

## Brief Analysis

Rosenberg and Siobhan present the United States as the primary director of the war in Afghanistan. They use modifiers to add more credibility to their sayers and constantly remind the reader that it is the United States that is behind all the progress made in Afghanistan. They highlight al Qaeda's diminishing role, mirroring their powerlessness by placing them as the agent and experiencer of passive material and mental processes, respectively. Rosenberg supports the broad campaign which targets the Taliban. In order to convince the reader that it is the Taliban that must be subdued, he emphasizes that the Taliban is an prevalent threat. Rosenberg uses modifiers to elevate the Taliban's rebellion to violent and savage. Finally, Rosenberg places the Taliban as the agent of active material processes while presenting al Qaeda as experiencers of passive mental processes.

In this brief analysis of Rosenberg's article, I consulted English Grammar: A university Course by Angela Downing and Philip Locke for all grammatical structures. All of the quotations I use in this essay are taken solely from Matthew Rosenberg and Siobhan Gorman's article: "Al Qaeda's Diminished Role Stirs Afghan Troop Debate," published in the Wall Street Journal on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009. All of the important grammatical structures that I would like to draw attention to are emphasized using bold font.

After reading the article, one feels confident about the United States' control over the situation in Afghanistan. This can be attributed to the modifiers in this text. Rosenberg modifies the sayers with words like "senior", "retired" or "university professor" to give the reader the impression that what they are told comes from the voices of credible sayers. An example of this is illustrated below, where the heads of these two nominal groups have been modified to enhance their credibility.

Example 1	Determiner	<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Modifier</b>	Head
	A	senior	military	official
Example 2	<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Modifier</b>	Head	
	Retired	Gen.	James Jones	

In both of these examples, the modifiers could have been removed and the sentences would have remained complete. However, when Rosenberg writes “Retired Gen. James Jones ... acknowledged” instead of merely “James Jones ... acknowledged,” he builds the sayers credibility and inspires confidence in the reader that what was said is true. Rosenberg builds on this confidence and relates it to the United States' position in Afghanistan.

Rosenberg uses modifiers to draw attention to who is subduing al Qaeda, often using “U.S.” to modify verbs or nouns. This increases the readers confidence in the United States and the success of their actions in Afghanistan. The reader is always aware that it was a

<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Head</b>	<b>Preposition</b>	<b>Compliment</b>
U.S.	campaign	of	missile strikes

that disrupted al Qaeda's leadership hierarchy,

<b>Determiner</b>	<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Head</b>
the	U.S.	Central Intelligence Agency

killed many dangerous men associated with al Qaeda and the

<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Head</b>
U.S.	Officials

are reporting the positive results in their campaign to eliminate al Qaeda. All of the previous examples would be valid sentences if the “U.S.” modifier was removed. However, without this modifier the reader would not be reminded that it is the United States that is responsible for all of the advances in Afghanistan.

Rosenberg often places al Qaeda in the role of agent or experiencer. In those situations, al

Qaeda is the participant in passive processes. This leaves the reader with the impression that al Qaeda is struggling. In the following sentence, al Qaeda is the affected, experiencer, and agent.

Material process	Connective adjunct	Agent	Material process	Connective adjunct
Hunted	by	U.S. drones,	beset	by
Phenomenon	Connective adjunct	Material process	Affected	Material process
money problems	and	finding	it tougher	to lure
Affected	Nominal group <i>Determiner Modifier Head</i>	Post modifier Circumstantial adjunct <i>Preposition Compliment</i>	<b>Affected Experiencer Agent</b>	
young Arabs	to the bleak mountains	of Pakistan,	al Qaeda	
Relational process	Mental process	Verbal group <i>possessor</i>	Affected <i>possessed</i>	Material process Phenomenon
is	seeing	its	role	shrink
Circumstantial adjunct				
there and in Afghanistan				

In this clause, al Qaeda is affected by the American drones, the agent. This, once again, reminds the reader that the United States is actively hunting al Qaeda. Both material processes, in which al Qaeda is the affected, are active. Al Qaeda is “beset” by troubles, unable to obtain funding and lure recruits. Rosenberg uses active material processes to target al Qaeda. Rosenberg has paired the active material process, “finding,” of which al Qaeda is an agent, with an affected group that demonstrates diminished power, rather than strength – they are “finding it tougher to lure young Arabs.” Al Qaeda is the agent of the active material process, “finding,” however, they are not able to act in a way that will advance their position, as the United states is. Rosenberg ensures that the active material process al Qaeda participates in is one that highlights how their power has diminished. The mental process, “seeing,” of which al Qaeda is an experiencer, is passive. Rosenberg emphasizes that al Qaeda is incapable of taking on the role of an agent in an active

process. The role of al Qaeda is presented to the reader as diminishing and passive.

Rosenberg hints at his support of continuing the broad war against the Taliban. He does so by portraying the Taliban as dangerous and active, while describing al Qaeda as a subdued, diminishing presence in the Afghanistan war. Rosenberg often modifies the Taliban or its actions with: radical, violent, brazen, or savage. In contrast, he modifies al Qaeda and their circumstances with: diminishing, struggling, shrinking or relying. This suggests that the Taliban is much more capable of harm than al Qaeda. This is illustrated in the following example:

<b>Subject</b> Nominal group Determiner	Head	Agent Experiencer	Relational process		<b>Material process</b>
The	Taliban	insurgency	has become		increasingly
Phenomenon Post Modifier of insurgency			Connective adjunct	<b>Material process</b>	
violent and brazen			and	spread to	
Affected	Locative compliment		Connective adjunct	Circumstantial adjunct	
areas	of Afghanistan		that	only a year ago	
Connective compliment	Mental process	<b>Modifier</b>	Phenomenon	<b>Subject</b> Nominal group Experiencer	Relativizer
were	considered	solidly	pro-government.	Al Qaeda,	in contrast,
<b>Mental process</b>	Affected		Phenomenon Material process		Connective adjunct
has seen	its role		shrink		because
Agent	<b>Material process</b>		<b>Material process</b>	Affected	Connective adjunct
it	is struggling		to raise	money	from
Relational process Possessor	Modifier	Nominal group	Preposition	Compliment Possessed	Connective adjunct

its	global	network	of	financiers	and
Material process	Affected				
attract	recruits.				

In this passage, the Taliban and al Qaeda are both subjects within their own independent clauses. Rosenberg uses “in contrast” to link the comparison of al Qaeda's position to the Taliban's. Rosenberg depicts the Taliban's position as one that is capable of harm. The Taliban is active. Its rebellion is becoming “increasingly violent and brazen.” The material process used here forms an image in the reader's of mind of growth. The Taliban's rebellion is becoming more and more “violent and brazen.” The post modifiers of insurgency depict the group as threatening and dangerous. The agent, their “insurgency,” has the ability “to spread” - another active material process. Rosenberg continues to depict the Taliban's rebellion as dynamic, active and powerful. Rosenberg draws attention to the power of the Taliban by modifying “pro-government.” Though the sentence would have been complete without it, Rosenberg uses “solidly” to modify “pro-government.” This informs the reader that the Taliban is capable of penetrating even strong and well established regions. These techniques herald the Taliban as a growing threat and heighten the need for a campaign that targets them.

In contrast, al Qaeda is depicted as a passive subject. It is the experiencer of the passive mental process “has seen” - al Qaeda as watching “its role shrink.” The two material processes, “increasing” and “shrinking,” play very different roles. The reader's mind is filled with the contrast between al Qaeda's shrinking role and the Taliban growing as an active threat. The material process, “to raise,” is coupled with struggling; the reader is told that al Qaeda is having difficulties raising money and attracting recruits, both of which would be considered threatening

activities.

Rosenberg's style reflects his nationalism. It appears common in the American news to draw attention to the United State's superiority in and control over the situation in Afghanistan. This news article is filled with the modifier "U.S." and this constantly reminds the reader of an American presence in Afghanistan. Though he instills confidence in the American position in Afghanistan, Rosenberg's article also participates in fear mongering. As illustrated in the previous example, Rosenberg modifies the Taliban's insurgency with "violent and brazen." These modifiers increase fear in the reader as the Taliban are portrayed as vicious attackers. Rosenberg could have communicated his ideas without such fear inducing words, but instead he chooses these modifiers in order to emphasize the fearsomeness of America's enemies.

Rosenberg's article is filled with modifiers and active material processes that make the reader feel confident in America's actions in Afghanistan while maintaining the urgency of the war. The sayers in this article are modified to increase their credibility and the events and decisions that revolve around the war in Afghanistan are modified with "U.S." to constantly remind the reader that it is the United States that is behind all actions. His style is consistent with American journalism, in which the United states is portrayed as superior and the readers are lead to fear the foreign terrorist groups.

## Works Cited

- Downing, Angela and Philip Locke. English Grammar: a University course. Ed. 2. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Rosenberg, Matthew and Siobhan Gorman. "Al Qaeda's Diminished Role Stirs Afghan Troop Debate." Wall Street Journal. (2009): A.1.