DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT:
A CONTEXTUAL PRESENTATION OF PORTER AND
O'DONNELL'S *DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE GREEK NEW
TESTAMENT*[1]

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Abstract: This paper introduces Porter and O'Donnell's *Discourse Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, the focus of discussion in a session of the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting in 2024. The paper attempts to place Porter and O'Donnell's introduction to discourse analysis within the larger context of discourse analysis as a whole and the New Testament in particular. To do so, the paper begins with a brief history of discourse analysis from its inception to more recent developments in the field. It then responds to objections to use of discourse analysis in New Testament study that have hindered its use. The final section summarizes the contributions of Porter and O'Donnell's volume, which provides a complete discourse analytic, even if it focuses upon the textual metafunction using Systemic Functional Linguistics. (Article)

Keywords: discourse analysis, Greek New Testament, textual metafunction, Systemic Functional Linguistics, context

1. *Introduction*

In this brief paper, I wish to set a context for discourse analysis of the New Testament. I believe that discourse analysis should play a much larger role than it has in New Testament studies. There

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1.   Porter and O'Donnell, *Discourse Analysis*. This paper was prepared as an opening statement for a review session of this book in the New Testament Greek Language and Exegesis section at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting in San Diego, November 20–22, 2024.

was a time in linguistics itself when it was said, by at least one scholar, that he envisioned a future time when linguistics consisted of morphology and discourse analysis. By this, I believe that he was indicating that discourse analysis was so important and so encompassing that it would basically subsume all the other areas of importance in language study apart from the basic semantic and formal building blocks we call morphemes. In other words, discourse analysis would encompass what is traditionally referred to as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (although not necessarily configured in the same way), and as we shall see, beyond that, extending to context and culture. That day has *not yet* arrived in linguistics and still appears to be a ways off—although perhaps closer than we might realize—but in New Testament studies, it is but a distant dream for only a few, and perhaps not even a dream but a possible nightmare for many others.

In this paper, I will first discuss discourse analysis and its development as a means of describing texts in New Testament studies, before saying a few things about Porter and O'Donnell's *Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament* (2024). My emphasis will be upon the context in which Porter and O'Donnell is written and the issues it was designed to address, rather than presenting in detail what is better covered within the book itself.

2. *Discourse Analysis: A Brief History*

2.1 *Early History*

The term "discourse analysis"[2] was apparently first used or, to an extent, made popular (if that is the right term), at least within North American scholarship, by the American linguist Zellig Harris in two articles published in the journal of the Linguistic Society of America, *Language*, in 1952.[3] Most of us probably have some idea of what constitutes discourse analysis. Here is what Harris says that it is:

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2.   This means of describing discourse analysis is influenced by Schiffrin, *Approaches to Discourse*, 20–22. For a contrasting view, see Beaugrande, *Text*, xi–xiv.

3.   See Barsky, *Zellig Harris*.

> A method for the analysis of connected speech (or writing). The method is formal, depending only on the occurrence of morphemes as distinguishable elements; it does not depend upon the analyst's knowledge of the meaning of each morpheme. By the same token, the method does not give us any new information about the individual morphemic meanings that are being communicated in the discourse under investigation.[4]

However, he does say that additional information is provided in one regard:

> The analysis of the occurrence of elements in the text is applied only in respect to that text alone—that is, in respect to the other elements in the same text, and not in respect to anything else in the language. As a result of this, we discover the interrelations of the morphemes of the text as they occur in that one text; and in so doing we discover something of the structure of the text, of what is being done in it. We may not know just what a text is saying, but we can discover how it is saying—what are the patterns of recurrence of its chief morphemes.[5]

In other words, Harris performed a formal analysis, what he called a morphemic analysis of individual texts, by which he examined the distribution of morphemes. This is very similar to his string analysis of sentence structure, which he saw as a stage between "traditional constituent analysis and transformational analysis."[6] Harris went on to publish two further articles on discourse analysis and then a small book with four further essays, three of which were discourse analyses of individual texts using his method of morphemic analysis.[7] The statements above, supported by his further essays, show that Harris was a structural linguist, a North American descriptivist, a formalist, and not a semanticist.[8] Noam Chomsky, not surprisingly, was his most well-known student.

Such an approach to discourse analysis, however, may come as something of a surprise to those who have some acquaintance with

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4. Harris, "Discourse Analysis," 1.
5. Harris, "Discourse Analysis," 1.
6. Harris, *String Analysis of Sentence Structure*, 7.
7. Harris, "Discourse Analysis: A Sample Text"; "Culture and Style," 210–15; and Harris, *Discourse Analysis Reprints*.
8. See Harris, *Structural Linguistics*.

discourse analysis, at least as it is usually discussed and practiced both within linguistics and within New Testament studies. Nevertheless, such a definition also may make clear why it is that there may be some residual resistance to discourse analysis in some interpretive circles, especially since it would appear from Harris's definition that discourse analysis is not concerned with meaning—at least meaning as we typically think of it—but with something else, textual structure, and its concern with textual structure is complex and far from intuitive. There were some efforts to extend the kind of discourse analysis that Harris represented, much of which focused upon the clause or sentence as a structural unit. This is where the notion develops that discourse analysis is concerned with language beyond the sentence or clause, and most discourse analysis continues to include this as an important defining feature, even if other features have emerged as equally important. However, most of the work confined to the clause or sentence has been forgotten, and probably for good reason since such a path—to be candid—seems desiccated and barren of the kinds of interests that excite people about dealing with texts since it tends to remain within the realm of distributions and strings and the like first promoted by Harris.

2.2 *More Recent Developments*
Instead of Harris and his followers, the major motivations for development of discourse analysis, especially in North America but also in Europe, were found in more functional, social, and communal models of language that emerged in the 1960s and then flourished in the 1970s and 1980s. Several different streams have been identified as contributing to this development. Deborah Schiffrin, in her survey of discourse analysis, cites the following:[9]
2.2.1 *Speech Act Theory*. In the 1960s, although neither J. L. Austin nor John Searle was a linguist or particularly concerned with discourse analysis,[10] their basic notion of the performative nature of language has had an influence upon linguistics, including discourse analysis. According to their work, language is not just

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9.   Schiffrin, *Approaches to Discourse Analysis*, 45–334, from which the following six categories are taken and the content of their descriptions.
10.   Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Searle, *Speech-Acts*.

about content but about doing or meaning. These ideas were taken up by functionalists (e.g., John Sinclair, Matthew Coulthard, M. A. K. Halliday; see *Systemic Functional Linguistics* below). However, there have in fact been relatively few actual speech-act discourse analysts, even if speech-act theory is included as a part of a larger discourse analytic model.

2.2.2 *Interactional Sociolinguistics*. Based on the theories of John Gumperz and Erving Goffman, interactional sociolinguistics is concerned with how culture, society, and language interact with each other, that is, how language plays a part in society and culture and its users.[11] Various discourse analysts have applied this work in politeness theory (e.g., Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson) and with various models of language interaction (e.g., Schiffrin and Deborah Tannen).[12]

2.2.3 *Ethnography of Communication*. Based on the research of the sociolinguist Dell Hymes,[13] the ethnography of communication has, along with interactional sociolinguistics, had perhaps the largest influence on discourse analysis of any of the social models by examining "patterns of communication as part of cultural knowledge and behavior."[14] Hymes's theory of communicative components—SPEAKING (*s*etting, *p*articipants, *e*nds, *a*ct sequence, *k*ey, *i*nstrumentalities, *n*orms, and *g*enre)—is recognizably similar to some other models that attempt to define context, in particular some of the components of context in Systemic Functional Linguistics.[15]

2.2.4 *Pragmatics*. Although pragmatics is a large and encompassing area, much discourse analysis here is based upon H. P. Grice's conversational implicature as a means of describing verbal semiotics.[16] Grice's conversational implicature is concerned with the co-operative principle and maxims of quality, quantity, relevance,

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11. Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies*; Goffman, *Presentation of Self*.

12. Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*; Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers*; Tannen, *Conversational Style*.

13. Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics*.

14. Schiffrin, *Approaches to Discourse*, 137.

15. Hymes, "Models of the Interaction of Language," esp. 58–65 and summarized on 65 (revision of an essay first published in 1967) and also found in a slightly altered form in Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics*, 53–62.

16. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*.

and manner. Relevance theory is arguably a discourse approach based on pragmatics.[17]

2.2.5 *Conversation Analysis*. Influenced by phenomenology (especially the sociologist Alfred Schutz), conversation analysis was applied to conversation by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson and has been developed further by others.[18] It is similar to interactional and ethnographic models but focuses upon the orderliness of conversation, such things as turn-taking in discourse.

2.2.6 *Variation Analysis*. Based upon the work of William Labov, variation analysis is a linguistic approach that focuses upon semantics and then upon texts and how variation in language use reflects differences of meaning because of the constraints of the text.[19] This is the largest area of study within sociolinguistics and shows the close relationship between discourse analysis and sociolinguistics in terms of both being concerned with language use in social contexts.

Two further approaches that Schiffrin does not mention that have been very important are the following developments.

2.2.7 *Tagmemics*. Based upon the work of Kenneth L. Pike, tagmemics had a big influence upon the development of discourse analysis, developed further by Robert Longacre, especially in the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which has focused upon study of the Bible. The influence of tagmemics has now waned. Pike's tagmemics, in which language is seen as a form of human behavior, focuses upon a stratified model that encompasses the range of substitutionary phenomena from the phoneme to meaning by means of types of "memes," that is, stratum-specific elements within the language architecture.[20]

17.   Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*.

18.   See essays by these authors in Gumperz and Hymes, eds., *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. There is also a form of Systemic Functional Linguistics conversational analysis. See Eggins and Slade, *Analysing Casual Conversation*.

19.   Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*.

20.   Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory*; Longacre, *Grammar of Discourse*.

2.2.8 *Systemic Functional Linguistics*.[21] Based on the work of Michael A. K. Halliday, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), although originally a grammar of English, has been reconceptualized as a theory of text. In fact, Halliday's *Introduction to Functional Grammar* originated in lectures for a course on discourse analysis. Halliday's language model is also stratificational but extends from sound to context, including both situational and cultural context. More will be said about it below in description of Porter and O'Donnell's discourse analysis.

Since Schiffrin wrote, there have been other approaches to discourse analysis, many of which are based upon the models mentioned above. Most of these new models, however, are concerned not just to move beyond the sentence or clause (which they usually attempt to do) but also to introduce elements that one might characterize as being at the larger or discourse or text level.

For example, two relatively recent handbooks on discourse analysis, one from 2012 and another from 2021, introduce different approaches to discourse analysis.[22] Several of these are not approaches as we are defining them above, since they do not have a coherent theory but are approaches to the area of investigation. These would include genre analysis, narrative analysis, and corpus-based studies. However, there are, besides many that I have already discussed above, some others worth noting:

2.2.9 *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Based on Halliday's SFL, critical discourse analysis (CDA) has become *a*, if not the, dominant discourse analytic within sociolinguistics. CDA is concerned with how language is used as a tool for power, ideology, and social critique (e.g., Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak), and hence concerned with not just wordings but wordings as they are used within their contexts.[23]

2.2.10 *Multimodal Analysis*. Multimodal analysis draws on a variety of approaches, including an appreciation and expansion of the

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21. Halliday and Webster, *Text Linguistics*. This volume is very similar in outline and content to Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (see below).

22. Gee and Handford, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*; and Hyland et al., eds., *Bloomsbury Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. I realize that some might include others in the list that I am creating.

23. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*; and Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

notion of semiotic systems such as is found in SFL.[24] Its contribution to discourse analysis is to expand the definition of discourse, an expansion, for example, by Michel Foucault,[25] and to appreciate that a culture has a variety of means of expressing itself, including written modes but others besides. In other words, the trend is to move more and more to include society and culture as an important, if not the most important, part within discourse analysis, while at the same time ensuring that a view of language plays a major role in such description.

These are some of the major approaches and ways of thinking about discourse analysis that have emerged and established themselves within the field of linguistics. There is, of course, much more that I could say about each of these, and undoubtedly there are other approaches that might merit inclusion in a more complete overview. However, we see that a lot has happened since Zellig Harris. In fact, much of what now falls under the label of discourse analysis is a far distance from Harris's approach, so much so that they tend to fall on the other end of a cline. Whereas Harris was concerned with formal morpheme distribution, most discourse analysis concerns such things as human communication, social factors and constraints, the dynamics of language interaction and variation, and the like. Thus, the analysis often takes place at relatively high levels of abstraction, such as dialogue, interaction, and even elements other than language itself.

3. *Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies*

Discourse analysis has had a relatively difficult time emerging as a form of textual analysis in New Testament studies, a much more difficult time than within Hebrew Bible studies. There have been those within the field of translation studies, particularly Bible translation, who have used forms of discourse analysis in New Testament studies for some time.[26] However, with a few exceptions, most of these models have not come to be used within the mainstream of New Testament studies. There was probably more

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24. O'Halloran, "Multimodal Discourse Analysis."
25. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*.
26. E.g., Callow, *Discourse Considerations*.

of a chance of such work becoming integrated into New Testament studies when it was clearly linked to tagmemics. However, discourse analysis in SIL circles, admittedly from my limited perspective, seems to have retreated from the expansive view that was once possible to a much more focused and narrow perspective on language and discourse itself. I have described my view of the major approaches to discourse analysis within New Testament studies on previous occasions—and do so again in *Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament*—so I need not do that here. I instead wish to suggest some of the reasons why the situation is what it is in New Testament studies today. There seem to me to be several major reasons that discourse analysis has not caught on in New Testament studies.

3.1 *Fear of the Unknown*

The first major reason is probably fear of the unknown. Fear is a terrible motivation for action, or rather lack of action, but it seems still to be present. We are all familiar with the statement in one Greek grammar as to why no discussion of discourse analysis was included in the volume. The justifications offered included such things as the discipline being in its infancy. This was in 1996, when in fact, by all accounts, discourse analysis had already reached a level of maturity, which is reflected in Robert de Beaugrande offering his history and well-developed theory in 1980 and in Schiffrin writing her encompassing introduction in 1994 (already cited above). Just as all fields of study have continued to develop, so has discourse analysis, although many of the approaches still being used were already in place by around 1990. A second justification is that discourse analysis does not "start from the ground up" as does syntactical investigation. This of course reveals a poor understanding of syntactical investigation, which itself has various models—whether constituency or dependency, etc.—that govern its description. Further, it is simply untrue that such a ground-up approach is not found in discourse analysis. In fact, that is where it started! Harris is the key proponent of such an approach. A third explanation offered is that syntax is peripheral to discourse analysis. As already noted, this is simply untrue, as Harris and his morpheme groups and string analysis

demonstrate. Syntax has traditionally been central to discourse analysis and at the heart of several of its models. A fourth supposed reason is that discourse analysis deserves a fuller treatment than being appended to a grammar.[27] This is no doubt true, but based upon the three previous reasons, I wonder whether the author has other reasons for hesitating—for example, because the paradigm shift involved would simply be too great. It is much easier simply to invoke our tried-and-true categories that we grew up with than be stretched to learn something new and run the risk of failure. Others, thankfully, have been willing to run the risk.

3.2 *Focus upon Small Elements of Language*

A second major reason discourse analysis has not been widely adopted in New Testament studies is that there has been too much continued focus upon relatively small elements of language, often in isolation. The result may be a sense of being overwhelmed by the prospect of doing much more than is being done or possibly even a false sense that doing such work is actually doing discourse analysis or at least doing discourse analysis in anything close to a full and complete sense. On the one hand, it is true that, in discourse analysis, there is virtually always more data than can be easily and usually comprehensively analyzed; one must be selective. On the other hand, the nature of discourse analysis warrants, even demands, that we attend to larger elements, however these are characterized.

   There are several very limited works that contribute to this perceived situation. One, to be fair, styles itself as dealing with discourse features and being a coursebook or textbook. In that sense, it is legitimately limited in its scope and expectations. This book has six sections (after a very short introduction to its linguistic theory). They include constituent order, sentence conjunctions, reference, background and highlighting, conversation, and boundary markers, all of which—apart from conversation—are arguably textual elements.[28] Another such book is also designed as a textbook but claims to provide a discourse grammar. This volume also deals with a limited range of topics: conjunction (oddly titled

27. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, xv, for the four reasons listed.
28. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*.

"Connecting Propositions," which mixes formal elements, the conjuncts, with the abstract conceptual notion of proposition), forward-pointing devices, information structuring devices, and thematic highlighting devices. Again, all are arguably textual elements (and surprisingly similar to the previous list).[29]

This is not the place to offer a critique of these proposals. I will just say that they are generally confined to a narrow range of phenomena that are textual in nature. This is clearly out of keeping with the general movement of discourse analysis over the years from small units to larger contextual and cultural phenomena. One reason for this limitation—possibly among many others—may be found in one of the foundational notions of both these approaches: "choice implies meaning."[30] The usual formulation of this statement in linguistics is "meaning implies choice" (or "is choice").[31] It is easy to think that they mean the same thing. Perhaps not. "Choice implies meaning" indicates, at least to me, that one makes a grammatical choice first and then this is reflected in a choice of meaning. And that is how these two books approach language. There is something to this formulation, and it is not entirely wrong because there is, I believe (and the authors apparently do also), a relationship between choice and meaning. However, is that the way language works? A moment's reflection will indicate that the expression of language is the product of a process of meaning choices. Our communicative context motivates our meaning choices and these are realized in language and then expression. Our representations of language, such as semantic systems with realization statements, try to capture the language potential and display it as a series of choices, but they are semantic choices realized in expressions of language, not the other way around. Discourse analysis must get beyond limitations confined to a few restricted features.

29. Runge, *Discourse Grammar*.

30. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, viii; Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 5–7.

31. Bazell, *Linguistic Form*, 81. Followed by many, including SFL. See Fontaine et al, eds., *Systemic Functional Linguistics*.

3.3 *Models of Language*

A third major reason for neglect of discourse analysis, related to the second, is that most of us do not have models of language that are able to handle the major factors that must be considered in discourse analysis, and these are elements at and beyond the clause. The glass ceiling of linguistics has always been the clause or sentence (I prefer clause and so will use it). The clause is located at the turning point beyond which language investigation becomes more interesting, but it is also the largest unit of formal linguistic structure and so has inbuilt difficulties. Linguists have not been able to agree on structural principles for units beyond the clause (or clause complex) even if we all may recognize that there are such units, whether we call them "paragraphs" or something else, that are an intermediate level before we reach the text (or discourse in some models). As a result, much linguistic discussion has confined itself to the clause as the maximal structural unit and thereby not formalized—and in effect neglected—levels or strata beyond the clause. This has been one of the persistent limitations of the study of New Testament Greek both when it is being taught in elementary grammars and when it is being described in more advanced works. There are some acknowledged and admitted reasons for this, I recognize, but if they are allowed to remain unchallenged, they will continue to limit our ability to fully understand the language.

3.4 *Difficult Elements to Define*

A fourth major reason for lack of discourse analysis in New Testament studies is that three of the most difficult concepts remain very difficult to define. These are: (1) semantics and pragmatics taken as a whole since they interact with each other; (2) situational context; and (3) cultural context. These are huge topics, often not even adequately addressed in various linguistic models. So, I cannot hope to discuss them adequately here. Let me just say a few words.

3.4.1 *Semantics and Pragmatics*. The relation between semantics and pragmatics has been one of the persistent questions in linguistics and is especially important in discourse analysis. Semantics is often defined as the systemic meaning of an element and pragmat-

ics as the meaning of that element in use or context. The nature of their relationship has resulted in a variety of attempts to discuss them. As a result, there is some confusion, in fact, great confusion. Generally speaking, I think that the field of semantics is better characterized by several major competing theories that continue to debate.[32] The field of pragmatics, however, which has distinguished itself over the years and generated a lot of discussion, has done so often without connection to semantics and thus now finds itself in a state of disarray, to the point where picking up a pragmatics book is no guarantee of what one will find inside.

There are three basic models for the relationship between semantics and pragmatics.

Semantics/Pragmatics. The one that most may be familiar with is the semantics/pragmatics model—this model recognizes each and attempts to negotiate a satisfactory relationship between them. This is the kind of approach often seen in the Cambridge Textbooks to Linguistics series or most linguistics textbooks—a volume or chapter on semantics often, if not invariably, followed by a volume or chapter on pragmatics.[33] However, the fact that we have such volumes or chapters does not mean that we understand their relationship. In fact, we often do not. The result is the other two theories.

All Semantics. The second view argues that all is semantics, that is, everything is about meaning of the formal expression and pragmatics is a secondary enterprise. The Chomskyan program to a large extent reveals this perspective in his advocacy of competence over performance.[34] Performance is messy and full of extraneous elements that confuse the situation. Competence, or I-language or internal language, should therefore be the focus of linguistics (rather than E-language or external language).

All Pragmatics. The third is that all is pragmatics, that is, everything is about the use or contextual meaning and, in this view, semantics becomes secondary. In some ways, SFL represents itself as this third model since it places emphasis upon language use.

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32. Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*.

33. And in Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, ix; Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 7–9.

34. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, 4.

However, even SFL, as a herald of such a position, is not entirely clear at this point. Halliday characterizes the stratum related to meaning as semantics (content consists of semantics and lexico-grammar) and James Martin as discourse semantics, which, in many ways, resembles pragmatics.[35] In any case, even if semantics is still fundamental, in SFL, pragmatics or language in use is the focus of attention.

This is all to say that one's language model—and hence one's approach to discourse analysis—must have some theory about how these elements relate to each other.

3.4.2 *Context of Situation*. New Testament scholars are keen to speak about context.[36] They use it as a term to refer to a variety of things, from the immediate environment of a word or construction, such as an immediate context, to a very expansive and extra-textual context, perhaps equivalent to the ancient Greco-Roman world. However, in these uses—and sometimes in linguistic usage—these contexts are usually analogous to what has been referred to by Ruqaiya Hasan as the "material situational setting."[37] Material situational settings are difficult to establish, even if we think we know a lot about them. For instance, what is the material situational setting of a Dickens novel, such as *A Tale of Two Cities*? If you think of Paris and London during the time of the French Revolution (late eighteenth century), you would be wrong. The material situational setting would be Dickens's house in London during the mid-nineteenth century. But a setting of Dickens sitting hours at his desk with pen in hand is not a captivating subject for a novel nor a material for analysis.

The result is that some linguistic models—at least those that have taken on the task—have attempted to define context in a linguistic way. For example, SFL defines context of situation as a linguistic concept. It is a configuration of factors including field (what the text is about), tenor (who is involved in it), and mode (how it is structured as a text). This configuration of elements indi-

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35. Halliday, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 26; and Martin, *English Text*, 1.

36. Porter, *Hermeneutics, Linguistics, and the Bible*, 93–98 and 121–24.

37. Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text*, 99.

cates the register of the text, which is defined as a type of language use.

These concepts, such as context of situation and register, have proved difficult to define and even to discuss, but they have also proved very useful in description of texts, in which one's descriptions are based upon linguistic factors rather than historical ones that are often not retrievable.

3.4.3 *Context of Culture*. The context of culture has proven even more difficult to define for those linguists who distinguish it from context of situation. For some, it entails much broader ideological, social, anthropological, and related factors, while for others, it is confined to language. I have tried on several occasions to define context of culture. In our discourse analysis book, we have defined it as encompassing the following: setting (including deixis), behavioral environment (including exchange structure), language as context (including for some genre), and extra-situational context (including scaffolding and intertextual thematic formations). Cultural knowledge can also be defined through the perspective of context of culture as cultural *knowledges*, encompassing ideational, interpersonal, and textual knowledge.[38]

As difficult as these concepts might be, however, they merit further discussion since they are crucial to New Testament studies. The relationship between language and its expression is the fundamental basis of New Testament interpretation.

4. *What Porter and O'Donnell Are Trying to Accomplish*

So, where does Porter and O'Donnell's *Discourse Analysis of the Greek New Testament* fit within all that I have outlined above?[39] I will not recount the history of the book here because that is stated within the book itself. However, let me just say that, even if the focus is upon the textual metafunction, I believe (so far as I know) that it is the only relatively complete introduction to discourse analysis available for New Testament studies which not only reflects a coherently maintained linguistic model but also paves new

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38. Porter, *Hermeneutics, Linguistics, and the Bible*, 127–30, following Leckie-Tarry, *Language and Context*, 8–9.

39. Porter and O'Donnell, *Discourse Analysis*.

ground through development of that model for New Testament interpretation. The linguistic model that is used within this work is Systemic Functional Linguistics, especially in the form of Formal Systemic Functional Grammar. For those who might be interested, this model has been used by me in many other works, especially my commentary on Romans and my recent commentary on the Pastoral Epistles.[40]

The discourse analysis itself concentrates upon features of what within Systemic Functional Linguistics would call the textual metafunction. As noted above, the variables within the context of situation that define a register are field, tenor, and mode. Each of these three is realized by or redounds to or is linked to—the language of SFL varies—one of the metafunctions of language. Hasan called this "context-metafunction resonance" (CMR) (earlier she called it the "context-metafunction hook-up").[41] These metafunctions are the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, respectively.

In the book, we first introduce discourse analysis and some of its basic concepts. These include concepts such as methodology and the need for it (rather than simply being eclectic in one's approach), bottom-up and top-down approaches (both are called for), clause and beyond (one of the major distinguishing features of discourse analysis is movement beyond the clause), textuality, coherence, and cohesion (as meaningful concepts since discourse analysis is about texts), the meaning of meaning, levels of language and description, markedness and prominence, context, and corpus linguistics. Without addressing each one individually, we address all of these in varying ways in and throughout this volume.

In the second chapter, we set the stage by offering a brief history of discourse analysis and discourse analysis within New Testament studies with a particular emphasis upon SFL that we follow in the book.

In the third chapter we tackle the overall shape of a SFL discourse analytic and thereby provide the rudiments of a comprehensive discourse analytic. The chapter is titled, "Context, Co-

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40. Porter, *Letter to the Romans*, esp. 24–35; *Pastoral Epistles*, 3–18.
41. See Hasan, "Towards a Paradigmatic Description of Context," 8 and 25.

Text, Register, and Its Metafunctions." In other words, this provides a compact overview of SFL but also emphasizes the major components of a SFL based discourse analytic. We begin with context based on the work of Bronisław Malinowski and J. R. Firth.[42] We attempt to define context of culture in a way that is helpful for discourse analysis. In doing so, we include such elements as I mentioned above: setting in terms of deixis, behavioral environment where we discuss exchange structure (something new to New Testament studies, we believe, but worth exploring further), language as context including discussion of genre in relation to register, and extra-situational context where we also treat intertextuality from a linguistic standpoint based upon the work of Jay Lemke.[43] What then follows is our definitions of context of situation and context of text (or co-text). This triadic treatment of context moves from immediate text to the most abstract features. We then return to situational context and the metafunctions where we also explore the concept of register. We believe that register is one of the most potentially productive concepts in linguistics. Here, we outline the relationships between the contextual features within field, tenor, and mode, and their metafunctions. So, even though we do not explore all these elements in exhaustive detail, a full discourse model is provided, at least in rudimentary (but workable and appliable) form. One of the elements we provide for clarity are system networks of the semantic choices that reveal the language potential.

In light of this overview of discourse analytic elements, we then devote three chapters to three important components of the textual metafunction since it remains focal in discourse analysis as the implementing function of text.

The first, chapter 4, treats information structure and thematization. Based upon the Prague Linguistic Circle notions of theme and rheme and the Functional Sentence Perspective,[44] we develop further a model of thematization from the clause to the clause

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42. Malinowski was an anthropologist who had a major impact on Firth who was Halliday's doctoral supervisor. Relevant introductions to their writings are: Malinowski, "Problem of Meaning"; and Firth, *Papers in Linguistics*.

43. Lemke, *Textual Politics*.

44. See Porter et al., eds., *Literary-Linguistic Analysis of the Bible*.

complex to the paragraph to the text. Most models only discuss the clause as the maximal unit, including the Prague linguists and Halliday and most others we have surveyed. In Porter and O'Donnell, however, the clause is ordered around prime and subsequent, the clause complex around theme and rheme (with various levels of marking the theme), and the paragraph and text around topic and comment. This model allows the textual metafunction to connect with the field in defining the topic of a text. We also discuss the role of conjunctive discourse markers and the role they play in both continuity-discontinuity and logico-semantic relations.

The fifth chapter concerns linguistic highlighting, including prominence, markedness, and grounding. These concepts come from Russian Formalism and the Prague Circle,[45] and we expand and develop them in ways that help extend the concepts to encompass immediate and extended usages, that is, from individual elements to text. We define markedness in terms of structural features and grounding as textual, with prominence uniting them semantically. Thus, a form may be marked (in any number of different ways) and thus have prominence and be foregrounded or frontgrounded within a text. We go further and relate this to text types and mainline and supporting material, so that the highlighting is part of an overall discourse analytic that reflects a theory of narrative. We conclude by discussing both the range of paradigmatic and syntagmatic choices available in numerous systems within Greek. Paradigmatic choices include aspect (tense-form), attitude (mood), causality (voice), case, and interactants (person). Syntagmatic choices include discussion of functional component ordering at word, word group (e.g., nominal group), clause, and clause complex.

The sixth chapter concerns cohesion and coherence, often equated with textuality. We differentiate texture, coherence, and cohesion and then concentrate upon cohesion and its various means of expression. We classify cohesive devices in terms of (1) referential cohesion (reference, substitution, and ellipsis), differentiating degrees of reference (grammaticalized, reduced, and implied) and participant-referent chains; (2) conjunctive cohesion;

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45. See Porter et al., eds., *Literary-Linguistic Analysis of the Bible*.

and (3) lexical cohesion (reiteration, collocation, and lexical clusters). We then discuss chain interaction and cohesive harmony analysis, the latter a relatively recent advance that helps to understand the role of cohesion in a more complex and nuanced way than is provided by cohesion alone.

We conclude in chapter seven by providing several major examples of how discourse analysis can be used as a critical tool in New Testament interpretation. We have abundantly illustrated our discussion throughout the book, but here we concentrate on some larger topics. These include (1) the ancient letter-form and register/genre, using Generic Structure Potential as a useful way of describing the letter form;[46] (2) audience, addressees, and participants; (3) literary integrity, cohesion, and coherence; and finally (4) theology and prominence, whereby our theory of prominence speaks directly to theological issues.

By way of summary, we believe, as noted above, that we have written the first relatively complete New Testament discourse analysis book that outlines a coherent method treating the major components of discourse analysis. We also believe, on the basis of the discussion above, that we have done so at the cutting edge of much of the recent work in discourse analysis not just by focusing upon the lower level elements of language but also by providing sustained treatment of topics—such as context of situation, context of culture, and register—in terms of larger units of language—including major chunks of text and even entire texts—in ways that bring insights directly into study of the New Testament.

5. *Conclusion*

We do not pretend that we have written a perfect book and are far from believing that we have said the last word on discourse analysis. However, we believe that we have been able to introduce and develop some major features of discourse analysis that are on the cutting edge of discourse studies—including such things as narra-

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46. The concept of Generic Structure Potential (which we believe is arguably a theory of register at least as much as genre) was proposed by Ruqaiya Hasan. Among several works, see Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text*, 52–69.

tive and genre analysis—that make this book a suitable volume for discourse analysis in the larger field. However, we also believe that we have helped to disambiguate and make much clearer some of the areas that continue to befuddle and even beleaguer use of discourse analysis in New Testament studies—such as defining context of situation without equating it with a material situational setting or defining context of culture in a way that avoids the attempt to equate it with specific cultural practices and behaviors apart from language—so that some of the fears and previous reasons for resisting discourse analysis may be overcome. If our book aids in the practice of New Testament interpretation and inspires others to engage in this area of research, then we will have met our goal.

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