

# Longacre's Discourse Analysis Model Adapted for the New Testament Interpretation: Application with Reference to the Gospel of John

Yan Ma

McMaster Divinity College, Canada

加拿大麥克馬斯特神學院

## I. Introduction

Discourse analysis has recently become an important interpretive approach in the field of biblical studies. Various models of discourse analysis have been constructed and applied to interpret the biblical text.<sup>1</sup> In New Testament studies, the five major forms of discourse

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<sup>1</sup> Discourse analysis has been developed as an important field in the discipline of linguistics since the last forty to fifty years. Discourse analysis is an encompassing notion that involves many major subjects of linguistics and focuses on instantiations of real language use. As a synthetic model, discourse analysis intends to integrate various areas of linguistic investigation, especially the three traditional ones, namely syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, into a coherent and unifying framework. Different areas of linguistic investigation may be integrated in different ways, thus various models of discourse analysis are constructed in the discipline of linguistics. Recently, many biblical scholars adopted discourse analysis approaches in the field of biblical studies. Stanley E. Porter, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies: An Introductory Survey," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 113 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 17–18; Stanley E. Porter, "Discourse Analysis and the Study of the New Testament," (forthcoming), 1–5; Stanley E. Porter, "Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation," in *Methods of Biblical Interpretation. Excerpted from The Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 37–38; Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "New Testament Greek Language and Linguistics in Recent Research," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 (2008): 235–36; Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, "Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: An Introduction," in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 15.

analysis are Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), South African, Continental European, and eclectic.<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Longacre (1922–2014), a linguist and biblical scholar of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), is one of the first ones who applied discourse analysis to biblical interpretation and has a significant influence on the discourse analysis of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>3</sup> The discourse analysis model developed by Longacre has been widely adopted to understand Hebrew narrative in the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> Longacre also tried his approach to examine the Gospel of Mark but failed to fully appreciate the features of the Greek language.<sup>5</sup>

This paper proposes to remodel Longacre's approach for the interpretation of the Greek New Testament. I will first introduce and describe Longacre's discourse analysis model. Then according to my appraisals of Longacre's approach for its strengths and weakness, I will reconstruct Longacre's discourse analysis model by integrating all essential elements in the Greek language system for it to better serve

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<sup>2</sup> This paper follows Stanley E. Porter's most updated categorization of the five major forms of New Testament discourse analysis. See Porter, "Discourse Analysis and the Study of the New Testament," 1–5; Porter and Pitts, "New Testament Greek Language and Linguistics in Recent Research," 235–36.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley E. Porter, "The History of Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Conspectus," in *Prevailing Methods before 1980*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, vol. 1 of *Pillars in the History of Biblical Interpretation*, McMaster Biblical Studies Series 2 (Eugene: Pickwick, 2016), 47.

<sup>4</sup> Longacre's *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence* might be the best exemplary application of his discourse analysis model to the Hebrew Bible. For Longacre's discourse analysis on the Old Testament, see Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39–48*, 2nd ed (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003); Longacre, "The Discourse Structure of the Flood Narrative," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1976 Papers*, ed. George MacRae (Missoula: Scholars, 1976), 235–62. (Also found in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47 Supplement [1979]: 89–133).

<sup>5</sup> For Longacre's discourse analysis on the New Testament, see Robert E. Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis, Illustrated by Application to Mark's Gospel," in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 170* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 140–68; Longacre, "Mark 5.1–43: Generating the Complexity of a Narrative from Its Most Basic Elements," in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 170* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 169–96.

the New Testament interpretation. To demonstrate the application of this reconstructed model, I will adopt it to form the discourse structure of John's Gospel and to conduct a discourse analysis on John 13:1–30 within the discourse structure.

## II. Longacre's Discourse Analysis Model

Longacre's discourse analysis model is established on the basis of tagmemics, a linguistic theory originated by Kenneth Lee Pike (1912–2000) that provides the theoretical foundation for the notion of grammatical hierarchy.<sup>6</sup> It has been recognized in linguistic studies that hierarchy acts as the organizing principle for the grammatical surface structure of a language. The grammatical constituents of most languages are hierarchically ordered from discourse, paragraph, and sentence down to clause, phrase, and word. This notion of grammatical hierarchy has crucial significance to Longacre's discourse analysis, which guarantees the identification and comparison of genuinely comparable constructions. By identifying different levels of hierarchy in the grammatical surface structure of the narrative according to the hierarchical principle, constructions within the same level of the hierarchy can be compared, namely discourse types, paragraph types, sentence types, clause types, phrase types, and word types.<sup>7</sup>

Focusing on how the narrative is framed, structured, and developed, Longacre's discourse analysis model intends to provide a linguistic framework to interpret the biblical text through observing the larger linguistic and contextual unit within the entire discourse. This top-down narrative analysis approach first constructs the discourse structure of a narrative by identifying the basic narrative elements and then distinguishes the primary storyline from the relatively foreground

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<sup>6</sup> Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed, Topics in Language and Linguistics (New York: Plenum, 1996), 273; Porter, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies," 25.

<sup>7</sup> Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 269–72.

and background information in the narrative by investigating these basic narrative elements. The exegetical import of this discourse analysis, as Longacre believes, might be to discern the authorial intent, to articulate the function of grammatical constituents, and to make the message of a Greek narrative more explicit.<sup>8</sup>

The basic narrative elements included in Longacre's top-down narrative analysis are aperture, stage, inciting incident, mounting tension, climax, denouement, closure, and finis. Aperture is the starting part of a narrative. Stage provides the important information on time, place, circumstances, and participants to prepare for creating the narrative. Inciting incident introduces unexpected and routine-breaking events. Mounting tension usually involves a series of episodes that develop the conflict and complicate the situation. Climax is to accumulate all sorts of contradictions and tangles until the confrontation is inevitable. Denouement, which is normally correlated with climax, makes resolution possible due to the occurrence of a crucial event. Closure brings the narrative to an end. Finis is the ending part of the narrative.<sup>9</sup>

Transition markers that introduce an episode are used by Longacre to identify the basic narrative elements, which may involve temporal expression, locative expression, circumstances change, participant switch, motion verb, speech verb, and/or verb with the historic present. Moreover, Longacre stresses the importance of identifying discourse peaks, both action peak and didactic peak, on various levels of discourse. As a central constituent and a type of prominence in the discourse, peak indicates the overall surface structure of a narrative.<sup>10</sup> Action peak is the episode in which considerable details are presented and the great moments of a narrative are represented. Action peak

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<sup>8</sup> Longacre summarizes the exegetical import of this discourse analysis based on his analytical results of the Gospel of Mark. See Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 162–63.

<sup>9</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 34–36.

<sup>10</sup> Longacre, "Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence," 97; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 38.

markers might be the variation of constituents length, immediacy, the maximum of participants interlacing, and/or verbs in the historic present that cluster within an episode other than the episode-initial without being limited to speech and motion verbs. Didactic peak is the episode in which themes are developed by means of speeches rather than actions. Didactic peak markers might be a monologue and/or dialogue of chief participants.<sup>11</sup>

Longacre distinguishes the primary storyline from the foreground and background information in the basic narrative elements through observing the tense and aspect of the verbs in component clauses. According to Longacre's observations, the primary storyline in Greek narrative is carried by verbs in the aorist tense with verbs in the imperfect tense playing a depictive role. Verbs in the historic present clustered without being limited to speech and motion verbs indicate a secondary storyline that can be either a demotion from the primary storyline or a promotion of background information. When a participle is posed prior to the main clause with a finite verb in the aorist tense, it adds preliminary details to the primary storyline. When a participle is posed subsequent to the main clause with a finite verb in the historic present, it continues the message conveyed in the preceding main verb. In addition, both the clauses with εἶμ in the imperfect tense and the clauses with no verb supply background information.<sup>12</sup>

### **III. Reconstruction of Longacre's Discourse Analysis Model**

In this section, I will appraise Longacre's top-down narrative analysis approach for its strengths and weakness based on the above introduction

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<sup>11</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141-46; Longacre, "Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence," in *Beyond the Sentence: Discourse and Sentential Form*, ed. Jessica R. Wirth (Ann Arbor: Karoma, 1985), 96-97; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 37-39.

<sup>12</sup> Longacre, "Mark 5.1-43," 169, 176-77.

and description of this approach. Accordingly, I will offer the proposals for improving and advancing Longacre's discourse analysis model by integrating all essential elements in the Greek language system. The reconstructed model will provide a linguistic framework to analyze the New Testament narrative and thus better interpret the New Testament text.

First, Longacre constructs the discourse structure of the Gospel of Mark by identifying the basic narrative elements of the Gospel, which rightly takes into account the entire construction of the Gospel and observes the larger linguistic and contextual unit within the entire discourse. However, Longacre relies almost solely on transition markers that introduce an episode to identify the basic narrative elements. In fact, shift in grammatical person, shift in verb tense-forms, and connective word are other three important boundary markers that indicate the discourse boundary in New Testament Greek, which have not been included in Longacre's model. Furthermore, Longacre's categorization of transition markers as motion verb, speech verb, and verb with the historic present is quite problematic since the tense-forms shift of any verbs, especially the switch to or from the aorist tense, can be a discourse boundary marker in the Greek language.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, this paper will identify the basic narrative elements by using all seven markers, namely shift in grammatical person, shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch.

Second, Longacre correctly concludes that different verbal forms of New Testament Greek play different roles in building a narrative,<sup>14</sup> whereas he focuses on the verbs in the aorist, imperfect, and present tense without considering those in the perfect tense. Longacre also correctly suggests that the primary storyline is carried by verbs in the aorist tense with verbs in the imperfect tense supplementing details,<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed, Biblical Languages: Greek 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 301.

<sup>14</sup> Longacre, "Mark 5.1-43," 169.

<sup>15</sup> Longacre, "Mark 5.1-43," 176-77.

while he fails to explain the aspect of each tense-form related to its individual role in Greek narrative and his discussion of verbs in the present tense is not accurate and complete. Obviously, Longacre's model does not take into account all the tense-forms of verbs in the language system of New Testament Greek and does not accurately explain the relationship between the aspect of each tense-form and its individual role in Greek narrative. Nevertheless, the verbal aspectual analysis of the tense usage is actually very important in assessing how Greek narrative is framed, structured, and developed within the discourse by employing different tense-forms in their specific context.<sup>16</sup> This paper will scrutinize all the verbal tense-forms of New Testament Greek, paying particular attention to the aspect of each tense-form in terms of its individual role in Greek narrative.

In Greek narrative, the aorist tense is the background tense that forms the basis for the discourse with the assistance of the imperfect tense. The aorist tense with a perfective aspect, which occurs frequently in past-time contexts, is used to describe an action as a complete and undifferentiated process. Predominating in Greek narrative, the aorist tense carries the primary storyline of a narrative while draws no attention to the action that it describes.<sup>17</sup> The imperfect tense with an imperfective aspect, almost being restricted to past-time contexts, is employed to delineate an action as in progress. Being widespread in Greek narrative, the imperfect tense usually heightens the primary storyline of the narrative by filling in the details of the action that it delineates.<sup>18</sup>

The prominent features of the discourse are marked by the present tense as the foreground tense and the perfect tense as the frontground tense. The present tense with an imperfective aspect as well, which may be found in various temporal contexts, is also adopted to depict an action as in progress. When appearing in Greek narrative, the present tense, commonly called the historic present, introduces significant

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<sup>16</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 23, 302.

<sup>17</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 21, 23, 35, 302.

<sup>18</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 21, 29, 34, 302.

actions or climactic events and draws added attention to the action that it depicts.<sup>19</sup> The perfect tense with a stative aspect, being used in different temporal contexts, is reserved for an action as reflecting a given state of affairs regardless of whether the action ceases in the past or continues to the present. When occurring in Greek narrative, the perfect tense highlights very significant items in a complex way.<sup>20</sup>

Third, Longacre's discourse analysis is confined to studying the tense-forms of verbs as well as the different orders of the participle and the main verb in a sentence.<sup>21</sup> However, there are many other elements in the language system of New Testament Greek to be considered. The participle retains its own relation to the subject of a sentence although its major usage is to modify the main verb.<sup>22</sup> Variations in word order, clause structure, and sentence structure make a difference in the expression.<sup>23</sup> Particles and conjunctions not only join various grammatical units but also indicate the relationship between clauses, sentences, or even paragraphs, which might be adversative, causal, comparative, conditional, connective, consecutive, emphatic, explanatory, inferential, or temporal.<sup>24</sup> This paper will explore all these important elements in the Greek language system when it is applicable.

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<sup>19</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 21, 23, 29, 31, 302.

<sup>20</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 21–23, 39–40, 302.

<sup>21</sup> Longacre, "Mark 5.1–43," 170, 176–77.

<sup>22</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 187.

<sup>23</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 289–90.

<sup>24</sup> Longacre actually mentions this issue in the footnote 11 of his article "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis" that "This top-down, template-driven analysis amounts to a beginning sketch; to be more adequate the analysis needs to be extended downward to include relations within the paragraph in which sentences and groups of sentences are related according to what I term 'interclausal relations.'" Nonetheless, the "interclausal relations" analysis that is applied to Mark 5 in Longacre's article "Mark 5.1–43" focuses only on the tense-forms of Greek verbs without reference to Greek particles and conjunctions. Longacre's "interclausal relations" analysis approach, as discussed in his *The Grammar of Discourse*, chapters 3 "Combinations of Predications" and chapter 4 "Intersentential Relations: Etic Paragraph Types," is developed in accordance with the general features of several different language systems, which takes no consideration of the unique features of New Testament Greek. See Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 143; Longacre, "Mark 5.1–43," 169–96; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 51–122; Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 204–5.



Lastly, Longacre conducts a detailed discourse analysis on Mark 5 by investigating the basic narrative elements of Mark 5, the outcome of which is basically to distinguish the primary storyline from the relatively foreground and background information in Greek narrative. Longacre's top-down narrative analysis provides the overall structure of the discourse in describing surface compositional attributes, main event developments, supportive materials, and prominent features but offers minimal explications and little insights regarding the deep structural meaning. Nonetheless, the reconstructed model can actually interpret the meaning of the New Testament text by examining its linguistic features. The following section will provide such a demonstration.

#### **IV. Application with Reference to the Gospel of John**

I will demonstrate the application of the reconstructed model of Longacre's top-down narrative analysis approach in this section by adopting it to form the discourse structure of John's Gospel and to conduct a discourse analysis on John 13:1–30 within the discourse structure. Given the fact that the Gospel of John presents the teachings and works of Jesus, the genre of the Gospel can be classified as narrative despite its distinctive features.<sup>25</sup> Hence the reconstructed model of Longacre's approach can work well in forming the discourse structure of John's Gospel. The discourse analysis on John 13:1–30 will pay particular attention to interpret the meaning and usage of the εγώ εἶμι, a Greek phrase which is literally translated into English as "I am," in John 13:19.

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 14–17; Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 145; Stanley E. Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 42–43.

## V. Discourse Structure of John

As explained above, the discourse structure of John's Gospel is formed by identifying the basic narrative elements and discourse peaks using discourse boundary markers, transition markers, and peak markers. Due to the purpose of this paper, only the primary constituents of the Gospel (all letters capitalized) and the constituents on the first level of discourse embedding (the first letter capitalized) are listed by indicating all basic narrative elements, namely aperture, stage, inciting incident, mounting tension, climax, denouement, closure, and finis, and discourse peaks, including both didactic peaks and action peaks on different levels of discourse.<sup>26</sup>

### **APERTURE: Incarnation 1:1–18**

EPISODE 1: (STAGE) John the Baptist's testimony 1:19–34 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

EPISODE 2: (INCITING INCIDENT) Jesus' ministry in its early stage 1:35–4:54

Episode 1: Jesus' first disciples 1:35–51 (shift in verb tense-forms, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 2: Miracle of changing water into wine 2:1–12 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 3: Jesus' clearing the temple 2:13–25 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

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<sup>26</sup> This paper determines motion verb and speech verb based on the semantic domain in Louw–Nida. The verb with the semantic domain of "linear movement" or "non-linear movement" will be classified as motion verb and the verb with the semantic domain of "communication" will be classified as speech verb.

Episode 4: Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus 3:1–21 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 5: John the Baptist's final testimony 3:22–36 (temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 6: Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman 4:1–42 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 7: Miracle of healing the official's son 4:43–54 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

**EPISODE 3: (MOUNTING TENSION) Rising opposition to Jesus' ministry 5:1–7:52**

Episode 1: Miracle of healing the man at the pool 5:1–15 (temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 2: Jesus' teaching on His authority and witnesses 5:16–47 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 3: Miracle of feeding the five thousand 6:1–15 (shift in verb tense-forms, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 4: Miracle of walking on the sea 6:16–21 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 5: Jesus' teaching on the bread of life 6:22–71 (temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 6: Unbelief of Jesus' brothers 7:1–9 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 7: Jesus' teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles 7:10–52 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

EXCURSUS: The controversy of the woman caught in adultery 7:53–8:11 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)<sup>27</sup>

EPISODE 4: (MOUNTING TENSION) Radical contradiction between Jesus and "the Jews" 8:12–10:42

Episode 1: Jesus' debate with "the Jews" at the Festival of Tabernacles 8:12–59 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 2: Miracle of healing the man that was born blind 9:1–41 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 3: Jesus' teaching on good shepherd 10:1–21 (shift in grammatical person, and circumstance change)

Episode 4: Jesus' conflict with "the Jews" at the Festival of Dedication 10:22–42 (shift in verb tense-forms, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

EPISODE 5: (MOUNTING TENSION) Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem 11:1–12:11

Episode 1: Miracle of raising Lazarus 11:1–54 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 2: Jesus' being anointed at Bethany 11:55–12:11 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

EPISODE 6: (PEAK) Jesus' ministry in its final stage 12:12–20:31

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<sup>27</sup> The basic narrative elements in Longacre's discourse analysis model do not include excursus. However, John 7:53–8:11 is known not to be included in the original text and does not fit into the primary storyline of the Gospel, thus it is better to classify this passage as an excursus to differentiate it from the other episodes in the discourse structure of John. John 7:53–8:11 will only be displayed here but will not be analyzed since it is not a part of the earliest authentic Gospel. See Aland, et al., eds., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 55.

Episode 1: (Inciting Incident) Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem 12:12–50 (shift in verb tense-forms, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 2: (DIDACTIC PEAK) Jesus' farewell teaching and prayer 13:1–17:26 (connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, participant switch, the monologue of chief participants, and the dialogue of chief participants)

Episode 3: (ACTION PEAK) Jesus' crucifixion (CLIMAX) and resurrection (DENOUEMENT) 18:1–20:31 (temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, participant switch, the variation of constituents' length, immediacy, the maximum of participants interlacing, and verbs in the present tense that cluster within the episode)

EPISODE 7: (CLOSURE) Jesus' appearing to His disciples again 21:1–23

Episode 1: Miracle of catching fish 21:1–14 (shift in verb tense-forms, temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch)

Episode 2: Jesus' reinstating Peter 21:15–23 (shift in verb tense-forms, connective word, temporal expression, and circumstance change)

FINIS: True testimony of Jesus 21:24–25 (shift in verb tense-forms, circumstance change, and participant switch)

## VI. Discourse Analysis on John 13:1–30

The Johannine ἐγώ εἶμι in Jesus' speech has been studied by many biblical scholars.<sup>28</sup> In general, the contemporary biblical scholarship focuses on two categories, namely the predicate and absolute usages of

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<sup>28</sup> In the Gospel of John, the Greek phrase ἐγώ εἶμι occurs in Jesus' speech for 31 verses, which are John 4:26, 6:20, 6:35, 6:41, 6:48, 6:51, 7:34, 7:36, 8:12, 8:18, 8:23, 8:24, 8:28, 8:58, 10:7, 10:9, 10:11, 10:14, 11:25, 12:26, 13:19, 14:3, 14:6, 15:1, 15:5, 17:14, 17:16, 17:24, 18:5, 18:6, and 18:8.

εγώ εἰμι sayings. The predicate usage means that the εγώ εἰμι phrase has a stated predicate, whereas the absolute usage denotes that the εγώ εἰμι phrase stands on its own with no stated predicate or complement. Scholars dispute over the meaning and usage of the ἐγώ εἰμι uttered by Jesus in John 13:19 whether it is a predicate usage as the daily expression of "I am" or an absolute usage as the divine name "I AM." Scholars with the former view contend that the ἐγώ εἰμι saying in John 13:19 bears no necessary Christological or theological significance because this phrase can be normally used in this way according to Greek grammar. They suggest that the ἐγώ εἰμι phrase has the Messiah as its implicit predicate and that Jesus predicts His betrayal to His disciples in order that when it does occur, they will believe that He is the Messiah.<sup>29</sup> Scholars with the latter view assert that the ἐγώ εἰμι saying in John 13:19 acts as the divine self-revelation of Jesus since this phrase is used by God as His divine name in the Old Testament. They propose that the ἐγώ εἰμι phrase stands on its own with no stated or implicit predicate and that Jesus predicts His betrayal to His disciples in order that when it indeed happens, they will believe His divinity.<sup>30</sup>

No matter which view, the current interpretive works rely heavily on the origin of this phrase, and thus their conclusions are reached

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<sup>29</sup> Scholars who hold this view include Beasley-Murray and Carson. See George R. Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel of John*, 2nd ed. Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 236–37; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 471.

<sup>30</sup> Scholars who hold this view include Ball, Bauckham, Bruce, Dodd, Harner, Lincoln, Michaels, Morris, and Williams. See David Mark Ball, "I Am" in *John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 124 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 198–200; Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John," 245–46; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 287–88; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 95–96; Philip B. Harner, *The "I Am" of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Johannine Usage and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 37–42; Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 374; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 743–44; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 553; Catrin H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of 'Ani Hû' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 283–86.

almost based on diachronic data only. However, according to the principle of modern linguistics, synchronic analysis takes priority over diachronic data, thus the origin of the term ἐγώ εἰμι should be subjected to its contextual usage.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the meaning of the text is made in its context. It is the context rather than the origin of the ἐγώ εἰμι that determines the meaning of this phrase.<sup>32</sup> That is to say, the ἐγώ εἰμι saying in John 13:19 must be interpreted in the context of John's Gospel through a synchronic analysis. Only a few studies mention the Johannine context in their analysis, whereas none of them has employed a linguistic method.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the linguistic features that are actually essential for the appropriate interpretation of the Johannine ἐγώ εἰμι have not been fully assessed in the current biblical scholarship.<sup>34</sup> To interpret the meaning and usage of the Greek phrase ἐγώ εἰμι, a particular linguistic structure throughout the Gospel of John, the linguistic method will be a better choice, which is able to offer new insights to the existing research of Johannine ἐγώ εἰμι sayings in most regards. In this section, I will employ the reconstructed model of Longacre's top-down narrative analysis approach, which can provide a linguistic framework for the interpretation of the ἐγώ εἰμι saying in John 13:19, to conduct a discourse analysis on John 13:1–30.

As displayed in the discourse structure of John's Gospel, John 12:12–20:31 that records Jesus' ministry in its final stage is the peak of the entire Gospel. Within this primary constituent of the Gospel, there

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<sup>31</sup> This principle is originally from the theory of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), a Swiss linguist who is widely acknowledged as the founder of modern linguistics. See Stanley E. Porter, "Studying Ancient Languages from a Modern Linguistic Perspective," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 2 (1989): 153.

<sup>32</sup> M. A. K. Halliday, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, revised by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Not much work has been done by taking into account the context of the Gospel of John. Ball conducts a literary analysis of the function of ἐγώ εἰμι constructions. Bauckham examines the ἐγώ εἰμι statements without predicates. Williams has one chapter discussing ἐγώ εἰμι sayings used in John although most of her work concentrates on the Jewish background of the phrase. See Ball, "I Am" in *John's Gospel*; Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John," 243–50; Williams, *I Am He*; 255–303.

<sup>34</sup> Porter, "Jesus and the 'I Am' Sayings in John's Gospel," 120–21.

are three constituents on the first level of discourse embedding. John 12:12–50, the inciting incident of the peak, depicts Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. John 13:1–17:26, the didactic peak of the Gospel, delineates Jesus' farewell teaching and prayer. John 18:1–20:31, the action peak of the Gospel, describes Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Three constituents on a lower level of discourse embedding exist in John 13:1–17:26, which are John 13:1–30 for the last supper, John 13:31–16:33 for Jesus' farewell teaching, and John 17:1–26 for Jesus' prayer. John 13:1–30 serves as the context within which the meaning of the absolute ἐγώ εἶμι in John 13:19 will be determined through a discourse analysis. In terms of the basic narrative elements, John 13:1–30 may be further divided into six sections, namely John 13:1 as the stage, John 13:2–11 as the inciting incident, John 13:12–20 as the mounting tension, John 13:21–25 as the climax, John 13:26–27 as the denouement, and John 13:28–30 as the closure.<sup>35</sup> The basic narrative elements of John 13:1–30 will be investigated for the linguistic features of the Greek text so as to interpret the ἐγώ εἶμι in John 13:19.

First, John 13:1, the stage of the episode, introduces important information of time and circumstances using one compound sentence to prepare for creating the narrative.<sup>36</sup> The clause (with no verb) πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα states the time of this episode, which was before the festival of the Passover. Referring to the position of the episode within the discourse structure of John's Gospel, this was the last Passover before Jesus' crucifixion. The clause with the participle εἰδῶς provides a preliminary detail regarding Jesus' acknowledgment that His hour of departing from this world and going back to the Father had come. The clause with the participle ἀγαπήσας offers another preliminary detail that Jesus had loved those who belong to Him in the world. The main clause finally initiates the primary storyline with the

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<sup>35</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 34–36.

<sup>36</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 34.



verb ἠγάπησεν in the aorist tense, indicating that Jesus loved them to the end.

Second, John 13:2–11, the inciting incident of the episode, records an unexpected and routine-breaking event that Jesus washed the disciples' feet, including the conversation between Jesus and Peter.<sup>37</sup> The specific time of this event, during supper, is identified by the first clause in John 13:2 with the participle γινομένου. Two clauses in John 13:2–2 with the participles βεβληκότος and εἰδῶς respectively then supply two important preliminary details of the event. The former affirms that Judas had decided to betray Jesus. The latter emphasizes Jesus' conviction that God had given all things into His hands as well as that He had come from God and was going back to God. In John 13:3–10, the event is described through several main clauses with four motion verbs ἐγείρεται, τίθησιν, βάλλει, and ἔρχεται in the present tense, four speech verbs λέγει (four times) in the present tense, two verbs διέζωσεν and ἤρξατο in the aorist tense, as well as two speech verb ἀπεκρίθη and εἶπεν in the aorist tense. Added attention is drawn to the four actions and four utterances that are depicted with the present tense, the clustering of which signifies this event as important materials promoted in the narrative.<sup>38</sup> Explaining Jesus' awareness of the person who was to betray Him, the last main clause in John 13:11 furthers the primary storyline with the speech verb εἶπεν in the aorist tense.

Third, John 13:12–20, the mounting tension of the episode, involves Jesus' teaching and prediction, which develop the conflict and complicate the situation.<sup>39</sup> The primary storyline is advanced by the main clause in John 13:12 that introduces Jesus' statement, with the

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<sup>37</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 34–35.

<sup>38</sup> When clustering without being limited to speech and motion verbs, the historic present indicates a secondary storyline that might be a promotion of important materials. However, in this case the historic present is limited to speech and motion verbs, thus it probably signifies the importance of this event but not a secondary storyline.

<sup>39</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 35.

motion verbs ἔνιψεν, ἔλαβεν, and ἀνέπεσεν as well as speech verb εἶπεν in the aorist tense. Jesus stressed His identity as Lord, Master, and Teacher so that the disciples should follow His example. After foretelling His betrayal, Jesus expounded the reason for His prediction, which was to ensure that when it does occur, the disciples may believe that εγώ εἰμι. Throughout Jesus' statement in John 13:12–20, the immediate context of the absolute εγώ εἰμι in John 13:19, He does not mention or even imply His Messiahship. Obviously, the viewpoint of those scholars who consider the Messiah as the implicit predicate of the εγώ εἰμι construction in John 13:19 can hardly be supported by its immediate context.<sup>40</sup>

Fourth, John 13:21–25, the climax of the episode, demonstrates that Jesus' prediction accumulates contradictions and tangles, hence the confrontation is inevitable.<sup>41</sup> The main clause in John 13:21 with the verb ἐταράχθη as well as the speech verbs ἔμαρτύρησεν and εἶπεν in the aorist tense brings the primary storyline to the climax in announcing Jesus' plainly assertion that one of the disciples was to betray Him. The disciples' reaction is delineated through several main clauses in John 13:22–25 with the motion verb ἔβλεπον in the imperfect tense, which fills in the details of the action, as well as the motion verb νεύει and the speech verb λέγει in the present tense, which draws added attention to the action and utterance. Being confused by Jesus' assertion, the disciples desired to know of whom He was speaking and thus asked who was to betray Him.

Fifth, John 13:26–27, the denouement of the episode, resolves the confrontation in the climax due to the occurrence of a crucial event, Jesus' identification of the betrayer.<sup>42</sup> In John 13:26, Jesus answered the disciples' question and recognized Judas as the betrayer. The

<sup>40</sup> See "A Survey of Scholarship" for detailed discussions of this view.

<sup>41</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 34–35.

<sup>42</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 34–35.

significance of Jesus' answer and subsequent action is highlighted in two main clauses with speech verb ἀποκρίνεται and motion verb δίδωσιν respectively in the present tense. In John 13:27, the first main clause continues the primary storyline with the motion verb εἰσήλθεν in the aorist tense, which declares that Satan entered Judas. The second main clause underlines Jesus' request, letting Judas do quickly what he was going to do, with the speech verb λέγει in the present tense.

Sixth, John 13:28–30, the closure of the episode, ends the narrative with the response of the disciples and Judas to Jesus' identification of the betrayer.<sup>43</sup> Articulating the disciples' incomprehension and Judas' departure, the main clause in John 13:28 with the verb ἔγνω in the aorist tense and the first main clause in John 13:30 with the motion verb ἐξῆλθεν in the aorist tense accomplish the primary storyline. In John 13:29, the main clause with the verb ἐδόκουν in the imperfect tense describes the disciples' confusion in detail. The second main clause in John 13:30 with the verb ἦν in the imperfect tense offers the final setting of the narrative, noting that it was night.

In light of this discourse analysis, the primary storyline of John 13:1–30 can be summarized as follows. Jesus loved those who belong to Him in the world, but one of the disciples was to betray Him. After Jesus predicted His betrayal and identified the betrayer, Satan entered Judas who went out at night. The most prominent feature in John 13:3–10 must be the event of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet, which is described through several main clauses with four motion verbs ἐγείρεται, τίθησιν, βάλλει, and ἔρχεται as well as four speech verbs λέγει (four times) in the historic present. The absolute ἐγώ εἰμι in John 13:19 occurs in Jesus' prediction of His betrayal. No predicate of the ἐγώ εἰμι construction is discerned in its immediate context, John 13:12–20, or in its broader context, John 13:1–30. However, ἐγώ εἰμι by itself is not a complete clause structure according to the syntax of

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<sup>43</sup> Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis," 141; Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 34–35.

New Testament Greek. Therefore, the only explanation must be that the ἐγώ εἰμι construction in John 13:19 is used as an allusion to the divine name. This interpretation can be further testified by considering the position of John 13:19 within the discourse structure of John's Gospel. Following the instance of the absolute ἐγώ εἰμι in John 8:58, which is used as the divine self-revelation, the same expression in John 13:19 most likely have the same meaning and usage.<sup>44</sup>

According to the above discourse analysis, this section verifies that the ἐγώ εἰμι uttered by Jesus in John 13:19 means "I AM," an absolute usage as the divine name. In the discourse unit John 13:1–30, Jesus' domination over the situation is manifested in His prediction of the betrayal. Jesus is actually in control of His own circumstances and is able to guarantee the fulfillment of His prediction. This prediction bears great resemblance to Yahweh's predictive words in Isa 40–55, the fulfillment of which vindicates Yahweh as the one true God so that Israel will believe Him as ἐγώ εἰμι. Similarly, the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction in John 13:19 vindicates that Jesus is the one with God as ἐγώ εἰμι.<sup>45</sup> The ἐγώ εἰμι statement in Jesus' speech explicitly conveys this profound Christological implication, the import of which can hardly be mistaken.

## VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the reconstructed model of Longacre's top-down narrative analysis approach can serve as an effective and important tool for the New Testament interpretation. As I have demonstrated in this paper by applying this reconstructed model to form the discourse

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<sup>44</sup> The absolute ἐγώ εἰμι in John 8:58 is accepted by almost all biblical scholars as the divine self-revelation that echoes the divine name. See Ball, *"I Am" in John's Gospel*, 195–98; Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel of John*, 139–40; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 205–6; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 358; Harner, *The "I Am" of the Fourth Gospel*, 39–42; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 273; Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 276; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 534–35; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 419–20; Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus*, 137–40; Williams, *I Am He*, 275–83.

<sup>45</sup> Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus*, 146.

structure of John's Gospel and to conduct a discourse analysis on John 13:1–30 within the discourse structure, this approach provides a linguistic framework for the exploration of Greek narrative in the New Testament. This discourse analysis model fully assesses the linguistic features of the New Testament text, which are essential for the appropriate interpretation of the Greek text. In this way, the reconstructed model of Longacre's approach can offer new insights into the existing research of New Testament studies.

### ABSTRACT

Discourse analysis has recently become an important interpretive approach in the field of biblical studies. Various models of discourse analysis have been constructed and applied to interpret the biblical text. The discourse analysis model developed by Robert E. Longacre has been widely adopted to understand the Hebrew narrative and has a significant influence on the discourse analysis of the Old Testament. This paper proposes to remodel Longacre's approach for the interpretation of the Greek New Testament. I will reconstruct Longacre's discourse analysis model by integrating all essential elements in the Greek language system as well as demonstrate the application of this reconstructed model by adopting it to form the discourse structure of John's Gospel and to conduct a discourse analysis on John 13:1–30 within this discourse structure. In this way, I will verify that the reconstructed model of Longacre's approach, which provides a linguistic framework for the exploration of the Greek narrative, can serve as an effective and important tool for the New Testament interpretation. This discourse analysis model fully assesses the linguistic features of the New Testament text and will offer new insights into the existing research of New Testament studies.

### 撮 要

近年來，語篇分析已成為聖經研究領域中的一項重要釋經方法，各種語篇分析方法已被構建並應用於詮釋聖經文本。朗阿克雷（Robert E. Longacre）研究的語篇分析方法被廣泛用於解讀希伯來文敘事文，對舊約聖經的語篇分析產生了重大影響。本文將改寫朗阿克雷的語篇分析方法，使其適用於詮釋希臘文新

約聖經。筆者將整合希臘文語言系統中的所有基本要素，並將改寫後的方法應用於構建約翰福音的語篇結構，進而以約翰福音十三章 1 至 30 節為例，展示如何根據語篇結構進行語篇分析。如此，筆者將證實改寫後的語篇分析方法不僅為希臘文敘事文提供了語言學分析的框架，更為新約釋經提供了有效而重要的工具。該語篇分析方法能夠全面查考新約文本的語言特徵，將為現有的新約研究提供新的洞見。