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Stephen H. Levinsohn

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The Relevance of Greek Discourse Studies to Exegesis

Stephen H. Levinsohn

Stephen Levinsohn has a doctorate in Linguistic Science from the University of Reading, England. He and his wife, Nessie, became members of SIL in 1965 and worked with the Inga people in Colombia. The Inga New Testament was completed in 1996. He is an international linguistics and translation consultant for SIL

Abstract

At least three discourse-related areas of exegesis tend not to be handled satisfactorily in many commentaries: the order of constituents in the clause and sentence, the presence versus absence of the article with nouns, and the significance of the conjunctions used. This paper first shows how insights from the work of Simon Dik, Jan Firbas and Knud Lambrecht have contributed to our understanding of the significance of variations in constituent order. Other insights that bear on constituent order are the Principle of Natural Information Flow and the distinction between default versus marked ordering. The paper then outlines how recent insights about the presence versus absence of the article may help us to choose between alternative exegeses of the same passage. The final section shows how insights from the work of Diane Blakemore and Reboul and Moeschler have revolutionized our understanding of the most common conjunctions used in the New Testament.

1. Introduction

One of the tools we are likely to use, whether as consultants or as translators, is the series of Exegetical Summaries of different New Testament epistles that the Translation Department of SIL International has prepared. When I look up a verse in them, I can see at a glance which interpretation of a particular point is favoured by the majority of commentators. Periodically, I also discover some interpretation that I had never even dreamed of before!

It is encouraging when most of the commentators agree on the interpretation of the feature I am concerned about, and rather disconcerting when they are evenly divided between two or more mutually exclusive exegeses. In Trail's (1995) exegetical summary of 1 Corinthians 1–9, for instance, he asks about 1:27, "What words in these next two verses are emphasized?", and gives three answers that have been offered by different commentators:

> "The words 'God chose' are repeated three times and are emphasized…"
>
> "The words 'of the world' are repeated three times and are emphasized…"
>
> "The objects of the verb 'chose' plus phrases: the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the despised things—are placed first in their propositions and are therefore emphasized…" (p. 67).

How do we know which answer is the right one?

Many fine commentaries were produced in the nineteenth century, and there is a good reason for this: classical education introduced the writers to Classical Greek at a very early age, so the transition to the Koiné was not difficult for them. By the time they had completed their doctorates at seminary, the language was probably as natural to them as King James English. Such writers were particularly strong on morphology and basic grammar, as well as word studies. However, they also tried to address issues that could only be resolved by taking the wider context into account, and today we often call those issues discourse studies.

At the same time, their commentaries display some weaknesses (ones, I may say, that are evident also in twentieth century commentators). To start with, most of them had a Germanic background, their mother tongue typically being German or English. This meant that the framework into which they fitted their observations, if it was not Latin, would be German or English.

As an aside, what I found interesting, as I prepared for a workshop on 1 Corinthians in Papua New Guinea, was the frequency with which the Frenchman Frédéric Louis Godet (1886) had something valuable to say about discourse-related features of the Greek. Why? Probably because his mother tongue, though a Romance language, evidences more Greek influence than Germanic ones do.

2. Discourse-related areas of exegesis that tend not to be handled satisfactorily in the commentaries

I have noted at least three discourse-related areas of exegesis that tend not to be handled satisfactorily in the commentaries: 1) the order of constituents, 2) the presence versus absence of the article with nouns, and 3) conjunctions.

2.1 The order of constituents

The only explanation that most commentators offer for changes from default constituent order is "emphasis." Some examples:[1]

- Concerning 1 Cor. 1:9a (πιστὸς ὁ θεός 'God is faithful'), Lenski (1961:35) says that πιστός "is placed emphatically forward."
- Concerning 3:5d (καὶ ἑκάστῳ ὡς ὁ κύριος ἔδωκεν 'and to each as the Lord assigned'), Findlay (1900:788) claims that "ἑκάστῳ is emphatically projected before the ὡς."
- Concerning 4:8f (ἵνα καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμῖν συμβασιλεύσωμεν 'so that we also might be kings with you!'), Ellingworth and Hatton (1985:83) say that both ἡμεῖς ('we') and ὑμῖν ('with you') are "emphatic."
- Concerning 4:5e (καὶ τότε ὁ ἔπαινος γενήσεται ἑκάστῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ 'And then the praise will come to each one from God'), Robertson and Plummer (1971(1914):178) claim that the **final** constituent, ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ (from God), is "with emphasis."

Does "emphasis" always mean the same when applied to the above passages? And, more to the point as far as translation is concerned, will it always be encoded in the same way in receptor languages? The answer, especially to the second question, is "No." (see further below).

2.2 The article

Related to constituent order variations and "emphasis" is the presence versus absence of the article with nouns. A noun like θεός ('God') is sometimes preceded by the article (e.g., in 1:9 & 4:5, both cited above), and sometimes it is not (e.g., 3:9a: θεοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί 'For we are God's coworkers'). Most commentators do not discuss why this is happening. And those that do discuss the article tend to offer explanations that are conditioned by the way the definite article works in their mother tongue.

Are we right in ignoring the presence versus absence of the article when undertaking the exegesis of a passage? My answer below will be "No."

2.3 Conjunctions

Greek grammarians traditionally content themselves with noting different "senses" for the conjunctions they encounter. For example, Porter (1992:208, 211) lists the following senses for two of the most common conjunctions in the Greek New Testament:

[1] This paper was originally presented to translation consultants in Papua New Guinea, at the beginning of a workshop on discourse features of the Greek of 1 Corinthians 1–4. Consequently, most of the examples are taken from that book.

"δέ (... Adversative or Connective or Emphatic...)"

"καί (…Connective or Adversative or Emphatic)"

As a linguist, my reaction to such statements is that the author has failed to identify a difference between the functions of δέ and καί. No wonder some twentieth century grammarians concluded that δέ is "usually... indistinguishable from καί" (Turner 1963:331).

As another example, Fee (1987:162, fn. 20) states about γάρ ('for') in 4:4a (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα ('For I am aware of nothing against myself'): "More likely this is an illustration of γάρ having the force of δέ." Such a comment makes no linguistic sense. Consequently, in my notes on this verse I wrote, "It does not and cannot have 'the force of δέ'."

Although SIL International's Semantic Structure Analyses (SSAs) have attempted to take the conjunctions into account when determining the semantic relation between propositions or groups of propositions, they have only had partial success. The reason is that, in the past, SSAs assumed that all relations between propositions could be expressed as semantic ones. That is why so many of the notes in the Exegetical Summaries are taken up with noting alternative semantic relations. For example, look at Trail's (1995:54) summary of possible relations that γάρ might be signalling in 1:21: is it explanation, or grounds, or reason?

Are we right in attempting to analyse the conjunctions of the Greek New Testament in terms of different "senses"? And are we right in expecting relations between propositions or groups of propositions always to be semantic? The answer below to both questions will be "No."

3. Discourse-related areas of exegesis can be helped by discourse analysis

Each of the above areas has the potential to affect our exegesis of a verse quite significantly, yet none of them is handled satisfactorily by most commentators. Can insights from discourse analysis help? They certainly can! I examine the three areas in turn.

3.1 Constituent order

Several linguists have made significant contributions to our understanding of variations in the order of constituents.

a) Simon Dik (1989:363) proposed a template that is particularly applicable to languages like Koiné Greek, Ancient Hebrew and N.W. Austronesian (Philippine-type) languages. What is common about them is that the verb often precedes the subject and object.[2]

Dik's template is: **P1 P2 V X**, where
position P1 can be occupied by one or more TOPIC constituents, and
position P2 can be occupied by a FOCUS constituent.[3]

Such a template explains why commentators seem to attach the word "emphatic" to very different types of preverbal or preposed constituents. Most of them readily fall into one of two sets:
(P1) TOPIC-like ones such as ἑκάστῳ ('to each'—3:5d), and
(P2) FOCUS-like ones such as πιστὸς ('faithful'—1:9a).

It is important to distinguish these two types of preposing for "emphasis,"[4] because many of the languages we work with handle topic-like constituents in one way, and focus-like constituents in a different way. In

[2] The word "often" is used deliberately, since my comments about Dik's template apply whether or not the default order of constituents in Koiné Greek is considered to be VSO.
[3] Dik's template does **not** imply that the language to which it is applied has VSO as its default order. The template allows, for example, that it be the norm for P1 to be occupied by a topical subject. Such a norm, if proposed for non-narrative material in Koiné Greek, would be consistent with Terry's (1995) constituent order statistics for 1 Corinthians (see also Porter 1992:295).
[4] Following K. Callow (1974:50), I prefer the term "prominence" (see Levinsohn 2000:7). Callow uses the term to refer "to any device whatever which gives certain events, participants, or objects more significance than others in the same context." I also follow Callow (op. cit. 52) in distinguishing three types of prominence: **thematic** (topic-like—'what I

Gumawana (Austronesian, Papua New Guinea), for instance, topic-like constituents typically occur at the beginning of a sentence, often with the particle *go* immediately after them, whereas focus-like constituents occur later in the sentence, without the *go*.

b) Jan Firbas, a Prague School linguist, was a pioneer in recognizing that, in the majority of sentences in a natural text, the order of non-verbal constituents tended to follow what has come to be called the "Principle of Natural Information Flow" (Comrie 1989; see Firbas 1964). According to this principle, non-verbal constituents that convey **established** information are placed before those that convey new or **non-established** information. See, for example, 1 Cor. 3:17b:

verb	**established**	**less established**
φθερεῖ	τοῦτον	ὁ θεός
will destroy	this one	the God

'This one' was referred to in the previous proposition (17a), whereas 'God' was not an active participant in the action of 17a, so the object appropriately precedes the subject. Some commentators say that 'this one' is emphasized; others, that 'God' is emphasized. In fact, neither constituent is emphasized, because the order of constituents conforms to the Principle of Natural Information Flow.

Note that when this principle is applied to Koiné Greek, constituents occupying Dik's P1 and P2 positions are excluded from consideration.

Firbas also observed that, to the extent that the syntax of the language permits, the most important piece of non-established information comes last. This is illustrated by 1 Cor. 2:7b (below), as two of the non-verbal constituents convey non-established information: 'before the ages' and 'for our glory'. However, as the reference to 'the Lord of glory' in v. 8 indicates, the most important of the two is 'for our glory', so this constituent is placed last.

established	**verb**	**established**	**non-established**	**non-established**
ἣν	προώρισεν	ὁ θεὸς	πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων	εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν
which	decreed	the God	before the ages	for glory our

On occasion, the Principle of Natural Information Flow leads to the verb being placed last in the sentence in Greek. John 1:5b provides an example (5a read, 'And the light shines in the darkness').

	P1		**established**	**non-established**	
καὶ	ἡ	σκοτία	αὐτὸ	οὐ	κατέλαβεν.
and	the	darkness	it	not	grasped

Application to translation. The Principle of Natural Information Flow operates in many languages, but translators often fail to obey it. For example, the default order of constituents in many OV languages is Subject – Object(s) – Adjunct(s) – Verb. I have frequently observed that translators tend to reproduce this order even when the adjunct conveys established information and the object, new or non-established information.

Look at 1 Thess. 4:6a, for instance. The adjunct ἐν τῷ πράγματι ('in the matter') is established information, whereas no previous reference has been made to τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ('his brother'), so the object follows the adjunct:

verbs		**established**	**non-established**
τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν	καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν	ἐν τῷ πράγματι	τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ
the not to overstep	and to wrong	in the matter	the brother his

Natural texts in both OV and VO receptor languages represented in recent workshops typically deviated from default constituent order in order to place non-established information after established information. Nevertheless, translators of this verse had invariably placed the object before the adjunct in the draft they

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am talking about'), **focus** ('what is relatively the most important… information in the given setting'—Dik 1978:19), and **emphasis proper** (to express strong feelings about an item or indicate that an event is unexpected).

brought to the workshop. However, as soon as they changed the order when prompted to do so by a consultant, they agreed that it sounded better that way.

Note that most languages can **violate** the Principle of Natural Information Flow (i.e., place non-established information before established information) when prominence (contrastive or emphatic) is to be given to a focal constituent. 1 Cor. 1:9a (cited above), which is verbless, provides an example:

non-established	**established**
πιστὸς	ὁ θεός
faithful	the God

When a verb is present in Greek, violations of the Principle of Natural Information Flow are achieved by placing the non-established information in the P2 position. 1 Cor. 1:31b illustrates this. By violating the Principle of Natural Information Flow, (contrastive) prominence is given to ἐν κυρίῳ ('in Lord'):

P1	**P2: non-established**	**established**
Ὁ καυχώμενος	ἐν κυρίῳ	καυχάσθω
the one who boasts,	in Lord	let him boast

See also 1 Cor. 2:14b (ignoring γὰρ 'for'):[5]

P2: non-established	**established**	
μωρία	αὐτῷ	ἐστιν
foolishness	to him	they are

c) Knud Lambrecht (1994) has made an important contribution to our understanding of sentences in which the subject is **not** the topic of the sentence. Certain changes in constituent order reflect the fact that the sentence is not "articulated" as a comment about a topic.[6]

Presentational sentences do not make a comment about a topic, but present or introduce a new entity or event to the discourse. The norm is for the reference to the new entity to occur at the very **end** of the clause (this is achieved in English by using the dummy subject 'there'). 1 Cor. 3:3b provides an example (I have omitted γὰρ 'for'):

ὅπου	ἐν ὑμῖν	ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις
as long as	among you [there is]	jealousy and quarrelling

However, the reference to the entity or event may be preposed (e.g., for emphasis) and occur at the very **beginning** of the clause, as in 1:11b:

ὅτι	ἔριδες	ἐν ὑμῖν	εἰσιν
that	contentions	among you	are

Most **identificational** sentences are information questions such as 'Where are you going?' or answers to such questions. Underlying both is a presupposed proposition (in this case, 'You are going **somewhere**'), and the focus is on where that somewhere is. In Greek, as in English, the focal constituent usually occurs at the very beginning of the clause (thus violating the Principle of Natural Information Flow—see above).

It is not always easy to recognize an identificational sentence when the focus is **not** a question word. 1 Cor. 1:13b (μὴ Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν 'Was Paul crucified for you?') provides an example. At first glance, this could be mistaken for a comment about the topic, Paul. In reality, though, there is a presupposed proposition that **someone** was crucified for you, with the focus on who that someone was.

Translation consultants need to check that the consultee has used an appropriate identificational structure, rather than the default topic-comment one when translating such sentences.

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[5] When a focal constituent occupies position P2 and a "pronominal constituent would otherwise end the sentence, it is nearly always found *before* the verb" (Levinsohn 2000:39). I suspect that such an order makes it more obvious that the Principle of Natural Information Flow has been violated, and thus adds to the prominence given to the focal constituent.

[6] For further discussion of articulations of the sentence, see Levinsohn 2005 sec. 2.1.

d) Default versus **marked** orders of constituents. In the above discussion, I have used the term "default" on various occasions. This is because, underlying any claim that a constituent has been "placed emphatically forward" (Lenski), there must be a normal position from which the constituent has been moved.

Dik's P1 P2 V X template does not specify the normal order of constituents that occur after the verb. Cross-linguistically, it is normal for pronominals to be closer to the verb than nominals, for the subject as topic to precede the object, and for "arguments" such as the subject and object to precede adjuncts (see Levinsohn 2000:29–32). This leads to the following expansion of Dik's template as an expression of the norms in verbal clauses in both Koiné Greek and Hebrew:[7]

P1—P2—V—Pronominals—Nominal subject—Other nominal arguments—Adjuncts.

Commentators sometimes claim that a final constituent is emphatic when in fact the order is default. 1 Cor. 2:9c provides an example of default order. As Ellingworth and Hatton (1985:48) point out, "There is nothing in the text that corresponds to TEV's 'is the very thing'."

relativiser	**verb**	**subject**	**other nominal argument**
ἃ	ἡτοίμασεν	ὁ θεὸς	τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν
which things	prepared	the God	for those who love him

More often, the order of constituents is marked, which needs to be taken into account in the exegesis. 1 Cor. 1:30b provides an example (see further below):

relativiser	**verb**	**nominal**	**pronominal**	**[adjunct/continuation of nominal?]**
ὃς	ἐγενήθη	σοφία	ἡμῖν	ἀπὸ θεοῦ
who	became	wisdom	for us	from God

Are the words ἀπὸ θεοῦ ('from God') connected to the verb ('who was made by God to be wisdom for us') or to σοφία ('wisdom from God') (see Trail 1995:75)? The answer needs to include an explanation of why the order of constituents is marked (default order would have placed the pronoun ἡμῖν ('for us') immediately after the verb).

The marked order can be explained if ἀπὸ θεοῦ ('from God') is connected with σοφία ('wisdom') (Trail's Option 2). σοφία … ἀπὸ θεοῦ is then a constituent that is discontinuous "due to its parts being unequally relevant" (Levinsohn 2000:58). And we shall see in the next section that the lack of the article in ἀπὸ θεοῦ indicates that 'from God' has been "emphasized; in other words, it is the more prominent part of the constituent: wisdom 'from **God**'.[8]

3.2 The article

When a constituent precedes the verb or has been preposed, one way in Greek to decide whether it is topic-like or focus-like is to see whether the article is present or not.

> Topic-like constituents are typically associated with established information, so are more likely to have the article.
>
> Focus-like constituents are typically associated with non-established information, so are more likely not to have the article.

Compare 1 Cor. 3:16a	(ναὸς θεοῦ 'a temple of God'): non-established, focal
with 3:17c	(ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ 'the temple of God'): established, topic of proposition

Now look at 3:17a (εἴ τις τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φθείρει 'If anyone destroys the temple of God'). At first sight, it might appear that τις is occupying the P1 position before the verb, and τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ the P2 position ('If anyone destroys **the temple of God**'). However, 'the temple of God' is established

[7] The norm is for negatives and relativisers also to precede their verb in Koiné Greek.

[8] When a focal constituent is discontinuous "due to its parts being unequally relevant," Levinsohn 2000:58 only allowed for the first part to be more prominent, with the second part supportive. Further research, however, indicates that, in some contexts, it is the second part that is more prominent.

information and has the article. The only constituent that conveys new information in the proposition is the verb ('If anyone **destroys** the temple of God'). So the order of constituents in fact conforms to the Principle of Natural Information Flow, with the verb focal (as in John 1:5b, discussed earlier).[9]

Note that the above discussion does not explain why, in 3:16a, θεοῦ ('of God') has no article, even though θεός "has a unique referent and is active" (op. cit. 162).[10] The traditional explanation ('Apollonius' Canon') is "that both the head noun and genitive noun mimicked each other with regard to articularity" (Wallace 1996:239). However, there are many exceptions (see Levinsohn 2000:151 for examples), so a better explanation is needed.

Compare 1:30b (ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν **ἀπὸ θεοῦ** 'who became wisdom for us from God') with 4:5e (καὶ τότε ὁ ἔπαινος γενήσεται ἑκάστῳ **ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ** 'And then the praise will come to each one from God'). Both clauses include the constituent 'from God', but only the second has the article. Why is this? The answer has to do with where the focus falls in the two propositions.

In 1:30b, 'from God' is **emphatically focal** (Trail 1995:75, citing Findlay). In 4:5e, the primary focus is on 'then', not 'from God' ("the presence of τότε appears to highlight the fact that the event is to occur then and not at some previous time"—Levinsohn 2000:94).

The general principle underlying the above difference is the following: "If an anarthrous substantive has a unique referent and is active, then its referent is prominent" (op. cit. 162). In other words, if you are satisfied that a Greek noun has a unique referent and is active, yet it lacks the article, then it has been "emphasized."

Incidentally, the omission of the article with nouns that have a unique referent and are active when they are "emphasised" is not peculiar to Greek. Something similar happens in a number of African languages (see Levinsohn 2005 sec. 9.2.4).

Now consider 2:16c: ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν ('But we have the mind of Christ'). Ellingworth and Hatton (1985:55) state, "it is important, though difficult, to get the emphasis of this sentence right. RSV's literal translation, and even TEV, throws stress on the final word, **Christ**. The Greek sentence, however, does not stress **Christ** but **we.**" Now it is certainly true that the subject pronoun ἡμεῖς ('we') in position P1 signals a switch of topic from the implied 'no one' of 16a–b. So 'we' is emphatic in the sense that it is a contrastive **topic**. In addition, though, νοῦν Χριστοῦ ('mind of Christ') is a **focal** constituent that has been preposed to position P2 to give it extra (contrastive) prominence. The omission of the article increases this prominence. So Ellingworth and Hatton are wrong to claim that the Greek sentence does not stress **Christ**.

Conclusion: Understanding how the article works in Greek can be very important to choosing between alternative exegeses of the same passage.

3.3 Conjunctions

Certain practitioners of Relevance Theory have made the greatest contribution here.

Diane Blakemore (1987) made a couple of key contributions:

- Some conjunctions do not signal a semantic relation, but a **pragmatic** one.
- As the title of her book (*Semantic Constraints on Relevance*) implies, each conjunction is associated with a particular constraint. This constraint is different from the constraint associated with any other conjunction.

To illustrate the difference between conjunctions that signal a semantic relation and ones that signal a pragmatic one, consider the following pair of propositions from 1 Timothy 4:8, with the conjunctions omitted:

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[9] See Levinsohn 2000:40-42 on the ambiguities that arise when a verb ends a sentence.

[10] The printed version of Levinsohn 2000 has "activated," but this was corrected to "active" in the Errata and Addenda to the volume, to exclude instances in which an activated referent has ceased to feature in the discourse for a while and so needs to be reactivated (p. 152).

8a physical training is of some value.
8b godliness has value for all things.

The **inherent** semantic relation between these propositions is prototypical contrast (Longacre 1996:55, Mann & Thompson 1987:8), as they have a point of similarity (X 'has value' or 'is of value') and two points of contrast ('physical training' versus 'godliness', and 'some' [value] versus 'for all things'). These propositions may be (rather redundantly) linked by a conjunction whose specific function is to signal an adversative **semantic** relation (e.g., Greek ἀλλά 'but').

Alternatively, since the semantic relation can already be deduced from the content of the propositions themselves, the author may indicate how the reader is to process them within the particular argument that he or she is currently making. This is something that **varies** with the purpose of the argument, hence the term **pragmatic** relation. So, in one argument, the author's intention may be that the two propositions be **associated** together as part of the same point (e.g., 'physical training is of some value **and** [και] godliness has value for all things, so plan on doing both'). In another argument, the author's intention may be that there be **progression** from a lesser to a more important point (e.g., 'physical training is of some value, **whereas** [δέ] godliness has value for all things').

Key pragmatic conjunctions in Greek are γάρ, δέ and καί. In addition, some conjunctions with semantic content have pragmatic overtones (e.g., οὖν).

The reason that commentators cannot agree whether γάρ in 1 Cor. 1:21 signals explanation or grounds or reason (Trail 1995:54) is that it does not signal any of those semantic relations. Rather, it is a pragmatic conjunction whose job is simply to signal that what follows **strengthens** a preceding assertion.

The reason that commentators cannot agree whether δέ in 1:10 signals contrast or "transition" (op. cit. 31) is that it is never there to signal an adversative semantic relation (see Levinsohn 2000:11–14).[11] Rather, it is a pragmatic conjunction whose job is to signal that what follows marks **progression** (development) in Paul's argument.

Similarly, the reason that commentators cannot agree on whether καί in 1:10 introduces additional information or a negative restatement (different semantic relations) is that it is a pragmatic conjunction whose job is to signal that what follows is to be **associated** with what precedes, without specifying how.

Finally, the reason that commentators cannot agree on whether or not οὖν in 3:5 introduces a conclusion is that it is never there to signal the semantic relation of grounds-CONCLUSION. Rather, it is a semantic-pragmatic inferential conjunction whose job is to signal that what follows is a resumption (in most instances) and **advancement** of the same theme line as before (op. cit. 128).

Reboul and Moeschler (1998:77) define connectives in a particularly useful way. The following is my translation, with modifications, of their definition of a connective (whether semantic or pragmatic):

> A connective is a linguistic marker, drawn from a number of grammatical categories (coordinating conjunctions [e.g., 'but'], subordinating conjunctions ['since'], adverbs ['thus'], adverbial expressions ['after all']), which:
> a) links a linguistic or discourse unit of any **size** to its context
> b) gives instructions as to **how** to relate this unit to its context
> c) constrains conclusions to be drawn on the basis of this discourse connection **that might not have been drawn had it been absent**.

Now for some observations on the above definition.

a) One cannot tell the **size** of the unit being linked from the connective itself. The connective γάρ ('for') indicates that what follows strengthens the material that immediately precedes it. However, one cannot tell from the presence of γάρ how far the strengthening material will extend.

[11] As I have argued above, contrast is conveyed in the first instance by the content of the propositions that are being conjoined, not by any conjunction. This is clear from 1 Cor. 3:15. "Verses 14 and 15 are in a contrastive relationship" (Trail 1995:142), yet no conjunction is present.

Thus, in 1 Tim. 4:7b–8 (below), γάρ indicates that what follows strengthens the command of 7b, but does not indicate how far this strengthening material will extend. In fact, the strengthening material extends over two clauses (8a–b), but this is not indicated by γάρ.

7b	γύμναζε	δὲ	σεαυτὸν	πρὸς	εὐσέβειαν·
	train	DM[12]	yourself	for	godliness

Train yourself in godliness.

8a	ἡ	γὰρ	σωματικὴ	γυμνασία	πρὸς	ὀλίγον	ἐστὶν	ὠφέλιμος,
	the	for	bodily	training	for	little	is	profitable

For physical training is of some value.

8b	ἡ	δὲ	εὐσέβεια	πρὸς	πάντα	ὠφέλιμός	ἐστιν
	the	DM	godliness	for	all	profitable	is

But godliness has value for all things.

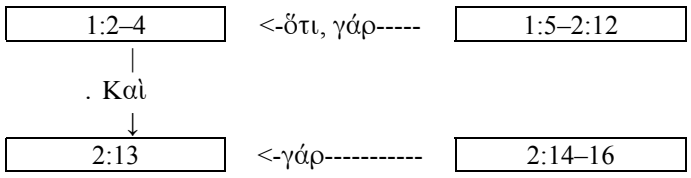
b) The presence of γάρ in the above extract guides or **constrains** the reader to interpret what follows (1Tim. 4:8a–b) as strengthening the immediately preceding material (7b).

c) The presence of the connective constrains conclusions to be drawn **that might not have been drawn had it been absent**. This is illustrated in the following extract from the NIV translation of Rom. 8:17–18:

> 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, provided we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
>
> ***Future Glory***
>
> 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Although the translation does not show it, γάρ introduces 18. Failure to translate γάρ (e.g., by 'After all'), together with the presence of a title, means that the reader is unlikely to draw the conclusion that 18 is strengthening 17, even though the presence of γάρ indicates that it is![13]

Commentators often overlook the significance of γάρ when discussing the overall structure of a passage. For example, 1 Thess. 1:2–2:16 are usually divided into three sections, each with its own title (e.g., 1:2–10: The life and faith of the Thessalonians; 2:1–12: Paul's work in Thessalonica; 2:13–16: After Paul left Thessalonica—*UBS Handbook*). This outline hides the unity of 1:2–2:16, which is reflected in the presence of γάρ at the start of each section and subsection (1:8–10, 2:1–8, 2:9–12), and of Καὶ ('and') at 2:13. The overall theme of 1:2–2:16 is thanksgiving to God. The first theses on this theme are presented in 1:2–4. Thereafter, all the material from 1:5–2:12 is supportive in nature. Καί then introduces a further thesis on the theme of thanksgiving (2:13).



[12] DM: development marker.

[13] I am not suggesting that an English translation should always include a conjunction when the Greek has γάρ. It is important to determine for each language when a particular semantic or pragmatic relation is marked by a conjunction and when it is left implicit (see Levinsohn 2005 chap. 6 for discussion of this issue).

4. Conclusion

A good exegesis of a passage in the Greek New Testament will consider whether the order of constituents within the individual clauses and sentences is default or marked. If the order is marked, it will determine whether the emphasis is topic-like or focus-like, and will take into account the presence versus absence of the article in reaching a decision. It will analyse the function of conjunctions like γάρ, δέ and καί in terms of the distinct pragmatic constraint that each imposes on interpretation. And it will also take into account other discourse features that have not been discussed in this paper.

Let me close with a final caution! If the discourse features of the Greek text are taken into account when undertaking the exegesis of a passage, new interpretations of the passage should **not** normally be the result. Rather, the value of taking such features of the text into account is that it enables the exegete to choose between existing interpretations.

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