as the blackmailer resorts to threatening or physically harming the victim, the crime is then referred to as extortion (Lindgren, 1992:1696). Blackmail usually entails that someone holds information/knowledge of a victim which the victim wishes to keep untold. The victimiser uses the exposure of the information/knowledge as a threat in order to control the actions of the victim. An example may be knowledge of an affair that the victim had, which the victimiser threatens to expose. In attempting to protect his secret, the victim obeys the demands, with the victimiser’s silence as the reward.

The characteristic features of a threat text that indicate the level of threat illustrated in Figure 2.4 are manifested as follows in blackmail: There is a *threat* of either physical harm or information that may be undesirably leaked. Through holding the information, the speaker/author brings about *intimidation*, by using the information as *leverage* to control the reader. This leads to a *prediction*: *obey the demand*, and the information will be kept a secret; *disobey the demand*, and the *threat* (*harmful indirect or direct act*) will be carried out. The *warning* leads to the belief that the *threat* is

sincere, which leads to instilled fear, which results in *obedience of the demand*. An example of this is a case analysed by EH Hubbard, who dealt with a court case in South Africa where the owner of a chain store received a threat text. The demand was to pay R1.5 million to prevent the poisoning of the products sold by the company (Kotzé, 2010:186). This threat to poison the products sold by the store created a sense of intimidation and was the means of leverage to control the actions of the reader of the threat. The prediction would be to refrain from poisoning the products if the demand was met; and resulting harm for the customers if the demand was not met.

Unlike blackmail, bribery is usually referred to as “extortion under cover of office”, where someone abuses his/her position of authority with the intention of “a corrupt benefit” to “influence an official action” (Lindgren, 1992:1696). Bribery is defined as “[t]he offering, giving, receiving or soliciting of something of value for the purpose of influencing the action of an official in the discharge of his or her public duties” (Black, 1990:191). This type of crime can include two types of language crimes and includes both the offering of the bribe and the acceptance of the bribe (Gibbons, 2003:263). A common way in which bribery is committed includes payments made in order to control the actions of the person receiving the payments. These payments are generally concealed by disguising it as a “commission”, “reward”, “finder’s fee”, “gratuity” or “a thank you” (Tillen & Delman, 2010:12).

Tillen and Delman (2010:13) point out that money trails may attract attention when large amounts are displayed in bank account statements, but these may be disguised through the use of descriptions such as “consultancy”, “agency”, “processing” and other such vague references. Although common references are used in general when money is transferred or when transactions involving large sums of money are described, one should be aware that new words or phrases are constantly being used as references. Therefore, when analysing bank statements, it is crucial to analyse the naming of the transactions where no receipts or supporting documents can be found (*ibid*). This should be done to prevent overlooking a newly thought up reference as simply an innocent transaction. Lastly, companies are warned to learn the language terms that are used as reference for a bribe, both by their own company and by companies or persons with whom they are dealing; as well as the cultural norms which traveling employees may experience (Tillen & Delman, 2010:15). For example, in Russia, terms often used for smaller bribes include “coming to an agreement”, “helping each other out”, and “understanding each other”. Larger bribes are described as “extra costs” with vague references such as “consultancy”, “agency” and “processing” (Tillen & Delman, 2010:12).

In the case of extortion, an offer (referred to as a “proposal”) is made, which can be revisited if negotiation takes place and if the reader of the threat is brave enough to contend with the

proposition. The proposition is based on providing an answer to a problem that has been identified, for example, “I know that you aren’t being faithful to your wife”. This creates a problem for the reader, who realises that this information could be spread and may eventually reach his wife, probably with negative consequences. The author can simply offer a proposition, “decline the promotion and I will keep quiet”. This proposition could be negotiated, possibly by suggesting a salary increase, instead of the promotion. This can be tossed back and forth until agreement is reached. This activates other stages in the bribe, namely “acceptance, rejection and delay” (Gibbons, 2003:263). In the case of the Unabomber (to be discussed in the empirical analysis in chapter 5), the bribe entails a threat to more than just one person, but the proposal asks that a document be published, with the threat of further bombings if the proposal is not adhered to.

The figure below offers a summary of the order of events from the problem being presented to the reader, to the final stage of extension of bribery (further negotiation and other agreements). The problem introduces the leverage of the bribe, and thereafter the conditions of the information are set, which determines the level of control that the author has over the reader. This presents the opportunity for the author to provide an offer, the proposal, which can then be further negotiated to satisfy the author, and which will then be settled with a contract, whether official or unofficial. Unfortunately, bribery is often not a once-off event, and can be extended, as shown in stage four.

A bribe is structured to make it sound like a business negotiation, which is designed to make the “reader” feel guilty, and to ensure that the reader recognises, “understands and perceives the transaction as a bribe, and that the bribe is accepted” (Gibbons, 2003:264). Gibbons (2003:265) categorises the features of a bribe into four main categories which represent each step of the bribe:

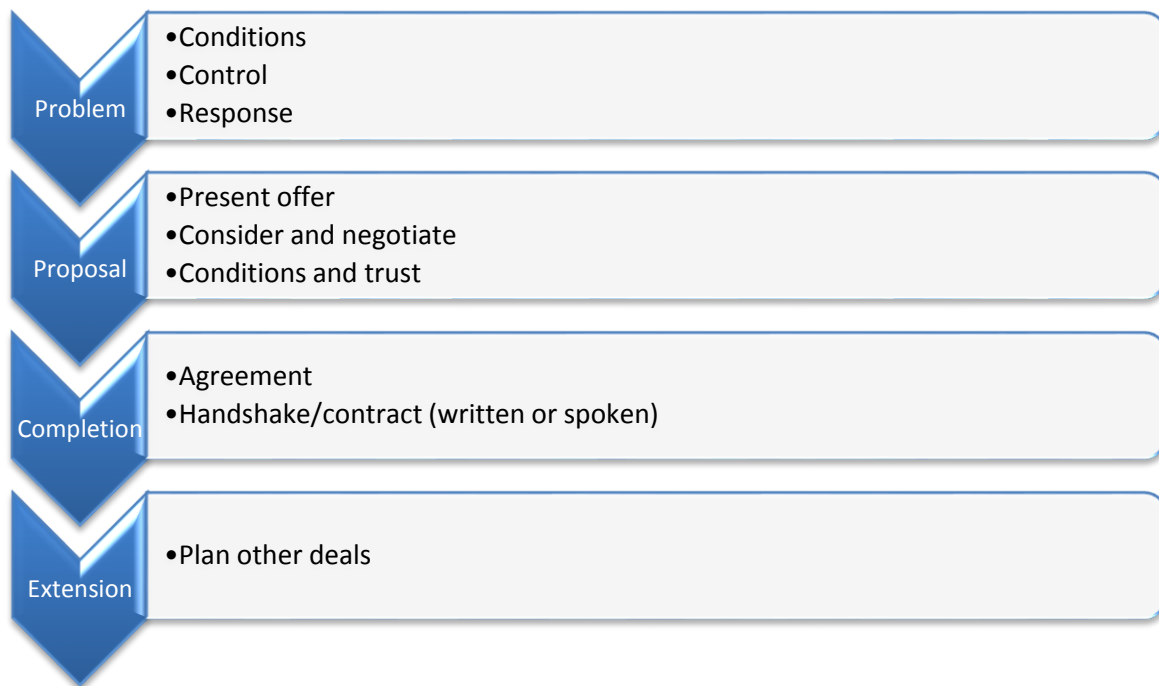


Figure 2.6: Four stages of a bribe

The features of a bribe align with those of an effective threat where the interrelationship of elements contributes to the legitimacy of the threat (see Figure 2.4). This is brought about through the offering of a bribe, which is generally a payment of sort used to control the actions of the reader. This payment is used as *leverage* and *intimidation*. This presents the problem, which involves conditions, control and response. This problem results in a response from the reader, who will have to choose between taking and rejecting the bribe. If the bribe is accepted, there is a *promise* to make the payment in exchange for obedience. Alternatively, if the bribe (proposal) is rejected, there is the consequence of not being paid, or in severe circumstances, *harmful criminal actions* which may be either *direct* or *indirect*. These harmful actions are predicted as a warning, which in turn, make the text seem sincere, resulting in compliance with the demanded action.

2.4.3 Hate Mail

Olsson (2004:157) concludes that hate mail is different to bribery, blackmail, ransom notes and many other threat texts, because the author is not usually “in possession of anything that the addressee will want returned”. The purpose of hate mail is to “express hatred by appearing to threaten someone” (Olsson, 2004:158). Hate mail is intentionally sent as “a self-initiated aggressive action” (Temkin & Yanay, 1988:468), and in the hate mail the “personal is political not only for the recipient of hate mail but also for its authors (Cloud, 2009:459).

The category of *hate mail* falls in the genre of threat texts since hate mail generally includes a threat of sort, including slander, insults, curses and defamation, although authors do not necessarily intend to actually carry out the harm implied in the threat. Rather, the purpose of hate mail is usually to intimidate and express hate toward the reader (Olsson, 2004:158). The letters written to the high court in the Eastern Cape under the pseudonym “Father Punch” are examples of hate mail. These letters contained numerous instances of defamation of members of parliament (Kotzé, 2010:187), in phrases such as “[t]here are also managers, males who are even married, that are sharing kids with nice ladies in the institution”. Such comments were intended to slander the politicians, and to expose the “wrongdoings” highlighted in the letters.

Hate mail has not received as much attention in publications as ransom notes and acts of extortion have, but for the purpose of this study it is important to understand the concept. Hate mail is generally not an impulsive or random act, as it takes time to write out your emotions and is therefore often a premeditated act often used by agents who are involved in “neoconservative populist social movements” which are arranged by online radio and internet sites (Cloud, 2009:459). Hate mail is coupled with hate speech, which is used as a “performative event” constituting its “subjects and its objects in opposition to one another” (Cloud, 2009:458). The purpose of hate mail is generally not to actually carry out the threat, but rather to carry across a viewpoint that has been ignored or to manipulate the reader into complying with a demand. This was the case in the hate mail sent by Father Punch, where the letters were used to expose the offensive behaviour of South African politicians.

The classification of a threat text as hate mail helps to determine the level of danger of the threat as knowledge of the type of threat text will determine the purpose of the text. If the threat is deemed unlikely or almost impossible to be carried through, the level of threat is lower and the situation can be dealt with accordingly. If the text seems to hold a high level of threat and probability, however, it will most likely not be classified as hate mail. Hate mail involves the use of words to instil fear, and such texts are therefore very often used to express emotion and hate towards the reader of the mail, rather than an intention of carrying out the threat (Olsson, 2004:157-158). The intention of the threat is measured through the aligning of illocution and locution, which is further explained in section 3.3.

Temkin and Yanay (1988:468) note that hate mail reflects “strongly held political convictions and widely shared cultural images”. Father Punch wrote about the immoral acts of the politicians in order to convey the perspective that these actions were unprofessional and to reveal the truth about the political leaders of the country. Temkin and Yanay (1988) identified a number of common features of hate letters in political cases, including an assertive religious influence as motivation for the letter (Temkin & Yanay, 1988:470); reference to fictitious organisations

(1988:469); very little personal information conveyed about the authors of the letters, such as their motivation, occupation and socio-economic status (1988:469); and that the number of hate letter written by men greatly exceeds the number written by women (1988:469). It was furthermore found that hate mail could be in the form of very neat and concise letters, either typed or written by hand; long or short missives, postcards, short comments written on newspaper clips; or notes written on napkins, on computer paper or on pamphlets (Temkin & Yanay, 1988:470). Other characteristic features identified by Temkin and Yanay (1988) were that the letters communicated “hatred”, “emotion”, “symbols”, “images”, and “forms of expression (including some graphic and pictorial ones)”.

Hate mail, on the other hand, can also be categorised by its “highly aggressive and emotional language” and often also by “insults, curses and threats [which] recur continuously, setting the basic feel for the messages” (Temkin & Yanay, 1988:469). Even though emotional language may seem impulsive, it can still be a build-up of emotions over time, resulting in a thought-out letter. This was evident in the Unabomber letter, in which the authors declared that they were not afraid to bomb again, as they already “blew up Thomas Mosser last December” (Kaczynski, 1995:1), to show that they would resort to aggressive actions while taking a stand for the belief that the research in technology should be stopped. Likewise, Jack the Ripper also used aggressive language in his hate letters, for instance “ripping them” and “shall clip the ladys ears off” (Anon, 2017). Giraldi (2016:64) contends that most hate mail greetings omit the general “dear ...” formula of greeting, often starting with the full name of the reader which has a strong impact on the reader. Because hate mail is emotionally driven, it often omits logical actions that the author could take. It can also be written in a moment of emotional instability, and texts consequently seem irrational. The text therefore often leaves the reader frightened and emotionally affected rather than in danger of physical harm. Once again, the “basic feel” (Temkin & Yanay, 1988:469), or the emotional effect, is the strongest leverage that hate mail holds.

As is the case with most threat texts, hate mail is also very often anonymous, authors most often leave the letter unsigned or choose to use a pseudonym (Giraldi, 2016:64). The letters written by the author who called himself “Jack the Ripper”, for example, left the police with no specific person to arrest, and confused the authorities as to the identity of the author. The letter written to *Washington Post* and *New York Times* by the person whom the police nick-named the “Unabomber” was also left unsigned. These are just two examples of many cases where the author’s names are omitted in order to conceal identity. Even though many hate letters omit the author’s identity, the letters are very often addressed to someone specific. In some instances, the author will use an alternative name or description which the reader will recognise as referring to

them. These may include derogative representations of the name of the reader (Temkin & Yanay, 1988), or other terms, such as the use of “Boss” by Jack the Ripper to address the chief of police.

Because hate mail usually includes threats, it is crucial that a manner of analysis be constructed with the purpose of determining whether the author intends to realise the threats, or if the threats are merely portraying emotion and hate. The flow chart in Figure 2.4 is applicable in the case of hate mail as well, although the four stages are not as clearly distinguishable for hate mail as they are for ransom notes, blackmail and bribery. In the case of hate mail, there is an intentional criminal act that is used as leverage to intimidate the reader of the mail. The purpose of the threat is to express hate, to manipulate the reader’s emotions and, occasionally, to comply with a demand. Its main purpose is to instil fear, however, and not to coerce the reader into complying with a demand as there is usually no promise of an act of harm that will befall the reader in the case of non-compliance. Figure 2.4 can therefore be used to distinguish between hate mail that intends to elicit emotional responses, and mail or message that contain actual and legitimate intentional threats.

When the differences between the text types are known, they may be classified efficiently which will support a thorough analysis in order to manage the threat effectively. This will make it possible to protect the reader from the threat, whether the threat only has an emotional affect or poses real and physical danger.

2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to contextualise a threat in the context of Forensic Linguistics, and to conceptualise the notion of a *threat*. This was done through providing a working definition of a threat, as well as outlining the characteristic features of a threat, through which the reader is manipulated into complying with the demands of the threat. For the purpose of this study, a *threat* was defined as an “intentionally directed criminal act, through means of communication, making it relational and socially conditioned, declaring either direct or indirect harmful intentions toward a recipient, instilling fear of undesirable consequences due to a lack of compliance to the demand presented” (Collins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2003:659; Fitzgerald, 2005:2; Solan & Tiersma, 2005:223-225; Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99; Yus, 2013).

Furthermore, characteristics of the methods used by the author to evoke a desired response were outlined through identifying specific linguistic choices made to convince the reader of the sincerity of the threat. These characteristic features demonstrate the stance and commitment of the author and involve two aspects: the social context of the text and the language and grammar choices made by the author. The social context is demonstrated by the cohesion and coherence in the

text along with the description of date, time, place and persons involved. The literary and grammatical choices include adverbials of time, verbs (verbs of harm, modal verbs, and verbs of prediction), pronouns (first and second person pronouns), proper nouns, emotive language, and genre.

The rhetorical moves of a threat were discussed to show how the author uses leverage, demand, threat and promise to convince the reader that they have no choice but to comply with the demands. Section 2.2 provided a comprehensive consideration of how the elements interact, and in 2.3.2 a schematic visual representation of the interrelations of the elements of a threat was compiled. The intention is to eventually add other elements, such as the stance markers mentioned in section 2.3.1 and the elements analysed in chapter 3, to achieve an all-inclusive visual representation which can be used as a framework to apply to a threat text in order to measure the legitimacy of a threat text.

Three types of texts were considered in more detail to explore the manifestation of threat features in threat texts, and more specifically in ransom notes, extortion (bribery and blackmailing) and hate mail. It was established that these threat texts differ in terms of the intended outcome of the author, but that they generally portray a similar interrelation of threat elements.

A compilation of the above-mentioned characteristics of a threat text may facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the texts, in order to come to an informed decision regarding the legitimacy of a threat text. However, a more objective study is still needed in order to enhance the quality of the assessment of a threat text.

In chapter 3, the focus is shifted toward a theoretical perspective of threat text analysis. Chapter 3 involves a discussion of relevant linguistic theories which may be applied to threat texts for the purpose of an objective analysis of the threat text.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THREAT TEXT ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

Threats are relational and “socially conditioned in that they are a manifestation of personal feelings, emotions, and intentions that have been shaped, influenced, and even encouraged by the larger social structure” (Gales, 2010:23). If one accepts this description of a threat (as presented in chapter 2), the core of analysing a threat becomes understanding it as a social act. Language is a social construction which is purely used for the purpose of carrying across meaning in human interaction. In other words, people use language as a structural concept with the intention that it be a medium used to convey meaning. Thompson (2014:8) argues that language is used to carry across meaning to accomplish “social practice” and “interplay” where “functions of language provide the motivations for language form and structure”, consisting of three interplaying aspects: language, social context and genre (Gales, 2015:174). Since this study departs from the assumption that a threat is a linguistic act committed in a social environment for communicative purposes (Gales, 2015a:1), the analysis presented in chapter 5 should be based on a theory which holds the perspective that language is used to mean, thus placing language and context at a point of interdependence toward each other (Thompson, 2014:10). This is in line with a general Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) view of language which contextualises the theories chosen for analysis as these theories are based on the social influence that is made on word choice. SFG was first introduced by JR Firth, and expanded by M.A.K. Halliday (Halliday, 1973; Trask & Stockwell, 2007:292). Through noting that a threat is supported as a social action, the ties between the notion of threat and functional linguistic theories are established in this chapter. The aim of this chapter then is to relate the notion of a *threat* as a social act to relevant linguistic theories and approaches. In so doing, characteristic theoretical features of threat are identified to inform the design of the framework of analysis developed for the purpose of this study.

Since threat depends on a social context, socio-linguistic approach to analysis is suitable for this study. Thompson (2014:7;28) describes a systemic functional approach to grammar (i.e. Systemic Functional Grammar, or SFG) as an approach where function and meaning are “essentially equated” and the function of language is used to carry across a specific meaning in a specific context. Nini and Grant (2013) applied SFG to bridge the gap between stylistic and cognitive approaches to authorship analysis. Through the SFG approach, which entails seeing language and meaning as interdependent, this chapter aims to establish a theoretical framework that integrates social influences with structural features of language to form a coherent, all-inclusive explanation of how the language structure of threatening texts is used in a social context

(Trask & Stockwell, 2007:292). If language is context dependent, this would mean that culture and society determine the meanings of words (Thompson, 2014:11). As such, language not only expresses the literal meaning of a word, but also the meaning that a particular society has placed on the text of interest in certain settings.

Idiolect, linguistic profiling and authorship identification rely on the Theory of Markedness (Olsson, 2008:46) to identify unique linguistic features of a speaker/author, which may be used to characterise the text in an effort to identify the speaker/author. Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962), and the Conversational Implicature (Grice, 1975), are related to the theoretical framework along with the stylistic features discussed in chapter 2 to help describe the legitimacy of the threat. The legitimacy of the threat presented in the text is measured in chapter 5 through aligning the features of the text with a compiled set of characteristic features typical of threat texts. Each theory is explained, along with the reasons for choosing the theory to apply to the threat text.

In this chapter, theoretical principles are evaluated critically to demonstrate how they may be used complementarily to inform an analysis of written threatening texts. These theories are the Speech Act Theory (SAT) (Austin, 1962); Grice's Theory of Conversation Implicature (Grice, 1975); and the Theory of Markedness, where Chaski was the first linguist to apply markedness to authorship in a systematic manner (Olsson, 2008:46).

In terms of the Theory of Markedness, the concept of *idiolect* is the main indicator of authorship and therefore it is evaluated first in the investigation. Thereupon, the possibility of socially profiling an author based on his/her writing is explored. This assessment of who the author may be, is linked to an assessment of the type of threat. Once the author has been identified, the seriousness of the threat can be estimated with more accuracy, and in some cases even eliminated. In section 3.3, it will be shown how the Theory of Markedness may be applied to mark certain aspects of speech which are unusual, and which can be used to build a profile of the author's idiolect. Section 3.4 explores Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1957; Searle, 1962) and its potential relevance for determining the commitment to a threat. Section 3.6 relates SAT to a forensic context, with specific focus on *promises* and *threat*. Lastly, Grice's (1975) Conversational Implicature is discussed, as well as the manner in which it relates to SAT.

3.2 Authorial Style, Idiolect and Linguistic profiling

Trask & Stockwell (2007) explain that any type of language use forms part of a social context (as mentioned in section 2.2) which influences the form of that language and, in turn, the language will influence "the nature of the social event" (Trask & Stockwell, 2007:2). In other words, certain variations influence the type of language use in an event. Trask and Stockwell (2008:3-4) identify

two types of variables which influence an individual's language choice, indicating the type of person who wrote the text in question. The choices of language use are determined by *social* and *linguistic* variables. Social variables are physical characteristics of a person, such as the person's age, occupation, origin, place of living, gender, social class, and race (McMenamin, 2002:52). These variables may typically affect a person's dialect, which is a prominent linguistic variable to consider in linguistic profiling (discussed in section 3.3.1). Linguistic variables, on the other hand, include the style or register that a person may use. This section explores these variables to foreground the evaluation of the linguistic theory which informs this project, since these elements are relevant in determining who the author of a threat text may be; or – in cases where no suspects have been identified – what type of person may have composed the threat.

When analysis is intended to find the author that may have written the text in question, the style of the author may be similar to other texts that were found and kept as evidence. Style is described as a “collection of identifying features which occur more or less regularly in a given author's text” (Olsson, 2008:71; 2009:37). In order to achieve an understanding of style, a study of stylistics is done through the examination of authorship (McMenamin, 2002:42). McMenamin (2002:26) observes that authorial style may be influenced by internal and external factors. The internal factors refer to aspects such as “structural and functional effects on linguistic change” (McMenamin, 2002:26), such as one's subconscious linguistic habits where one makes grammatical decisions without consciously thinking about the choice. External factors are determined by the social context of the author, which means that the social context of the author will play a role in terms of the external influence.

Because language is influenced by social context, this section unpacks the different influential factors that determine the language choices made by the author/speaker, exploring authorial style and dialect, which are both influenced by social context. External factors (social context) may be the cause of unity in a group of people, but they can also be the cause of division between two groups of people. This could result in two different dialects where each group has its own dialect and manner of speaking. Social context, for example, language – may unite a group if all its members understand the same language, but it can just as easily cause division if there is miscommunication due to lack of a unified understanding of the language. These dividing factors could be “separation by geography, social class (sex, age, race, ethnicity, education, occupation, income level), and the immediate social context of language use (topic, intended listener or reader, communicative purpose, place and time)” (McMenamin, 2002:26). The author/speaker adjusts his/her style according to the register (i.e. level of formality required in a setting), depending on the interlocutor, possibly someone with higher authority than the author (Olsson, 2009:37). This concept is referred to as the “social context” (Cutting, 2015:40). The physical

separation caused by geographic distance often determines the difference between dialects – “a form of language that develops differently due to the geographic or social separation, partial or total, of one group of speakers from another” (McMenamin, 2002:26).

Social dialects can also be influenced by difference in class (McMenamin, 2002:26). Therefore, the analysis of texts should consider context of the author, as the “degree of familiarity” will vary from person to person (Cutting, 2015:40). Status will vary depending on the role that the author has in a social context, as determined by factors such as age, gender, level of education, class, occupation and ethnicity (Cutting, 2015:40).

The style of the author includes the dialect which is used, i.e. “a synthesis of shared elements” (McMenamin, 2002:53) and which is revealed in text through aspects like “spelling, sentence structure, word and sentence meaning, larger discourse units, and ways of doing things with language” (McMenamin, 2002:26). Dialectic difference involves, for example, simple spelling differences between American and British spelling of certain words, like “analyze” vs. “analyse”. McMenamin (2002:53) points out that dialect is determined by variation and that it is a choice made by the speaker, where one variant is favoured over different variants. It influences the style of the text, along with other factors such as “early language influences, education, social contacts and exposure to language in various media such as newspaper, television, films, books, and [...] use of internet” (Olsson, 2008:71; 2009:37). These influencing factors change according to the social circumstances of the speaker, evolving as one learns and grows, including “illness, marital status, moving locations, or switching careers, bereavement, trauma, imprisonment, or any other major alteration in an individual’s life” (Olsson, 2009:37). These factors impact upon linguistic choices, which affect the style of the author/speaker. The style influences the idiolect of the author/speaker. Idiolect is the idea that “every native speaker has their own distinct and individual version of the language they speak and write”, describing the typical linguistic choices that each individual will make (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007:161). A more detailed working definition of *idiolect* is given in section 3.3.1, where the concept is discussed in more detail.

Linguistic profiling can inform the identification and/or elimination of possible authors of a specific text. This process involves exploring a text or texts where a list of linguistic features used by a particular author may be characteristic of one person or another (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:24). These comprise an individual’s idiolect, which is the result of the social context of the author – i.e. it is determined by both social and linguistic variables. Idiolect is shaped by a speaker’s society, the people with whom the speaker interacts and the factors that were mentioned above, with the result that idiolects differ from person to person.

Kean (1975), Kotzé (2010), McMenamin (2002) and Olsson (2008) all view the Theory of Markedness as central to the process of authorship identification. It is therefore relevant to this study pertaining to authorship identification, because it addresses the features which combine to form an idiolect, to ultimately provide a linguistic profile of author. Markedness is an established linguistic theory which has been applied by Chaski (2005) and Jakobson (1963), amongst others, to refer to universal linguistic principles (Hume, 2004:1) that are used to note abnormal or marked linguistic choices made by the author. To understand idiolect and to notice unique linguistic choices, it is necessary to have a sound understanding of the Theory of Markedness.

3.3 The Theory of Markedness

The linguistic Theory of Markedness has been applied to threat text analysis by authors such as Chaski (2005), Kotzé (2010), McMenamin (2002), and Olsson (2008) and to the trademark law by Hotta and Fujita (2012). The Theory of Markedness has been researched for over 50 years, and both Jakobson (1963) and Chomsky (Cook, 1985) were key researchers hoping to find “linguistic universals – rules of structure which applied in all languages” (Olsson, 2008:46). The concept of markedness has developed in two different ways, one through the Jakobsonian School of thinking, and the other in a Chomskyan School of thinking (Battistella, 1995:55). Jakobson distinguished between words that were either marked or unmarked, from a structural perspective (Andrews, 1990:13; Battistella, 1995:56). Chomsky, on the other hand, used markedness to analyse the “naturalness” of language use (Battistella, 1995:63) in the context of generative grammar. This included incorporating the feature of an evaluation metric used to rank “features, categories, rules, and grammatical options” (Battistella, 1995:63). Olsson (2008:46) explains that markedness refers to structures and signs that are linguistically unusual or strange, because at some level, it is non-standard. This can refer to any element in the text that strikes the analyst as unusual. The basic premise of linguistic markedness is to locate a set of specific notable aspects of the text in question chosen by the author in the various levels of either structural preference (Battistella, 1995:56) or “phonological representation”, characterising the segments of language (Kean, 1975:2).

A simpler explanation is provided by Zhang and Tian (2015:1), who suggest that the author chooses the most prototypical forms, ones that the native speakers would generally choose. In other words, the word that is most likely to be chosen in that social and communicative context is said to be unmarked, while the formulated choice that is less likely to be chosen in that context, is marked (Kean, 1975:7). These basic linguistic elements would be labelled as unmarked, while linguistic choices which are less frequently chosen and more unlikely to be person-specific should be labelled as marked. These marked elements can be compared to other unmarked aspects of other texts, providing evidence that supports the theory that the marked elements are different

from the general choice in language. For example, in the JonBenét Ramsey case, the mother of the kidnapped child was suspected of writing the ransom note because the word “hence” was used in the ransom note, as well as in a Christmas letter that she authored in the past (Anon, 2019b). Since “hence” is a word that is considered as characteristic, it is said to be marked in this case, whereas a more generally used word would have been said to be unmarked.

The vocabulary that is used (Zhang & Tian, 2015:2), the phonology or written text, as well as other variables such as punctuation, words, phrases and clauses in speech or text can all be marked, providing a broad base of analysis (Olsson, 2008:47) for cases of marked speech or text. An incorrect suffix, or a prefix that would not usually be used, is an example of language that may be marked. Thus, markedness concerns both features that are commonly selected and those that are less commonly selected (Kean, 1975:10). Generative grammar, which relies on the generative perspective that Chomsky presents (Battistella, 1995:63), claims that the child has a choice as to which word and tense to use. The choice is determined by input from the environment, namely, the parents, family, or other caretakers. This input affects an internal cognitive “setting” which chooses one of two rules to which it would adhere for a specific language. The unmarked option is the most natural choice to be made in the specific language, and requires the least informational input and least processing, whereas the marked form would be the contrasting option. In general, the child would choose the unmarked option, but if the child’s input is ill-formed concerning a form of sort, there may be an exception to the rule – the normal and logical pattern might be chosen, for example, but in combination with an incorrect prefix/suffix, which will mark the word as a “non-standard” word (Olsson, 2008:46).

Marked features are linguistic variables that manifest as textual features chosen by the author over and above other possible options of linguistic variables that could be used in the text. These features stand out when the same concept might be stated in more than one way. There is usually an option which is generally chosen, often specific to a social group/community, and the alternative choices are said to be marked if they are the option chosen less frequently (McMenamin, 2002:54). Where there are multiple options, the markedness can be seen in a choice that is made which is not the most commonly chosen option in general, showing linguistic characteristics person specific. For example, slang in a surfer community may include words such as “rad”, “shot” and “vibe”, but if a manager of a professional cosmetics company were to exclaim in a meeting that the new shade of lipstick is “rad”, it would be non-standard and marked for the specific person who said it, as it would not generally be the likely word to be used in that context. Marked linguistic behaviour may be found to be typical of a particular author. In the investigation of the Unabomber case, for instance, Lakoff was asked to investigate the language use (Larner, 2014:3). Through Kaczynski’s marked language, his brother recognised the non-standard

language choice. After he had reported this, the letter in question could be compared with articles written by Kaczynski previously, and eventually the linguistic choices could be linked to each other.

Kean (1975:14) explains that this linguistic theory relies on a type of universal grammar, a “strategy for grammar construction” that is “part of the child’s cognitive capacity”. The distinction between marked and unmarked grammar can be made by noting whether the form used illustrates “the most natural intra-segmental relations”, where these features classify and characterise these segments (Kean, 1975:15). These natural features are unmarked, while on the other hand, an unnatural use of the word/term/phrase would indicate markedness, known as “a marked specification of that feature” (Kean, 1975:16). Authors apply the markedness principle in authorship attribution. In relation to this study, the notion of markedness may assist an analysis of a threat text by providing evidence through their personal use of language.

3.3.1 Idiolect

In authorship attribution studies, idiolectal features help to create a profile of features characteristic of an author. The definition of idiolect has often been disputed by various authors such as Chaski (2001), McMenamin (2002), Olsson (2008). According to Coulthard and Johnson (2007:161) idiolect is the idea that “every native speaker has their own distinct and individual version of the language they speak and write” and that through this individual version, the idiolect is evidenced through the choices made by the author through their speech and writing. McMenamin (2002:111) compares idiolect to dialect, arguing that idiolect describes the manner in which an individual uses language – just as dialect describes how a community uses a language. It is therefore a “personal dialect”, as “no two individuals perceive language in exactly the same way so there will always be at least small differences in the grammar each person has internalised to speak, write, and respond to other speakers or authors” (McMenamin, 2002:53). Idiolect in this sense represents each individual’s unconscious linguistic choices, influenced by that individual’s unique combination of social and linguistic variables. Olsson (2008:26) has reservations regarding idiolect as a set notion such as a linguistic fingerprint, because language is malleable and can be influenced by the context and environment of the author at that moment in time. In an extreme case of unique language use, one might say that the language grouping is unique to one person and could be used to provide evidence as to who the author is. This would mean that idiolect could hold potential to lead toward linguistic fingerprinting, suggesting that just as fingerprints are unique to each individual, so language choices are unique to each individual (Olsson, 2008:25).

The term *linguistic fingerprint* will not be used in this study as it suggests that the linguistic preferences of an author are not variable or influentially changed by circumstances. One's language preferences are malleable and easily adjust according to context, subject and register, which make the concept of a fingerprint too rigid for its purpose. This is influenced by one's society, age, and one's needs in communication – an individual will acquire new skills according to the needs and changes of the environment of the individual. *Attrition* and *regeneration* are characteristic of the language system (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:47). *Attrition* refers to the loss of lexical items which are no longer used, or which are only of relevance for a short period of time. Regeneration, in turn, takes place when certain linguistic items which were once used, are used again, or more commonly, new linguistic features are generated and used (Olsson, 2008:27). The malleable nature of language, however, does not make the concept of idiolect irrelevant to the study. In order to avoid confusion, a clear working definition is provided for the purpose of this research paper, to avoid misinterpretation of the term *idiolect* in the analysis.

In the case of this study, the concept of a linguistic fingerprint is rejected in favour of the term *idiolect*. An idiolect is a group of characteristic features of the language of an individual, which, when combined, form a profile that may be indicative of a specific author/speaker (McMenamin, 2002:111). Since linguistic choices vary from context to context, and since people add new words to their vocabulary while dismissing other words, an idiolect is not a constant. Authors (Olsson 2008, Coulthard & Johnson, 2007; McMenamin 2002) question whether it can be used as a reliable method of author identification. According to McMenamin (2002:53) and Olsson (2008:29), since each person is raised differently, each person has a perception of what language is: one individual's perception of language is not the same as the next person's perception of language. This means that there will be slight variations in how people express themselves, even between people who share the same community. Idiolect is not something that is consciously decided, but rather is formed by a "unique combination of linguistic knowledge, cognitive associations, and extra-linguistic influences" (McMenamin, 2002:53). Through learning and growing, language will be adjusted to the environment of the individual; new careers will add vocabulary to a person's language; and certain vocabulary will eventually become unnecessary to the individual. Thus, though idiolect might be individually characteristic, it is not a constant, as a linguistic fingerprint implies. Olsson (2008:29) suggests that the idiolect of a person rather is a "marked way of using language habitually".

Grammatical features are subconsciously chosen, do not change and are not influenced by external factors, such as in the case of lexical items or words, which rely on context. Chaski and Howald (2007:2-3) explain that linguistic profiling is done through collecting specific features that show authorship preference and which represent the author's style. These frequently featured

characters are listed and combined to create the author's profile (Chaski & Howald, 2007:5-6). According to Chaski and Howald (2007:3), the list includes "indentation, placement of comments, placement of braces, character preferences, construct preferences, statistical distribution of variable lengths and function name lengths, statistical distribution of lines of code per function, ratio of keywords per lines of code, spelling errors, the degree to which code and comments match, and whether identifiers used are meaningful". These choices are generally made subconsciously, and this would make the analysis more objective.

The concept of *idiolect* should be approached with caution, and for the purposes of this study, the term *linguistic profile* will therefore be used to refer to an outline of specific characteristics of the author's linguistic choices. The notion of idiolect will strictly be used to refer to a combination of isolated characteristic features which can assist in the process of linguistic profiling. A linguistic profile allows for a broader reference, not attempting to adhere to the implications of a linguistic fingerprint. This ensures that there is still a basis for what will be needed in threat text analysis. Aspects of the text that seem unique to the author should be identified, by looking for something that seems unusual and that could therefore be "marked". A linguistic profile in the context of this study is the composition of the linguistic choices generally made by the author in question, making the text characteristic to that author. It aims to narrow the list of suspected authors to only those who match the profile composition in attempt to identify the author responsible for the text in question. Through looking at authorship markers, linguists can determine what linguistic choices are made by the individual. This will make it possible to compile a group of variants to form a combined set of words, collocations and punctuation (in written texts) that can be said to be the author's "idiolect". The combination of these specific choices should distinguish one author from another, to form a person-specific linguistic profile. To this end, the two sub-sections below will explain how idiolect can be used to determine the linguistic profile of the author, and how it may help to provide a shorter list of suspects. If the linguistic profile can be compared to other writings by known authors, it can lead to authorship identification in some certain cases.

Linguistic profiling is an investigative procedure which is used to assist in identifying suspected authorship. It is not used for the positive identifying of a suspect but is a tool that adds evidence that can be used to support identification or to point toward a specific suspect. It can offer useful clues about certain characteristics of the currently unknown speaker or author (Shuy, 2014:11). Shuy makes it clear that linguists may not necessarily provide the final answer to the question at hand (see 2.2), but can help narrow the list of possible suspects by giving guidelines to the authorities and outlining the type of person they should look for, based on marked aspects of language use. Therefore, linguistic profiling has become a contributing solution for identifying

potential perpetrators in legal investigations, where the linguistic features are used as supporting evidence.

3.3.2 Authorship Identification

With the complexities in mind, it may be more relevant to ask, “*what kind of person wrote this text?*” than to ask “*who wrote the text?*” (Grant, 2008:222). The former question entails two sub-questions: “what kind of linguistic person/s wrote this?” and “what kind of psychological person/s wrote this text?” (Grant, 2008:223). In the specific type of profiling examined here, the relevant question pertains to the type of linguistic person who would write such a text. Therefore, the analysis of authorship identification forms part of the characteristic features that are used to analyse the threat texts in question. These incriminating features pertaining to threat texts are based on sociolinguistic principles, with the purpose of working toward the result of authorship identification.

Olsson (2014:4) defines authorship identification or attribution as “the task of identifying the authorship of a document”. This means that the linguist needs to identify potential authors of the forensic text and then, in turn, identify the actual message intended, based only on the linguistic features which are presented. The focus of this section therefore is on gaining an understanding of how the text may be attributed to a likely author. The definition of an “author” should first be clarified, considering that multiple authors may have collaborated on a text (Olsson, 2014:4). With this in mind, Olsson (2014:4) also explains that the person who actually wrote the message could perhaps have been forced or asked to write it on behalf of the actual author. A kidnapped child could for instance be forced to write the message to his/her parents, to make it more difficult to trace an author. In less serious cases this could include a document written on behalf of a company or institution, so that the words may be typed by an assigned typist who was not involved in composing the document.

The features that provide a method of possible elimination or identification, also present challenges. For instance, authorship can be attributed to one person or to multiple people. Love (2002) provides categories in which the types of authorship of a text may be classified. Four categories of author types are distinguished, namely “precursory, executive, declarative, and revisionary authorship” (Grant, 2008:217). This classification system can be useful in a forensic context since authorship could be forced upon a victim, or there could be more than one author to a text. Furthermore, the document might not be original; or may have multiple authors, editorial authors, or accomplices who influenced the author. In a forensic context, such as a kidnapping case, the kidnapped person may be forced to write the ransom note, or others involved may be told what to write by the person in charge of the kidnapping. In such instances, a proper analysis

could indicate whether only one kidnapper was involved, or whether more than one person was involved.

Precursory authorship (Love 2002:40) include primarily academic authors (for example, cases of plagiarism), who generally include information from previous academic texts to compose the current text of authorship (Grant, 2008:217). In an academic context, this would be the author of a dissertation who uses previous books, articles etc. to support the argument or hypothesis presented in the paper. In a forensic context, these documents could, however, be used as forensic evidence as in some cases, a threat text is based on a previous document or text that written by a previous perpetrator. This could be an example of a “copycat” who may want to attempt criminal actions that someone had committed before them. Executive authorship asks, “who wrote this text?” (Grant, 2008:218). One should not rule out the possibility that there could be more than one executive author. Declarative authorship, on the other hand, is used in many reports pertaining to the government or businesses. It is not actually written by the person who is credited with the authorship, but by the declarative author because it reflects the declarative author’s perspective and opinion (Love, 2002:44). For example, a secretary who writes a speech for a president is the executive author of the speech, while the president – who presents the speech as his/her own view and perspective, is the declarative author. Lastly, *revisionary authorship* refers to editorial work that is done on the document (including input from editors and publishers) after the executive author has finished writing (Grant, 2008:218). Therefore, when a text is analysed, one should consider how many authors there were, and in the case of a kidnapping, whether the victim was forced to write the text. The text may also indicate the number of perpetrators through the personal pronouns that are used. Authorship identification often provides investigators with information that can equip the rescuers to analyse the level of precaution they should take.

Gibbons (2003:297) outlines the basic methodology of obtaining texts where the authorship is definitely known, and comparing these with those in question, noting similarities and differences that might suggest whether the author in question is in fact the author of the text in question. These features used for comparison should specifically be differentiating features. While these features are analysed, it should be taken into account that in most cases it is easier to work on elimination than on positive identification, as it is generally an easier and more reliable process to decide whether an individual person is *not* the author of the text. In addition, researchers in this field should not rely on one universal method in approaching authorship issues. Rather, he suggests, the research should be used as supporting evidence, as there is always a chance that there could have been multiple authors, or an incorrect analysis of the text. He also cautions that authorship attribution is typically complex, as one rarely finds a precisely accurate idiolect that

can be used as an authorship identification tool. (Gibbons, 2003:297; Grant, 2008:16; 220-224). Ultimately the linguist can do no more than present a likely author, based on a close evaluation of textual features. Chaski (1994) also presents a method of analysis through pattern recognition, focusing on the “empirical validation” in each text (Chaski, 1994:2). Chaski’s (1994:2) method is involves the following:

The standard method for empirically validating any classification method is very logical and simple. The analyst starts with a set of objects, in our case, texts, whose authorship (or gender or topic) class is already known and undisputed. These objects are typically divided into two known classes (author A and author B, male or female gender, or on-topic and off-topic). The linguistic features (forensic stylistic ‘style markers’, or words or sentence length or paragraphs per document or n -grams) are extracted from each text; their presence and/or frequency is tabulated. The feature data are analysed by a statistical or machine learning algorithm which builds a model of the data classified into two classes and outputs a confusion matrix. The model shows the separability of the data into two classes. The confusion matrix lists how many texts of a known category were classified as the correct class and how many were not. So, for instance, if author A had 5 texts and author B had 5 texts, how separable are the A and B texts, and in particular, how many of the 5 A texts were classified correctly as A texts, and how many were confused with B texts? How many of the 5 B texts were classified correctly as B texts, and how many were confused as A texts? The confusion matrix gives us information about the “hits” (the correct classifications) and the “misses” (the incorrect classifications) so that we get an accuracy score.

Similarities and differences are found between the two texts, which differentiate them. Whereas Grant uses an elimination process, Chaski is concerned with alignment between the texts in question and the known author. Both tests are effective, and the context of the text will determine which method is most applicable. It will depend on if the aim is to identify an author from a narrow list of authors, in which case one would use Chaski’s method of alignment. However, if there is a large group of suspects, one would go about eliminating those who don’t have any similarities. After this, one could also apply Chaski’s method of aligning the texts to confirm the suspected authorship.

Characteristic features of texts can be used to identify shared authorship by pointing toward differences and similarities in language, and in grammatical and stylistic aspects. When the text in question is compared with other texts written by authors who plausible suspects are, these characteristic features can eliminate suspected authors or confirm similar authorship, thus providing supporting evidence and directing the investigation.

As explained in 3.3, marked features of a text may be compiled to form an idiolect of person-specific features which can be used to create a linguistic profile which can assist in identifying the author. These three concepts – idiolect, linguistic profiling and authorship identification – are influenced by the principles in the linguistic Theory of Markedness as the marked features will inform the idiolect, linguistic profile and eventually lead to authorship identification. When a typical threat text is analysed, the question should be asked “who wrote this text”? It should be determined whether there was only one author or a number of authors, whether the text was

revised or not, and whether it might contain precursory information that is not the original executive work of the author or authors.

The Theory of Markedness may prove useful, for comparing the forensic text with other texts, such as a personal journal of the suspect, in order to look for similar or identical characteristic features in both texts.

The following section focuses on Speech Act Theory, which aims to explain what the speaker means by what is said. To understand the purpose of the threat, one should consider the author's intentions with the text. This theory provides guidelines to understand how one uses speech to say something directly or indirectly, and how to interpret the message intended. It attempts to answer the questions: "what is meant through the language that is used?" and "what is the purpose of the linguistic features that are chosen?"

3.4 The Use of Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory (SAT) is a theory that is used to analyse the act of speech, that which is said, the meaning that is conveyed and the way that it was received. This theory has received multiple reactions, where some linguists have been positive in the potential and the usefulness of the theory, while others have critiqued it negatively. Its applicability for the purpose of this project is evaluated critically in this section. Austin's (1962) priority was to place focus on the speech act in its entirety, looking at the circumstance of the language user, as well as the circumstance of the use of the language (Oishi, 2006:5). Austin introduced the concept of a *speech situation*, proposing that instead of focusing on the attitude that the illocution may seem to imply, the focus should rather be on the situation in which the speaker finds themselves. This, as Oishi (2006:6) points out, may refer both to "location" as well as "psychological space animated by linguistic communication and specified by linguistic devices". SAT has been successfully applied by a number of linguists to answer various questions pertaining to conversation (Moeschler, 2002), SMS language (Twitchell & Nunamaker, 2004:1), language and philosophy (Tiersma, 1986), offer and acceptance (Tiersma, 1986), indirect speech acts and social communication (Asher & Lascarides, 2001; Cooren, 2000; Holtgraves, 1986:306; Jacobsen, 2006; Kravchenko, 2017), conditionals (Young, 1989) and threats (Salguiero, 2010; Tiersma, 1986). Other linguists such as Allwood (1977); Bach (2006); Bach and Harnish, (1979); Cooren (2000); Habermas (1984), Kravchenko (2017) Levinson (1983); Oishi (2006); Poythress (2008) and Sadock (1974) criticised the theory for lacking in certain areas. This section first considers critique directed toward SAT, explaining SAT in the context of these concerns, and how SAT remains relevant in application to threat text analyses.

The focus of this section is on defining SAT, unpacking both direct and indirect speech acts and describing the three levels of SAT (locutionary act, illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect (Cutting, 2015:14)). The manner in which the illocutionary force is manifested in the speech act is then identified and categorised in a subcategory of macro-classification (Searle, 1976:10-11). Below, the limitations of SAT as well as successful applications of the theory will be discussed. This classification system is later specifically used to identify threats and promises (Tiersma, 1986; Salgueiro, 2010). These are all aspects which contribute to determining the legitimacy of a threat text.

SAT focuses mostly on utterances (as opposed to sentences and words) and the meanings that they depict. Both Austin (1962) and Searle (1971; 1975; 1976) describe a speech act as an actual utterance, arguing that a speech act involves the use of words to create an effect on a hearer, with the purpose to convey meaning. Oishi (2006:1) explains Austin's concept of meaning as that "the speaker with an associated intention performs a linguistic act to the hearer", through "utilizing linguistic conventions. This act is "the idea that meaning exists among these relations" (Oishi, 2006:1), with relations found between the meaning of what was said, and the linguistic conventions (either words or sentences) that were used to convey the message. Austin's aim in linguistic theory was to avoid using reduction, which was the generally accepted method at the time, and instead to provide an explanation of the meaning of a sentence through providing a meaning of a sentence through a logical manner (Oishi, 2006:1). The method of reduction did not provide for exceptions in sentences where the meaning did not correlate with the literal words. Oishi (2006:2) notes that Austin tried to explain a sentence in totality of the situation, which included avoiding oversimplification of a sentence's meaning as well as paying attention to underlying, hidden meaning. This basic understanding of a speech act by Austin (1962) and Searle (1975) is necessary to objectively analyse texts.

SAT is a rule-governed theory. Searle (1971:3) distinguishes between two types of rules that underlie speech acts, namely "regulative" and "constitutive" rules. The act of speech can either regulate already existing actions, demonstrating how one should behave in particular environments (regulative rules), while other rules are the reason for the existence of the behaviour (constitutive rules). Searle describes the regulative rules to be "etiquette" or manners that one should use in conventional settings. These rules refer to acceptable public behaviour, what would and would not be appropriate behaviour and how one should adjust according to the social norms and expectations. On the other hand, constitutive rules create a behaviour. These rules are the types of rules used in the creation of a game, for example. The game known as "stuck in the mud" offers an example of constitutive rules. When the person who is "it" touches another player, that other player has to freeze as if "stuck" in mud. Even though there is no conventional reason to

freeze, the person can only be set free if a different player, who has not been touched, crawls between the legs of the “stuck” player, releasing the player from his frozen position. This behaviour is not a social norm or conventional act; it was created through rules that were explained through a speech act (Searle, 1971:3). This is the same as in the cases of court rulings across the world. Different countries have different rules which constitute social rules that are to be adhered to, creating an expected behaviour (Cutting, 2015:29).

Since people are social beings, their primary use of language is to convey messages. This is achieved through speech acts, and therefore, the speakers “select their speech acts” in order to effectively convey a message (Clark, 1979:433). The speakers rely on the listener’s ability to infer the meaning of the speech act through “recognising these goals (the intention of the speaker), these plans and the roles the speech acts play within the plans” (Clark, 1979:434). Speech acts can be direct or indirect. The following section explains how the two types differ, and how they achieve an effect on the hearer. Both types are influenced by context, words that are selected and the persons involved in the conversation. If the author wants to save face, they might say something indirectly, which leaves room for the recipient to detect an underlying meaning, without the actual intended meaning being stated literally. If the meaning is literally stated, it is a direct speech act. In turn, each act (direct or indirect) can be considered on three levels, namely a locutionary act, an illocutionary force and a perlocutionary effect. The locutionary force is classified according to five subcategories, known as macro-classes (Searle, 1976:10-13). These are representatives, directives, expressives, declaratives and commissives, and they are used to identify what the speaker is trying to mean through the speech used. This classification is explained after the discussion of direct and indirect speech acts.

3.4.1 Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

Direct and indirect speech acts respectively involve that the speaker’s locutionary act and illocutionary force are either directly correlated, or that there is a subtler, underlying message within the locutionary act which may be stated indirectly (Searle, 1975:59). Direct and indirect speech acts can both elicit one of three responses: the expected responses, cooperative but unexpected responses, and uncooperative responses. These responses are known as the perlocution (Hancher, 1979:1). Ideally, the speaker wishes the perlocutionary response of the hearer to cooperate with the speaker’s illocution.

As indicated above, speech acts are selected for an intended purpose by an author. This selection may be influenced by factors such as the speakers’ relationship with each other, as well as the degree to which they like each other (Cutting, 2015:40). The assumption is that the closer the speakers are to each other on an emotional level, the higher the preference for a “direct and true

reply” (Holtgraves, 1986:307). Cutting (2015:40) contends that the smaller the social gap, the more direct the speech act will be, whereas the greater the social difference, the more indirect the speech act tends to be. Cultural differences may also influence the level of direct speech – different levels are expected in different countries, for example (Emike, 2013; Poythress, 2008). Relevant findings regarding SAT include the fact that it does not seem to be influenced by the sex of the speaker. However, the context in which the conversation takes place has an impact, and the more formal the occasion, the “more indirect the language is” (Cutting, 2015:40).

A direct speech act is the simplest form of a speech act, where the utterance or writing of a sentence, the locution, means exactly and literally what is being said (Searle, 1975:59). This could be a simple statement, “it’s raining”, where it is actually raining and therefore, the meaning of the combination of these words aligns with the message that the speaker intends to convey. These direct speech acts are only meant to have one meaning or illocutionary force (Clark, 1979:431). Direct speech acts do not hold underlying, implied or intended meanings other than that which is said. This type of speech act does not attempt to save face, but rather communicates the conventional denotative meaning of a word holding a direct relation between the form and function (Cutting, 2015:17). This means that the speaker does not attempt to say something subtly, even at the risk of coming across as socially impolite. The speaker chooses to carry meaning in order to avoid confusion or misinterpretation. In this case, the speaker relies on the hearer’s general knowledge of the rules of speech, which control the type of words spoken, expecting a particular response that will be inferred through the use of words and grammatical rules of the language (Searle, 1975:59). These types of speech acts are used when there is only one “illocutionary force” which is the literal meaning of the words (Clark, 1979:430). Therefore, the words that are uttered are equivalent to what is intended by the speaker, who has a specific accomplishment in mind (Holtgraves, 1986:305). This direct correlation between locution and illocution is most often used in giving instructions in order to eliminate any confusion and to receive the expected response without hesitation, allowing the meaning of direct speech acts to be “undeniable and explicit” (Holtgraves, 1986:36). However, there are cases where instructions are implied rather than directly stated. For example, when instructing someone to pass the salt across the table, one might say, “could you pass the salt” – this is indirect, because although the locution may refer to ability, the actual illocution is to actually pass the salt. This indirect request is seen as socially polite compared to a blunt request like “pass the salt”.

Indirect speech acts generally include more than one meaning, depending on the context one being from the speaker, and the other being the sentence meaning (Holtgraves, 1986:305). Although the priority is usually the intended meaning over and above the literal meaning, speakers tends to answer both to the literal and intended illocutionary force in that order (Clark, 1979:431-

432). In the case of an indirect speech act, the speaker “utters a sentence, means what he says, but also means something more” (Searle, 1975:59), where one speech act is carried through another, holding an underlying pragmatic meaning (Cutting, 2015:17). Sentences with underlying implied meaning make use of one illocutionary act, to perform another illocutionary act indirectly through the direct speech act (Searle, 1975:60). Examples of such sentences/phrases include the use of idioms (Clark, 1979:433), hints, implications, metaphors and irony (Searle, 1975:59).

Clark (1979:432) relates how hearers go through the process of depicting the literal meaning of the utterance, and then determine whether there is a chain of underlying indirect, intended meanings in the utterance or not. This process includes recognising potential underlying meanings, followed by a layout of a logical priority of the meanings within context. The literal meaning is usually answered first, followed by an answer to the indirect meaning. For example, “Can you make supper?” firstly asks about the ability of the hearer, but an underlying meaning will be “can you make supper tonight?” or “will you help me with supper this week as I am busy?” etc. The answer can include the answer to the literal meaning as well as the intended meaning, but if the hearer only answers the literal meaning and not the intended meaning, they will either not have inferred the indirect request, or are intentionally not cooperating. An answer such as “Yes, I have the ability to make supper” with no further offering to help, is described as an “uncooperative response” (Clark, 1979:434). However, if the hearer chooses to simply say, “I will cook tonight”, the fact that he will cook, implies the ability to cook as well, and the hearer is thus “cooperative”. The hearer may also be cooperative by answering “Yes, I can cook, however, not tonight, but I will help tomorrow night”, even though the answer is an unexpected response (Clark, 1979:434). An indirect speech act will come across as politer than a demand to make supper and will give the hearer the option to escape the request. The hearer may answer the indirect request as well as the direct question by answering “No, I cannot make it tonight”. This often complicates the linguistic analysis depending on the contextual situation.

Because of the way social practices have developed, people often resolve to using indirect speech acts in order to adhere to politeness principles (Clark, 1979:433), but this leaves room for possible miscommunication and “potentially deniable and implicit” meaning (Holtgraves, 1986:306). The indirect speech act accommodates politeness in society, but at the same time it leaves room for misunderstandings and possible offence, or incorrectly understood instructions, which could result in undesired consequences. Through analysing the illocutionary act, the intended meaning can possibly be determined, which could indicate whether the speech act is direct or indirect. Politeness calls for the frequent use of indirect speech acts, as indirect speech acts are more concerned with conventions and social norms than with the intended meaning of utterance (Searle, 1975:8). When a text is being analysed, it is therefore necessary to question

whether the author would have felt it necessary to adhere to politeness expectations, or whether the author would have ignored the Cooperative Principle and spoken directly. If this can be discerned in an analysis of the social context of the author, as well as the illocution of the text, it can help to identify the intention of the threat text.

The cooperation between speaker and hearer will be further discussed in section 3.8, where the answers and the amount of information provided in response to requests will be discussed with reference to the maxims of speech (Grice, 2004). Since the rules of social norms and conventions must be followed for effective communication to take place, it would seem that society makes use of indirect speech acts to conform to expected politeness. Searle (1975:64) suggests that “ordinary conversational requirements of politeness normally make it awkward to issue flat imperative sentences [...] or explicit performatives”. This means that the very act of directing someone’s actions requires an indirect speech act: “would you mind giving us a moment alone?” is indirectly requesting someone to leave the room, without actually imperatively stating “I demand that you leave”. In this present study, this raises the question of whether social norms of politeness apply in the context of a written threat. Presumably, it would most likely be ignored in order to rule out any confusion or misinterpretation of the illocutionary force. This assumption is considered and tested in the analysis of threat texts in chapter 5 of this study. It is expected that written threat texts will mainly be formulated as direct speech acts, or a mutual understanding of an indirect act that allows no room for misunderstanding. The author of a threat text knows that the demand may not be adhered to if the instructions and leverage are not explicitly and directly stated.

In writing a text, one is expected to adhere to social norms, which means that the expected behaviour of the author should adhere to the regulative rules of writing. The author of a threatening text, however, would most likely ignore the social norms of politeness in order to eliminate misunderstanding and confusion. This would mean that the locution, the literal meaning, and the illocution, the intended meaning, should align in order to avoid misinterpretation and incorrect inferences of the meaning. This will be further discussed in section 3.3.5.

3.4.2 Locution, Illocution and Perlocution

As mentioned above, certain meanings are tied to the words that are spoken or written in order to achieve a direct or indirect speech act. The aligning of the meaning with the written or spoken word may be thought of as a three-legged construct of a speech act: the words uttered, what was meant by the uttered words, and how they are perceived causing a resulting reaction to what was said. Meaning is communicated through a speech act, whether it be direct or indirect – there is a reason for what was said, and an expected reaction to what was said. According to Austin (1962) speech acts are actions that involve conveying a message through speaking. These actions can

be analysed through three aspects, all directed from different perspectives, and include locutionary act, illocutionary force, and perlocutionary effect. The three levels combined explain the entire effect of something that has been said. Based on Austin's (1962) principle, Oishi (2006:2) applies a three-part analysis to a speech act through analysing "conventionality, actuality, and intentionality". Conventionality refers to the "associated conventions which are valid" (Oishi, 2006:2), actuality is concerned with the words that are spoken and heard, and lastly, the intentionality is the actual underlying meaning of the sentence even though it may not be grammatically explicit. These three steps can be linked with the locution, illocution and perlocution which are explained in the section below.

3.4.2.1 Locution

The words that are spoken or written, with their original, literal meaning, are the locutionary act: the layout of words in the text or in speech is the "mere uttering" of the words (Hancher, 1979:1; Searle, 1979:1). This "mere uttering" is the simplest case of meaning, where the words uttered in a sentence align literally and in meaning (Searle, 1975:59). This excludes underlying meanings that are possibly intended by the speaker/author, rather focusing only on the syntactic aspect of the words themselves. In such cases, the speaker/author assumes that the listener/reader knows and understands the rules of the language in order to correctly infer the locution.

Oishi (2006:3-4) subdivides the locutionary act into three sections: the phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts. The phonetic aspect of the locution refers to the act of actually producing sound (Oishi, 2006:3-4) and movement of the jaw and tongue (Searle, 1971:1). The phatic act is the act of speaking these "words or sentences in accordance with the phonological and syntactic rules of the language to which they belong" (Oishi, 2006:4). Lastly, Oishi (2006:4) defines the rhetic act as a spoken sentence which is logical with an approximate reference where actions such as making a statement, asking a question, offering praise etc. are all included (Searle, 1971:1). These locutionary acts are simple, taking the words for their literal meaning. However, there is very often an underlying meaning in the locution, which calls for further analysis through the perspective of the illocutionary force, which takes into account the context and attempts to explain how a speech act that may seem as a simple direct meaning may contain underlying intentions.

3.4.2.2 Illocutionary force

The illocutionary force is the second level of a speech act and refers to the meaning intended by the speaker. This is the intention that the speaker holds and what the speaker does with the words (Cutting, 2015:14). This force is the goal that the speaker wishes to achieve with the words used, or "the meaning the speaker intended to convey in performing the illocutionary act" (Asher &

Lascarides, 2001:186). Examples of illocutionary force include *state, assert, describe, warn, remark, comment, command, order, request, criticise, apologise, censure, approve, welcome, promise, express approval, and express regret* (Searle, 1965). Asher and Lascarides (2001:186) explain that the illocutionary force is achieved through another illocutionary act. An example of such an illocutionary act is where a student may ask a friend: “Are you going to the party tonight?” with the intention of actually asking if they can get a lift with the friend. This underlying meaning may not seem obvious to everyone, but in their personal context, where it is normal for the speaker to get a lift, it would be logical for the friend to assume that the request for a lift is made through asking if they planned on attending the party. The illocution contains a “force” that is performed through the utterance of the sentence (Oishi, 2006:4). This force is the actual meaning, and the desire to get a lift with the friend of the speaker is the force of the illocution. This could be conveyed in the tone of voice, or in context, and may be correctly understood by the intended hearer. However, someone overhearing the locution may not perceive the correct illocution because of a lack of contextual information. The illocution is therefore the semantic aspect of the speech. It is the conveyed message, which may or may not be understood by the reader (Austin, 1962; Cutting, 2015; Searle, 1971). The illocution is said to be the “central component of language use” (Hancher, 1979:1) as well as the “basic unit of human linguistic communication (Searle, 1976:1).

Even though the illocution may be misunderstood by the hearer, this would not reduce the illocutionary effect it may have had – it nevertheless remains valid (Cutting, 2015:14). This confusion does not only occur when someone overhears a sentence and lacks a full context, it often takes place in general conversation and can cause offence when someone misinterprets the intended meaning or even responds in an unexpected way because of a misunderstanding the intended illocution. There seems to be a lack of explanation for cases where there are misunderstandings and misattribution to meaning (Masaki, 2004:35). A misunderstanding is the result of a failed perlocutionary act and leads to a response which is not desired by the speaker. The misattribution refers to the failed illocutionary force because the act is unsuccessfully conveyed, as when the reader of a threat for example does not realise that the speech act is actually a threat. There are multiple reasons for an illocutionary speech act to fail, for example “when conventions to perform the speech act do not exist; existing procedures cannot be applied to a particular case; or because the speaker makes a mistake, for example, causing the performances not to conform to conventional procedure” (Van den Berg, 2019:319).

For an illocutionary act to fail, the speaker has to fail to perform, but when a perlocutionary act fails, it is due to misinterpretation. The illocutionary act relies on the conventions of society, and the failure thereof is a result of speakers assuming them to be something that they are not. In

threats, speakers often make utterances of violence, but their level of sincerity has to be considered: if they immediately convey non-violent intention through “acknowledging that the conventional intention of any speaker performing the utterance in question is insincere in doing so” (Van den Berg, 2019:308), they will make the threat insincere – for example, by saying “I will blow up the building, but I don’t mean literally.” The speech act after the directive eliminates the sincerity of the first command.

The speaker may utter the words “Go home.” but may mean it sarcastically or as a joke. The function of the words may then be to invite the hearer, and not actually to send the hearer home. The words “go home” are the locution, but the invitation (the semantic meaning/function of the words) is the illocution. The illocution could have various meanings, such as inviting, advising, promising, ordering, excusing, apologizing, warning, approving, and welcoming (Searle, 1971:1).

Searle (1976:10) created sub-classes that provide categories of the type of act that the speech attempts to achieve. The macro-class classification pertains to both direct and indirect speech acts, as these acts are used to achieve either a direct or indirect speech act. Searle (1976:10-13) describes five illocutionary acts, for which he uses different terms than those used by Austin (1962). These, along with the category of the commissive directive class proposed by Hancher (1979:13), are discussed below to scaffold the empirical analysis through a description of characteristic classes. The sub-categories are important for this study, as they distinguish one type of speech act and intention from another. This will be used to label what the speech in a threat text was intended to mean. Since illocutionary force has the strongest effect, especially when viewed from a threat text analysis perspective, it is used as a guideline to show how the illocutionary force is used to create an impression on the hearer. This force is intended to make the listener adhere to the demands made by the speaker.

The macro-class classification shows how illocution can either coincide with the locution or could hold a completely different meaning than the locution. Searle claimed that only one of Austin’s five categories (commissives) was clearly defined and unambiguously presented (Searle, 1976:7-8). The other four categories (verdictives, exercitives, expositives, and behabitives) Searle (1976:10-13) replaced with new categories, namely representatives, directives, expressives and declaratives. These four categories, along with commissives, present the “macro-class” classification system, which provides a more explicit classification of illocutionary force. Cutting (2015:15) argues that these five categories help to explain the type of message that the speaker wishes to convey.

Representatives are words used to describe the speaker’s opinion, what the “speaker believes to be the case” (Cutting, 2015:15). Thus, they are meant to convince the hearer that something is

the truth, therefore committing the speaker to what they are saying, to “something’s being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition” (Searle, 1976:10). They represent the world as it is, through choosing the appropriate language that states truth of a situation (Hancher, 1979:3). Words like “think” or “believe” is very often used in such cases: “I think we are meeting at 12:00” or “I believe she said she would come”. The types of acts include “describing, claiming, hypothesising, insisting, and predicting” (Cutting, 2015:15).

Directives are commands given by the speaker with the intention that the hearer should fulfil these commands. Directives are the “attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something” (Cutting, 2015:15; Searle, 1976:11). These speech acts run on a continuum varying from “suggestions” to “commands” (Hancher, 1979:2), and these commands and suggestions can be either to do or not do something. “Do not accept the promotion”, “Keep away from my wife”, or “Do not tell a soul” are all examples of directive speech acts. In the case of a threat texts, it is the attempt of the author to control the reader’s behaviour and will most likely not be presented in the form of a suggestion, but rather as an imperative demand/command, with the intention of giving the reader no choice but to follow the instructions.

Expressives are words which convey the emotional state of the speaker (Cutting, 2015:16), showing their reaction to reality. Unlike representatives and directives, they do not solely focus on reality and facts themselves (Hancher, 1979:3), but rather accept and react to the state of the situation. Such speech acts reveal the feelings and emotional state of the speaker, where they express what they experience, irrespective of whether this reaction is validated by a reality or false interpretation of an event or not. It is merely a reflection of how the speaker personally experiences the situation. An example could be a situation where a child experiences a curfew as punishment, while it is intended to protect the child. Outbursts of anger or frustration toward their caring; for instance, “I hate that you don’t understand!”, might not be validated by the caring act, but it does express how they experience the rule. Another example is where disappointment is portrayed through the speech act: “I was very disappointed in the way that you handled the bank transfer, leaving me angry and with no choice but to not succumb to my original arrangement”. The words “disappointed” and “angry” are both examples of the emotions that the speaker experienced; yet they do not represent or coerce but are simply the response to hearer’s actions. Some examples of these illocutionary acts include emotions such as welcoming, apologising, praising, congratulating, deploring and regretting (Cutting, 2015:16; Hancher, 1979:3; Searle, 1976:12). Searle (1976:12) explains that the expressive illocutionary act shows the emotions of the speaker, exposing their psychological state, showing “the truth of the expressed proposition”.

Declarations are used in change, declaring something into being that was previously non-existent, bringing about change through the very words they speak (Cutting, 2015:15). Through successfully declaring something, the declaration “brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality” (Searle, 1976:13), therefore immediately making a change in the world (Hancher, 1979:3). In an example of a threat case, the statement “You are no longer in possession of your daughter” can be made, declaring that the circumstance of your reality has been changed through the declaration. These are often used when the author is stating the type of leverage that they have over the reader, which will convince the reader to adhere to the directives that are in the threat text.

Commissives, as implied by the name, are commitments made by the speaker to fulfil the speaker’s future intentions, or to “commit the speaker to some future course of action” (Searle, 1976:11). Examples include “promising, offering, threatening, refusing, vowing and volunteering” (Cutting, 2015:15), for example, “I commit to handing over the child if the R100 000 is deposited into the bank account by noon of the 24th April.” This is a commitment or promise given by the kidnapper, an intention to carry out an action. Whether the commitment is sincere or not, is irrelevant to the classification of the illocutionary act. In the same sentence where a commissive (“I commit”) is used, a directive is also given (“R100 000 has to be deposited into the bank account by noon”). This is “aimed at making the hearer do something” (Cutting, 2015:15). As indicated above, this category holds both the speech acts of promises and of threats. Both are prominent in threat texts. Section 3.3.5.4 therefore covers the concepts of promises as well as threats, showing how they are used in a threat text, and contributing toward the analysis of the legitimacy of a threat text.

Hancher (1979:6-7) suggests a sixth classification, which he calls the commissive directive class. This class more specifically explains how certain speech acts incorporate commissives and directives in one act. In a threat text, the commissive directive speech act can be quite prominent and it will therefore be briefly discussed. Hancher (1979:6-7) who analysed a number of linguistic classes, and by combining macro-classes with each other created a smaller, more specific sub-class of these macro-classes. This more specific sub-class combines the concept of commissives, where speakers promise or commit to a future action, along with the directive, which commands the hearer to do something with the result that “The response sought is itself illocutionary in nature” (Hancher, 1979:7). The type of speech class is said to be “conditionals”, as these conditions mean that if the hearer (B) performs a particular act, the speaker (A) will reward B with an act to which A committed. The commissive directive class includes threats, ransom notes, bribery etc. In most cases, a threat text has a demand which should be adhered to, which is the directive. If that demand is met, the reward for compliance with the demand will be the

commissive, the promised act to be carried out by the speaker. The promised reward is classified as a commissive even though there is a chance that the speaker is not sincere in the promise.

Macro-classes may prove valuable for providing the tools to describe the semantic meaning conveyed by the use of any speech, whether written or spoken. This equips linguists with tools to describe these acts and potential intentions. The linguist then needs to consider what the intention of the speech act is through the context of the act. These macro-classes are used to classify the type of indirect speech acts that are made in the texts, and they assist in determining the characteristic macro-classes generally used in threat texts.

The section below elaborates on why SAT can be used to analyse threat texts. The speech acts generally used in threat texts contain the illocutionary force of a promise and threat. Therefore, these two specific illocutionary forces, belonging to the commissive sub-class and sometimes to the commissive directive subclass, are defined and their characteristics are studied in more detail. These acts will be studied in section 3.5.1, where the acts of promising and threatening are presented in the context of speech acts and their relation to forensic texts.

3.4.2.3 Perlocutionary Effect

The perlocutionary effect is the perspective on the speech act from the hearer's point of view. It focuses on the hearer's interpretation of the comment that is made, being the cause and "contingent consequence" (Hancher, 1979:1) of the threat. This is the effect that the locution and illocution eventually have on the hearer. It shows whether the hearer understood the illocution, through interpreting the response that the hearer gives after reading/hearing the words in the message. Its main purpose is to "achieve certain effects", with the "acts attributed to the effect of uttering a sentence" (Oishi, 2006:4). Even though the illocutionary act may have had an intended outcome, the perlocutionary act may not necessarily align with the desired response. This adds support to the idea that the illocutionary speech act should generally align with the locution in order to comply with the requirements of a direct speech act, eliminating as much confusion as possible.

Even though SAT has proven successful in various studies and applications, it does present a couple of concerns that need to be addressed and considered when applying the theory in this research study. Therefore, the following section considers the limitations of SAT, and explains how these limitations have been considered in context of this study in particular.

3.5 Critique of SAT

SAT is effective in many instances of linguistic analysis, but its limitations cannot be ignored, as will be indicated below. Concerns that have been expressed by academics will be presented, and it will be explained how these limitations do not affect the research negatively. The research method either compensates for the attributes of concern; or the concerns do not impact the research project. Despite the limitations, the theory has still proven useful in numerous areas (Holtgraves, 1986; Moeschler, 2002; Twitchell & Nunamaker, 2004), as demonstrated in section 3.6., where application of SAT has been successfully applied to the above-mentioned authors' research projects relating to the analysis of speech acts such as indirect speech acts and social processes, conversation, and chat and instant messaging respectively. Due to the success that these authors have had on the application of SAT on various linguistic acts, one can attempt to apply SAT to threat texts while taking into account the possible weaknesses that are acknowledged, proactively providing effective alternative solutions where necessary.

The first area of concern is the general perspective of SAT, in that it focuses specifically on the meaning intended by the speaker, thus following a speaker-centred approach. It is therefore illocutionary focused, with emphasis on the influence that the speaker has on the situation. Cooren (2000:296) and Masaki (2004:32-34) argue that the specified necessary illocutionary conditions presented by Searle, lack a reference to any conditions that should be met by the hearer, where the "listener is reduced to a mere passive decoder of the message" (Masaki, 2004:36; Salgueiro, 2010:226). The shortcomings of the theory will be taken into consideration in this research dissertation and other theories such as the Conversational Maxims and the Cooperation Principle will also be applied to threat to overcome the problem of SAT not giving proper account of the hearer. Although both the speaker and hearer will be considered in the analysis, the text in question particularly requires an understanding of the intended message of the author. The fact that SAT is a speaker-centred approach makes it suitable for use in a forensic context as the investigation focuses on who the author of the text is.

Salgueiro's (2010:226) concern is that SAT isolates the different illocutionary forces from one another and fails to take the intentions of all parties into account. He argues that the analysis of a speech act cannot rely on the speaker alone, but that it should take the speaker, the hearer, and any third parties into account. It is therefore suggested that the perspectives of the speaker and listener should be equally considered and that both the intended meaning (the illocutionary meaning) and interpreted meaning (the perlocutionary interpretation) should be analysed (Masaki, 2004:28-34), with consideration of how the listener contributes making meaning (Tiersma, 1986:232). This study therefore notes that meaning can be misinterpreted, and it can be ambiguously stated.

Poythress (2008) also voices concern about oversimplifying the complexity of the nature of a speech act. He is of the opinion that there is a level of ignorance concerning the complexity of a speech act, as the smaller embedded speech acts found “within larger groupings of human behaviour” are not taken into consideration (Poythress, 2008:4). His claim that “human actions are capable of having multiple interlocking purposes making complex commitments” (Poythress, 2008:6) further emphasise that there are limitations in speech act theory. The analysis of the illocution of the speech act should be done with consideration toward the “context and situation” as it may determine whether the speech act is direct or indirect.

The idea that SAT should be viewed from a dialogical point of view is more clearly represented by Habermas (1984:290-291), who insists that the intended illocution will only be a success if the hearer interprets it to be true. Therefore, SAT veers toward analysing a speech act from a dialogical perspective (Masaki, 2004:28).

With regard to the illocution of an indirect speech act, Kravchenko (2017) also argues that Searle (1969) and Austin (1962) do not take into account that a direct speech act may be of a compound nature in that it considers both the direct message and the reception of this message. She claims that illocution may consist of a “compound structure regardless of the direct or indirect nature of speech acts” (Kravchenko, 2017:129). Her concern lies within the idea that speech acts of both direct and indirect nature are complex, and not simply one utterance equating to one single meaning (Van den Berg & Surmon, 2019:260).

Therefore, the layers found in speech acts need to be understood by both the speaker and hearer. The listener will be influenced by his/her attitude toward the speaker as well as by what they believe to be sincere in the speech act (Kravchenko, 2017:130-131). Direct and indirect speech acts as well as layered speech acts will be applied in the analysis in this study (see section 2.2 where the sincerity of the text is considered in the proposed framework of analysis). However, Poythress (2008:5) gives credit to the speech act theory for accomplishing a level of reflection regarding the context and the fact that it considers the way one will “successfully transfer a speech act” in a specific context. This relates to the concern presented by Kravchenko (2017), as the context needs to be understood by the listener as well as the speaker. Even though it is important to evoke the desired perlocutionary response and also to be able to analyse both the illocution and perlocution, in the context of threat text analysis, the text is generally written by the author for the reader, and no written response is usually given. Therefore, the speaker-centred focus of SAT is not a limitation for this study.

Threat text analysis often focuses on only one voice, namely the speaker/author of the threat (Van den Berg & Surmon, 2019:261). The lack of clear tools to describe dialogical analysis

consequently does not negatively influence the analysis of threat texts, which are generally a monologue as a threat is a start of a one-way communication. The position of power generally lies in the author's voice (Gales, 2015:3; Guy, Konklin & Sanchez-Davies, 2018), leaving threat texts to naturally incline toward a speaker-centred context (Van den Berg & Surmon, 2019:261). In addition to being speaker-centred, there is little negotiation of meaning and clarity, due to the position of power that the author wishes to exert (Van den Berg & Surmon, 2019:261).

A number of authors are also critical of the vague definition which Austin and Searle provide of an illocutionary act. Cooren (2000:297), for example, expresses frustration at Habermas for accepting the definition offered by Austin and by Searle even though their definitions do not explicitly explain what is meant by an "act" as or by "illocution" (Allwood, 1977). Allwood (1977:54) describes the confusion that arises because the term "act" can refer to more than just linguistic acts and can refer to both verbal and non-verbal acts. He also argues that Searle does not allow for an act to be more than one type of activity at a time. However, Searle (1979:59) suggests that "[o]ften, we do more than one of these [acts] at once in the same utterance". The utterance is the act itself.

Allwood's (1977:59) concern is that there is little room for classifying a sentence as both an act of promising and a statement. He identifies a lack of clarification for determining the exact category of the illocutionary act, whether it be "conventional, intentional or tied to achieved effects, overt behaviour or context" (Allwood, 1977:59). He believes that an act can be only one single event, instead of being complex in nature, allowing for a number of events to take place simultaneously. Searle, however, considers the illocutionary act to consider all actions that the one speech act (utterance) makes at the same time, as it considers the utterance as well as the message which is intended and inferred. This means that SAT allows for one act to be performed directly while another is indirectly taking place (Searle, 1979:25). This makes Allwood's (1977) concern that there is not enough clarification invalid, since the illocutionary act includes both the actual act of speaking and the message that is conveyed.

Austin is also criticised for focusing only on the English language in the Westernised context, excluding other languages and other social contexts across the world (Emike, 2013:241). Different countries have different cultures, norms and beliefs, and a broad generalisation of linguistic features should therefore not be made without careful consideration of different cultural conventions. Since there are so many dialects of English across the world, a cross-cultural approach toward SAT has been suggested by a number of authors, such as Emike (2013:244), Bayat (2012), and Miranda (2013). Analysis may be improved, and confusion avoided by not relying merely on linguistic meaning, but by also taking social context into account. Bayat (2012:213) suggests that it will help embody social relationships if SAT is correctly applied in a

particular culture. Miranda (2013:2) also attempts to draw a link between linguistic theory and humour in cultural context.

In light of the above arguments, this study will therefore also take into account the context in which a text was written; as context itself is a factor in determining the stance markers (see section 2.3.1.1). Thus, the socio-cultural dynamics which may give different semantic meaning to a word, depending on the context as well as the social norms of the community in which the threat text was written will also be considered in analyses in this study. This is core to SFG, in which SAT is based.

These points of criticism are considered for the purpose of this study and inform the careful application of SAT in this study (see chapter 5). Other concerns, even though relevant in the direction of the various authors' studies, are not necessarily of concern in the context of this specific study.

Despite much criticism of SAT, Austin is also acknowledged for many advantages of SAT, for example the foundation that SAT provides for the use of illocution and for showing how nouns interact with context to determine the choice of verbs (Emike, 2013:243). There are also numerous other examples of successful application of the theory, as will be indicated in the next section.

3.6 Successful Applications of SAT

Despite the limitations of SAT, the successful use of the theory should be considered. SAT is often used to analyse conversation (Moeschler, 2002:2). Because it has proven useful in conversational analysis, one can apply SAT to a threat text, which is the start of a conversation. It may then be added to the framework of characteristic features of a written threat text. Above, it was pointed out that shortcomings of SAT, such as its ambiguity or lack of clarity, will not affect threat text analysis in this study directly, because threats are mostly one-way directed communication. Before gaining an understanding of how it can be applied to threats, some examples of SAT application are given below, to illustrate the reliability of the theory.

SAT has been used to analyse people's communication, specifically indirect speech acts and social processes (Holtgraves, 1986:306; Moeschler, 2002:1). SAT was applied in experiments to show how selection of speech is made in a particular circumstance, and how social practices influence this decision, specifically with regard to face management (avoiding embarrassment or humiliation) and status (Holtgraves, 1986:306). In face management, one would use indirect speech acts in order to avoid direct negative speech toward someone, saving their self-esteem (Holtgraves, 1986:306; Cutting, 2015:33). In this case, it is apparent that indirect speech acts are

used by speakers to avoid unpleasant social situations, and to show a level of politeness, because it allows the hearer to avoid the possible embarrassment of giving direct responses. Speakers, who notice that the indirect speech act causes discomfort, also get the opportunity to adapt the intended meaning and to provide a different, more appropriate meaning.

Through understanding SAT, studies of social interaction have been improved and human behaviour can be more easily analysed. Holtgraves (1986:306) found that in the case of face-threatening acts, indirect speech acts are socially more acceptable, while in non-face-threatening cases, a more direct approach would be socially acceptable, and probably even preferred. Saving face in order to adhere to social norms is not generally of great concern when it comes to threat texts, however. Authors of a threat text are aiming to instil fear and convince the reader of their sincerity (refer to section 2.3). This means that they would most likely violate these social norms, with no concern about the face of the reader. The seriousness of a threat letter may therefore be estimated by determining whether the threat is direct and definite, or whether specific details are avoided in the threat. The vaguer the threat, the less likely it may be that the author will carry it through (Solan & Tiersma, 2005:228).

Social relations also involve people from different social backgrounds, giving way to various forms of social status. Through the use of SAT, the manner in which people communicate with others of a different social status may be analysed (Holtgraves, 1986:307). It was found that the higher the social status of the speaker, the less likely the speaker will try to save face, and therefore the more likely to prefer direct speech acts. High-status speakers are also more likely to take control of the conversation by changing the course of the topic when they are confronted (Holtgraves, 1986:307). Lower-status speakers, in contrast, choose indirect speech acts in order to save face, and are seen as socially subordinate (Holtgraves, 1986:307).

Studies have been done on speech acts from a cultural perspective (Bayat, 2012; Cutting, 2015; Miranda, 2013; Simon & Dejica-Cartis, 2015). It was indicated above that the concern in terms of social and cultural contexts (Emike, 2013) may be overcome by relying on SAT, which was successfully applied in social and cultural research studies by Bayat (2012), Cutting (2015), Miranda (2013), and Simon and Dejica-Cartis (2015). This is especially important for international companies and their communication with different cultural groups, as well as negotiation and trading with other companies. Since different cultural groups have different social norms and expectations, companies as well as individuals need to understand cultural norms and socially acceptable actions (Cutting, 2015:41). Therefore, the research done through the application of SAT can assist in improving communication between international organisations, by teaching speakers how to communicate without cause for offence. The understanding of a particular culture's method of appropriate communication is vital in advertisements (Simon & Dejica-Cartis,

2015:1) for choosing the speech act with purpose to carry across an intended message to a target audience. Advertisements as well as other speech contexts often make use of humour (Miranda, 2013:7) to convey a message. Depending on the community receiving the joke, background knowledge and context will be necessary for them to understand the method of marketing (Miranda, 2013:13). Background knowledge of the community of concern for the company is essential in order to avoid using humour that may be misinterpreted as offensive and inappropriate.

Analyses of chat and instant messaging have also been undertaken with reference to SAT (Twitchell & Nunamaker, 2004:1). These analyses of conversation can help create a compilation of profiles representing speech acts. This can provide a visual representation which can assist with detecting deception and support the retrieving of information and “online technical support monitoring” (Twitchell & Nunamaker, 2004:1). This method of analysing human behaviour through conversations is known as *speech act profiling*. This method is also applied by Twitchell, Nunamaker and Burgoon (2004:403-410) in deception detection. The purpose of their study was to use speech act profiling for “analysing and visualising conversations [...] for distinguishing online conversations that express uncertainty, an indicator of deception” (Twitchell, et al., 2004:403). Through this analysis, key words that are characteristic of deceptive computer-mediated communication can be detected, which are used for searching data bases online. This is less time consuming than reading through each conversation to detect suspicious conversational activity.

Young (1989) uses SAT as a tool to analyse the use of conditional sentences in general conversations, also providing the essential conditions for requests and assertions (Young, 1989:37). He notes that SAT is useful to objectively analyse conditional sentences, as it provides “objective criteria” and meaningful results. This approach includes the use of both implicature, presented by Grice (1967), and SAT, presented by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The purpose is to understand the intended meaning, which is done by considering linguistic activity as well as situational context (Young, 1989:35). In this manner it may be determined if more is communicated through underlying meaning than simply the locution (i.e. what was said).

Tiersma (1986) uses SAT to understand the notions of offer and acceptance more clearly. He explains how speech acts can be used to commit the speaker to a particular course of conduct. Tiersma (1986:192) shows that context determines the meaning and outcome of the act. The speech act also does not have to explicitly state what the act is, but rather, through this context, the illocution of the act can be inferred. The utterance “Follow me”, for example, may be inferred as either a command or a suggestion, depending on who the speaker is and where the phrase is said. If it is spoken by a sergeant major, the response will be immediate obedience, whereas, if a

tour guide were to say “Follow me” to the group walking through streets of a foreign city, the phrase is not a command but rather a suggestion (Tiersma, 1986:192). Tiersma (1986) also uses SAT to understand the concepts of offer and acceptance within a legal context, showing that language philosophy can be used to analyse language communication which is used to commit the speaker to a proposal.

As shown in the above examples, SAT has been useful in numerous areas of research, but as far as could be determined, it has not been applied to threat texts prior to this researcher with the purpose that is intended in this research paper. The purpose of this chapter is to clearly explain each theory, determining which aspects of the theories can be used. Therefore, the concept which is pursued is that the SAT can be used to analyse the text with the purpose of determining the legitimacy of the threat through the analysis of the locution, illocution, and perlocution and the way they would relate to each other in a typical threat text.

Based on these considerations, SAT is evaluated as potentially useful for threat evaluation. Its potential use must be considered in view of the theory’s limitations. The next section reviews prominent points of criticism concerning this theory, which serves to inform an appropriate application of the theory in relation to threat texts for the purpose of this study, as demonstrated in section 3.5. The next section addresses the context of forensic texts and their relation to SAT, and how SAT can be used to analyse threat texts and the act of promising and threatening.

3.7 The Act of Promising and Threatening

It was explained above that SAT is an appropriate theory for the purpose of this study. Based on the manner in which SAT is used, Shuy (2016:9) remarks that “a speech act is a way of getting things done with language” and concludes that SAT can be considered in a forensic context. Furthermore, the “context and roles of participants must be recognized by all parties; the action must be carried out completely and the persons must have the right intentions” (Cutting, 2015:16). The speech that is spoken needs to be clearly conveyed for the hearer to correctly understand the form and functional meaning, and therefore to understand the language; and the speaker should not be “pretending”. Shuy’s (2016:9) list of types of speech acts is quite lengthy (see 3.3), and some frequently used speech acts that are found in a forensic context include: promising, admitting, advising, agreeing, denying, offering, and reporting. Shuy’s list will serve as a basis to inform the following discussion on the characteristics threatening text. Ransom notes, bribery, blackmail and hate mail, or any other forensic text may now be analysed in more detail, bearing in mind that such an analysis involves the form of a text as well as the function that the speaker intends, even though it may be an underlying function.

Gales (2010:9) explains that when texts are analysed in a forensic context, “threats are dependent on the illocutionary force”. This relates to what is explained in section 2.3.1 as the “cause and effect” concept (Olsson, 2008:142). The intention of the act to be carried out by the threatened reader is the cause, and the effect is the “promise” by the author not to carry out the threat. Shuy (1993:98) presents three speech acts that depend on the illocutionary speech act: a threat, a warning, and a promise. He shows how the speaker/author of the text is at an advantage when the text is of a threatening nature, whereas the reader of the text has an advantage when the text falls under either the speech act of warning or promise, and vice versa for each participant. The threat is then disadvantageous to the reader, and the promise/warning is disadvantageous to the speaker (Gales, 2010:10). The reader’s reaction is known as the “perlocutionary effect” (Gales, 2010:12). This is the acknowledgement of the threat, and the response to the locution.

Returning to the idea of “cause and effect” in (see 2.4), there is a party controlling the situation, or as Gales explains, having “signs of wealth” or “signs of authority” (2010:10). This provides the speaker with a “level of linguistic capital”, where “the speaker remains in the position of power over the hearer” (Gales, 2010:10). Gales also refers to the concepts mentioned by Solan and Tiersma (2005:223-228), namely the *intent* of the speaker (Gales, 2010:10) (later referred to as *prediction*) as the warning; intimidation; and sincerity or the appearance thereof.

A threat is illocutionary (the speaker’s intended meaning), according to Coulthard and Johnson (2007:28), as it is used to “warn or advise the witness about the possible implications of her actions”. This leads to the analysis of the legitimacy of the texts through understanding the illocution of the author, and not only analysing the locution. In order to test the legitimacy of a threat text, the relation between linguistics and promises and threats is analysed.

In most threat texts, there is a condition, and as mentioned in the Macro-class classification in 3.4.4.2, there is a sub-class of “commissive directives” (Hancher, 1979:6), which account for these types of speech acts. Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014:163) distinguish four main aspects that are typical of a threat text: leverage, threat, demand and promise. Leverage is provided in order to convince the reader to comply with the demand. This demand is most often a directive, and generally will take place in the form of a direct speech act. This will avoid any unwanted perlocutionary responses. The threat is a type of promise but can be distinguished from a promise through the use of prepositions: a promise will be done “for” you, while a threat is done “to” you (Searle, 1971:11).

Since both threats and promises are part of threat texts (see Figure 2.5), this section explores the differences and similarities between a threat and a promise. Salgueiro (2010:217) argues that threats and promises are almost parallel to each other, as they are both required to “satisfy the

condition on propositional content, which must describe a future action or omission, or a sequence of such actions or omissions by the speaker". This means that they both fulfil the requirements to be classified as conditional commissives, having the potential to propose a directive (demand) toward the reader, with the "promise" to be the consequence if they adhere to the demands. However, the threat holds that the future action will be unfavourable if the demand is not met. The correlation between the directive illocutionary act and the demand is a core reason that the speech act theory may be applied to threat texts, since one of Olsson and Luchjenbroers's (2014:163) requirements of a ransom note is the feature of a demand, which is usually a directive in a direct speech act.

On the surface both a promise and a threat seem linguistically similar; in fact, they may be described as "constitutively intertwined" (Salgueiro, 2010:226). However, even though they both commit to carrying out a future action and can both hold conditions which allow them to be used as directives, forcing the reader of the threat or promise to do something, they are still distinguished from each other. The threat contains a level of commitment to carry out an act if the demand is not fulfilled. This commitment, however, is different from a promise, as the outcome is negative and very often detrimental toward the reader. The promise made in the threat text is very often the reward of something desirable for the reader, for example not to carry out the threat if the reader complies with the conditions and demands.

Promises and threats are sometimes described as similar speech acts (Salgueiro, 2010:213), but despite their similarities, there are slight differences, and the main difference is their purpose. A threat is used to make the reader believe that something will be done to them, and that the outcome will be detrimental (Salgueiro, 2010:225; Searle, 1965:11). Promises, on the other hand, present the idea that the outcome will be beneficial to the reader (Salgueiro, 2010:225) or will do something for the reader (Searle, 1965:11). A threat is often presented as a warning, but a promise is only effective if its outcome is desired by the hearer (Salgueiro, 2010:12). If it is not a desired outcome, the directive demand will simply be ignored. The illocutionary act of the threat is classified as something unpleasant done to the reader (Searle, 1971:11). Salgueiro (2010:215) also suggests that a threat depends on the reaction of the reader of the threat. If the demand is clear, the perlocutionary response will most likely be satisfactory to the author, which then brings the author to his responsibility to fulfil his promise. One should consider that even though the speaker may believe that the promise would be rewarding, if the reader does not view the promise as an incentive, the demand will be ignored because there is no desire for the promised reward – thus, a promise is a "joint participation of both speaker and reader" (Searle, 1965:11).

Through performing a commissive speech act, the author binds himself to a responsibility to intend to fulfil the promise made, even though the intention might not be to fulfil the promise at

all. The act of the promise will still be classified as a commissive (Hancher, 1979:6), whether the intention of fulfilling the promise is sincere. The reason is that the promise was stated and therefore the speech act was made, whether sincere or not (Searle, 1971:14). To achieve a sincere promise, there should be the intention to fulfil the act as stated (Searle, 1965:12), to hold to the sincerity rule presented by Tiersma (1986:197), which “requires that the speaker intend to perform the promised act and to accept the hearer’s act in exchange”. Not only should there be the intention to complete the act, it is also required that the speaker/author should believe that they are capable of carrying out the act (Searle, 1965:12). When a speaker does not intend to fulfil a speech act, they are said to be insincere. This is a prominent concern when a threat text is analysed, because very often the perpetrator has no intention of carrying out the desirable outcome, and his/her only reason for stating the promise was to manipulate the reader to comply with the demands in the hope that the promise was sincere. If the speaker is insincere, they pretend to believe that they have the ability to or intend to fulfil the promise if the demand is met (Searle, 1965:14). Whether the speech act is sincere or insincere, the speech act cannot exist without commitment (Tiersma, 1986:197).

When it comes to the threat, the speaker has the choice to use direct speech acts in the demand, which would be labelled as a directive, using the threat as the motivation to perform the demand. Through performing a direct speech act, social norms and conventions of politeness are ignored. Since the speech act is direct, the author does not allow the reader to consider not complying with the request (Clark, 1979:433). There is no indirect request which would allow for the reader to respond other than by obeying the demand. Therefore, the maxim of politeness is ignored, or “flouted” (Grice, 2008:49). Furthermore, the speech act will be performed with a purpose and will be intended to provoke a particular response from the reader. The speech act is intended to “get him to believe that something is true” (the *assertion*) and to “get him to do something” (the *request*) (Clark, 1979:433). Threats are not flexible, unlike promises which can be ignored by the reader. A threat is generally a “unilateral affair” (Searle, 1965:12). This means that the speaker has control over the situation, and the hearer is forced to comply with the demands made by the speaker. In contrast, a promise is often deactivated if there is no interest shown by the reader. Threats are used to obtain submission toward the demand, and therefore deactivation of a threat rarely takes place.

By understanding illocutionary forces and macro-class classification, with a focus on promises and threat, the underlying meaning conveyed in a speech act can be more clearly understood. The hope is that in classifying speech acts through the macro-class classification, one can identify the intended illocutionary force in threat texts with greater accuracy.

This relates to Grice's (1975) Conversational Implicature, including the maxims of speech and the Cooperative Principle. Through looking at both SAT and Cooperative Principle (CP), one can gain an understanding of the illocutionary intent. Through categorising the intent, one could possibly use both theories in a forensic context. Therefore, to determine whether a text is sincere, one would have to analyse the text to infer the intention behind the speech act, and whether the speech act is intended to be sincere or not. Through using Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature, one would be able to question whether the correct information and the correct amount of information are conveyed; whether the information is relevant and presented in a manner which is clear for the reader to respond with the intended perlocutionary response expected (see section 3.8). Combining both theories helps ensure a more objective approach to forensic text analysis. If the Cooperative Principle and maxims of conversation are ignored, the purpose of a forensic text may be ineffective. For example, if a threat is not clearly conveyed, the message might not be considered as serious, and might be ignored, with the demand having little to no effect on the reader.

Both SAT and Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature will be combined to conduct a combination of stylistic and semantic analyses. Through this research the purpose is to present a more holistic approach of stylistic analysis that may prove to be more reliable for providing evidence in threat text analyses, adding to the efficiency of linguistics within a forensic context.

3.8 Grice's Conversational Implicature

3.8.1 Conversational Maxims and Cooperative Principle

In his theory of conversational implicature, Grice's (1975) suggested that there is an underlying principle that determines the way in which language is used with maximum efficiency and to effectively achieve rational interaction in communication. He called this the Cooperative Principle (CP) and subdivided it into four maxims of conversation: Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner (Grice, 1975:45). This idea holds that as one speaks, there are "general features of discourse" connecting the conversation together. This is the idea that two people having a conversation will attempt to cooperate with each other through speech choice in order to reach the intended goal of the conversation. The purpose is to "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975:45). Grice's principle includes four maxims which comprise the basis for the CP: "Quantity, quality, relevance and manner" (Miranda, 2013:3). These maxims form the foundation of conversation exchange and help to describe the way people effectively communicate even when they do not use the words that mean what they are intending to say. In order to be polite and successful in the exchange, these maxims should be adhered to. In the

analysis of threat texts, these maxims are relevant in terms of noting what is said through the text, as well as how it is said. In a forensic context, Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature can be used to analyse deception (Eggington, 2008).

Quantity is the first maxim of importance, referring to the amount of information that is conveyed through the conversation. Within the category are two sub-maxims which outline the quantity that should be transferred: provide as much information as required and do not provide more information than necessary. In an example of a threat text analysis, this maxim may be ignored, as the authors will leave out any information that might give them away, but in the context of the demand, the quantity of information needed for the reader to successfully adhere to the demand must be sufficient. Any added information may lead to confusion, which may cause the hearer to misinterpret the actual message (Grice, 1975:46). Therefore, one can assume that the author will carefully choose the amount of information needed to clearly stipulate instructions, thus adhering to the maxim of quantity, but may not necessarily provide information such as his/her identity or the reason for the crime, unless there is an ulterior motive.

Quality has to do with the validity of that which is said. Is what you are saying true, and at the very least, do you as speaker believe it to be true? Therefore, this maxim has two sub-maxims: do not disclose information which you believe is not true and do not make statements for which you lack supporting evidence of truth (Grice, 1975:46). In this case, it would be better to flout the maxim of quantity, providing less information than asked, instead of adding information which may not be true. For example, if someone asks for the address of A, and B only knows the town in which A lives, it would be better to only state the small quantity that he knows for sure adheres to the maxim of quality, than to make up an address that he is not sure of. The maxim of quality is relevant as the author might hide his/her identity, possibly making use of an alias, thus ignoring the maxim. The maxim of quality may also be ignored in lying about the kidnapped person's location, well-being, and living status.

When one is in a conversation, the generally understood practice is to keep the conversation relevant to the topic at hand. Therefore, Grice (1975:46) argues that relation is the third maxim of the Cooperative Principle. This maxim is very succinct: "be relevant" (Grice, 1975:46). In most threat texts, the message is short and to the point, remaining relevant to topic. There is a likelihood that flouting this maxim might imply that the threat is not legitimate, or at least that the author is not very committed to the threat.

To this point, each maxim has dealt with the "what" that is said in the conversation. The final maxim of importance is the manner in which it is said. The manner has to do with "how" the message is conveyed. It requires the "Supermaxim - Be perspicuous" (Grice, 1975:46). This

means that the message spoken is to be made as clear as possible, allowing little to no room for confusion, therefore including other maxims. These include “avoid obscurity of expression”, “avoid ambiguity”, “be brief”, and “be orderly” (Grice, 1975:46).

The fact that these maxims are not always adhered to, will be beneficial in the research as it will show marked speech, and possibly reveal particular violations that might be common to threat texts. Therefore, even though the concept is relatively simply constructed, it can still be applicable to the study. Miranda (2013:3) briefly outlines the conversational maxims with the purpose to use them in her analysis of jokes. The manner in which she uses the maxims to note which maxims are violated in order to create humour is applied in this study, where key characteristic features of the text are pin-pointed and compiled to show the what types of features such texts entail.

The maxims of conversational implicature can be related to SAT as both attempt to understand the manner in which language is used to carry across meaning. Searle (1965:76) maintains that the speaker has the goal of having an illocutionary effect on the hearer, with the purpose of the hearer recognising the intention. Grice’s Theory of Conversational Implicature contends that the analysis is on the conversation exchange, where the maxims are the means of analysis and the foundational elements of the conversation taking place. Searle (1975:75) explains how both the “theory of speech acts and the principles of conversational cooperation do, indeed provide a framework within which indirect illocutionary acts can be meant and understood”. At the same time, the maxims found in the Cooperative Principle (CP) are said to be useful in “eliminating unintended meanings and in inferring meanings that are not immediately evident” while making clear the necessity to understand what is said within the context or particular circumstances for the specific speech act (Tiersma, 1986:210). The CP is the “overarching principle governing most conversation” and explains that people usually try to make the utterances (speech acts) with the purpose of relevance to the conversation and in cooperation with the person/people with whom they are communicating (Tiersma, 1986:210). CP was also used by Cheng, Chenh & Li (2015) to investigate the drafting of jury instruction, once again proving the close relationship between language and law. Since both SAT and CP attempt to understand how language is used to express meaning, and how conversation takes place to successfully communicate, with the intention that the speech act should be relevant to the listener.

The maxims (quality, quantity, relevance and manner) (Grice, 1975:47) can be related by means of SAT one through comparing the aspects of analysis. When combined, they provide a holistic outcome in the analysis. The locutionary act presented by SAT is the literal meaning of the words chosen in the speech act. These words provide both the quantity and quality of a direct speech act. The words used will determine the amount of information provided as well as the level of truth held in these words. However, if the speech act is indirect, the quantity may be flouted and the

quality may be altered, especially if it is assumed that the hearer has contextual background, or if the intention is for the hearer not to fully understand the speech act. Indirect speech acts are often used in order to be polite (Searle, 1975:74), for example asking “can you...” when the speaker is fully aware of the listener’s ability, but still provides the option to say “no” if it might be inconvenient for the speaker to comply with the request. Politeness is said to be the main purpose of indirect speech acts, in an effort avoid causing offence.

The illocutionary force is the intention of the speech act, which may or may not directly align with the locution, having an indirect or an underlying meaning. The illocutionary categories of directives, commissives, representatives, emotives and declaratives categorise the manner in which the information is carried across, defining the purpose of the act. This meaning will only be correctly inferred if the hearer is aware of the context in which the speech act is made. This contextual background along with the correct manner of carrying across the meaning, which depends on the brevity and clarity of that which is said (Tiersma 1986:210), determines the effectivity of the conversation exchange, determines whether both speakers are adhering to the cooperative principle. The perlocutionary response is only effective if the speech act was relevant to the hearer, where their information and context will align, so that they can effectively infer the intended illocutionary force.

Tiersma (1986:225) explains that the text has to seem sincere for it to be taken seriously. For a text to seem sincere, the reader must believe that the maxims are not being flouted, and that the threat is not a practical joke, or hate mail with no true intention to do any harm. Therefore, in the analysis of a threat text, one would have to measure whether the information provided in the text is complete, and provides the reader with clear instructions, and does not flout the maxim of quantity or quality in order to ensure that their desired outcome can take place. This being said, the maxim of relevance would have to be adhered to, as the reader would need to have a reason for obeying the demands of the threat text. If the threat is irrelevant, the reader may not provide the desired perlocutionary reaction. The manner in which the text is conveyed may be flouted to some extent if the author is unconcerned with the emotional well-being of the reader, which would most likely be the case in a criminal offence, where the normal social standards of communicating are disregarded. This might include violent language or reference to sensitive topics.

SAT and CP combine the illocution and intent of the speech act respectively, ultimately providing an analysis referred to as “illocutionary intent”, where the speaker “must intend to make the hearer recognise or believe that in uttering words that count as an offer” (threat/promise/commitment) (Tiersma, 1986:226-227). This focus is specifically on what the speaker intends the hearer to believe and not necessarily the actual commitment that is made.

3.8.2 Critique of Grice

Cutting (2015:29) cautions that just like SAT, CP cannot be applied to different cultures, countries and communities. Different cultures value different aspects, and some prefer honesty over protecting someone's feelings. This would affect the analysis, as one cannot simply analyse a text without considering the authorship possibilities and the cultural background of the environment and the possible suspects.

Searle (1983:47) criticises CP for incorrectly labelling its purpose, as the theory does not focus on the perlocutionary response and should not classify the response as the belief of the hearer, but it should be seen as the understanding that the reader may have on the illocutionary force.

Another concern is the vagueness that occurs between the different maxims, as in some cases, the four maxims overlap to some extent (Cutting, 2015:30), which makes it difficult to classify the speech acts and the intention of the speech acts with precision. This concern is also voiced by Searle (1969:43) when he complains that CP does not account for the meaning and how this meaning can be a determining factor in rules and conventions (Searle, 1965:43). Although Sperber and Wilson (1995) have a different maxim of relation than from Grice's original maxim, it has been suggested that all maxims "can be reduced to the maxim of relation" (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) as the speech act has to be relevant for the hearer to naturally converse with the speaker successfully (Cutting, 2015:30).

Although there are minor concerns about the effectivity of the use of Cooperative Principle as a clarified theory, however, the purpose that the maxims serve in this study allows for the overlapping of the maxims, and also provides clear contextual backgrounds for each case study.

Since every author has a somewhat unique authorial style because of marked features and these can provide an idiolect of the author, and ultimately a linguistic profile. The aim with a linguistic profile is to understand the intention and the indicated commitment toward the conveyed message, as well as the type of speech act. This can hopefully assist in investigating the underlying semantic meaning. It emphasises the need to analyse what was said, and what was meant by what was said, as well as the perceived meaning. This is done through analysing these aspects in SFG, building a framework by means of SAT and Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature. The purpose of applying these theories is to understand the threat, and to determine the correct response to the threat.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the linguistic theories which hold potential to objectively analyse forensic texts. These theories can now be incorporated with Figure 2.5 in section 2.3.1 to propose a comprehensive, objective framework which can be used to measure the legitimacy of a threat text. Through the Theory of Markedness, which assesses the characteristic features of an author's style, SAT (which is purposed to comprehend the intention of the speaker) and Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature (used to measure the intent) a more objective analysis can be made of threat texts. Speech Act Theory and Grice's Theory Conversational Implicature supports an analysis of what was said, meant, and how linguistic analysts should perceive the text. These three linguistic theories are applied toward probable authorship identification and linguistic profiling. Through collecting stylistic features by gathering key features of these theories that identify characteristic features to written threat texts, a stronger framework can be constructed to outline the characteristic features of a threat text. These can hopefully be used in further studies and perhaps in the practice of authorship identification and the measuring of the legitimacy of a threat text.

Chapter 4 will present the methodology of this study, clearly outlining the method of analysis that will be done in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: METHOD OF RESEARCH

4.1 Introduction

According to Williams (2007:65) research is a process that should be approached systematically, with the purpose of providing an objective analysis, manage data that has been compiled, and communicate findings based on relevant analyses through the use of a framework in already existing guidelines. Marshall (1996:522) suggests that the research question be used as a starting point in choosing the method of research to follow. In order to address the question: “how may a linguistic framework assist in determining the legitimacy of threatening texts for forensic linguistic purposes?”, a framework was compiled based on a literature review of expert opinions and empirical analysis of threatening texts. The following sub-questions and aims were formulated to answer the main research question (see chapter 1):

1. What is the definition of a *threat text* in the context of forensic linguistics?
2. What is the theoretical basis for the analysis of a threat text?
3. What linguistic and stylistic features are characteristic of threat texts?
4. To what extent can a linguistic framework aid the objective and systematic evaluation of the legitimacy of threat texts?

In order to answer the questions above, the following aims were set at the outset of the research proposal:

1. investigate the nature of a threat text;
2. analyse the linguistic basis of threat texts;
3. determine typical linguistic features that are characteristic of threat texts;
4. develop a framework to assess the legitimacy of threat texts.

The previous chapters provide a theoretical foundation to address these questions. Chapter 2 focuses on the notion of threat, addressing the first and third aims. Chapter 3 presents an overview of linguistic theories that provided guidelines toward the analysis of the above-mentioned threat types to address the third aim. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology followed for the purpose of the present study. The design, data collection and analysis are described and motivated, before ethical issues are considered.

4.2 Empirical Research

4.2.1 Research Design

In a research project, one has the option of choosing between three types of methods of analysis: qualitative, quantitative or a mixed approach (Williams, 2007:65). The aim of this study warranted a qualitative research design since the aim was to explain the concept of *threat* and provide an understanding of complex questions related to human behaviour (Marshall, 1996:523), in this case with regard to linguistic features to execute a threat. A qualitative study is used to break down and explain psychosocial questions, aiming to answer the questions “how?” and “why?”. In so doing, concepts are created that can be used to classify the answers to these questions. This allows the researcher to create a new description of the phenomenon in question. For the purpose of this study, the researcher investigated the linguistic phenomenon of threat texts, aiming to arrive at a new description of such texts to aid forensic linguistic analysis. In so doing, the present research responds to calls for research to bridge the gap between academics and those who practice the law in a linguistic context. To conduct the present research, a stylistic approach was therefore used to describe textual features of written threat texts. Stylistic study identifies syntactical patterns in the text, using both formal linguistic analysis and literary criticism (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019; Guy, Konklin & Sanchez-Davies, 2018).

Michell (2013:33) observes that stylistic studies can be subdivided into two sections, namely the literary and linguistic stylistic analysis. The literary focus is on the aesthetic and linguistic conformity-issues, while the linguistic analysis concerns the style markers in the text. In this study, a two-pronged approach was followed. Chapter 2 unpacks the types of style markers indicating characteristics of threat texts that are important to the linguistic study. These features include the linguistic markers such as verbs of harm, proper nouns, personal pronouns, and adverbials of time etc. which were taken into account in the analysis (chapter 5). Literary features such as semantic themes represent motivations to write a threat text and include anger, hate, hurt and genres pointing toward violence, obsessions and weapons, and other emotional topics. A detailed analysis of these features could assist in determining the seriousness and legitimacy of the threat text.

In conducting the stylistic content analysis, both deductive and inductive modes of reasoning were adopted (Armat, Assaroudi, Rad, Sharifi & Heydari, 2018; Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Mayring, 2014). The literature component of this research entailed deductive reasoning, starting with the collation of existing categories of linguistic features characteristic of threat texts, based on linguistic theory. Deductive reasoning moves from generally accepted theories and lead to specific theories/hypotheses (Williams, 2007:66). These categories were then applied to a set of texts to

confirm the relevance of these features and categories based on patterns emerging from the data. The empirical component of this study then also entailed inductive reasoning as the textual analysis was not only used to corroborate existing features, but also to revise, add, collate or delete features as necessary (Marshall, 1996:522). Consequently, categories were revised, to present a new linguistic framework for evaluating threat texts. The qualitative stylistic approach thus informed a general framework (chapter 5), based on the collection of specific details through a combination of inductive and deductive procedures.

Though stylistic methods for forensic linguistic purposes have been heavily criticised for being applied subjectively by proponents of quantitative analysis (for example, Chaski, 2001; 2005), a stylistic analysis such as the one undertaken in the present research can inform further quantitative studies (for instance, stylometric and/or computational linguistic work) for accurate and scientific conclusions (Soiferman, 2010:3; Smit, 2002:66). Stylistic methods are criticised for being subjective as the data is analysed, interpreted, and presented by the researcher themselves, as well as that often there is very little and sometimes no quantitative data that is absolute and factual (Chaski, 2001; 2005). Stylistic analyses are useful to answer the question “how many?” and investigate cause and affect relationships. Thus, the nature of the research question posed is such that a qualitative approach is most appropriate. In addition, researchers such as McMenamin (2002) and Shuy (2006; 2008; 2012; 2016) have achieved success employing stylistic methods and following procedures such as those employed for the present research for forensic linguistic analyses. Furthermore, quantitative studies are accurate when large data sets are available. Chaski (2001; 2005), for example, established that a minimum of 2000 words per text are required for her computational linguistic analysis (utilised for authorship attribution and threat detection) to be accurate. In this case, notes were generally short. Apart from the threat by Theodore Kaczynski (1411 words), the average word length of the 30 texts that were analysed was 244 words per text, with the shortest text comprising only 33 words. Had the research question warranted a quantitative design, the texts would likely have been too short to achieve reliable results. A qualitative design is therefore most appropriate to address the research question for this study. In phase 2 a brief account of a quantitative step is given, but this is included for demonstrative purposes and as a way to show the limitations of the framework.

4.2.2 Data Collection

The qualitative study did not include participants, but instead looked at human linguistic behaviour in authentic threat texts. 30 texts were chosen by means of availability and purposefully sampled as examples of various threat genres, including blackmail and bribery, and ransom notes. According to Marshall (1996:523), the success of a qualitative study does not rely on the size of the sample, but rather the focus should be on whether or not the sample answers the research

question or not. Therefore, in addition to this being mostly a qualitative study, it also takes on interpretive textual analysis, which is a type of qualitative analysis focusing on underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of a text. This method reaches beyond what meets the eye, and helps the researcher grasp prevailing ideologies, employing various methods of analyses such as ideological, genre, narrative, rhetorical, gender or discourse analysis (Fürsich, 2018). This research is concerned with classifying the manner in which one legitimately or successfully threatens another. The number of texts selected was sufficient to arrive at a general framework (see Figure 5.2) of such texts to serve as foundation for future research.

The research was done in a natural setting (Soiferman, 2010:6), with texts not having been generated for the specific purpose of this study. All threat texts were taken from real-life situations and their content are reproduced in the appendices for the purpose of this study, without any alterations. Some examples of case studies that were analysed include the bribery letter sent by the Theodore Kaczynski (Unabomber), and the notes from the kidnapping of John Paul Getty and of Marion Parker.

There are no publicly available corpora of relevant genres of written threats, due to the sensitivity of the nature of the texts. Sample texts were sourced and chosen due to the level of availability from different platforms where the full texts were supplied on the internet, open to the public. The FBI Vault has multiple case studies available to the public, and other websites that have the original text available were used. Originally, the sample comprised relevant texts from the database compiled by Professor Tammy Gales for her database. She compiled the database (available online at <https://sites.google.com/site/tammygales/forensic-linguistic-data>) through the years of her research on stalking and threatening. Gales provided written permission for the texts that she had compiled to be used.

The Communicated Threat Assessment Database (CTAD) maintained by the Behavioural Analysis Unit (BAU) and run by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) critical response group (a component of the National Centre for the Analysis of Violent Crime) includes a large number of examples of threatening communication. However, many of these texts could not be utilised for analysis in this specific study as the full texts are not available. Some that were included are for instance “Lampley Hollow” and “Army of God”. The original sample was extended for greater representation of threat genres by including examples of complete threat texts published by the press. These include the Unabomber manifesto, published by the *New York Times*, (1995), and the threat text allegedly composed by the serial killer, Jack the Ripper (Anon, 2014). In addition, the FBI Vault as well as the appendix provided in John Olsson’s book *Forensic Linguistics* (2008) both include examples of a number of ransom texts (for example, Jon-Bennet Ramsey, Charles Lindbergh), hate mail (for example, Anonymous letter), and other threatening texts (for example,

Luke John Helder, Jesse Helms) that were included in the sample (See Appendix for full texts). Since none of the texts chosen were classified and all were available to anyone who has access to the internet, no written permission was needed, however, out of courtesy, written permission was requested from Gales, and she consented to use of the texts she had compiled and placed on her website.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

ATLAS.ti was designed to support theoretically based research projects that include data analysis processes (Smit, 2002:65). The software was used to analyse, evaluate, search and query data” and to “capture, visualize and share findings” (Friese, 2012:66). The software offered a means of presenting a visual overview of the data, using the Hermeneutic Unit (HU). This feature in ATLAS.ti provides an effective way to access, search and retrieve functions, which can then be labelled to help identify shared themes and concepts that relate on some level (Smit, 2002:65-66). After collection, the data was organised to be analysed (Smit, 2002:66). First, all samples were copied exactly in MS Word format so as to be readable for the computer software. All documents were given descriptive titles and arranged alphabetically for easier processing. These texts were then uploaded in alphabetical order as separate files into the computer software programme, ATLAS.ti (2019: Version 8.4.18.0).

In this analysis, the software was first used to code the texts for identification purposes using a descriptive name, such as the name of the victim or the perpetrator (for example, Charles Ross/Theodore Kaczynski), and then to code all the characteristic features (divided into four main categories: *Elements of a Threat*, *Idiolect*, *Pragmatic Features*, and *Social Context*) which became the code groups. They each contained the characteristic features identified in the literature review, including *adverbials of time*, *verbs of harm*, and *cause and effect*. Coding was done to identify individual elements and to classify these into groups or categories of related elements. As sub-categories became evident in the data, these were coded accordingly. Further details are provided in relation to phase 2 in 4.2.4.

4.2.4 Procedure

The procedure comprised the following three phases: (1) an in-depth study of literature (chapters 2 and 3) to compose a preliminary framework; (2) the application and validation of the suggested framework (see 5.1 and Figure 5.1) based on an empirical evaluation of authentic texts; and (3) consolidation and conclusion of the results and revision of the preliminary framework of written threats to guide forensic linguistic analysis aimed at establishing the legitimacy of threats (see Figure 5.3.). The details of each phase are presented in this section.

- *Phase 1*

The first phase corresponded with the first aim, as an investigation of the nature of a threat text – i.e. defining the construct of “a threat” to be investigated. The second aim was addressed as the linguistic basis of threat texts were studied in relevant literature. Likewise, the third aim was addressed based as literary and grammatical features were identified that are considered characteristic of threat texts. The in-depth literature review (chapters 2 and 3) informed a preliminary checklist of linguistic features in threat texts. In chapter 2, the nature of a threat text was investigated, it was described, and a working definition of a threat text was given in relation to this research study. Phase 1 therefore entailed an inductive reasoning process, working from given theoretical assumptions that informed the selection of features hypothesised to be characteristic of such threat texts, as proposed by experts in literature. Once a working definition had been provided, it was then possible to consolidate existing information on characteristics of threat texts according to authors such as Gales (2010), Olsson (2008), Shuy (2014), and Tiersma (2011). In chapter 3, the accepted linguistic theories of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962 & Searle, 1965; 1971) and Grice’s Theory of Conversational Implicature (Grice, 1975) were discussed to the extent that theoretical principles are relevant to and inform the analysis of threat text. Once these features were noted, they were linguistically categorised into four categories: *Elements of a Threat*, *Idiolect*, *Pragmatic Features* and *Social Context*. These features that were accrued in phase 1 were then observed and corroborated in phase 2.

- *Phase 2*

Phase 2 involved a manual analysis of the content and linguistic features of each text. All relevant elements were coded and tagged in the sample. It aimed to confirm those elements identified in *Phase 1* and to identify any additional features that may be relevant. The empirical analysis specifically addressed aim 3, focusing on the literary and grammatical features (Gales, 2011; 2015; Gibbons, 2003; Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014; Shuy, 2016) and pragmatics (Austin, 1962; Gales, 2011, 2015; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1975) of the texts. With each aspect intended to be used in threat analysis, a qualitative and interpretative textual analysis took place, based on the preliminary framework devised in phase 1 (see Figure 5.1).

Each text was analysed individually by using the recommended framework presented in Figure 5.2, with the codes labelling the purpose of the word, thus distinguishing which categories are relevant to the illocution of each word. These categories are firstly divided into four main code groups: *Elements of a Threat*, *Idiolect*, *Pragmatic Features*, and *Social Context*. The coding process entailed highlighting the words/word groups/phrases which fell

under the code, compiling them into a code document by choosing the texts of interest and the code groups or individual codes and exporting them into MS Excel, which presents the results in a table. These results were then also presented in charts that can provide a visual representation of the outcome. To ensure as high a level of accuracy as possible, each text was checked and double-checked; the work was also spot-checked by the supervisor.

This procedure corroborated the relevance of these features as characteristic of threat texts. This led to a resulting number of characteristic features which proved relevant to the analysis. Their features were then combined and subcategorised into the four categories mentioned above (see 4.2.4), all forming part of the final framework suggested for future analysis of threat texts. Once the features of the text were coded, tagged, and analysed, a general conclusion was made on the level of legitimacy found in the text based on the fulfilment of the framework. This was done through counting each of the characteristic features within a text. The number of times a feature occurred in a text was first measured individually per characteristic feature, and then converted to a percentage per category in which the characteristic features were grouped. This percentage was measured where all occurrences of that specific feature per text in each of the thirty texts are presented out of 100%. Each feature had an individual percentage representing the number of times it occurred in that text compared to the other thirty texts. For example, the feature of first-person pronoun had a presence of 31.14% in Theodore Kaczynski's text, but only 4.79% in the Charles Lindbergh text. Each of the individual characteristic features was then compiled into code groups, which consisted of the four main categories: *Elements of a Threat*, *Idiolect*, *Pragmatic Features*, and *Social Context*.

The same method of calculation took place to arrive at a percentage of 100% for each category, and the features in that category measured per text added to that total of a 100%. The percentage was ranked with a numbering system, where 1 represented the highest frequency in a text, and the highest number represented the lowest frequency of the characteristic features in that text. Any percentage that ranked equally with another was given the same rank. Each category's number was added to the other of each text, where another ranking system was implemented for the total results. This ranking system worked exactly the same, with 1 placed at the lowest number (as 1 was used to represent the highest frequency) and the texts were then ranked with other texts with the same number of features on the same rank.

Following this analysis, the framework was again revised. The results of this analysis and the revised framework are presented and discussed in chapter 5.

Once the framework was compiled, the data of each threat text that was analysed was tabulated to relate the results more systematically. Each feature in each text was counted (using ATLAS.ti) and tabulated according to the raw frequencies of each feature as it occurred in the relevant text. Once this was done, the number of occurrences of each feature was calculated as a percentage in relation to the other texts to make the ranking more meaningful, as it was noted that the raw frequencies were influenced by text length. The percentages were then ranked, using a numbering system to order the 30 texts from the least number of characteristic features to the most (with 1 being the highest ranking). Texts with the same percentage of the characteristic features were ranked the same. Table 5.2 represents the relative frequency in which the characteristic features occur. This takes into account the length of the texts, as those with shorter texts might naturally have fewer characteristic features than those with longer texts. Therefore, a ranked relative frequency offers a more accurate table of results, as these rankings consider the length of the text, and the percentage of the characteristic features of the text as a whole.

Based on the outcome of this analysis, one could add all sub-categories and identify the text ranked 1 as the text with the most characteristic features of a threat text. This will indicate a high level of legitimacy, while the greatest number ranking indicates a lower-level threat, as there are a low percentage of characteristic features in the text. In this case, texts were analysed according to the framework of characteristic features, which were divided into four categories that typify threat text. The framework was revised in the next phase, based on the results of phase 2.

- *Phase 3*

The final phase was a synthesis of the results that were obtained (the review of the literature and the empirical investigation of threat texts) and constituted the final stages of the deductive process (4.2.1 and 5.3). Based on these results, the final framework was drawn up. Though no major changes were made to the general categories, various features in categories were revised. In this process, features that were not detected in the data, and which could therefore be deemed irrelevant, were removed. In some cases, a finer distinction was considered necessary in relation to a particular feature (see section 5.4). Also, some additional elements that were evident in the data were labelled and then categorised pertaining to the four quadrants of the framework. The final product is presented and discussed in chapter 5.

4.3 Ethics

As human participants were not the object of investigation in this study, there was no need for formal ethical clearance. However, written permission was obtained by Professor Gales to use

the texts that are provided on her website, which she had compiled from the FBI Vault. This led to more texts that were available on the website of the FBI Vault. Texts sourced from online and printed publications are available to the public and can be used without infringing copyright. The electronic data have been safely secured and saved along with back-up versions of the dissertation and texts used for analyses.

Galdas (2017:2) says: "Those carrying out qualitative research are an integral part of the process and final product, and separation from this is neither possible nor desirable. The concern instead should be whether the researcher has been transparent and reflexive (i.e., critically self-reflective about their own preconceptions, relationship dynamics, and analytic focus; Polit & Beck 2014)".

The steps taken during the analysis is therefore described in detail in this chapter, and relevant decisions are elaborated upon in Chapter 5 to ensure transparency and in this way disclose potential researcher bias. In addition, the analysis was spot-checked by the supervisor and discrepancies were addressed. Following the strategies outline by Noble and Smith (2015:34-35), bias was minimised in the following ways:

1. Truth value was ensured through reflexivity and reflection on the researcher's own perspectives. All decisions were discussed with the supervisor and documented in a journal. The supervisor debriefed the researcher to help uncover any biases taken for granted.
2. Since this sample cannot be assumed to be representative of all written threatening letters, the researcher acknowledges the fact that results are not generalisable. The aim of this research, however, is establish a baseline framework to be used toward a standardised benchmarking tool. The supervisor checked the researcher's analysis to confirm the final categories identified.
3. Auditability was achieved by providing clear descriptions of the research process, from the initial outline, to the development of the methods and reported findings, reporting of findings. The researcher also documented challenges and issues in the journal mentioned above, to sustain cohesion between the aims of the study, the design, as well as the method used. Emerging categories were discussed with the supervisor who challenged assumptions in order to reach consensus.
4. Applying the findings to other texts and contexts is recommended for future research to validate the presented framework.

4.4 Conclusion

Chapter 4 describes the methodology adopted for the purpose of this study and addresses the question of ethical professionalism. It furthermore motivates the selection of a research design, following a combination of inductive and deductive processes to address the main research question by means of a stylistic analysis. It also presents the manner in which data were collected, along with the manner in which the texts were analysed. The procedure is relayed in terms of three stages covering the literary and linguistic aspects of the literature review, and the empirical analysis of 30 authentic threat texts.

Following these three stages, the products of each stage are presented and considered critically in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the literature review and empirical analysis. First, the preliminary framework that has been devised (based on the findings of chapters 2 and 3) is presented and discussed. Then the collated results are presented following the application of this draft framework to 30 texts. These results are discussed, and the draft framework is critically evaluated and revised accordingly. The final product of this research is then presented: a framework for evaluating the legitimacy of threat texts, based on linguistic markers. The chapter concludes with final considerations about the potential application and use of the proposed framework.

5.2 Phase 1: Preliminary Framework

The preliminary framework compiled based on the literature review in chapter 2 and chapter 3 is presented in Figure 5.1. The features were grouped together, and four main categories emerged: *Elements of a Threat*, *Idiolect*, *Pragmatic Features* and *Social Context*.

The category *Elements of a Threat* includes all the features that were discussed in section 2.1.2 and identified by Olsson, (2008:142-143). These include cause and effect, various threats (for example, conditional, direct and indirect threats), demand, leverage (which is presented through the use of intimidation or warning), and a predicted promise (intended to convince the reader of the sincerity through rewarding his/her compliance with the demand made through the threat). Within this category, more detailed aspects of features are also distinguished, for example prediction, in the form of a direct threat, a promise, or a warning.

The category *Idiolect* includes all the grammatical features characteristic of a threat text (see section 2.1.1.2). *Idiolect* is included in the framework as it describes the linguistic structure of the text. It also pertains to the lexical items that are chosen, and patterns of use in terms of spelling, punctuation, the nature of tense (past, present and future), and literary features of the grammar. Language and grammar contain a number of more detailed labels, like adverbials of time, verbs of (harm/modal/prediction), pronouns (first and second person), emotive language and paralinguistic markers.

Pragmatic features are informed by theories of Speech Acts (Austin, 1962; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1971 & 1975). By applying these principles, the implicature of the communicative act is characterised in terms of being direct, or indirect, and to determine the speech act categories that are commonly used – if any – to execute authentic threats.

Social Context refers to all contextual features that affect the communication. This includes texts in the threat genre, such as hate mail, blackmail, bribery or ransom, and the social aspects relating to the themes found in a threat (labelled as the genre in the text). It also includes social factors that influence the speech act, such as persons involved, date, time and place of the threat or when the threat is intended to realise into harmful action.

Figure 5.1 below represents the culmination of the results following the in-depth literary overview that was reported on in chapters 2 and 3. It is the product of a deductive reasoning process (see 4.2.1). Codes that were used included labelling the speech act as either direct or indirect, along with the type of message that was intended (for example such as a command, description, expression of regret, promise, request, statement, threat or directive). Macro-class classification was used to describe the role of the speech: (representatives / directives / commissives / expressives / declarations / commissive directives).

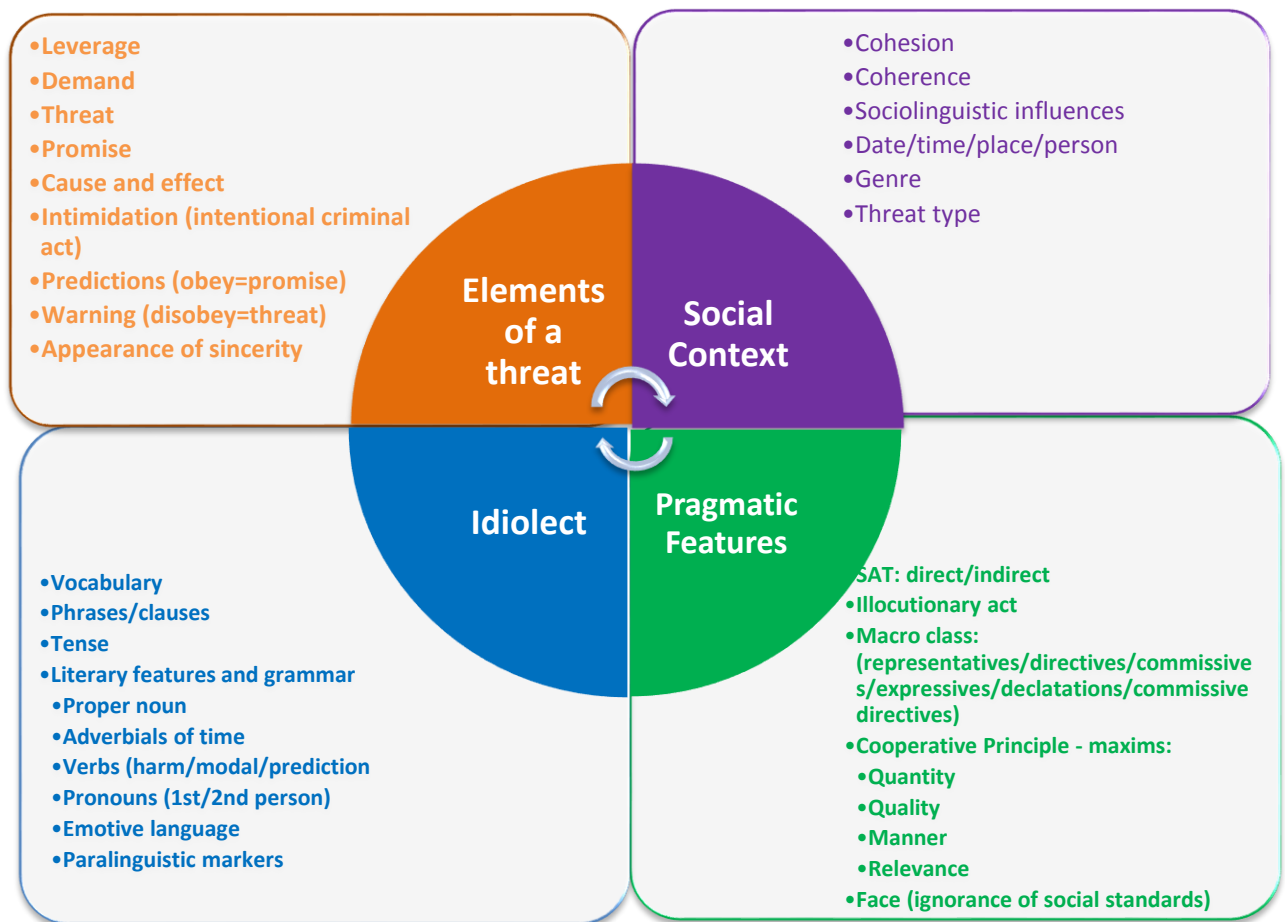


Figure 5.1: Preliminary framework for analysing threat texts

Figure 5.1 above illustrates the draft product that informed the analysis of the 30 texts during phase 2. Each text was evaluated in terms of each of the four main categories which were used to categorise the individual features. This is discussed in more detail below.

5.3 Phase 2: Results of Analysis

Results obtained following the empirical analysis of 30 threat texts are presented and discussed critically in this section. See 4.2.2 (Phase 2) for the procedure that was followed. Table 5.1 summarises these results. Each category and characteristic features related to it are discussed in turn in relation to these results.

During the tagging of the features identified in the preliminary framework (Figure 5.1), it became evident that relevant word/phrases needed to be classified with more than one code, with up to 5 codes being assigned to a single words/phrase. This suggests that the four main categories are interdependent and that a single category would be insufficient to characterise or to evaluate a threat text. The list was compiled as the texts were being analysed, in order to avoid subjectively deciding on features before the time, but rather to label them as they appear. This process revealed that some of the features originally included in the preliminary framework were not evident in any of the texts or were rarely evident. *Cohesion* as a feature, for example, was found to be irrelevant as a distinguishing factor because it appeared across all the texts that were analysed. Without cohesion in the text, no message can be conveyed, and therefore, the characteristic feature was and will not be present in the final revised framework in section 5.4.

Once all the texts had been analysed, the relevant code list was once again arranged into four categories. Through the coding, it was found that threat texts used direct illocution in order to communicate, as instructions, intentions, requests and threats occur in the texts and unless these are understood, the author's demands will not be adhered to. No new categories emerged, and none were found to be obsolete. Therefore, the distinction of the four main categories was supported. The codes in ATLAS.ti were colour-coded in accordance with the colours used in Figure 5.1 to display the distribution of these four categories in the data. The results were then exported to MS Excel and categorised to correlate with the four categories presented in Figure 5.1. Thereupon, the results could be exported to Microsoft Excel in tabular format to show the relation of the different results. The exported results showed the number of times each code appeared in each text, as well as the number of times each code occurred in total across the sample of 30 texts. For example, in Text 1 "Anna Nicole Smith", the code [LEVERAGE {Element of Threat}] appeared twice. The results showed that some codes occurred only once or twice out of all thirty texts, giving reason to question their relevance to a threat text.

Table 5.1 below was also exported from ATLAS.ti and presents a condensed version of the results. It reports the occurrence of each code group in relation to the 30 texts.

Table 5.1 Summary of results based on the empirical analysis of the framework to the threat texts (raw frequency)

Text	Case Studies	Elements of a Threat	Idiolect	Pragmatics	Social Context	Number of features
1	Anna Nicole Smith	14	25	16	21	76 (24)
2	Annie Laurie Hearin	13	21	16	18	68 (20)
3	Anonymous Letter	17	4	20	6	47 (11)
4	Anthrax	13	20	7	12	52 (13)
5	Army of God	7	12	15	2	36 (8)
6	Ashley Madison Example 1	3	2	2	4	11 (2)
7	Ashley Madison Example 2	5	5	10	15	36 (8)
8	Carlos the Jackal	10	23	18	14	65 (17)
9	Charles Lindbergh	15	10	7	10	42 (10)
10	Charles Ross	12	22	12	10	56 (14)
11	Enigma Machine	13	23	16	23	75 (23)
12	George Bush	12	19	13	12	56 (14)
13	Jack the Ripper	18	9	14	20	61 (15)
14	Jackson, M.S.	16	26	18	20	80 (25)
15	Jesse Helms case 1	8	11	8	5	32 (6)
16	Jesse Helms case 2	18	16	19	13	66 (18)
17	Jesse Helms case 3	15	24	15	13	67 (19)
18	John Paul Getty III	6	8	4	16	34 (7)
19	Jon-Bennet Ramsey	2	3	5	8	18 (3)
20	June Robles Birt	11	14	8	17	50 (12)
21	Lampley Hollow	4	7	5	3	19 (4)
22	Luke Jon Helder	9	6	6	7	28 (5)
23	Marion Parker	16	24	9	15	64 (16)
24	Michael Sams	8	15	7	9	39 (9)
25	Peter Weinberger	15	23	15	19	72 (22)
26	Robert Wiles	12	13	11	11	47 (11)
27	Root@primenet	16	18	17	18	69 (21)
28	Suzanne degnan	17	17	15	22	69 (21)
29	Timothy Pitzen	19	26	18	24	87 (26)
30	Theodore Kaczynski	1	1	1	1	4 (1)

The first column of Table 5.1 shows the identification number of the text in ATLAS.ti, followed by the names of the cases in alphabetical order in column 2. Columns 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively show the results of the various code groups per text. The final column on the right then reports the total number of characteristic features identified within each text, followed by the ranking according to the number of characteristic features found in that text in brackets.

Each individual characteristic found in the data proved relevant for revising the preliminary framework. The individual characteristics were grouped in the four main categories presented in Figure 5.1. Because it would be impractical to represent the categories by means of a table in a document, the results are discussed below with reference to the revised framework. The results of the four categories, along with each text, are presented by numbering the texts and arranging them in alphabetical order, in respectively the first and second columns of the table. The third

column presents the *Elements of a Threat*; the fourth column, the *Idiolect*, the fifth column the *Pragmatic Features*; and the sixth column the *Social Context*.

The results presented by ATLAS.ti and shown in MS Excel include the number of times the code group occurs, and then the percentage that that number holds out of all 30 texts in total. Each code group was exported in this format and summarised in Table 5.1. The feature codes for each group were then manually ranked, with 1 representing the most occurrences of a category, and the highest number representing the least occurrences of a category. If two or more texts had the same total of characteristic features in a specific code group (i.e. *elements of a threat* was ranked 13th in three texts: “Annie Laurie Hearin”, “Anthrax”, and “Enigma Machine”), they received the same ranking number. In the case of text 30, “Theodore Kaczynski”, it is ranked 1st in all four code groups, adding to the low total number and making it the highest level of threat, whereas in the case of Peter Weinberger, the text ranks 22, as there is a lower number of characteristic features found within the text, only adding to a total of 72 characteristic features. Once again, if two or more texts had the same total number, they were ranked in the same position, therefore the Anonymous Letter and Robert Wiles are both ranked 11th as they both have 47 characteristic features in total.

For example, Text 9 (“Charles Lindbergh”) contained 15 elements of threat; 10 idiolectal features; 7 pragmatic features; and 10 features related to social context. Adding the four individual categories together shows the total number of characteristic features being 42 characteristic features within the text of Charles Lindbergh, placing it at a ranking of 10th place on Table 5.1. According to the absolute frequency of characteristic features, it ranks 10th when compared to the levels of the other texts analysed. This would show that the level of legitimacy of this text falls in tenth place out of the thirty texts that were analysed.

The lowest total number of characteristic features that combined all four categories, was 4, for the case of the Unabomber, where Ted Kaczynski threatened to keep posting bombs to people who supported technological research. His threat contained the highest level of each of the categories. In this case, Kaczynski was arrested, and the threats had proven legitimate, as the bombings had indeed taken place in the past. What happened in this case supported the theory that these elements are prevalent in a threat text. The text with the lowest number of characteristic features turned was the case of Timothy Pitzen, where the mother had kidnapped her own child, and committed suicide. She left two notes – one for her mother and one for her husband – both explaining that their son was with people who loved him and that nothing could have been done to change her mind. Even though kidnapping was involved, the text in this case turned out to be a suicide note rather than a threat per se. The text is relevant even though it was not a kidnapping as there was an assumed threat on the child’s life. This makes it relevant to be analysed as the

threat level would indicate the seriousness of the situation. The text second to the Ted Kaczynski case study is the Ashley Madison case, in which many people claimed that the threat texts were hoaxes. Yet, the texts still contained enough characteristic features to make the threats seem legitimate, causing people to fear the outcomes that were promised and to pay the money that was demanded in the blackmail letter.

The texts included in the sample vary in length. This is an aspect that the forensic linguist may need to consider. For the purpose of this discussion, the concern is the extent to which the text length may influence the number of linguistic features that add to the threatening nature of the text. However, the empirical analysis of the text revealed that one word or phrase could often be classified in more than one way and in such instances, the data was double coded or triple coded. For example, the sentence 'YOU CAN NOT STOP US' from the Anthrax case would be coded for all four categories in the framework, to provide a rich description of this utterance as a threat. In relation to *element of threat*, this sentence supports the leverage because it emphasises the power of the author in this blackmail scenario (*social context*). From a pragmatic perspective, this is an example of a direct representative and a face threatening act. The present tense is used, suggesting that this is a state of being – the authors cannot be stopped. This one sentence, therefore, displays a range of aspects to constitute a threatening meaning. It is a short sentence, but it carries a lot of weight in terms of communicating a sincere threat.

Potentially, a longer text may display a higher number of characteristic features, simply because there is more text. However, the fact that the linguistic elements of threat are layered in terms of the four proposed categories suggests that short texts may succeed in conveying a more sincere or more urgent threat than a long text. Therefore, the absolute frequency of the occurrence of characteristic features presented in Table 5.1 may not necessarily be an accurate indicator of the sincerity of a threat. To explore this possibility, Table 5.2 presents a ranked order of texts, showing the text with the highest relative frequency of characteristic features, in relation to word length. The number of features identified for a category was divided by the total number of features found within each text to get a sense of how categories may contribute to the threatening function of the text. The average of the four categories per text was calculated, and assuming that each category carries 25% weight of the analysis, the average that was found was ranked. The text with the highest average of characteristic features is ranked at the top. According to this ranking procedure, the Anthrax case study is ranked as the text with the highest density of threatening features, with an average of 48%, while the Enigma Machine case shows the lowest density of 4% of characteristic threat features.

Table 5.2 Ranking of threat text based on the average characteristic features displayed in a text in relation to the text length.

Text	Text length	Case studies	Elements of a Threat	Idiolect	Pragmatics	Social context	Average Percentage of threatening elements in relation to the text length
4	41	Anthrax	11	28	19	20	48%
28	39	Suzanne Degnan	4	36	9	6	35%
1	33	Anna Nicole Smith	9	15	8	7	30%
10	66	Charles Ross	12	26	11	23	27%
12	71	George Bush	12	32	11	20	26%
18	137	John Paul Getty III	24	65	25	15	24%
15	179	Jesse Helms case 1	19	59	17	36	18%
14	43	Jackson, M.S.	5	13	5	8	18%
20	121	June Robles Birt	13	41	17	14	18%
2	95	Annie Laurie Hearin	11	27	8	12	15%
8	103	Carlos the Jackal	15	24	5	18	15%
5	264	Army of God	23	52	9	52	13%
21	327	Lampley Hollow	27	67	24	49	13%
19	371	Jon-Bennet Ramsey	32	90	37	30	13%
27	114	Root @p rime net	5	33	6	12	12%
17	122	Jesse Helms case 3	8	22	9	19	12%
23	127	Marion Parker	5	22	16	17	12%
26	188	RobertWiles	12	42	12	21	12%
25	112	Peter Weinberger	8	23	9	11	11%
9	270	Charles Lindbergh	8	60	19	23	10%
24	262	Michael Sams	19	40	19	24	10%
13	240	Jack the Ripper	3	61	10	8	9%
7	385	Ashley Madison Example 2	26	73	14	17	8%
22	418	Luke Jon Helder	18	69	21	31	8%
6	702	Ashley Madison Example 1	28	124	38	43	8%
29	64	Timothy Pitzen	1	13	5	2	8%
30	1411	Theodore Kaczynski	54	210	54	85	7%
3	451	Anonymous Letter	4	75	1	32	6%
16	300	Jesse Helms case 2	3	38	4	19	5%
11	276	Enigma Machine	11	23	8	5	4%

The formula used to calculate the average percentage of threat characteristic per text is as follows:

Elements of a threat = a

Idiolect = b

Pragmatic features = c

Social context = d

Text length = x

Result = y

Formula: $[(a/x = y) + (b/x = y) + (c/x = y) + (d/x = y)] / 4 = \text{average percentage}$

For the Anthrax case, for example, the formula was $[(11/41=27\%) + (28/41=68\%) + (19/41=46\%) + (20/41=49\%) = 190] / 4 = 48\%$.

The first column identifies the case number as for the analysis. The second column gives the length of the text in number of words, which is followed by the name of the case study in the third column. Columns four, five, six and seven then report the average number of characteristic features per case, in relation to the categories, *elements of threat*, *idiolect*, *pragmatic features* and *social context*. The last column on the right reports the average percentage of characteristic features identified per text.

Such a ranking procedure may be useful in showing the level of legitimacy in the text as ranked results could give a more accurate representation of legitimacy in threat texts, in consideration of text length and the density of categories of characteristic features. The effect of text length could be controlled for in such a manner. Based on the ranking in Table 5.2, the Anthrax case contained the highest level of threat, being a short text with high impact threatening features. In using the formula presented above Table 5.2, one can see that the length of the text in question influences the outcome:

Likewise, the case that is ranked as displaying the second highest average percentage of linguistic characteristics of threat is another short text from the Susan Degnan case. In this case, the note was very short and very direct text written on the wall, begging people to stop the kidnapper. The girl was kidnapped, and the threat in itself proved true as she was missing when the texts were found. On the other hand, the text with the lowest level of threat is from the case of the Enigma Machine and even though the text was longer, the threat did not hold much weight since, when calculated in proportion to its length, it contained few linguistic characteristic features of threat.

It seems as if the framework may potentially inform more complex analyses that could contribute to indicating the severity or legitimacy of a threat. Such a process, however, would require detailed and more complex statistical calculations which are beyond the scope of this study. For example, a more in-depth analysis can be undertaken to determine the normalised frequency of linguistic features related to idiolect. The analysis presented here, however, deals with features that may span one word, or more. The overlapping categories further complicate the matter and therefore more research is required to extend this framework to a practically applicable model. In the present research, the focus is on identifying the salient linguistic features that could be aid an investigation into legitimacy, rather than on measuring the actual legitimacy of the text in question. In order to do that, a more extensive validation study will have to be conducted.

The main purpose of this study is to collate, describe and confirm linguistic features that are characteristic of threatening texts. The aim is to present a framework to aid thick stylistic description of threatening texts. To this end, the preliminary framework presented in Figure 5.1 was revised and refined, following the empirical analysis and trial application of the framework. The results based on the application of the preliminary framework, for example, showed that some characteristic features identified in the in depth literature review (chapter 2 and 3) were not present in any of the analysed texts, or occurred once or twice throughout the entire analysis. Some codes were revised accordingly, vague codes were refined, and redundant codes were deleted. These details are discussed in relation to Phase 3 before a revised framework is proposed.

5.4 Phase 3: Final Revision

Following phase 1 (the compilation and application of the preliminary framework) and phase 2 (trial application of the framework), Phase 3 involved revising the framework, with the final product presented in Figure 5.2. Changes made to the preliminary framework are discussed in this section.

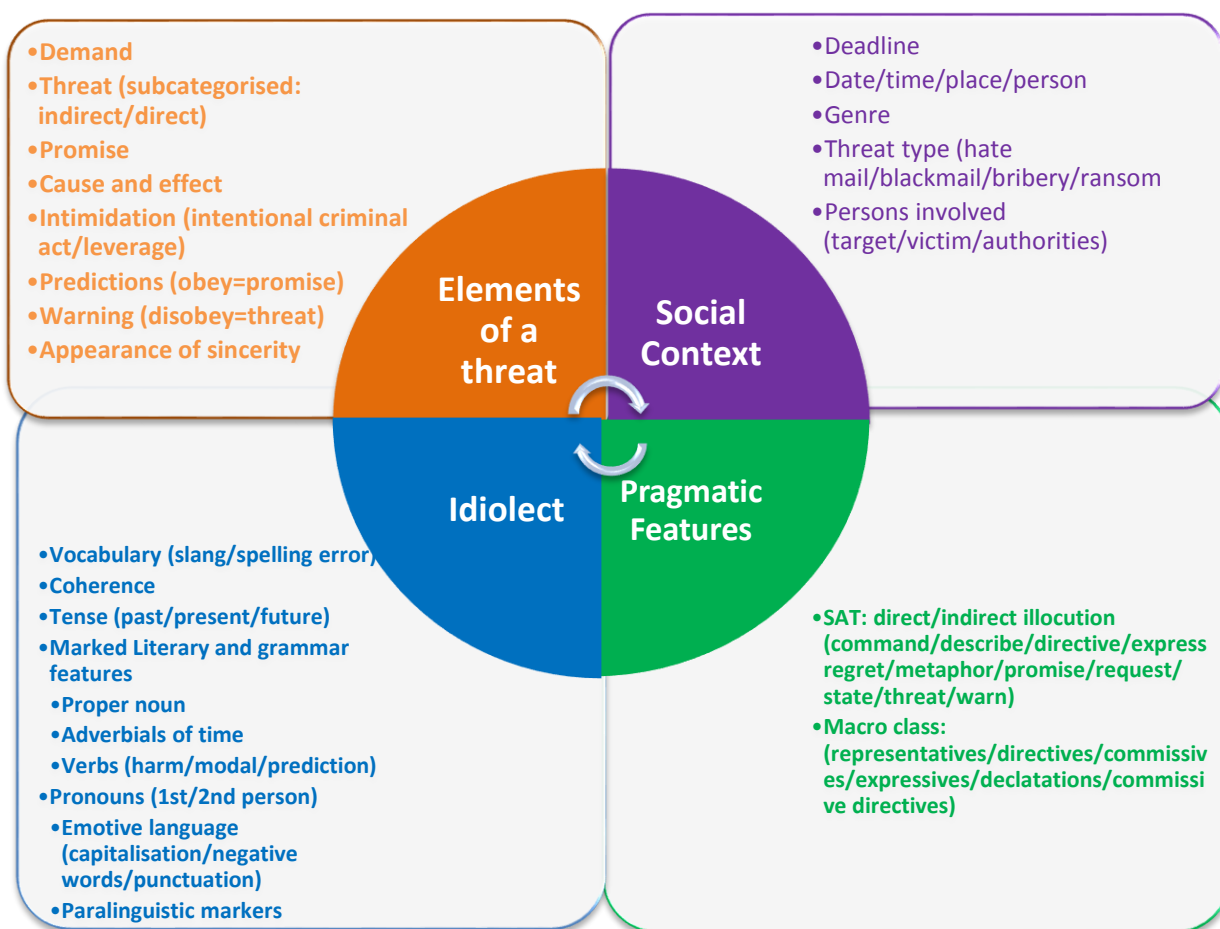


Figure 5.2: Revised framework

The revised framework presented in Figure 5.2 was compiled based on the results of the empirical analysis and includes only the most relevant features. Changes are considered below.

In the *Elements of a Threat*, the major difference concerned the definition of *threat*, following Olsson (2008). For the purpose of the present study, the threat was considered as either direct or indirect, as determined by the type of speech act being performed (discussed below), which relates it to the category of *Pragmatic Features*. Therefore, the code for [threat] was related to both *direct* and *indirect*, to distinguish the two elements as *Pragmatic Features*. In this way, it shows the type of speech act, and represents *Elements of a Threat*. Then the category [leverage] was merged with [intimidation], as [leverage] proved to be a form of [intimidation]. However, it became apparent that the [intimidation] code had to be qualified more carefully. Another feature of [intimidation] presents an [intentional criminal act], and this form was retained as well. Therefore, [intimidation] was refined as a feature, sub-dividing into [leverage] and [intentional criminal act]. Other features in *Elements of a Threat* remained unchanged, viz. [Demand], [promise], [cause] and [effect], [prediction], [warning] and [appearance of sincerity]. The following extract from the Army of God shows some of these elements on context:

THE ABORTION CLINIC WAS THE TARGET OF THE FIRST DEVICE [leverage/intimidation]. THE MURDER OF 3.5 MILLION CHILDREN EVERY WILL NOT BE "TOLERATED." [warning] THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE IN ANYWAY IN THE MURDER OF CHILDREN MAY BE TARGETED FOR ATTACK [leverage/intimidation]. THE ATTACK THEREFORE SERVES AS A WARNING [warning]: ANYONE IN OR AROUND FACILITIES THAT MURDER CHILDREN MAY BECOME VICTIMS OF RETRIBUTION [threat]. THE NEXT FACILITY TARGETED MAY NOT BE EMPTY [leverage/intimidation].

The attack on the abortion clinic is marked as the *first* attack, which suggests that more will follow. This is reiterated by *The next facility...* This serves to intimidate the reader and take the threat seriously. The authors warn the reader that the deaths of children *will not be tolerated*, emphasising the authors' position of power. The threat is expressed directly as *may become victims*. The use of the modal, *may*, suggests that not all will necessarily be killed, but that anyone who is guilty could be killed on account of this. If you are guilty, then you are as likely as the next person to be killed. The *Elements of a Threat* show how authors use the elements of threat as discussed in Chapter 2 to express the main moves or parts of the threat in terms of what they want, why they have the power to demand this and what will happen if their demands are not met. If any of these elements are not present, it may influence the severity or legitimacy of the threat as such.

In relation to this, details about the *Social Context* further reveal authors' commitment to threatening and to executing a threat. This category as a whole proved relevant as it considers contextual information given in the text to relate the event to the outside world. Such details include the dates being mentioned, including the time of day; the deadline (which is a further distinction of time); place; and persons involved. The code for [*persons involved*] was subdivided into the subcategories of [*victim*], [*target*] and [*authorities*]. The victim refers to the person who is held captive or will be hurt in any way. The target is the person who receives the ransom or threat, and the authorities refer to any police, law enforcement, firemen, medical assistants, and government officials. This category also concerns the *genre* or themes of the text, which includes behaviour to be punished; described assault; fantasies; hopelessness; intimidation; objects of desire; obsessions; racism; weapons; and harming the victim. Racism, for example, occurred only once in the 30 texts, with reference to Text 3, the Smear mail example:

The conversations that take place are very inappropriate for a public place or, as a matter of fact, for just about any place! There is talk of racism, violence, radical political topics, Nazis etc. there is talk of many weapons owned by the proprietors.

In this instance, the reference to racism is used to justify the message as it serves to exploit the misbehaviour of the target. Accusations of racism may be employed to induce fear and could serve as a means of intimidation. Following the empirical application of the draft framework, the label *threat type* was omitted, as this information is provided as metadata, or is evidenced in other codes categorised through textual features such as a ransom amount, among others.

In the case of *Idiolect*, the focus remains on linguistic features that relate the author to the text and to its content. These codes in particular may potentially be useful for the purpose of author profiling, but in some features reveal more about the nature of the threat and the author's commitment to the threat than others do. The preliminary framework presented in Figure 5.1 includes the lengths of phrases and clauses. However, it did not seem to be a useful label, as lengths of the phrases and clauses really serve a profiling purpose. In cases such as the ones considered for this research, the authors are unknown and often there are no other texts which can be compared to the note presented to support mutual authorship based on features such as text and phrase length. These features are also more prominently explored in quantitative analyses which were beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, this category was removed from the proposed framework, but not with the implication that these measures may not be useful at all (as discussed in the Limitations section).

Coherence was added to the category of *idiolect*, as it is also a feature of the structure of the text and it shows that the text is written in a manner that makes sense and relates to any other texts that may be relevant to a case, if there are any. In addition, coherence pertains to the reader's evaluation of a textual meaning as being a threat or not a threat. Cohesion was, however, removed as a code as it proved redundant in terms of describing language as being threatening or not. All the texts analysed in this sample were written cohesively to the extent of being understandable, and the extent to which cohesion influenced the sincerity of a threat therefore remains unclear. As cohesion is necessary in the text in order to carry across the message in a clear manner, a threat must be cohesive to the extent that it is understandable, or the threat will be void. Neither grammatical, nor lexical means of creating cohesion appeared to be particularly informative in terms of expressing a threat per se. Therefore, the cohesion code was removed. Further research, however, may find certain cohesive markers to play a more prominent role in emphasising aspects of a threat. For the purpose of this research, however, it appeared sufficient to classify a text as either being cohesive enough to facilitate understanding, or as being incomprehensible, in which case no threat would be conveyed. Cohesion is thus taken for granted in order for language to constitute a coherent threat.

Likewise, based on the analysis of the sampled texts, authors also tended to adhere to the Cooperative Principle in order to convey an apparent threat. For the purpose of this research,

therefore, it appears as though textual cohesion and Cooperative Principles could be taken as a necessary basic requirement for language to communicate a threat. A text either is cohesive or is not; a text either adheres to cooperative principles to convey a threat, or it doesn't. In case of the latter, either too little or too much information is given to convey a message of threat; too much ambiguity is present; the information does not appear truth worthy; or information appears irrelevant. Any combination of these elements would reduce the impact of the threat as a sincere and legitimate threat. Consequently, Cooperative Principles were removed from the category of *Pragmatic Features* from the framework since Cooperative Principles must be adhered to in order for language to convey a successful threat. In order to express a sincere threat, an author needs to give the correct quantity of information with a quality that proves believable, in a manner that is not ambiguous and that is relevant to the reader.

The classification code for *Saving face* was also removed, because it appeared seldom and could be connected with emotional expression (discussed below), like in relation to Peter Weinberger's expression of regret: "I'm sorry this had to happen but...", which is followed by a justification of his actions. Other politeness strategies were not employed by the authors of the sampled notes. Possibly, this may be because politeness is a social requirement and is usually used to allow respondents to opt out or to reject the required action, without feeling bad about it. If the intention of communication is to force someone to do something by means of a threat, the author wants to allow no leeway to act in any other way than what is required. Politeness strategies as such were excluded from the framework on account of this.

However, the revised framework shows the illocution to either be direct or indirect, along with the specific type of the act, viz. commanding, describing, directing, expressing, conveying regret, expressing a metaphor, promising, requesting, stating, or threatening or warning. Speech acts were marked for macro class, namely, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations, and commissive directives. The latter occurred 48 times in the various texts. In Suzanne Degnan's case, the text found under the bedroom window read: "Get \$20 000 Reddy & wAlTe FoR WoRd. do NoT NoTiFy FBI oR Police. Bills IN 5's & 10's." and on the back of the ransom note, it said: "BuRN This FoR heR SAfTY". The directives are to get the specified amount of money; to wait for the next order; to not notify the police; to make up the ransom amount in \$5 and \$10 bills; and to burn the note. These six commands are listed along with the disclaimer "for her safety". In this case, the commissive element is not expressed directly. It is only implied that if the note is not burnt – and supposedly then if any of these commands are not met – the victim will no longer be safe. The note essentially communicates *do this, or she is not safe*. In the case of Annie Laurie Hearin, the commissive directives are more direct. The first note comprises directives, while the second note contains the commissive directive:

“Mr. Robert Hearin, Put these people back in the shape they was in before they got mixed up with School Pictures. Pay them whatever damages they want and tell them all this so then can no what you are doing but don’t tell them why you are doing it. Do this before ten days pass. Don’t call police.”

It is clear that Mr Hearin is expected to put people back in shape, pay them, tell them what he is doing but not why, to do so within 10 days, and not call the police. The note supposedly written by Annie then reveals the intended consequence (underlined) the villains commit to if Mr Hearin were to be uncooperative:

“Bob, if you don’t do what these people want you to do, they are going to seal me up in the cellar of this house with only a few jugs of water. Please save me, Annie Laurie”

In addition, the code for tense was refined, because authors would refer to times that things happened specifically in relation to the event of the threat. Tense was sub-divided into three categories: past tense, present tense or future tense. An example from the Michael Sams case shows that tense reveals what has transpired – “Your employee has been kidnapped” -, and what the future may hold – “and will be released for a ransom of £175,000. With a little luck he should be still O.K. and unharmed”. Furthermore, the current state of being is expressed by means of the present tense: “...to prove this fact to you”. This suggests that ‘this fact’ is true at the moment and will remain true unless the status quo is disturbed. The reference to time in terms of when a recorded message by Michael Sams could be expected is less specific: “will in in the next day or so receive a recorded message from him”. This contrasts, for example, with the more definite report that the employer *has been kidnapped* and the he *will be released for a ransom of £175,000*. The fact that the kidnapping has already taken place suggests that the kidnappers may already have made a recording of the victim, which they could send at any time they wish, regardless of whether the victim would still be alive or not. Tenses play an important role, for example, to suggest that the kidnapped person is or may be still alive. Past tense references to the victim could suggest that the person is already deceased. In this example, the promise is expressed in future tense, *will be released*, and this is followed by a less convincing formulation to suggest that the kidnapped person may not remain alive. This example illustrates the need for distinguishing between tense periods. This relates closely to the detection of modal verb use as well, which were included in [marked language].

Literary features and grammar were combined under [marked language], focusing on non-standard use of either literary and /or grammatical items. Grammar, for example, was noted when words or sentences were structured irregularly such as in the case of Annie Laurie Hearin, “Put these people back in the shape *they was in* before they got mixed up with School Pictures.” where

the phrase *they was in* is irregularly structured and therefore is marked. Other grammatical features identified under *Idiolect* in the framework were coded individually and included: adverbials of time (words such as “tomorrow/next week/immediately) and verbs (e.g. verbs of harm: (kill/cut/shoot), modal verbs (might/may/will) and modals of prediction (will kill/shall see/shall bomb)). Pronouns were also described, labelling first (I/we) and second person pronouns (you/he/she) to aid an understanding of the authors' relation to the text itself, to the victim, and also to the receiver of the threat. A note from the case of Anne Nicole Smith illustrates the varied use of some of these features:

“I HAVE to kill you, and I will. I will also KILL your attorney. Neither of you understand why, but the earth is better off without you. One year, and you're both dead”.

Here, modals such as *have to* and *will*, and *will kill* were coded, as these elements express commitment to the text and the expressed actions. The repetition confirms the sincerity. This author specifies that *I* will kill you rather than anybody else, or that the receiver *will be killed* using a passive construction. The use of this personal pronoun serves to relate the author directly to the situation, taking ownership of the situation and of the lives of the reader and her attorney. In addition to the use of these grammatical features, vocabulary items are important to note and for different reasons.

[Vocabulary] was differentiated into two categories, namely [*spelling errors*] and [*slang words*] to refine the description. For example, in the Annie Laurie Hearin case, the spelling is incorrect where *then* should be *they*, and *no* should be *know in the phrase*, “so *then* can *no* what you are doing”. Here the spelling error is tagged, which may be useful in author profiling, though it is less meaningful in terms of the legitimacy and sincerity of the threat. On the other hand, in the case of the threats sent to President Bush, slang words were used such “dope” in the phrase, “BUSH the only *DOPE* WORTH SHOOTING”, in which case these lexical items reveal a strong dislike and may support the legitimacy of the threat. Slang words are used to show a strong dislike or disdain in a more expressive way, emphasising the author's feelings that give credit to a threat. It is important to distinguish slang from spelling errors, therefore, since the use of slang may express intention more clearly.

[Emotive language] was sub-divided in terms of capitalisation, negative words, and punctuation used to express the emotions of the author. Capitalisation was prominent in texts such as in the Anthrax case: YOU CAN NOT STOP US. WE HAVE THIS ANTHRAX., where all the words were written in capital letters, as well as the threats to President Bush, where most of the posters' texts were written in capital letters for emphasis. Language written in capitals denotes yelling or screaming, and in these texts seemed to express an underscoring of the importance and sincerity

of the message. Negative words were often double coded as slang words, as used, for example, in the Lampley Hollow case: “You *fucks* want to step outside the law to show us much of a *fuck* your mother is?” Similar to the use of capitals, the use of swearwords and other negative words suggests an attempt to express sincere emotion and intent. Punctuation also indicate emotion, such as exclamation marks which are often used to carry across emotional intensity. In the case of President Bush, for example, the use of capital print is further emphasised by the exclamation mark in: “RIP HERE LIES GEORGE BUSH!”.

Furthermore, various paralinguistic markers are used to reflect the attitude of the author or the mood. The belief in a cause such as in Theodore Kaczynski expresses his own belief in a particular cause as his motive and validation for the bombings: “**Our more immediate goal, which we think may be attainable at some time during the next several decades, is the destruction of the worldwide industrial system.**” The word order in this sentence also emphasises his justification of his actions. Attitude is also communicated through [emotional expression], as in Peter Weinberger’s case: “I’m sorry this had to happen, but I am in bad need of money and couldn’t get it any other way.” This is another example of justification, but in this case the author expresses his regret – I’m sorry - at having to gone to the extent that he had in order to get money. This contrasts with Jack the Ripper, who seems to show no regret or emotion in his statement “. I am down on whores and I shant quit ripping them till I do get buckled”. The motive in each of these three examples is different and the attitude of the author reflects this accordingly.

This section reports the amendments made to the original framework (Figure 5.1) and presents the refined and proposed framework (Fig. 5.2). In addition, the discussion in this section shows how the four main categories of the framework relate to each other, and how – in various cases – there may be overlap between the categories. It is, for example, somewhat difficult to discuss the *Pragmatic Features* without reference to grammatical and lexical choices, as addressed in relation to *Idiolectal* features, of the authors to affect the linguistic action of a threat. Likewise, it is difficult to consider pragmatic features as something other than factors of *Social Context*. However, the social context here is very specifically related to elements that relate the authors and the threat situation to reality and events, times and places in the real world. As such, the researcher now turns to considering limitations of the proposed framework.

5.5 Limitations of Framework

To my knowledge, no formal framework has been compiled and published to aid stylistic analysis of threatening texts prior to this study. This research therefore aimed to consolidate linguistic characterisations of threatening language, with the proposed framework (Fig. 5.2) as result. It is

important to acknowledge the limitations of this framework to show how future research can look to improve this design, but also highlight the ways in which this framework is useful as a starting point and stimulus for future research. Limitations of the proposed framework must be considered, particularly on account of this being a first step toward a formal framework for forensic analysis of threatening texts.

Foremost, more research is required to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of the proposed framework. It will need to be validated in contexts other than this study, and on larger samples. Preferably, the framework should also be trialled on samples of threatening texts in languages other than English. Additionally, quantitative analysis should be conducted to explore the relevance and impact of features such as text length, average sentence- and phrase length, on other features included in the proposed framework. A detailed quantitative analysis is called for to refine and validate the framework, before testing it on a greater variety of languages. Future research should, for example, consider the notion of a weighted system to inform quantitative analysis. This may involve individual analysis for each of the four categories, establishing normalised frequencies and calculating the extent to which each contributes to the overall impact of threatening features. As such, the proposed framework may serve as a baseline for more complicated analyses. If all four categories are weighted equally, it is possible to underestimate the value or impact of certain elements in a particular category. The extent to which these categories can be weighted, and then the extent to which they should be weighted equally or differently, requires detailed quantitative analyses. To further inform such decision, it may be useful to have experts evaluate the proposed framework, trial it and provide feedback on account of their analyses. Ideally, such a pilot project should be based on the same sample of texts in order to make analyses comparable.

In view of this, it is important to acknowledge again that the tables presented in this chapter (Tables 5.1 and 5.2) do not meet the rigorous requirements for qualitative analyses and it is therefore not presented as such. The ranking of the features should be considered as an illustration of how the framework could possibly inform more detailed analyses to evaluate the sincerity, severity and legitimacy of threatening texts. The tables presented should not be interpreted as a final indication of which text is to be considered the most threatening. However, the tables are included, because they do serve to illustrate the difference it makes to establish the raw value of codes, as opposed to a relative frequency or ratio. Although the foundation of this research may provide an indication of what the level of legitimacy of a threat text is, the manner of ranking the texts is not sophisticated enough to draw final conclusions of this kind. Drawing such conclusions, however, are beyond the scope of this study, as the aim of the

research was consolidating and confirming those linguistic elements that could be said to characterise threatening language. As such, this study was limited to a qualitative investigation.

In view thereof, the researcher acknowledges the limitations of the theoretical frameworks that underpin this research, as these have all been criticised (see 3.1.5 and 3.1.8). However, these points of criticism were acknowledged and taken into account. The selected theoretical framework proved relevant, because interactions amongst people themselves are not definite, and in application. Criticism such as that theories do not provide exact distinctions or that categories may overlap are evidence of the nature of language in use. The discussion of the four categories identified for the purpose of the framework echoes this trait of language in use: different authors apply linguistic elements in different ways to achieve an aim, in accordance with contextual aspects. Despite the dynamic nature of language and language use, this study does show that there are certain linguistic features that are found more readily in threatening language. In other words, subconsciously, society associates certain linguistic cues as being characteristic of extending a threat, despite this linguistic act not being a particular genre that is taught in schools. There are unwritten linguistic rules about how to threaten someone. By identifying these elements, it is possible to explore the act of threatening in more detail to enhance our understanding. If we understand the language of threat, linguists are in a better position to aid investigation centred around this linguistic act. In general, such an analysis needs to be done with consideration of the context in which the text was written. The proposed framework provides a systematic manner in which a threat can be described, to be understood, to be classified and to be countered.

The proposed framework therefore contributes to the body of literature on threatening language from a linguistic perspective. In doing so it helps to inform best practice for forensic linguists. It may inform forensic research and practice, but in order to do so, the recommended research needs to be conducted.

5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the results of this research and consider it critically. First, a preliminary framework (Figure 5.1) was provided, which is based on an extensive and systematic literature review to collate the characteristic linguistic features discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 3. Next, the results of the empirical trial are reported. This entailed analysing the 30 sampled text to test the extent to which those salient features identified in literature could be corroborated by an empirical analysis. In addition, the empirical results were tabulated, demonstrating the effect of using raw counts as opposed to relative counts in an attempt to determine whether the framework would potentially inform quantitative classification of threatening texts. Table 5.2 shows the relative results, comparing the characteristic features with

the length of the text in question. These results showed different text ranking than Table 5.1, as it considered the frequency of the occurrence of the features in relation to the length of the text. It suggests that further research including quantitative measurement and validation of the features addressed may be useful toward a more sophisticated instrument for analysis. As the research design of this study was qualitative in nature, sophisticated quantitative analyses were not attempted. In accordance with the empirical results, the amendments made to the preliminary framework are discussed and illustrated in the form of a proposed framework toward the forensic linguistic analysis of threatening texts, as shown in Figure 5.2. Based on this discussion, limitations of the present study and some implications for future research are addressed and the chapter is concluded. The following chapter concludes this research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

6.1 Introduction

The topic chosen for this research project falls under the broader subject field of forensic linguistics, which is concerned with “the analysis of language that relates to the law, either as evidence or as legal discourse” (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014:1). The purpose of this study is to provide a framework that can be used to work toward an objective and reliable method for collecting and presenting linguistic evidence that can be used to support investigations centred around threat, including kidnapping and blackmail. The research question, “How can the linguist conduct an objective and systematic linguistic analysis of threat texts to inform the legitimacy of threatening texts for forensic purposes?” was answered based on a detailed and systematic literature review, in conjunction with an empirical analysis that provided evidence of those salient linguistic features identified in 30 different threat texts, sampled for the purpose of this research.

To answer this question, the following sub-questions were addressed in this dissertation (see 1.1) to guide the research:

1. What is the definition of a threat text in forensic linguistic context?
2. What is the theoretical basis for the analyses of a threat text?
3. What linguistic and stylistic features are characteristic of threat texts?
4. To what extent can a linguistic framework aid the objective and systematic evaluation of the legitimacy of threat texts?

The answers to these four questions provide an answer to the main research question on which this study is based. To this end, the following aims were stipulated in section 1.1.2:

1. investigate the nature of a threat text;
2. analyse the linguistic basis of threat texts;
3. determine typical linguistic features that are characteristic of threat texts;
4. develop a framework to assess the legitimacy of threat texts.

6.2 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 presented the layout of the study, stated the research questions and aims, and introduced the concept of forensic linguistics.

To achieve aims 1 and 3, chapter 2 discussed the nature of threat texts with the purpose of answering the first question and fulfilling the aim: investigate the nature of a threat text. This was done by first providing working definitions for the terms “legitimacy” and “threat” (see 2.2), and then modelling the accomplishment of a threat in a chart (see 2.3.2). Legitimacy, for the purpose of this research, is used to describe the level of commitment that the author has toward carrying out the threat purposed in the threat text. The term *threat* is defined for the purpose of this research as an intentionally directed criminal act through means of communication. This makes it relational and socially conditioned, declaring either direct or indirect harmful intentions toward a recipient, and instilling fear of undesirable consequences if the demands are not met.

Along with the concept of the threat, the linguistic and semantic characteristic features of a threat text were identified and revealed through a literature research. These characteristic features included stance markers, contextual features, formal linguistic features and the rhetorical moves of a threat. The synthesis presented attributed toward a more comprehensive understanding of how threats typically manifest in linguistic terms. It also served as a basis for the empirical analysis of the present study, presented in chapter 5. By collating these, it was possible to provide a preliminary schematic representation of the interrelations between the elements of a threat, presented in a flow chart in Figure 2.5. The different types of threats were also described, in an effort to explain the differences between ransom notes, blackmail and bribery and hate mail. The literature review offered in this chapter served to identify the characteristic features of a written threat, which were included in the final framework under the category of *Elements of a Threat*. As such, chapter 2 contributed to achieving the first and third aim.

Chapter 3 provided answers in line with the research aims presented in section 1.1.2, numbers 2 and 3. In this chapter, the theoretical basis of threat texts was considered with reference to linguistic theory. In so doing, typical semantic, linguistic and stylistic features characteristic of threat texts were identified. The chapter considered the social construct of a threat (as defined in chapter 2), and how it manifests the feelings and emotions of an individual extending a threat. As such, theories that fall within the Systemic Functional Grammar approach were deemed applicable to analyse the social interaction that takes place in the context of written threats. Since a threat is a sociolinguistic construct, this chapter revealed the potential usefulness of considering contextual factors related to the society in which the threat was created, and the cultural influence

on the intended meaning of the text. These aspects were combined to form the basis for the category of *Social Context* in the framework that was developed.

To gain a deeper theoretical understanding of the construct of a threat (as identified in chapter 2), the theories of Linguistic Markedness (Chaski, 2005; Kotzé, 2010; McMenamin, 2002; and Olsson, 2008), Speech Acts (Austin, 1962) and Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature (Grice, 1975) were considered and found to be applicable for the purpose of this research. The notion of linguistic markedness seems to underpin the application of the other theories as the main aim is to describe how each of the elements presented in the final framework are realised by a particular author – either in a marked or unmarked way. By informing the analysis of the sample of threats with these theories, a multi-layered understanding of written threats was achieved. These theories prove useful to describe the features of the social act of threatening in linguistic terms, enabling the linguist to contribute in relevant forensic situations. This is intended to assist towards providing a linguistic profile of the author through noting the marked grammatical features analysed in the category of *Idiolect*. Notions informed by Speech Act Theory were captured in the category called *Pragmatic Features*. Speech Act Theory was used to note whether the threat was direct or indirect, and to describe what the illocutionary force of the words would likely be. It allowed for categorisation of the type of threat, and the type of speech act being performed in that specific word/phrase/sentence. Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature was also investigated, and it was found that all the text samples adhered strongly to these principles. This finding supports the idea that in order to effectively carry across a threat, is has to adhere to the Cooperative Principles. These linguistic theories as well as the conceptualisation of a threat as a socio-linguistic construct (see chapter 2), informed the preliminary framework (Figure 5.1) and offered the foundation for the empirical analysis (as explained in chapter 4).

Chapter 4 systematically presented the method followed to conduct empirical analysis. The research design was motivated to answer question 4; through applying a qualitative method. A qualitative stylistic approach utilising a combination of deductive and inductive procedures was used to perform an in-depth textual analysis to inform a description of written threats as defined in chapter 2. The three phases of the research procedure were described in this chapter.

- Phase 1 involved investigating the nature of the threat text, to accomplish the first research aim.
- Phase 2 concerned the manual textual analysis performed on the sample of texts, which confirmed most features that were identified in chapter 3. It also revealed additional features as characteristic of threats. This made it was possible to point out other characteristic features that were not mentioned in chapter 2 or 3. Characteristics that also

needed to be included in the list were identified; and characteristics that did not appear to have any effect in this context, were deleted or ignored.

- In Phase 3, the results were synthesised, and the preliminary framework was revised.

Ethical issues pertaining to this particular research was generally uncomplicated, as the sample texts were either publicly available or written permission was obtained to use them for analysis.

Chapter 5 discussed the results of the research and provided a preliminary framework. The results of the analysis, which were obtained by means of the framework, were summarised in various tables. These results were discussed, and shortcomings of the framework were identified (see Figure 5.1), whereupon the framework was revised (see Figure 5.2). Question 4 of this research was therefore answered, in that a framework was compiled and applied to threat texts, with successful outcomes. Through the combinations that were made in chapters 2 and 3, and the compilation of these features in four main categories, it was also possible to answer the main research question through the development of this framework (Figure 5.2) that can be applied to threat texts (Table 5.2) to measure the level of legitimacy within the threat text.

6.3 Summary of Results and Findings

Through answering the questions presented in section 1.1, it was possible to provide a comprehensive conclusion of the results and findings. Question 1 aimed to define the nature of threat texts. Therefore, chapter 2 contextualised *threat* in Forensic Linguistics, and conceptualised the term. A working definition for *threat* was provided as an “intentionally directed criminal act, through means of communication, making it relational and socially conditioned, declaring either direct or indirect harmful intentions toward a recipient, instilling fear of undesirable consequences due to a lack of compliance to the demand presented” (Collins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2003:659; Fitzgerald, 2005:2; Solan & Tiersma, 2005:223-225; Watt, Kelly & Llamas, 2013:99; Yus, 2013). Chapter 2 also outlined the characteristic features and linguistic choices of a threat which makes it possible for the perpetrator to create the impression of sincerity, in order to obtain adherence to his/her demands. Chapter 2 shows how stance, social context, literary and grammatical features, and rhetorical moves of a threat influence the text to bring about one of the various types of threats (see 2.4).

The question of providing a theoretical basis for analyses of threat texts was answered in chapter 3, which elaborated on linguistic theories that provide a comprehensive, objective analysis for forensic texts. This included stylistic theories such as the Theory of Markedness, which consider characteristic features of the author; Grice’s Theory of Conversational Implicature; and Speech Act Theory. These theories were included in the preliminary framework, with the purpose to

objectively analyse texts. However, all threat texts necessarily have to adhere to the Cooperative Principle in order for the threat to be clearly communicated and the principle therefore plays no role to distinguish threat texts from one another. In the case of marked features, these are stipulated individually throughout the entire framework. Speech Act Theory was applied to all the text analyses and it was found that texts that were marked by direct communication, presented a higher level of threat than those that were marked by indirect communication.

Both chapters 2 and 3 provide answers to the question “what linguistic features are characteristic of threat texts?” Question 3 was answered, as chapter 2 concerned all semantic and linguistic features, showing the specific features needed to achieve a threatening stance, while chapter 3 concerned the stylistic theories that consist of features found in a threat text. These two chapters constitute the results of the in-depth literature review to identify and consolidate linguistic features of threat, as identified by various prestigious authors and experienced forensic linguists. A preliminary framework was constructed on the basis of these results.

In order to corroborate the results of the literature review, and provide an answer to Question 4, “to what extent can a linguistic framework aid the objective and systematic evaluation of the legitimacy of threat texts?” the preliminary framework was applied to the sample of thirty threat texts in chapter 5. This analysis confirmed the selection of linguistic features as none were added. However, some redundancy was addressed, and the framework was reformulated accordingly. These amendments are discussed and illustrated in Chapter 5. Thus, the framework proposed in Figure 5.2 is the final result the literature review and the empirical analysis of 30 written threat texts.

The proposed framework (Figure 5.2) consolidates a range of linguistic features that pertain to extending a threat. In addition, it may serve as a foundation for future research and forensic linguistic practice, as it serves to inform a more objective and systematic analysis of such texts by identifying features that must be considered. More research is required, however, to validate the proposed framework for extended texts, different contexts and various languages. In addition, rigorous quantitative analyses are required before the proposed framework can be operationalised. However, through answering the four research questions, it was possible to address the main research question: “How can the linguist conduct an objective and systematic linguistic analysis of threat texts to inform the legitimacy of threatening texts for forensic purposes?” Through defining *threat*, providing characteristic features prominent in threat texts, using stylistic theories to increase objectivity, and producing a framework that incorporates all categories of a text (*Elements of a Threat*, *Idiolect*, *Social Context* and *Pragmatic Features*), it is possible to provide a comprehensive and objective analysis of a threat text, in order to calculate a percentage for the level of legitimacy that the text in question holds.

6.4 Future Recommendations

This research study aimed to offer guiding principles for standardising investigations of threats by offering a research-based foundation toward a framework for linguistic analysis of threatening text. All the categories that were identified for the proposed framework have proven to complement one another. The revised framework therefore serves as a foundation for future research. Furthermore, further research is warranted and necessary to validate the framework.

Future research could contribute toward a framework for the linguistic analysis of threatening texts by validating the proposed framework in different contexts, with a larger sample and with texts of different languages. The texts used for analysis in this research dissertation were not original to South Africa, and therefore, future research projects can look at applying this framework to South African texts, for example. In addition, rigorous quantitative analysis is required to validate the framework, and to make it operational. Ideally, a computational framework may be developed from such a basis.

The purpose for analysis may also be different. For example, an analysis of suicide notes would be able to determine whether the victim wrote the note before committing suicide; or whether the victim was murdered after being forced to write the note; or whether the note was written by someone else after the victim had been murdered. The framework could also be used to analyse letters written by convicted criminals on death row. Often, prisoners on death row persist to plead innocent, and justice could best be served if the authenticity of a text can be discerned by means of a reliable framework. Such frameworks aim to provide an objective and systematic approach to analysing texts in question and could therefore be relevant topics to pursue in the future.

Finally, future research could build on the foundation that the proposed framework provides toward a systematic and more objective linguistic analysis of a range of text types to help linguists describe the language; to aid understanding of how linguistic (and other) features of threat interrelate; and ideally to support linguists in providing and evaluating linguistic evidence.

6.5 Conclusion

Through explaining what the concept of Forensic Linguistics aims to achieve, and by finding underlying patterns of language, the question presented in chapter 1 could be answered. With specific reference to threat texts, it was asked whether it was possible to compile a framework that could facilitate an objective analysis that would assist in determining the legitimacy of threatening texts. This framework could then be used to achieve a more accurate analysis of the level of threat than in the past.

Through a thorough research of the nature of threat, the already available information on what a threat text entails, and the linguistic theories that have been used to analyse speech and communication, it was possible to arrive at the results presented in Table 5.2 and the final revised framework presented in Figure 5.2. The results proved that there is a way to compare threat texts with one another; and through coding the characteristic features, a percentile level of legitimacy of the threat text could be obtained. This was done through calculating the relative frequency of the number of times each category occurs in a threat text with the length of the text being kept in consideration. Once each category is calculated, the average percentage of the four categories is used to rank the level of threat presented in the text. The framework provided in Figure 5.2 can be used as a foundation for coding in future analyses, and can yield a more objective analysis, as shown in the results in chapter 5. The accuracy of the results of the analysis can always be improved, however, and with more research, an even more accurate outcome than the one presented in this dissertation can be achieved. Recommendations for further research accordingly includes finding a weighting system that can measure the weight of a category in the framework, as accuracy would be improved if the level of importance of each category were known, for example, *elements of a threat* should weigh less than *idiolect*.

Despite areas that can be improved, this research provides a foundation to future analyses of various forensic texts. It is possible to measure the legitimacy of a text of any sort by identifying the characteristic features of the text in question, and by numbering the occurrences of those features and by calculating a percentage of occurrences in relation to the length of the text. This concept could be applied in everyday investigations, whether the case is a kidnapping, fraudulent activities, blackmail or hate mail. The doors to presenting accurate linguistic evidence can be opened if objective linguistic theories are applied to the forensic inspection of a text. The characteristic features of threat texts (chapters 2 and 3) may be divided into four main categories (Figure 5.2) of a framework for analysis. The successful application of this framework (Table 5.2) creates the opportunity for further research in compiling linguistic theories and characteristic features of various text types, which can then be incorporated in these frameworks in order to objectively analyse texts. This research study has therefore contributed to the field of Applied Forensic Linguistics, by creating a foundation for further research of the application of a framework that can provide objective evidence in forensic cases.

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APPENDIX

Texts analysed

1. Anna Nicole Smith

Case study summary:

Anna Nicole Smith received threat via e-mail as well as posted on her website on the 4th of March 2004.

Texts of case study:

“I HAVE to kill you, and I will. I will also KILL your attorney. Neither of you understand why, but the earth is better off without you. One year, and you’re both dead”.

(FBI Records: the vault, 2004)

2. Annie Laurie Hearin

Case study summary:

Annie Laurie vanished from her mansion in Jackson Mississippi on July 26th in 1988. Her husband arrived home later that day and discovered a ransom note with smears of blood on it and was told to pay money to franchises owned by School pictures. He proceeded to hold a press conference begging for the return of his wife. However, he received a second note which demanded that he pay otherwise his wife would be placed in a sealed cellar. Even though he complied, his wife was never found (Leigh, 2019).

Text of case study:

Letter from kidnappers to Hearin:

“Mr. Robert Hearin, Put these people back in the shape they was in before they got mixed up with School Pictures. Pay them whatever damages they want and tell them all this so then can no what you are doing but don’t tell them why you are doing it. Do this before ten days pass. Don’t call police.”

Letter from wife to husband:

“Bob, if you don’t do what these people want you to do, they are going to seal me up in the cellar of this house with only a few jugs of water. Please save me, Annie Laurie.”

3. Anonymous Letter Smear Mail

Case study summary:

The following text was used presented in the appendix presented by Olsson (2008:204-205).

Text of case study:

To Whom it May Concern: (and I hope that's ALL of you!)

I am a true lover of Green Yellow Falls and the Green Yellow Falls area and that is why I am writing to you. I have been very, very disturbed about something for a long time but waited to see if perhaps you would become aware of the problem and take care of it without my needing to write to you. This has not happened so I feel it my civil duty to write to you. This has not happened so I feel it my civil duty to write this letter. Please understand that I would not normally do this but I am extremely fond of Green Yellow Falls and hate to see things happen that reflect so badly on the area.

I am referring to the Green Yellow Falls Inn which is promoted by your Chamber. What IS the criteria you follow recommending lodging in the Green Yellow Falls area? Do you screen these places in any way? Are you aware of the things that go on at this Inn? The woman who runs it – Louise – has been extremely rude to customers. The conversations that take place are very inappropriate for a public place or, as a matter of fact, for just about any place! There is talk of racism, violence, radical political topics, Nazis etc. there is talk of many weapons owned by the proprietors. There is negative talk about the Green Yellow Falls area. The children are often treated badly by their parents (The Browns). These are not isolated incidences either but have occurred many times for many years and talked about by several patrons (now former patrons) of the Inn. I just hope the people who go there do not become former patrons of the Green Yellow Falls area!

I thought that you might have become aware of these things but apparently not since this Inn is not only still on your website but even promoted this year in the Fall Art Tour brochure!!!! This does not reflect in any way positively on the Green Yellow Falls areas. Why is this allowed to go on? Does anyone care? Haven't you gotten other complaints about this?

I hope others have written so that this will not seem like one person complaining about some single unimportant incident. Believe me, that is not what this is. This is VERY important and should be taken seriously.

I hope that my letter will fall into the hands of someone who will take this seriously and realize what a mistake it is to promote this Inn. Green Yellow Falls is much too nice a place to be dragged down like this.

4. Anthrax analysis:

Case study summary:

In this case, there were 5 fatalities as well as 17 people who were critically ill from the biological attack where anthrax was sent with letters to the victims during the year of 2001 (FBI Archives).

Text of case study:

Letter 1:

09-11-01

YOU CAN NOT STOP US.
WE HAVE THIS ANTHRAX.
YOU DIE NOW.
ARE YOU AFRAID?
DEATH TO AMERICA.
DEATH TO ISRAEL.
ALLAH IS GREAT.

Letter 2 & 3 are identical:

09-11-01

THIS IS NEXT
TAKE PENACILIN NOW

DEATH TO AMERICA
DEATH TO ISRAEL

ALLAH IS GREAT

5. Army of God analysis:

Case study summary:

The case of Army of God was used for analysis by Gales (2010:282). (Shugerman, 2018) The

Text of case study:

THE BOMBING'S IN SANDY SPRING'S AND MIDTOWN WHERE CARRIED OUT BY THE UNITS OF THE ARMY OF GOD.

YOU MAY CONFRIM THE FOLLOWING WITH THE F.B.I. THE SANDY SPRING'S DEVICE'S – GELATIN – DYNAMITE – POWER SOURCE 6 VOLT D BATTERY BOXES, DURACELL BRAND, CLOCK TIMER'S. THE MIDTOWN DEVICE'S ARE SIMILAR EXCEPT NO AMMO CAN'S TUPPERWARE CONTAINERS INSTEAD – POWER SOURCE SINGLE 6 VOLT LANTERN BATTERIES. DIFFERENT SHRAPNEL, REGULAR NAIL'S INSTEAD OF CUTT NAILS.

THE ABORTION CLINIC WAS THE TARGET OF THE FIRST DEVICE. THE MURDER OF 3.5 MILLION CHILDREN EVERY WILL NOT BE "TOLERATED." THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE IN ANYWAY IN THE MURDER OF CHILDREN MAY BE TARGETED FOR ATTACK. THE ATTACK THEREFORE SERVES AS A WARNING: ANYONE IN OR AROUND FACILITIES THAT MURDER CHILDREN MAY BECOME VICTIMS OF RETRIBUTION. THE NEXT FACILITY TARGETED MAY NOT BE EMPTY.

THE SECOND DEVICE WAS AIMED AT AGENTS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT I.E. A.T.F., F.B.I., MARSHALL'S E.T.C. WE DECLARE AND WILL WAGE TOTAL WAR ON THE UNGODLY COMMUNIST REGIME IN NEW YORK AND YOUR LEGASLATIVE BUREAUCRATIC LACKEY'S IN WASHINGTON. IT IS YOU WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE AND PRESIDE OVER THE MUR OF CHILDREN AND ISSUE THE POLICY OF PEVERSION THAT DESTROYING OUR PEOPLE. WE WILL TARGET ALL FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. THE ATTACK IN MIDTOWN WAS AIMED AT THE SODOMITE BAR (THE OTHERSIDE). WE WILL TARGET SODOMITES, THERE ORGANIZATIONS, AND ALL THOSE WHO PUSH THEIR AGENDA.

IN THE FUTURE WHEN AN ATTACK IS MADE AGAINST TARGETS WHERE INNOCENT PEOPLE MAY BECOME THE PRIMARY CAUSALTIES. A WARNING PHONE CALL WILL BE PLACED TO ONE OF THE NEWS BUREAU'S OR 911.

6. Ashley Madison example 1

Texts of case study:

Hello [REDACTED], you don't know me but I know you very well. As you likely know, the Ashley Madison website was hacked a little while back and in the process some personal information from tens of millions of their clients was compromised. As scary as that sounds, most of their families will never find out. First, they would have to actively seek out the information. Second, the files containing the information are multiple gigabytes in size and are not all that convenient to access if you don't know how. There will be some spammers who shoot out mass threatening emails to those on the lists but they can safely be ignored. Only the unlucky few will draw the attention of a true blackmailer willing to actually research a target's family and acquaintances. Unfortunately, [REDACTED], you are one of the unlucky ones.

Yes, I know about your secret, that you paid for services from a company that specializes in facilitating adultery. But what makes me a threat to you is that I have also spent several days getting to know about you, your family and others in your life. All you have to do in order to prevent me from using this information against you, [REDACTED], is to pay me \$2,000. And before you ignore this letter, consider this: you received this via first class mail. It wasn't a spam email some Nigerian sent to thousands of people. That means I spent money on it. It means I took extensive counter-forensics measures to ensure that the Postal Inspector would not be able to track it back to me via post marks or via prints and DNA. It means I paid in cash for a printer that couldn't be traced back to me. I have spent considerable time and money on you, [REDACTED]. So if you decide to ignore me, you can be certain that I sure as hell won't ignore you.

The last man to whom I sent a similar letter decided to ignore me. Perhaps he thought I was bluffing. Feel free to contact him yourself if you wish to verify my sincerity. His name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and he is a redacted [REDACTED]. Their website is [REDACTED]. His phone number, if he hasn't changed it yet from embarrassment, is [REDACTED]. He used his office address for his credit card billing address on Ashley Madison but I was still able to track down his residential address, at [REDACTED]. From there it was a simple matter to learn that he has a wife named [REDACTED] who works for a [REDACTED]. He has a lovely college-aged daughter named [REDACTED], though she goes by [REDACTED].

So here is what I did when [REDACTED] did not pay up by the deadline. I of course anonymously contacted his wife, [REDACTED], and told her about [REDACTED]'s membership on Ashley Madison and told her how to confirm it for herself. But I didn't stop there. I also contacted [REDACTED]'s work

colleagues. I also contacted his daughter. And his daughter's boyfriend. And I contacted several of his superiors, peers, and subordinates at [REDACTED].

You see, [REDACTED], if you don't comply with my demand I am not just going to humiliate *you*, I am going to humiliate those close to you as well.

Then there was another man to whom I gave the same letter and he chose to pay. I'll call him "Mr. Wise". No, that isn't his real name. I am not going to share any of his information with you or anyone else. Ever. You see, HIS secret is safe with me. And he will never hear from me again.

So the only real question you need to ask yourself is whether you want me to treat you like [REDACTED] or like "Mr. Wise". That choice is completely yours.

If you do not wish me to destroy your life then send \$2000 in **BITCOIN** to the **Receiving Bitcoin Address** listed below. **Payment MUST be received within 10 days of the post marked date on this letter's envelope.** If you are not familiar with bitcoin, read the attached "How-To" guide. You will need the below two pieces of information when referencing the guide.

(Cluley, D. 2016).

7. Ashley Madison example 2 (Dave Eargle)

Texts of case study:

Hello [REDACTED], I'm going to cut to the chase. I know you cheated on your wife. More importantly, I have *evidence* of the infidelity. You don't know me personally and nobody hired me to look into you. Nor did I go out looking to burn you. It is just your bad luck that I stumbled across your misadventures while working a job. I then put in more time than I probably should have looking into your life. And I am going to give you two options that will accomplish that very thing. Those two options are to either ignore this letter or to pay me \$2,000. Let's examine those two options in more detail.

Option 1 is to ignore this letter. Let me tell you what will happen if you choose this path. I will take this evidence and send it to your wife. And as insurance against you intercepting it before your wife gets it, I will also send copies to her friends and family. So, [REDACTED], even if you decide to come clean with your wife about your cheating, doing so won't protect her from the humiliation she will feel when her friends and family find out the sordid details from me. Ignoring this letter *will* result in your wife and the people closest to her finding out about your adultery.

Option 2 is to pay me \$2,000. Now let me tell you what happens if you choose this path. I destroy the evidence and forget I ever heard of you. You go on with your life as though none of this happened. Though you may want to do a better job at keeping your indiscretions secret in the future.

At this point you may be thinking, "This is blackmail! I'll just go to the cops." Yes, this is blackmail. And yes, blackmail is illegal and I would likely do some jail time if caught. Which is why I have taken steps to ensure this letter cannot be traced back to me. So going to the cops won't stop the evidence from being sent out and would destroy your life the same as Option 1. I'm not looking to break your bank. I just want to be compensated for the time I put in investigating you. \$2,000 will close the books on that.

(Schlesinger & Day, 2018).

8. Carlos the Jackal Ransom Note

Text of case study:

(Reportedly dictated to British secretary Griselda Carey by Carlos the Jackal, born Ilich Ramirez Sanchez)

To the Austrian Authorities

We are holding hostage the delegations to the OPEC conference. We demand the lecture of our communiqué on the Austrian radio and television network every two hours, starting two hours from now.

A large bus with windows covered by curtains must be prepared to carry us to the airport of Vienna tomorrow at 1.00, where a full-tanked DC9 with a crew of three must be ready to take us and our hostages to our destination.

Any delay, provocation or unauthorized approach under any guise will endanger the life of our hostages.

The arm of the Arab Revolution

Vienna 21/XII/75

(Olsson, 2008:203-204)

9. Charles Lindbergh Ransom Note

Texts of case study:

Note 1:

Dear Sir!

Have 50.000\$ redy. 25000\$ bills in 20\$ bills 15000\$ in 10\$ bills and 10000\$ in 5\$ bills
After 2-4 days we will inform you were to deliver the mony.

We warn you for making anyding public or for notify the polise the child is in gute care.

[Indication for all letters are signature and 3 holes]

Note 2:

Dear Sir. We have warned you note to make anything public also notify the police now you have to take the consequences – means we will have to hold the baby until everything is quite. We can note make any appointments just now. We know very well what it means to us. It is realy necessary to make a world affair out of this, or to get your baby back as soon as possible to settle those affair in a quick way will be better for both – don't be afraid about the baby – keeping care of us day and night. We also will feed him according to the diet.

We are interested to send him back in gut health. And ransom was made aus for 50000\$ but now we have to take another person to it and probably have to keep the baby for a longer time as we expected. So the amound will be 70000 20000 in 50\$ bills 25000\$ in 20\$ bill 15000\$ in 10\$ bills and 10000\$ in 5\$ bills Don't mark any bills or take them from one serial nomer. We will form you latter were to deliver the money. But we will note do so until the Police is out of the cace and the pappers are quite. The kidnapping we prepared in years so we are prepared for everyding.

(Pelletreau, 2018).

10. Charles Ross Kidnapping

Texts of case study:

Letter 1: Mr. Ross forced to write this letter to his wife (Affectionately called "Dick")

Dear Dick

I am held for ransom. I have stated I am worth \$100,000.00 including the G.S. Carrington Co. stock held in escrow by First National Bank try and raise \$50,000.00

Yours

Charles S. Ross

Contact Harvey S. Brackett. Say nothing to anyone except Harvey.

All communications will be addressed to Williams Bay

Letter 2:

Dear Harvey S. Brackett

Have payment ready on instant notice, to be delivered by employee of Harley Davidson Co. on motorcycle. road to be designated later Rider to drop bag on highway at signal a shot, or repeated flashes of light. Rider to then continue forward for 300 yards and turn off Road on left side. To continue farther would be fatal. Money to be contained in small leather bag of following denomination.

20%

payment value

in \$5.00

50%

\$10.00

30%

in \$20.00

All money to be non consecutive and unmarked and of authentic origin. When ready insert following add in Chicago Tribune used cars for sale dept.

Dodge. Good cond. No defect. (amount)

(over)

amount ready

(example \$500.00 for \$50,000.00)

\$25.00 for \$2,500.00)

Name of Rider

and address

Harvey you are to hire a motorcycle rider from Harley Davidson Co. and get name and address Say nothing to anyone Except Dick.

Your friend
Charles S. Ross

for Albie

(Olsson, 2008:218-219; Pelletreau, 2018)

11. Engima Machine, ransom demand.

Text of case study:

Text 1:

I have been asked by the current owner above Engima machine, who purchased it in good faith to say and tell you now today, the unwitting person has no ultimate desire of depraving [sic] your august self or anyone the pleasure to see it again. It is though also not his position to freely give the possession for nothing either as the large sum is not to be lost that has been paid (here the police have blacked out the sum) but only on your full acceptance which are to be published nationally, with no conditions of escape on your part or any other person or official body involved in the matter.

[Blacked out paragraph]

A guarantee as said before in this letter that no pursuit of the unwitting now owner shall be made, this to get had by published notice in television and newspaper. This condition is of utmost desire to him and must be done for any further word can be exchanged to you on this matter. It is also of utmost importance also in this matter the person who will be as the negotiating medium will be afforded the same freedom of entanglement in this matter as they are not involved only on my insistence that they contract you to make this offer and for no other reason.

If no notice is to be seen by the day of Monday as the 18th day in September then nothing else is to be said again.

Text 2:

I have been instructed to inform you that negotiations for the return of the G312 are hereby terminated, and further, that the machine will not be destroyed.

(Olsson, 2008:208-209)

12. George Bush

Texts of case study:

Text 1: (Anti-war rally in San Francisco March 18, 2007)

KILL TERRORISTS

BOMB THERE HOUSE

KILL BUSH

BOMB HIS

F_ _ _ IN HOUSE

Text 2: (Protest November 20, 2003)

SAVE

MOTHER

EARTH

KILL

BUSH

Text 3: (Anti-war rally in San Francisco on March 18, 2007)

BUSH IS THE

DISEASE

DEATH IS THE

CURE

Text 4: (Anti-war rally in Los Angeles on March 15, 2008)

BUSH

the only

DOPE

WORTH

SHOOTING

Text 5: (Anti-war rally in San Francisco on March 18, 2007)

DEATH TO

WORLDS #1

TERRORIST. PIG

BUSH & HIS-SHEEP

Text 6: (Anti-war rally in San Francisco on March 18, 2007)

SMITE BUSH
FOR HE IS AN
ABOMINATION
UPON THE EARTH

Text 7: (Anti-war rally in San Francisco on February 16, 2003)

RIP
HERE LIES GEORGE
BUSH!
MASS MURDERER
OF HIS OWN
AND OTHERS
(FROM THE COMFORT
OF HIS OWN
HOME!)

(Anon, 2019)

13. Jack the Ripper

Texts of case study:

Dear Boss,

I keep on hearing the police have caught me but they wont fix me just yet. I have laughed when they look so clever and talk about being on the right track. That joke about Leather Apron gave me real fits. I am down on whores and I shant quit ripping them till I do get buckled. Grand work the last job was. I gave the lady no time to squeal. How can they catch me now. I love my work and want to start again. You will soon hear of me with my funny little games. I saved some of the proper red stuff in a ginger bottle over the last job to write with but it went thick like glue and I cant use it. Red ink is fit enough I hope ha. ha. The next job I do I shall clip the ladys ears off and send to the police officers just for jolly wouldn't you. Keep this letter back till I do a bit more work, then give it out straight. My knife's so nice and sharp I want to get to work right away if I get a chance. Good Luck.

Yours truly

Jack the Ripper

Don't mind me giving the trade name

PS Wasnt good enough to post this before I got all the red ink off my hands curse it No luck yet.

They say I'm a doctor now. ha ha

(Anon, 2017)

14. Jackson, M.S. Ransom note

Text of case study:

"SHERIFF" SHELDON

Bust another card room and we will bust her head!

Leave it alone like all others

Busting card rooms won't help make you a real sheriff.

Busting card rooms won't help her at all.

If you want her back, BACK OFF!

(Olsson, 2008:227-228)

15. Jesse Helms 1

Text of case study:

Dear Senator Helms,

Or to whoever reads this letter first.

Inform everyone who are national senators and representatives and say or show this letter amonge them.

A desolation has been decreed upon the nation and upon those in the nation. If I do not receive \$25,000 dollars in cashiers checks at \$25 each these things shall take place.

The two wings of the capital building shall crumble to the ground. It will happen in this manner.

Twenty four hours after this letter is read by anyone the walls of the two wings shall being to shake and will shake for 30 minutes. At the end of thirty minutes the walls will slowly give way allowing

any and all who are in there to flee. The crumbling will last for 30 minutes and at the end of the 30 minutes period all of the two wings of the capital shall be crumbled to the ground.

The part that holds the dome shall not be harmed, just the outer wings.

I will deal with the SBI official here in Murfreesboro N.C.

(Nini, 2017b:17)

16. Jesse Helms 2

Texts of case study:

FBI –

The Progressive Labor Party of Chicago, Illinois is going to kill U.S. Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. The reason we are going to do this is because the U.S. government has been committing atrocities against the members of the New Jewell Movement in Grenada ever since the United States invasion of Grenada in October, 1982. We are going to wait until Senator Helms visits Boston, Massachusetts. We are going to catch him in the subway station in Boston. Hispanic member of the Progressive Labor Party will sneak up behind Senator Helms while he is standing on the platform of the subway station waiting for the subway train to arrive. The Hispanic person will suddenly grasp Senator Helms' ankles with his hands and pull backwards. Helms will drop and smash his face hard onto the floor of the subway station. A white man will then quickly quietly kick Senator Helms in the side of his head like it's a football. Then three Chinese members of the Progressive Labor Party will grab Senator Helms and toss him head first off the platform onto the railway tracks in the subway station just before the subway train rolls past. When the front of the train runs over Jesse Helms it will smash him and squash him and slice him up so that he dies. After the subway train leaves the subway station, then a Black person who is a friend of the Progressive Labor Party will take photographs of Helms's remains to publish in the newspaper, "challenge". In the meantime the five heroes who knocked "scum of the earth" Helms onto the railway tracks will be riding on the train that ran over him and getting off at various stops to make good their escape. They will then go celebrate Helms' death.

(Nini, 2017b:21)

17. Jesse Helms 3

Text of case study:

Sir: I grew up in N.C., still have many friends there. It is, however, most unfortunate that you were elected as Senator from N.C. You are, unquestionably, the worst Senator ever elected by N.C.

Thank God, however, the tide is turning. With the help of distinguished Senators like Bob Packwood of Oregon or Goldwater of Arizona, not to mention Lowell Weicky of Comm., You are being revealed as the #1 scoundrel of all times.

I wish someone could push you down some stairs and break your neck.

PS – Real Time magazine of Sept. 82, pages 12 and 13. You will find your pictures on page 13, the unlucky page (because it has your ugly face on it)

To hell with Helms!

(Nini, 2017b:25)

18. John Paul Getty III

Summary of case study:

This case took place in 1973 on the 10th of July, around 3 in the morning, when the grandson of an oil billionaire was kidnapped and a ransom demand of \$17 million was made in order to see the safe return of 16-year-old John Paul Getty III. The kidnappers were later found to be Calabrian Bandits, and even though 9 of them were arrested, only two were charged as guilty. What makes this case interesting for analysis is that at first, authorities assumed that Getty had set the kidnapping up to manipulate his grandfather into paying the ransom for his own benefit. In this case, the test can be used to see if this prolonging of the search for Getty could have been started earlier if the analysis indicates a high level of legitimacy of the ransom note. Another interesting aspect is that there was only a phone call that was initially made, demanding \$17 million, later followed by a letter that Getty was forced to write to his mother and grandfather.

Getty was held in a cave in the Calabrian Mountains for 4-5 months, and was eventually found on a road between Naples and Rome in 1973, December 15th (Eszterhas, 2018). He was barely fed during this time, with little to drink except a small amount of alcohol. He suffered mentally for the years after he was found, and never fully recovered afterward.

Texts of case study:

Letter to mother:

"Dear Mommy, since Monday I have fallen into the hands of kidnappers. Don't let me be killed". Arrange things so that the police don't intervene. You must absolutely not take this thing as a joke. Try and get in contact with the kidnappers in the manner and the way they tell you. Don't let the public know about the negotiations if you don't want me killed. I want to live and be free again. Don't publicize my kidnapping. Pay, I beg you, pay up as soon as possible if you wish me well. This is all you have to know. If you delay, it is very dangerous for me. I love you, Paul."

Letter from kidnappers to mother:

This is Paul's ear. If we don't get some money within 10 days, then the other ear will arrive. In other words, he will arrive in little bits."

Letter to grandfather from Paul:

"I know that we haven't been very close but I hope you know that I love you. Please do whatever you can to get me out of here. This is serious. Love, Paul

Letter to lawyer directly from kidnappers:

Kidnappers: "This is a kidnapping. We are serious. Do as you are told and prepare a ransom".

"Did you get it"

Lawyers: "What are you talking about?"

Kidnappers: "the letter"

Lawyer: "Yes I got it."

Kidnappers: "We want to be paid in very small notes. You will be told later where the exchange will be done. Either we're paid or Paul is dead. Let us know on radio or TV if you agree to the terms".

Press conference: "The request is unreasonable. They should ask for less"

Kidnappers: "What do you mean you can't pay that much? You want to find the boy dead somewhere?"

Lawyer: "there isn't that much money in the whole world"

Kidnappers: "How much can you pay? Tell her to get it from London".

"We want three billion line"

"For \$100 000 we'll send you a photo of the boy missing an arm or leg."

Direct threat to Getty from kidnappers:

"Your grandfather better hurry or else we'll cut one of your fingers off. We'll send them a piece each month until they pay. We'll cut you into little pieces for a whole year. If you don't ask to sit

before you sit we'll cut something off. We're all cannibals. No, we're worse than cannibals, you know".

(Eszterhas, 2018; Paoletti, 2017).

19. Jon-Bennet Ramsey

Text of case study:

Mr. Ramsey,

Listen carefully! We are a group of individuals that represent a small foreign faction. We do respect your business but not the country it serves. At this time we have your daughter in our possession. She is safe and unharmed and if you want her to see 1997, you must follow our instructions to the letter.

You will withdraw \$118,000.00 from your account. \$100,000 will be in \$100 bills and the remaining \$18,000 in \$20 bills. Make sure that you bring an adequate size attached to the bank. When you get home you will put the money in a brown paper bag. I will call you between 8 and 10 am tomorrow to instruct you on delivery. The delivery will be exhausting so I advise you to be well rested. If we monitor you getting the money early, we might call you early to arrange an earlier delivery of the money and hence a earlier pick-up of your daughter.

Any deviation of my instructions will result in the immediate execution of your daughter. You will also be denied her remains for proper burial. The two gentlemen watching over your daughter do not particularly like you so I advise you not to provoke them.

Speaking to anyone about your situation, such as Police, F.B.I., etc., will result in your daughter being beheaded. If we catch you talking to a stray dog, she dies. If you alert bank authorities, she dies.

If the money is in any way marked or tampered with, she dies. You will be scanned for electronic devices and if any are found, she dies. You can try to deceive us, but be warned that we are familiar with law enforcement countermeasures and tactics. You stand a 99% chance of killing your daughter if you try to outsmart us. Follow our instructions and you stand 100% chance of getting her back. You and your family are under constant scrutiny as well as the authorities. Don't try to grow a brain John. You are not the only fat cat around so don't think that killing will be difficult.

Don't underestimate us John. Use that good southern common sense of yours. It is up to you now John!

Victory!

S.B.T.C.

(Olsson, 2008:217-218).

20. June Robles Birt

Case study summary:

In April 1934, June Robles was kidnapped and chained in a box and buried alive at the age of 6 in a box made of metal and wood, buried in the Arizona desert. There was food inside the box, and even though ants got in, but she managed to kill them. She was kidnapped in broad daylight, just after leaving school on her way to visit her aunt. A man approached her, claiming that her father had asked him to fetch her to meet him at the store. A ransom note was delivered to her father that same day by a young boy who had been paid \$.25 by a man if he were to give the letter to her dad. Her grandfather was known to be a wealthy and a well-known cattle baron and real-estate magnate. Correspondence took place in three ransom notes, and the final one gave location as to where she was buried. She was found 19 days later, still alive, having lived off bread and jam, graham crackers and fruit. She did, however, suffer bites and blisters from the ants and had a ceramic pot which she used as a toilet.

Texts of case study:

First ransom note:

This not included a demand of \$15000 and a threat to June's life if the contents of the letter were revealed, as well as detailed instructions on how to deliver the money.

Second ransom note: delivered to June's grandfather on 26th April

"Mr. Robles. Child safe. We are willing to reduce the ransom to \$10,000 if you act quickly. Child will be returned safely as per your instructions. Obey instructions. Signed Z."

Third ransom note: delivered to authorities underneath office door

Now if you play dirty, we will play dirty. Your child is OK. ... Keep spies away. Why don't you do as told? ... You have tried to trap us. We know what you have done. If you had listened to us, your child would be with you.

Now down to business. Your child will be released in 48 hours after money is delivered. We are going to shoot straight. We will keep our word.

Now or never. XYZ. OBEY."

Fourth note: not much direct information included

It described the desert area on the east of Tucson where June could be found.

“You will find the body covered with a load of cactus”

(Banks, 2003, Eubank, 2010; Ferrigon Media, 2017; Roberts, 2017)

21. Lampley Hollow Analysis

Texts of case study:

Hello asshole. This is the eve of the bloodiest day in the history of Lampley Hollow!

You fucks want to step outside the law to show us much of a fuck your mother is? Well, you have attacked innocent people, and now innocent people will pay, on your behalf. And a few cops trying to stop us.

Sunday is the final day of Founders Day. On that day a minimum of 20 people will die there.

Here is how it will happen: Your department will receive a phone call ten minutes to the top of an hour, to announce the countdown. At the hour, the first explosion will occur. Approximately six will die, mainly family members, and the bomber. This will start a panic, with people running in all directions. One of those directions will be toward the second bomber. Six seconds after the first explosion the second will occur, a distance from the first. Six more dead.

NOW for the big one. Two groups of people will collide, while escaping their respective explosions. At that time and place the third, largest explosion will occur. Eight dead, at least.

You wonder why we have people willing to do this and die over you? It's because they don't even know they are packing. And you cannot find them.

The people that die will even the score, and we start fresh. Don't fuckup or it will happen again. Perform your job with respect and dignity for the people you serve and you will save their lives. We regret this but feel an example of death is the only way to make you understand.

You remember the bomb in the planter last summer? That's right, the iron pipe bomb, with an electronic igniter. It was powered by four AA batteries in an Electronic supply pack, with a time delay. Don't count on a misfire this time. We worked out the ignition problems with that design.

It's a great day coming.

(Gales, 2010:277)

22. Luke Jon Helder: pipe bombers

Case study summary:

This text was left in Midwest America by a 21-year-old college student.

Text of case study:

Mailboxes are exploding! Why, you ask?

Attention people.

You do things because you can and want (desire) to

If the government controls what you want to do, they control what you can do.

If you are under the impression that death exists, and you fear it, you do anything to avoid it. (This is the same way pain operates. Naturally we strive to avoid negative emotion/pain.)

You allow yourself to fear death!

World authorities allowed, and still allow you to fear death!

In avoiding death you are forced to conform, if you fail to conform, you suffer mentally and physically. (Are world powers utilizing the natural survival instinct in a way that allows them to capitalize on the people?)

To "live" (avoid death) in this society you are forced to conform/slave away,

I'm here to help you realize/understand that you will live no matter what!

It's up to you people to open your hearts and minds. There is no such thing as death. The people I've dismissed from this reality are not at all dead.

Conforming to the boundaries, and restrictions imposed by the government only reduces the substance in your lives. When 1% of the nation controls 99% of the nations total wealth, is it a wonder why there are control problems?

The United States strives to provide freedom for their people. Do we really have personal freedom? I've lived here for many years, and I see much limitation. Does the definition of freedom include limitation? I've learned about the history of various civilizations in history, and I see more and more limitation. Do you people enjoy this trend of limitation? If not, change it!

As long as you are uninformed about death you will continue to say "how high", when the government tells you to "jump". As long as the government is uninformed about death they will continue tell you to "jump" Is the government uninformed about death or are they pretending?

You have been missing how things are, for very long. I'm obtaining your attention in the only way I can. More info is on its way. More "attention getters" are on the way. If I could, I would change only one person, unfortunately the resources are not accessible. It seems killing a single

famous person would get the same media attention as killing numerous un-famous humans. There is less risk of being abducted. Associated with dismissing certain people.

Sincerely,

Someone Who Cares

PS. More info will be delivered to various locations around the country.

(Olsson, 2008:198-199).

23. Marion Parker

Case study summary:

Marion Parker a 12-year-old girl, who was kidnapped by 19-year-old William Edward Hickman, who sent a ransom note to her father demanding a ransom of \$1500 in the form of \$20 gold certificates. The kidnapping took place through Hickman fetching her from school with the excuse that her father was ill and unable to come and fetch her himself. The teacher allowed her to go with, not taking note that she was one of a twin and that it would be odd to fetch her without her twin sister. The father paid the ransom and agreed to meet Hickman. From the car, it seemed to the father as if his daughter was sitting in the front seat of Hickman's car. Hickman drove off and dropped his daughter on the side of the road a way away from the meeting place. When the father arrived at her body, he found her torso wrapped in a blanket, having been choked to death to the point of her head being severed. In order to make her seem alive, Hickman had opened her eyes. He had also severed her legs and arms, and removed her internal organs, replacing them with rags and distributed them throughout LA. Her body showed signs of flogging as the skin of her back was ripped off, however there was no indication of sexual abuse. Her cause of death was either asphyxiation or the slitting of the throat. It was confirmed that her death was after the removal of her bowels.

Hickman attempted suicide twice in order to convince others that he was crazy, and was linked to the father as he had been fired by Mr. Parker prior to the kidnapping.

Texts of case study:

Ransom notes from Hickman to Parker:

First note: titled "Death" in Greek characters:

"Fox is my name, very sly you know. Get this straight. Your daughter's life hangs by a thread and I have a Gillette ready and able to handle the situation."

Second note: titled "Death"

The note demanded the ransom \$1500 in \$20 gold certificates to be prepared and delivered that night. It was also signed by "Fox Fate". This note included a letter that was written by Marion pleading for her father to comply:

"Please, Daddy, I want to come home tonight. Your loving daughter, Marion Parker"

They had arranged to meet on the 16th December, however, Hickman noticed police and didn't allow the transfer to take place. On the 17th of December came a third note:

"I will be two billion times as cautious and clever, as deadly from now on. You have brought this on yourself and you deserve it and worse. A man who betrays his love for his own daughter is a second Judas Iscariot.

(Gibbon, 2019)

24. Michael Sams

Text of case study:

Your employee has been kidnapped and will be released for a ransom of £175,000. With a little luck he should be still O.K. and unharmed, to prove this fact to you will in the next day or so receive a recorded message from him. He will be released on Friday 31 January 1992, provided:

On Wednesday 29 January a ransom of £175,000 is paid, and not extension to this date will be granted.

The police are not informed in any way until he has been released.

On Wednesday 29th at 4 pm (on line 021 358 2218) you will receive a short recorded message from the hostage. To prove he is still alive and O.K. he will repeat the first news item that was on the 10am, Radio 2 news. He will then give further instructions. A second and more detailed message will be given at 5:05 pm the same day. Your watch must be synchronized with the 5pm pips on Radio 2. The location of the second call will be given at 4pm, so transport with a radio must be available.

The money must be carried in a holdall and made up as follows, precisely;

£75,000 in used £20. £25,000 in used £10 packed in 31 bundles, 250 notes in each.

Kevin Watts (if not the hostage) must be the person to receive all messages and carry the money to the appointed place.

However, please note that all messages will be pre-recorded, so no communication or negotiations can be made.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED. HIS LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS.

(Olsson, 2008:231-232)

25. Peter Weinberger

Text of case study:

Attention.

I'm sorry this had to happen but I am in bad need of money and couldn't get it any other way. Don't tell anyone or go to the police about this because I am watching you closely. I am scared stiff and will kill the baby at your first wrong move.

Just put \$2000 in a brown envelope and place it next to the signpost at the corner of Albermarle Road and Park Avenue at exactly 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. If everything goes smooth I will bring the baby back and leave him on the same corner safe and happy at exactly 12noon.

No excuses, I can't wait!

Signed, Your babysitter.

(Raso, 2019)

26. Robert Wiles

Case study summary:

Robert Wiles was last seen on the 1st of April 2008, at that stage being 26 years of age, and living alone, working as a pilot for the family business: National Flight Services stationed at Lakeland Linder Airport, Ohio. His father, Tom Wiles receives a ransom note with the demand of \$750 000. He received two ransom notes, but Robert Wiles has never been found. He is therefore presumed to be dead.

Texts of case study:

E-mail from Robert's e-mail address:

"We have Robert. If you hope to see him alive again you must follow our instructions without deviation.

1. Do not speak about this to anyone including family tell everyone Robert is ill
2. Do not contact ANY authorities or private parties

3. Obtain an item of luggage of the appropriate size and place \$750 000 in small unmarked untraceable bills.
4. Place the luggage containing the money in a plain cardboard box and ship it to your lakeland facility with detailed instruction that it is highly confidential materials for a special project that your son is working on. You should instruct someone you trust to place the box unopened in your son's office.
5. This must be completed by the evening of the 8th. NO EXCUSES! NO EXCEPTIONS!

Remember we are watching everything and if you think you can outsmart us it will cost your son his life.

Group X"

Follow up text message from Robert's phone:

"Mr Wiles I suggest you read your Lakeland email if you ever want to see your son again. We can't imagine why you wouldn't answer a call from your son."

(Mattera, 2017; Warder, 2013)

27. Root@primenet

Text of case study:

Instead of hunting Lions in California, let us declare open season on State SENTIM LESLIE, his family, everyone he holds near and dear, the Cattlemen's association and anyone else who feels that LIONS in California should be killed.

I think it would be great to see this slimeball, asshole, conservative moron hunted down and skinned and mounted for our viewing pleasure.

I would rather see every right-wing nut like scumface Leslie destroyed in the name of political sport, then lose one mountain lion whose only fault is having to live in a state with a fucked up jerk like this shit-faced republican and his supporters.

Pray for his death. Pray for all their deaths.

(Olsson, 2008:205)

28. Suzanne Degnan

Case study summary:

Suzanne Degnan was a six-year-old girl living in Edgewater who was abducted from her room on Monday January the 7th, 1946. The first text found was written on the wall of her bedroom, and another text was a ransom note which was written on a small, oily piece of paper. Her body parts had been washed and were found on the same day distributed in different drains and sewers throughout the neighbourhood. People question whether the ransom note was itself a hoax or was actually real.

Texts of case study:

Text found on the wall of Suzanne's room: "For heavens sake catch me before I kill more I cannot control myself".

Ransom note under bedroom window: "Get \$20 000 Reddy & wAIte FoR WoRd. do NoT NoTiFy FBI oR Police. Bills IN 5's & 10's."

Back of ransom note: "BuRN This FoR heR SAfTY".

(Blommaert, 2012.)

29. Timmothy Pitzen

Case study summary:

This case is strange as the mother is the kidnapper of her own 6-year-old son. On May 11, 2011, she fetched her son from school in Aurora Illinois, just after 8:00 in the morning, and signed him out with the excuse of a family emergency. Amy Pitzen took her son on what subsequently seems as their last vacation together, and does not inform her husband of the change of events. Two days later, she informs her mother and brother-in-law that she and Timmothy are safe and just taking some time to get some space and distance from her husband James Pitzen. James was relieved from hearing that they were ok, and decided to wait until their return to talk through the events. Three days after the "kidnapping" the police appear at his front door, with some very disturbing news. He is informed that his wife was found dead in a motel in Rockford Illinois. Her death was classified as suicide, as evidence showed that she cut herself, however, the blood on the knife only belonged to her. Her son Timmothy was nowhere to be found, but there was a large amount of blood found on the back car seat. Two suicide notes were found.

Texts of case study:

Text from Amy to James:

"There is nothing you could have said or done that would have changed my mind. He is safe with people who love him and he will never be found"

Text from Amy to her mother:

"I've taken him somewhere safe. He will be well cared for and he says he loves you. Please know that there is nothing you could have said or done that would have changed my mind."

(Anon. 2019a; French, 2019)

30. Theodore Kaczynski (Unabomber)

Texts of case study:

The original text follows:

(Passage deleted at the request of the FBI)

This is a message from the terrorist group FC.

We blew up Thomas Mosser last December because he was a Burston- Marsteller executive. Among other misdeeds, Burston-Marsteller helped Exxon clean up its public image after the Exxon Valdez incident. But **we attacked Burston-Marsteller less for its specific misdeeds than on general principles.**

Burston-Marsteller is about the biggest organization in the public relations field. This means that **its business is the development of techniques for manipulating people's attitudes.** It was for this more than for its actions in specific cases that we sent a bomb to an executive of this company.

Some news reports have made the misleading statement that we have been attacking universities or scholars. **We have nothing against universities or scholars as such. All the university people whom we have attacked have been specialists in technical fields.** (We consider certain areas of applied psychology, such as behavior modification, to be technical fields.)

We would not want anyone to think that we have any desire to hurt professors who study archaeology, history, literature or harmless stuff like that. **The people we are out to get are the scientists and engineers, especially in critical fields like computers and genetics.** As for

the bomb planted in the Business School at the U. of Utah, that was a botched operation. We won't say how or why it was botched because we don't want to give the FBI any clues. No one was hurt by that bomb.

In our previous letter to you we called ourselves anarchists. Since "anarchist" is a vague word that has been applied to a variety of attitudes, further explanation is needed. **We call ourselves anarchists because we would like, ideally, to break down all society into very small, completely autonomous units.** Regrettably, we don't see any clear road to this goal, so we leave it to the indefinite future.

Our more immediate goal, which we think may be attainable at some time during the next several decades, is the destruction of the worldwide industrial system. Through our bombings we hope to promote social instability in industrial society, propagate anti-industrial ideas and give encouragement to those who hate the industrial system.

The FBI has tried to portray these bombings as the work of an isolated nut. We won't waste our time arguing about whether we are nuts, but we certainly are not isolated. For security reasons we won't reveal the number of members of our group, but anyone who will read the anarchist and radical environmentalist journals will see that opposition to the industrial-technological system is widespread and growing.

Why do we announce our goals only now, through we made our first bomb some seventeen years ago? Our early bombs were too ineffectual to attract much public attention or give encouragement to those who hate the system. We found by experience that gunpowder bombs, if small enough to be carried inconspicuously, were too feeble to do much damage, so we took a couple of years off to do some experimenting. We learned how to make pipe bombs that were powerful enough, and we used these in a couple of successful bombings as well as in some unsuccessful ones.

(Passage deleted at the request of the FBI)

Since we no longer have to confine the explosive in a pipe, we are now free of limitations on the size and shape of our bombs. We are pretty sure we know how to increase the power of our explosives and reduce the number of batteries needed to set them off. And, as we've just indicated, we think we now have more effective fragmentation material. **So we expect to be able to pack deadly bombs into ever smaller, lighter and more harmless looking packages.**

On the other hand, we believe we will be able to make bombs much bigger than any we've made before. With a briefcase-full or a suitcase-full of explosives we should be able to blow out the walls of substantial buildings.

Clearly we are in a position to do a great deal of damage. And it doesn't appear that the FBI is going to catch us any time soon. The FBI is a joke.

The people who are pushing all this growth and progress garbage deserve to be severely punished. But our goal is less to punish them than to propagate ideas. Anyhow we are getting tired of making bombs. It's no fun having to spend all your evenings and weekends preparing dangerous mixtures, filing trigger mechanisms out of scraps of metal or searching the sierras for a place isolated enough to test a bomb. **So we offer a bargain.**

We have a long article, between 29,000 and 37,000 words, that we want to have published. If you can get it published according to our requirements we will permanently desist from terrorist activities. It must be published in the New York Times, Time or Newsweek, or in some other widely read, nationally distributed periodical.

Because of its length we suppose it will have to be serialized. Alternatively, it can be published as a small book, but the book must be well publicized and made available at a moderate price in bookstores nationwide and in at least some places abroad. Whoever agrees to publish the material will have exclusive rights to reproduce it for a period of six months and will be welcome to any profits they may make from it.

After six months from the first appearance of the article or book it must become public property, so that anyone can reproduce or publish it. (If material is serialized, first instalment becomes public property six months after appearance of first instalment, second instalment, etc.)

We must have the right to publish in the New York Times, Time or Newsweek, each year for three years after the appearance of our article or book, three thousand words expanding or clarifying our material or rebutting criticisms of it.

The article will not explicitly advocate violence. There will be an unavoidable implication that we favor violence to the extent that it may be necessary, since we advocate eliminating industrial society and we ourselves have been using violence to that end. But the article will not advocate violence explicitly, nor will it propose the overthrow of the United States Government, nor will it contain obscenity or anything else that you would be likely to regard as unacceptable for publication.

How do you know that we will keep our promise to desist from terrorism if our conditions are met? It will be to our advantage to keep our promise. **We want to win acceptance for certain ideas. If we break our promise people will lose respect for us and so will be less likely to accept the ideas.**

Our offer to desist from terrorism is subject to three qualifications.

- First: Our promise to desist will not take effect until all parts of our article or book have appeared in print.
- Second: If the authorities should succeed in tracking us down and an attempt is made to arrest any of us, or even to question us in connection with the bombings, we reserve the right to use violence.
- Third: We distinguish between terrorism and sabotage. By terrorism we mean actions motivated by a desire to influence the development of a society and intended to cause injury or death to human beings. By sabotage we mean similarly motivated actions intended to destroy property without injuring human beings. **The promise we offer is to desist from terrorism. We reserve the right to engage in sabotage.**

It may be just as well that failure of our early bombs discouraged us from making any public statements at that time. We were very young then and our thinking was crude. Over the years we have given as much attention to the development of our ideas as to the development of bombs, and we now have something serious to say. And we feel that just now the time is ripe for the presentation of anti-industrial ideas.

Please see to it that the answer to our offer is well publicized in the media so that we won't miss it. Be sure to tell us where and how our material will be published and how long it will take to appear in print once we have sent in the manuscript. If the answer is satisfactory, we will finish typing the manuscript and send it to you. If the answer is unsatisfactory, we will start building our next bomb.

We encourage you to print this letter.

FC

(Passage deleted at the request of the FBI)

(Farhi, 2015; Kaczynski, 1995)

[REDACTED]

Hello [REDACTED], you don't know me but I know you very well. As you likely know, the Ashley Madison website was hacked a little while back and in the process some personal information from tens of millions of their clients was compromised. As scary as that sounds, most of their families will never find out. First, they would have to actively seek out the information. Second, the files containing the information are multiple gigabytes in size and are not all that convenient to access if you don't know how. There will be some spammers who shoot out mass threatening emails to those on the lists but they can safely be ignored. Only the unlucky few will draw the attention of a true blackmailer willing to actually research a target's family and acquaintances. Unfortunately, [REDACTED], you are one of the unlucky ones.

Yes, I know about your secret, that you paid for services from a company that specializes in facilitating adultery. But what makes me a threat to you is that I have also spent several days getting to know about you, your family and others in your life. All you have to do in order to prevent me from using this information against you, [REDACTED], is to pay me \$2000. And before you ignore this letter consider this: You received this via first class mail. It wasn't a spam email some Nigerian sent to thousands of people. That means I spent money on it. It means I took extensive counter-forensics measures to ensure the Postal Inspector would not be able to track it back to me via post marks or via prints and DNA. It means I paid cash for a printer that couldn't be traced back to me. I have spent considerable time and money on you, [REDACTED]. So if you decide to ignore me, you can be certain that I sure as hell won't ignore you.

The last man to whom I sent a similar letter decided to ignore me. Perhaps he thought I was bluffing. Feel free to contact him yourself if you wish to verify my sincerity. His name is [REDACTED] and he is a [REDACTED]. Their website is [REDACTED]. His phone number, if he hasn't changed it yet from embarrassment, is [REDACTED]. He used his office address for his credit card billing address on Ashley Madison but I was still able to track down his residential address, at [REDACTED]. From there it was a simple matter to learn that he has a wife named [REDACTED] who works for a [REDACTED]. He has a lovely college-aged daughter named [REDACTED], though she goes by [REDACTED].

THIS DOCUMENT IS TWO-SIDED

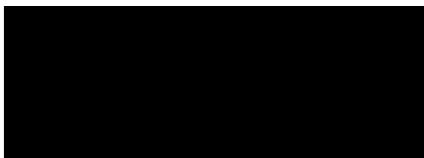
So here is what I did when [REDACTED] did not pay up by the deadline. I of course anonymously contacted his wife, [REDACTED], and told her about [REDACTED]'s membership on Ashley Madison and told her how to confirm it for herself. But I didn't stop there. I also contacted [REDACTED]'s work colleagues. I also contacted his daughter. And his daughter's boyfriend. And I contacted several of his superiors, peers, and subordinates at [REDACTED].

You see, [REDACTED], if you don't comply with my demand I am not just going to humiliate *you*, I am going to humiliate those close to you as well.

Then there was another man to whom I gave the same letter and he chose to pay. I'll call him "Mr. Wise". No, that isn't his real name. I am not going to share any of his information with you or anyone else. Ever. You see, HIS secret is safe with me. And he will never hear from me again.

So the only real question you need to ask yourself is whether you want me to treat you like [REDACTED] or like "Mr. Wise". That choice is completely yours.

If you do not wish me to destroy your life then send \$2000 in **BITCOIN** to the *Receiving Bitcoin Address* listed below. **Payment MUST be received within 10 days of the post marked date on this letter's envelope.** If you are not familiar with bitcoin, read the attached "How-To" guide. You will need the below two pieces of information when referencing the guide.



Hello [REDACTED], I'm going to cut to the chase. I know you cheated on your wife. More importantly, I have *evidence* of the infidelity. You don't know me personally and nobody hired me to look into you. Nor did I go out looking to burn you. It is just your bad luck that I stumbled across your misadventures while working a job. I then put in more time than I probably should have looking into your life. Frankly, I am ready to forget all about you and let you get on with your life. And I am going to give you two options that will accomplish that very thing. Those two options are to either ignore this letter or to pay me \$2,000. Let's examine those two options in more detail.

Option 1 is to ignore this letter. Let me tell you what will happen if you choose this path. I will take this evidence and send it to your wife. And as insurance against you intercepting it before your wife gets it, I will also send copies to her friends and family. So, [REDACTED] even if you decide to come clean with your wife about your cheating, doing so won't protect her from the humiliation she will feel when her friends and family find out the sordid details from me. Ignoring this letter *will* result in your wife and the people closest to her finding out about your adultery.

Option 2 is to pay me \$2,000. Now let me tell you what happens if you choose this path. I destroy the evidence and forget I ever heard of you. You go on with your life as though none of this happened. Though you may want to do a better job at keeping your indiscretions secret in the future.

At this point you may be thinking, "This is blackmail! I'll just go to the cops." Yes, this is blackmail. And yes, blackmail is illegal and I would likely do some jail time if caught. Which is why I have taken steps to ensure this letter cannot be traced back to me. So going to the cops won't stop the evidence from being sent out and would destroy your life the same as Option 1. I'm not looking to break your bank. I just want to be compensated for the time I put in investigating you. \$2,000 will close the books on that.

ANNEXURES

LAST UPDATED: 24 FEBRUARY 2020