

Sociolinguistics and New Testament Exegesis: Three Approaches to Discourse Analysis Using Acts 21:27—22:5 as a Test Case¹

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Abstract: This article discusses three distinct types of discourse analysis models—Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), Conversation Analysis (CA), and SFL Register Analysis—and applies them individually to the text in Acts 21:27—22:5 to examine various aspects and elements that comprise the context of situation of the incident of Paul’s arrest in the temple. The main objective is to showcase the relevance and utility of sociolinguistic theories in New Testament exegesis. (Article)

Keywords: Acts 21:27—22:5, sociolinguistics, exegesis, discourse analysis, social identity theory, speech or communication accommodation theory, conversation analysis, register analysis

1. *Introduction*

Exegesis continues to be an important component and mundane activity in New Testament studies—it is what keeps the business running.² To start talking about exegesis, however, is often a challenging task, for it can involve a complex discussion of a number of interrelated issues—the nature, problems, and history

1. This article was originally an invited conference paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (New Testament Greek Language and Exegesis Consultation) in San Diego, California, USA on 19 November 2014.

2. Cf. Conzelmann and Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 1.

of exegesis,³ the various methods of exegesis,⁴ and even the debate over the term “exegesis.”⁵ It is not my intention to get involved in such discussions, but I want to acknowledge these issues to recognize the complexities involved in dealing with the topic of New Testament exegesis. It is also not my intention to critique other types of exegetical methods. My intention is rather to demonstrate the relevance and utility of sociolinguistic theories for the exegetical task. Specifically, I wish to show that sociolinguistic theories can provide us with the best tools for analyzing the text of the New Testament, as these theories have the means to account for the dynamic interplay of the three components—language, people, and society—that make up the situational contexts behind the text of the New Testament. This article has three major sections. The first section defines, in sociolinguistic terms, the meaning of text and context, and explains the relation of these two terms to the concept of register (or standard and variable social domains). The second section discusses three sociolinguistic approaches to analyzing the text of the New Testament. The third and last section then demonstrates how these three approaches can be applied to the text in Acts 21:27—22:5 (Paul’s Arrest in the temple). Before I turn to the first section, some parameters of this study are in order.

3. An excellent resource on the history of New Testament interpretation is Baird, *History of New Testament Research*.

4. On methods of New Testament interpretation, see Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 73–82, 110–30; Black and Dockery, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament*, 2–186; McKnight and Osborne, eds., *The Face of New Testament Studies*, 59–145; and Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament*.

5. New Testament studies have already moved beyond the period of traditional historical exegesis (or grammatico-historical exegesis). Exegesis of this type typically requires the reader to focus the exegetical task and activity upon determining the historical background and the original author’s and audience’s intentions in order to discover the meaning of the text (see Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 111–12; Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 27; Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation*, 220, 252; and Marshall, “The Problem of New Testament Exegesis,” 67–73. For a summative discussion as well as a critique of traditional exegesis, see Porter and Clarke, “What Is Exegesis,” 3–21.

First, I note that the term “exegesis” needs to be distinguished from the term “hermeneutics.” Whereas exegesis is the application of hermeneutical theories to the interpretation of texts, hermeneutics refers to the science of formulating guidelines, rules, and methods for interpretation or the ways in which we may theorize about human interpretation.⁶ Second, I emphasize the importance and priority of one’s goal of investigation in the exegetical process; the ultimate goal of exegesis is to provide the best answer to the question asked in the investigation of a particular New Testament text. Thus, each individual textual analysis of Acts 21:27—22:5 in the third section of this article is constrained by a specific question that it seeks to answer. Third and last, as already mentioned, my focus is upon demonstrating how sociolinguistic theories can be applied to the text of the New Testament. I am not positing any particular argument for the interpretation of our passage of interest. My interpretation of the text in Acts 21:27—22:5 as a result of my sociolinguistic analyses, however, can certainly either clarify or supplement previous interpretations of the passage.

2. Text, Context, and Register (Standard and Variable Domain Concepts)

The traditional definition of “text” and “context” in New Testament exegesis is that the former refers to “what is said” (content) in a given New Testament text or document, and the latter refers to “why it is said” (context). The latter, context, is expressed in terms of historical context, which indicates the historical, sociocultural, and occasional nature of a New Testament document, and in terms of literary context, which denotes the reason why a given text was said at a particular point

6. Exegesis is sometimes taken as a synonym for hermeneutics and interpretation (see Porter and Clarke, “What Is Exegesis,” 4–6). On the topic of hermeneutics, see Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*; Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*; and *idem*, *Hermeneutics*.

in the document. To get at these two contexts is to get at the author's intended meaning.⁷ In sociolinguistic terms, however, these concepts or terms are defined in a different manner.

2.1 *Text as Discourse or Conversation*

Sociolinguists have given various definitions to the terms “text” and “context,” but it is helpful to start with a particular definition of text and work our way towards a definition of the concepts of context and register. Brown and Yule define text as “the verbal record of a communicative act.”⁸ Two important notions are immediately apparent in this definition. On the one hand, a “verbal record” implies that a text is composed of a word or a string of words that is subsequently governed by the lexico-grammatical rules and features of a particular language. On the other hand, a “communicative act” indicates that a text is actually an instance of social and linguistic interaction, whether written (text) or spoken (conversation).⁹ The story of Paul's arrest in the temple in Acts 21:27–22:5 is an instance of sociolinguistic interaction or a discourse between the author and the audience of the book of Acts. Similarly, the embedded conversation found in Acts 21:37–39 is also an instance of sociolinguistic interaction between Paul and the cohort commander (χιλίαρχος).

2.2 *Context (Context of Situation) and Register*

The social situation or context within which a linguistic interaction comes to life is called the context of situation or the situational context.¹⁰ More specifically, a context of situation is a situation type that can be identified within the social structure or system of a particular community or society. The aggregate number of the situation types found in a real community

7. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 5.

8. Brown and Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, 6, 190.

9. See Halliday, *Language and Society*, 179–80.

10. Goodwin and Duranti note four dimensions of context that sociolinguists explore: setting, behavioral environment, language as context, and extra-situational context (“Rethinking Context,” 6–9).

constitutes, in social terms, its context of culture, and, in linguistic terms, the entire semantic system of a particular language.¹¹ A situation type is also a semiotic structure, which means that it can be represented by a set of linguistic elements that configure or describe that situation type. The linguistic configuration of a particular social interaction in a discourse or conversation is known as register. Register is a concept often used in sociolinguistics to differentiate between language variation according to its user (dialect) and language variation according to its use (register).¹² Dialect is used to categorize different groups of people that speak different languages within a language community. Register, by contrast, is a means to categorize language according to its various uses; it is a powerful concept that can account for what people do with their language. M.A.K. Halliday notes that, because it is difficult to identify the registers of a language on the basis of their formal properties, it is therefore helpful to distinguish registers from the perspective of institutional linguistics, since “There is enough evidence for us to be able to recognize the major situation types to which formally distinct registers correspond.”¹³ Register analysis is one of the sociolinguistic approaches that attempt to define the context of situation of a social or linguistic interaction, a subject that I will return to below. In the meantime, I will introduce a new concept that could further elucidate the concept of register.

11. Halliday, *Language and Society*, 180–81.

12. See Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, 45–49; Holmes, *Introduction*, 259–64, who compares register with style, noting that the former is usually analyzed along a scale of formality; she also notes vocabulary choice, syntactic reduction, syntactic inversion, routines and formulas, and heavy noun modification as some of the elements that may distinguish one register from another; and Halliday, *Language and Society*, 16–26, 181–82. On the use of these concepts in New Testament studies, see Porter, “Dialect and Register”; and “Register in the Greek of the New Testament,” 190–229.

13. Halliday, *Language and Society*, 19.

2.3 Standard and Variable Domain¹⁴

The concept of social or language domain is not entirely new in that the concept has already been used in sociolinguistic studies.¹⁵ Domains refer to a set of institutionalized contexts that involve “typical interactions between typical participants in typical settings.”¹⁶ These institutionalized contexts, such as family, friendship, religion, education, government, transaction, employment, etc. can be found in *virtually* all speech communities. As such, in sociolinguistic terms, it is perhaps helpful to call them standard (or fixed domains). Within each standard domain of a particular speech community, however, we observe that there are many specific situational contexts that can be observed. I call these situational contexts variable domains, since, while we can say that they still fall under a specific standard domain, they deviate in various ways from the typicality of the sociolinguistic components (e.g., participants, setting, purpose, message form, message content, etc.) that configure standard domains.

This bifurcation of social or language domains into standard and variable domains is an important concept for three reasons. First, it brings the concepts of context of culture (something that cannot be described) and context of situation (something that can evolve into an infinite number of situation types) closer to each other,¹⁷ providing an intermediate bridge between context of situation and context of culture. Second, it allows for a clearer identification of a specific register, since, while each context of situation is, strictly speaking, always unique (cf. the concept of

14. I first introduce the concept of standard and variable domains in Ong, *Multilingual Jesus*, especially chs. 4 and 5.

15. The origin of this concept can be attributed to the work of Fishman (“Micro- and Macro-Sociolinguistics,” 22). Cf. Ferguson, “Diglossia,” 28. On the application of the domain concept in New Testament studies, see Ong, “Language Choice in Ancient Palestine,” 63–101; and especially, *idem*, *Multilingual Jesus*, esp. 122–3, 258–9.

16. Holmes, *Introduction*, 21.

17. Halliday, *Language and Society*, 180, notes that the concepts of context of culture and context of situation are both “fictional” in the sense that they can only operate in the abstract.

idiolect for language users), it nevertheless can be classified into one of the standard domains or larger social institutions of a speech community. Third, by using these two complementary concepts, we can now move from an abstract description of the context of situation to a more concrete and realistic one. This is something that the concept of register is not able to do, at least when used in New Testament exegesis. To be sure, for the purpose of New Testament exegesis, it is important that we analyze and describe the context of situation of a text over and against its larger social contexts, that is, those institutionalized contexts that actually existed in the speech community of the first century CE.

In summary, in sociolinguistic terms, a given text in the New Testament is treated not simply as the “content” (what is said) of a document. Rather, the text is treated as a “situated text.” A text in sociolinguistic terms is a situated text, since its production entails a context of situation, a situation type that can be identified within the larger social contexts or institutions of a particular community.¹⁸ Context of situation is different from “context” (why the content is said) as defined in traditional exegesis. Context of situation is a description and a configuration of the exchanges of meanings of the participants in the sociolinguistic interaction expressed through the text, that is, the social environment of the text. To describe the context of situation of a text requires an analysis of its register or language domain in order to identify the situation type or variable domain type of the text.

Applying these concepts to the text in Acts 21:27—22:5, we can see that the passage is a type of discourse between its author and audience. In that discourse, the author narrates an historical account, that is, the incident concerning Paul’s arrest in the temple. To provide a descriptive analysis of the various sociolinguistic factors (i.e., message, purpose, participants, setting, topic, etc.) that are at play in this incident of Paul’s arrest

18. This notion is usually attributed to the work of Malinowski (“Meaning in Primitive Languages,” 306).

in the temple, we need a systematic methodological approach to analyze the discourse. Similarly, we may also consider Paul's conversation with the cohort commander as a distinct discourse embedded within the larger discourse of Paul's arrest in the temple, and analysis of that embedded discourse in detail also requires the same systematic methodological approach. There are at least three systematic methodological approaches to analyzing a discourse.

3. Three Sociolinguistic Approaches to Analyzing a Text (or Discourse)

In the previous section, I differentiated the meaning of text and context as used in sociolinguistics from its use in traditional historical exegesis. Sociolinguists define text as a "situated text," that is, a text produced from a context of situation, an identifiable type of social situation (variable domain) within a larger social context (standard domain) of a particular speech community. It is in this complementary relationship between a text and its context of situation that we are able to see the utility and strength of sociolinguistics for the exegetical task. I will note three reasons why sociolinguistics serves as a useful tool for New Testament exegesis. First, the discipline is an amalgamation of various disciplines from the social sciences, notably sociology (the study of human society and its development, structure, and functions), anthropology (the study of humans and their sociocultural values and behavior), and linguistics (the study of language and its structure and use),¹⁹ making sociolinguistics effectually the study of the interdependent relationship of people, language, and society. These three sociolinguistic elements are the necessary components for the production of texts, and one cannot (meaningfully) exist without the other two. Second, sociolinguistics is able to establish a clear and formal linkage between a text and its context as I have pointed out in the

19. For a discussion of the theoretical convergence of these three disciplines in sociolinguistics, see Shuy, "A Brief History," 11–32.

preceding section. Third, sociolinguistics has the theoretical capacity to provide a more robust explanation as to why people speak and behave in particular ways in a particular culture. Language use follows the set of social norms, not just the rules of grammar, of a particular speech community.

Given these strengths and the usefulness of sociolinguistics as a tool for New Testament exegesis, there are at least three methodological approaches to analyzing a particular text or discourse. Each of these three approaches comprises a number of discourse analytic tools that focus on any of the three sociolinguistic elements that produce a text. First, analysis may be focused on the individuals or social agents that are involved in the discourse, searching for ways to explain why they are doing what they are doing (e.g., social identity theory, communication accommodation theory, language and social psychology approaches). Second, analysis may be concentrated on the instance of text or discourse (whether spoken, written, or signed text) that unfolds in a particular context, examining the micro-interactional features of the text, such as structure, patterns, cues, and other background features (e.g., conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics). Third, analysis may be approached in terms of a systemic framework expressed both in social terms as a form of interpersonal behavior and in semiotic terms as an exchange of meaning and knowledge (e.g., Systemic Functional Linguistics).²⁰ In what follows, I select and discuss a discourse analytic tool for each of these three approaches.

20. There is a fourth approach, that is, by theorizing and describing the text as a system or potential that contains propositional meaning (e.g., speech act theory, conversational implicature, language pragmatics). This approach, however, encroaches upon the field of philosophy; it thus falls outside the purview of my discussion here, although many introductions to sociolinguistics and literature on linguistic pragmatics still include them in the discussion (see Goodwin and Duranti, "Rethinking Context," 13–31; Matthiessen and Slade, "Analysing Conversation," 378; and Edwards, "Discursive Psychology," 257–73).

3.1 *Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory (Social Agent Focused)*

One of the main applications of Social Identity theory and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in sociolinguistics is in studying intergroup behavior, and more specifically, in determining the solidarity relationship between the participants in a linguistic interaction within a particular context of situation.²¹ Participants are perhaps the most important component in a social interaction, for without this component, a social interaction cannot take place. Henri Tajfel was the first to introduce the term “social identity,” and he defined the term as “that part of the individual’s self concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”²² Tajfel’s point is that individuals project a public face in a social interaction according to *how* they want their interaction partners to view them, and generally, people prefer a positive to a negative public face.²³ There are two parts of “face”: one part is concerned with the interpersonal relationship between participants, and the other part is concerned with the social classification of the speaker. Accommodation theory (see below) posits that when a speaker likes their interaction partners (interpersonal relations), they naturally will want to become *like* them (social classification).²⁴

According to Richard Hudson, the solidarity relationship is the most salient of all social relationships, as it reflects shared experiences through the use of similar language or linguistic codes.²⁵ A solidarity relationship is assessed using the so-called “social-distance dimension scale,” a scale that measures participants’ relationship of more or less “equal” status. Friendly relations move along this dimension scale, and they are signaled

21. On the application of these theories to Mark 14:32–65, see Ong, “An Evaluation,” 37–55.

22. Tajfel, *Social Identity*, 2.

23. Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*, 45.

24. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, 239.

25. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, 232.

by the absence of superior-subordinate linguistic codes, such as use of titles and honorifics, formal politeness language (e.g., linguistic forms of requests), and deferential gestures or behaviors. In creating a positive public face, people typically “accommodate” their behavior and speech to that of their interaction partners.

Howard Giles developed accommodation theory, when he explored some of the cognitive reasons for conversational code-switching. Giles notes that his theory derives from social identity principles and observes that people either “converge to” or “diverge from” their interaction partners depending upon their social goals and motivations.²⁶ Participants either “reduce” or “increase” differences in behavior or speech in order to stress their solidarity relationship. As such, accommodation behavior comes in two types. A convergence behavior happens when participants like each other, when they want to gain social approval by sacrificing something (e.g., their public face or right to something),²⁷ or when they have an interest vested in their interaction partners.²⁸ Participants may also adopt the accent, dialect, or language of their interaction partners.²⁹ By contrast, a divergence behavior happens when participants want to break away from the behavior of their interaction partners, when they want to be judged negatively, or when they want to be seen as uncooperative or antagonistic.³⁰ On the basis of these principles, accommodation theory, therefore, can be used to explain how

26. See Giles and Coupland, *Language*, 60–1; and Giles and Street, “Speech Accommodation Theory,” 193–226.

27. Wardhaugh, *Introduction*, 114.

28. Holmes, *Introduction*, 242.

29. One important question analysts using accommodation theory must ask is whether people are accommodating linguistically (i.e., making speech more similar to one’s interaction partner) or socially (i.e., matching one’s social status to that of one’s interaction partner). See Coupland, “Accommodation at Work,” 65; and Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, 164–66.

30. See Holmes, *Introduction*, 232–33; and Wardhaugh, *Introduction*, 114. For a list of the types of dissociative situations where people accentuate their differences between themselves and others, see Street and Giles, “Speech Accommodation Theory,” 208.

participants relate to each other,³¹ and on such basis determine their social goals and motivations in a particular context of situation.

3.2 *Conversation Analysis (Text Focused)*

If social identity theory and communication accommodation theory is participant focused, Conversation Analysis (CA) is text focused or discourse focused. If participants are an inevitable component in a social interaction, the use of language expressed in terms of spoken or written texts is an equally important component. Conversation analysis originated from the work of a group of sociologists—Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson—who collaborated to provide a theoretical concept that attempts at discovering and explaining why mundane conversations make sense, presupposing conversation or discourse as a body of situated texts or social practices.³² The conversation analysis model developed by this group of sociologists was assessed for its compatibility with a list of what they called “grossly observable facts”³³ in any type of

31. Wardhaugh, *Introduction*, 114.

32. See Drew, “Conversation Analysis,” 75; Sacks et al., “Simplest Systematics,” 696–735; and Sacks, “Initial Investigation,” 31–74.

33. There are fourteen observable facts: “(1) Speaker-change recurs, or at least occurs; (2) Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time; (3) Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief; (4) Transitions (from one turn to a next) with no gap and no overlap are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions; (5) Turn order is not fixed, but varies; (6) Turn size is not fixed, but varies; (7) Length of conversation is not specified in advance; (8) What parties say is not specified in advance; (9) Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance; (10) Number of parties can vary; (11) Talk can be continuous or discontinuous; (12) Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used. A current speaker may select a next speaker (as when he addresses a question to another party); or parties may self-select in starting a talk; (13) Various ‘turn-constructive units’ are employed; e.g., turns can be projectively ‘one word long,’ or they can be sentential in length; and (14) Repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations; e.g., if two parties find themselves talking at the same time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing the trouble” (Sacks et al., “Simplest Systematics,” 700–701).

conversation.³⁴ For this reason, conversation analysis serves as a useful tool for analyzing all forms of genres of talk-in-interaction from institutional talks to the larger, diverse field of communications.

Because it is text focused, conversation analysis only makes use of and pays attention to the information available in the text, without referring to extra-textual ethnographic information.³⁵ The utility and strength of this discourse analytic model is thus seen in its ability to analyze the relationship, structure, patterns, and sequence organization of text. There are three major concepts involved in analyzing a text that uses conversation analysis.³⁶ The first one is turn-taking. Speakers take turns in speaking: the current speaker selects the next speaker or the next speaker self-selects or the current speaker continues speaking. Turns are realized by what is called turn constructional units (TCU), which is the minimal unit that can constitute one complete turn of talk, which, in turn, can be a word, a phrase, or a sentence.

The second concept is turn action and design. Speakers decide on the performative action (e.g., invitation, elicitation, command or request, offer, rejection, etc.) of their turn and the verbal construction (lexical choice, grammatical construction, and non-verbal aspects) through which the action will be accomplished. The assumption of this concept is that speakers construct their turn in a conversation to fit into what comes before it; hence, the corollary assumption that participants in any normal, mundane social interaction are typically able to understand each other in a conversation. A deviation from this norm needs explanation and interpretation.

34. It is important to note that there are many models of conversation analysis. One prominent model is that of John Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard who developed their conversation analysis model based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (see Sinclair and Coulthard, *Towards an Analysis of Discourse*; and Coulthard, *Introduction*, 52–115).

35. Holmes, *Introduction*, 381.

36. For a discussion of these concepts, see Drew, "Conversation Analysis," 77–99. Cf. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 16–20.

The third and last concept is sequence organization. When turns are analyzed in a conversation, they reveal systematically organized sequences of texts. The most basic sequence organization is adjacency pairs—a pair of turns produced by two different speakers. Typical adjacency pairs include question/answer, complaint/denial, complement/rejection, request/grant, and offer/accept.³⁷ In a conversation, even though there are many adjacency pairs within it, there is only one so-called base adjacency pair, which serves as the gist or the main topic or concern of the conversation. The other adjacency pairs in such a case, therefore, only serve as expansions of the base adjacency pair. Expansions are expressed in terms of sequences of moves—pre-sequences (expansions preceding the first pair part of the base adjacency pair), insertion sequences and side sequences (expansions within the first and second pair parts of the base adjacency pair), and post-sequences (expansions after the second pair part of the base adjacency pair). Insertion sequences are expansions that are inexplicitly related to the pair part it is expanding (and thus need further explanation and interpretation), whereas side sequences are expansions that explicitly clarify or explain the pair part it is expanding.³⁸

3.3 *Register Analysis—Systemic Functional Linguistics (System Network Focused)*

It is perhaps a misnomer to say that register analysis in the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), with reference to using the model in textual analysis, is focused on a system network and not on the text or discourse itself that is under study. However, I think that this is perhaps the best way to contrast SFL register analysis with other types of discourse analytic models. This notion will become clearer as I discuss this model in what follows. The concept of register has been developed by Hallidayan SFL to provide a systematized network for establishing the formal linkages between a text and its

37. For Sacks's final word on adjacency pairs, see Sacks, *Lectures on Conversation*, 521–75.

38. See Wardhaugh, *Introduction*, 303.

context of situation.³⁹ The relations of the various sociolinguistic components that comprise this network may be explained in the following manner and order. A text is a social action instantiated in a specific linguistic form or wording (i.e., the lexicogrammatical structure). A text is also a product of various choices of meaning made by a speaker. The social environment in which a text unfolds is the context of situation, an instance of a social context or a situation type. The situation type of a text can also be called its register—the semantic configuration or the characteristics of the situation type.

This situation type is both a semiotic structure (a system of representation of meanings) and a semantic structure (a system of meanings). The semiotic structure of a situation type may be represented in terms of three socio-semiotic variables: (1) field (concerned with the purpose and subject matter of the interaction); (2) tenor (concerned with participants' relations); and (3) mode (concerned with the means and structure by which the linguistic interaction takes place). These socio-semiotic variables are directly related to the semantic structure of the situation type that is represented in terms of three functional components: (1) ideational (represents the “content” function of language); (2) interpersonal (represents the “participation” function of language); and (3) textual (represents the “relevance” function of language, that is, its thematic and informational structure that actualizes the ideational and interpersonal components). It is important to note at this point that, in SFL terms, social function is equivalent to social meaning; the meaning of a text also simultaneously means its social function. For this reason, each socio-semiotic variable corresponds to each

39. The Hallidayan bibliography is large. My discussion here of SFL register analysis follows Halliday, *Explorations*, 22–102; Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic*, 31–35, 60–64, 130–45, 186–89, 221–27; Halliday, *Language and Society*, 17–26, 93–96, 132–36, 196–200; and Thompson, *Introducing Functional Grammar*. For a summary and critique of Hallidayan linguistics, see Butler, *Systemic Linguistics*, 62–68, 92; and most recently, Porter, “Systemic Functional Linguistics.”

of the three functional semantic components; field is realized by the ideational component, tenor by the interpersonal component, and mode by the textual component.

The relationship between these three elements in the language network may be stated as follows: the contextual configuration (field, tenor, and mode) of a situation type is realized semantically by the functional/semantic components (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) of a text that are in turn realized in the lexicogrammar or wording of a text (i.e., context→speech function/meaning→text; thus, speech function or meaning serve as the “bridge” between the text and its context). When analyzing the ideational meanings of a text, we look at the kinds of activities and topics that are talked about, including when, by whom, and how they unfold and are achieved. In other words, we are concerned with the shared experience and view of the world participants construe together. When analyzing its interpersonal meanings, we examine the types of role relationships, attitudes, and various negotiations that are established between participants. Lastly, when analyzing its textual meanings, we are interested in determining how participants structure and manage the information flow of the text in such a way that they are able to guide and understand each other in their exchange.⁴⁰

There are at least three types of analysis involved in examining these three meanings in a text.⁴¹ First, ideational meanings can be discovered through transitivity analysis.⁴² Transitivity analysis identifies the participant (the nominal group), the process (the verbal group),⁴³ and the circumstance

40. Matthiessen and Slade, “Analysing Conversation,” 385.

41. There are more types and complex levels of analysis for determining the meanings or functions of each semantic component of a clause in a discourse. For a summative discussion, see Thompson, *Introducing Functional Grammar*, chs. 3–7.

42. Transitivity analysis is analysis of the verbal network of a clause, that is, the verb itself and all the items depending on it (see Halliday, *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 168–306).

43. There are at least four major types of processes—material, mental, relational, and verbal (Thompson, *Introducing Functional Grammar*, 90–105).

(the adverbial or prepositional group) of a clause and attempts to explain their relationship with other clauses in the text or discourse. In doing so, the analyst can draw conclusions regarding the topic, setting, and goals of a discourse through lexical items (nominal, verbal, and circumstance) that either recur frequently or belong to the same semantic field.

Second, interpersonal meanings are gleaned from mood analysis. If the focus of transitivity analysis is on the “content” of the clause, the focus of mood analysis is on the “interaction” by which the content is negotiated between the participants. The content may be negotiated in terms of a statement (i.e., to offer goods/services or to give information), a question (i.e., to demand information), or a command (i.e., to demand goods/services), all of which are realized and indicated by mood forms, such as indicatives, subjunctives, imperatives, and optatives (or tense forms; for example, in Greek, imperatives may be expressed in future forms). Verbal mood forms can also reveal the social roles of the participants within a particular discourse.

Third and last, textual meanings are derived from analysis of the organization of a text. In addition to the propositions speakers assert about their world and the type of interaction they negotiate with their listeners, speakers also organize their message in such a way that the message fits in with other parts and that their listeners are able to make sense of the message. There are three basic ways in which speakers organize their texts: (1) by lexical (similar wording) and grammatical repetition (similar meaning) to show that parts of a text (not necessarily adjacent to each other) are related in one way or another; (2) by use of conjunctions to show how parts of a text are related; and (3) by thematization (the first constituent of a clause) to indicate the “point of departure of the message.”⁴⁴ Speakers highlight the point of departure of their message for a reason, that is, to emphasize a point or to highlight a particular aspect in their message.

44. Halliday, *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 64.

I have discussed briefly in this section three sociolinguistic approaches to analyzing a text or discourse. The discussion is meant to be “introductory” in nature and orientation, as my main objective from the very start has been to demonstrate how sociolinguistics and its theories can be used as a powerful exegetical tool for New Testament exegesis. In this last section that follows, I will show how these theories can be applied to the text of Acts 21:27—22:5.

4. Applying These Three Methodological Approaches to Acts 21:27—22:5

As noted above, the priority of the exegetical task is to determine the goal of investigation or to ask the specific question one seeks to answer. Prioritizing the goal of investigation allows one to select the appropriate tool for the particular job. As we have seen above, each of the discourse analytic tools has its own utility and focus in terms of the kinds of goals it can achieve when applied to a text or discourse. Whereas social identity theory and communication theory are typically employed to assess solidarity and power relationships between participants, conversational analysis is used to analyze the patterns, structure, and organization sequence of a text or discourse. Register analysis, on the other hand, is a useful tool for getting at the context of situation of a text, describing the various sociolinguistic components, such as goals, purpose, message, topics, motivations, etc. of the text or discourse. In the following textual analysis, therefore, I will ask a specific question for each of the sociolinguistic theories that I use in applying them to the text in Acts 21:27—22:5.

4.1 Analyzing the Social Relationship between Paul and the Crowd in Acts 21:27—22:5 (Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory)

The text (or discourse) in Acts 21:27—22:5 commences with a group of Jews from Asia stirring up a crowd and seizing Paul from the temple area (21:27). The reasons for Paul’s arrest may be gleaned from the texts in 21:28–29, 34, 36, and 22:2–5. It is

important to observe that the accusation of the Jews was not an insignificant one for three obvious social actions that happened in the incident. First, the Jews not only tried to arrest (ἐπιβάλλω) Paul (21:27, 30), but they also attempted to kill (ἀποκτείνω) and destroy (αἶρω) him (21:31, 36). Second, even though it was probably part of their tactical plan to stir up (συγγέω) the crowd (21:27, 30, 31, 34, 35), they actually persuaded the crowd and set them in a violent (βία) rioting (κινέω; θόρυβος) (21:30, 31, 34, 35).⁴⁵ Third, the author of Acts says that the cohort commander and his soldiers had to intervene because of the violent commotion in the city (21:31–35). It is also interesting to observe that, while these violent social actions were happening, the text does not indicate Paul's reaction to the crowd until 21:37, when Paul had the chance to ask permission from the cohort commander to address the crowd. In fact, the text does not even mention any kind of resistance at all to the violence that was inflicted upon him by the crowd. While we may logically speculate that Paul would naturally have resisted and fought against or escaped from such a kind of violence from his assailants, this might have been what actually happened in the light of his address to the crowd in 22:2–5. Several aspects of his testimonial speech to the crowd show that Paul was converging to his assailants, despite their accusation and their violence inflicted upon him. I will note these aspects in his testimonial speech, after examining the accusations of his assailants. This will allow us to see more clearly that Paul actually did converge and accommodate himself to his assailants' accusations.

We find the accusations of Paul's assailants in the very first incident in 21:28–29. The Jews from Asia accuse Paul of teaching things against their people, their law, and their place (ὁ κατὰ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ τόπου) and of bringing Trophimus the Ephesian into the temple.⁴⁶ The second incident is

45. The terms κινέω, θόρυβος, and συγγέω (i.e., its noun cognate σύγχεσις), which, respectively, mean, “to start a riot,” “riot,” and “to stir up” all belong to the semantic sub-domain “riot” (see Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, 1:497–98).

46. Bringing Gentiles into the prohibited areas of the temple courts is a

found in 21:34–36. It is unclear what the crowd was actually saying at this point, for they were telling the cohort commander different things concerning Paul, causing the commander “to fail in getting at the truth of the matter” (μη δυναμένου δὲ αὐτοῦ γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλές) (21:34). All the crowd wants was “to get rid of him” (αἶρε αὐτόν) (21:36). In response to these things, Paul secures permission from the cohort commander to speak to the people (21:37–40). Paul, “having set himself up on the steps” (ἔστῶς ἐπὶ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν), gave a signal with his hand to the crowd (κατέσεισεν τῇ χειρὶ τῷ λαῷ), and spoke to them in Aramaic (προσεφώνησεν τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ). Contrary to F.F. Bruce’s assertion that Paul’s gesture of his hand indicated Luke’s intention to demonstrate the power of Paul’s personality, the hand gesture was probably simply a typical way that people act when they are about to address a (noisy) crowd to obtain silence from their audience (cf. 21:40, πολλῆς δὲ σιγῆς γενομένης).⁴⁷ What is perhaps more significant is Luke’s use of the perfect active participle ἔστῶς (ἴστημι) in the verse. Luke might have wanted to foreground or emphasize the action of Paul as someone speaking from an authoritative standpoint.⁴⁸

The first evidence of linguistic accommodation on Paul’s part, however, was his use of the Aramaic language (21:40).⁴⁹ That the

capital offense, and death was the penalty of the offense. Two inscriptional notices were discovered in 1871 and in 1935, which had this inscribed text: “No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught trespassing will bear personal responsibility for his ensuing death” (see Clermont-Ganneau, “Herod’s Temple,” 132–33; and Illife, “ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ Inscription,” 1–3).

47. Bruce, *Acts*, 413.

48. On the concept of verbal aspect in the use of the Greek tense-forms, see Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 75–109, esp. 91–93; and *idem*, *Idioms*, 20–26.

49. I wish to note here that, with reference to the linguistic situation of Palestine, there are many conclusions that we can glean from this passage. One is that first-century Palestine was to a certain degree (on the basis of this incident) a multilingual society. Another is that, if Paul were able to speak both Greek and Aramaic, many first-century Jews would also have been able to do so. A third conclusion is the question of whether the commander, who obviously was a Greek speaker (21:37), was also able to speak Aramaic by virtue of his interaction with the crowd (see 21:33–34, 37). A fourth and final

crowd was pleased or affected by this gesture is noticeable in their response—“they became even more quiet” (*μᾶλλον παρέσχον ἡσυχίαν*) (22:2). Linguistic accommodation (in this case, language accommodation) is a clear sign of social convergence; Paul respects his audience, and for that reason, they in turn listen to him. The second evidence is that Paul attempts to establish a social association with his assailants by identifying himself as a native Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, raised in this city, and having studied under the rabbi Gamaliel (22:3; cf. 21:39). This social association destabilizes his assailants’ accusation about his bringing of Trophimus into the temple. The author’s use of three grammatically parallel perfect passive participles—*γεγεννημένος* (having been born), *ἀνατετραμμένος* (having been brought up), and *πεπαιδευμένος* (having been educated)—to describe Paul’s identity highlights this social association. Paul further says that he persecuted the followers of the Way as far as Damascus to punish them and to put them in prison (22:4–5). He asserts that this is a fact that the high priest and all the council of elders can testify to (22:5). Here Paul was not only converging to the crowd, but more specifically, he was associating with the religious leaders who probably were responsible (at least in part) for his arrest. Paul at this point has now converged his language to the crowd and associated himself socially with his assailants. But most importantly, he also has converged to them by appealing to their religious belief; in 22:3, Paul says, “I am . . . being zealous for God as you all are today” (*ἐγὼ εἶμι . . . καθὼς πάντες ὑμεῖς ἐστε σήμερον*). His statement is clear: “I am . . . as you all are.”

We may now infer what Paul’s social motivation and goal (hence, intention) was through these various “convergence” aspects of his testimonial speech. Paul perhaps, in sociolinguistic terms, did not want to project a negative public face in this incident. He still had a glimmer of hope that through his testimonial speech, the Jews would believe and spare him. Paul

conclusion is that language selection in a multilingual society like Palestine serves different purposes and that the use of the appropriate language for the right occasion strengthens social relationships (see 22:2).

accommodates his audience by addressing them in their native Aramaic tongue (21:40; 22:2), exposing his Jewish pedigree (21:39; 22:3–5), and saying, “I am...as you all are today” (22:3). He wants to tell them that they are all members of the same social community; therefore, they should not arrest him. In terms of his interpersonal relation with the crowd, there is absence of superior-subordinate language in the text, and Paul in fact addresses them as “brothers and fathers” (ἄνδρες ἀδελφοὶ καὶ πατέρες) (22:1), which may indicate that the enacted social relationship is one that shows equality of social status. If there were any deferential gesture in Paul’s use of the term “fathers,” it probably would have been simply used to address the older people in the crowd. Based on this apparent accommodation of language and display of solidarity behavior on Paul’s part, it is even plausible to infer further from his testimonial speech that Paul did not distance himself from his assailants during that incident, for he knew already beforehand what was going to happen to him, that is, his appointed time had come (see 22:22). If he had fought back before the arrival of the cohort commander, he could have been killed by the mob and would not have been able to tell his testimonial speech and testimony to them (see 22:1–21). For whatever reasons he had in his mind during that incident, Paul’s intention was to tell them about his conversion from a Jewish persecutor of Christ to a Jewish Christian (22:6–21).

4.2 Mapping out the Structure of the Conversation between Paul and the Cohort Commander in Acts 21:37–40 (Conversation Analysis)

In between the accusations of Paul’s assailants and his response to those accusations, Paul had a short conversation with the cohort commander in Acts 21:37–40. Paul took this chance, which came when he was about to be brought to the barracks (μέλλων τε εἰσάγεσθαι εἰς τὴν παρεμβολήν), to ask for permission from the commander to speak to the crowd (21:39). Although this conversation between Paul and the commander seems straightforward in the text, that is, Paul asked for permission to speak to the crowd and was granted that permission, it is

interesting to note that his request only came at 21:39, when he said, “let me speak to the people” (ἐπίτρεψόν μοι λαλῆσαι πρὸς τὸν λαόν). Nonetheless, his first question to the commander in 21:37—“Could you permit me to say something to you”—should also have been connected to this request. This connection can be explained using conversation analysis, identifying the turn sequences and the structure of the conversation.

There is a total of four turns in the conversation, and each speaker takes an equal number of turns—two turns each for both Paul and the commander. Paul initiates the conversation in 21:37a asking, “Could you permit me to say something to you” (εἰ ἔξεστίν μοι εἰπεῖν τι πρὸς σέ)? This initial turn is composed of a single turn constructional unit (TCU) expressed in the form of an interrogative statement that is embedded as a dependent clause (introduced by the interrogative particle εἰ) in 21:37a. This interrogative statement is followed by a response, the second turn in the conversation, by the commander in 21:37a and 21:38. The response comes in the form of two independent clauses (hence, two TCUs), both of which are insertion sequences that support the commander’s answer to the question as implied in the phrase “but the *commander* was saying” (ὁ δὲ ἔφη) in 21:37b. In other words, both responses—“Do you speak Greek (Ἐλληνιστὶ γινώσκεις)” and “are you not the Egyptian who ‘instigated a revolt’ (ἀναστατώσας) and led out the four thousand Sicarii men into the wilderness (οὐκ ἄρα σὺ εἶ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ὁ πρὸ τούτων τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀναστατώσας καὶ ἐξαγαγὼν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον τοὺς τετρακισχιλίους ἄνδρας τῶν σικαρίων)”—do not directly answer Paul’s question. Paul’s question concerns a request for permission to speak to the people, but the commander’s reply concerns two other unrelated matters (notice that Paul had to repeat the question again in 21:39—“allow me to speak to the people”).

Nevertheless, Paul answers the commander’s question as he takes his second turn in the conversation with an informative statement (21:39a), “I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city” (ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος μὲν εἰμι Ἰουδαῖος, Ταρσεὺς τῆς Κιλικίας, οὐκ ἀσήμου πόλεως πολίτης), and a request statement expressed in terms of a declarative clause (21:39b), “I

beg you” (δέομαι δέ σου), and an imperative clause (21:39c), “allow me to speak to the people” (ἐπίτρεψόν μοι λαλῆσαι πρὸς τὸν λαόν). Paul’s answer comprises three TCUs: the informative statement directly responds to the commander’s questions in 21:37b and 21:38; and the declarative clause and the imperative clause serve as side sequences (i.e., they directly support what he perhaps was intending to tell the commander—“May I say something to you”) to his first turn in 21:37. It is important to note that the imperative clause actually constitutes the main social action that Paul intends to achieve in the conversation. It thus constitutes the first part of the base adjacency pair in the conversation. The second part of the base adjacency pair in the conversation comes at 21:40 when the commander gave Paul permission to speak. What exactly the words of the commander were in granting Paul’s request is not stated but implied. This base adjacency pair that is found in 21:39c and 21:40, therefore, serves as the gist or the purpose of this particular social interaction between Paul and the commander.

4.3 *Reconstructing the Context of Situation of Paul’s Arrest in the Temple in Acts 21:27–36 (Register Analysis—Systemic Functional Linguistics)*

We have now analyzed the nature of Paul’s social relationship with his assailants through his testimonial speech in Acts 21:27–22:5, and we have also looked at the purpose of his conversation with the cohort commander in Acts 21:37–40. In this section, I will attempt to reconstruct the context of situation of Paul’s arrest in the temple in Acts 21:27–36 using register analysis. Specifically, I will examine the field, tenor, and mode of the context of situation of Paul’s encounter with the crowd in Acts 21:27–36 to say something about what went on during this incident. I begin with the field component, that is, the content, setting, and circumstances of the discourse.

4.3.1 *Field*. The setting of this incident is marked by three sub-settings, all three of which appear to focus on the various activities of the three main participants of the discourse event, that is, “the assembling/gathering crowd” in 21:30b that was

instigated by “the Jews from Asia” in 21:27b, the “cohort commander” (ὁ χιλίαρχος), and Paul (ὁ Παῦλος). These three sub-settings altogether tell us of the main circumstances underlying this incident.

The first sub-setting is found in 21:27a: “When the seven days were about to be completed” (ὡς δὲ ἔμελλον αἱ ἑπτὰ ἡμέραι συντελεῖσθαι). This dependent clause introduced by the adverbial conjunction ὡς (when or after) and followed by αἱ ἑπτὰ ἡμέραι tells us about the temporal setting of the event. It also gives us a general overview of the events that immediately happened after Paul completed his purification rites (see 21:26). That the Jews “saw Paul in the temple” (θεασάμενοι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ) in 21:27 and that he was eventually dragged out of it (ἐπιλαβόμενοι τοῦ Παύλου εἶλκον αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ ἱεροῦ) and the temple doors were shut (ἐκλείσθησαν αἱ θύραι) in 21:30 indicate that the physical setting of this event was in the temple courts. The events that took place involved four participants: the Jews from Asia who stirred up the crowd (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι . . . συνέχεον πάντα τὸν ὄχλον) in 21:27b and laid hands on Paul (ἐπέβαλον ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας) in 21:27c; the whole city that was set in motion (ἐκινήθη ἡ πόλις ὅλη) in 21:30a; the assembling of the crowd that happened (ἐγένετο συνδρομὴ τοῦ λαοῦ) in 21:30b; and the temple doors that were shut (ἐκλείσθησαν αἱ θύραι) in 21:30c. The processes involved comprise two sets of verbal groups, both of which are categorized as “material” processes, that is, they involved physical actions. The first set includes two “active” material processes (i.e., with subject and object)—first, the Jews stirring up (συνέχεον) the crowd; and second, their laying hands (ἐπέβαλον) on Paul. It is important to note that the circumstance involved in the stirring up of the crowd was their shouting (κράζοντες) in 21:28. The second set consists of three “passive” material processes—first, the whole city was set in motion (ἐκινήθη); second, the assembling of the crowd happened (ἐγένετο); and third, the doors were shut (ἐκλείσθησαν).

The second sub-setting is found in 21:31a: “While they were seeking to kill him” (ζητούντων τε αὐτὸν ἀποκτείνειν). This dependent clause begins with a participial phrase and tells us what took place after the temple doors were shut. There is a

change of location from the temple courts to a particular place in the city. During this time, while the assembled crowd was seeking to kill Paul, there were five events that happened, involving two participants—the commander and the crowd. First, “a report went up to the commander” (ἀνέβη φάσις τῷ χιλιάρχῳ) or the commander received a report in 21:31b. Second, “the people stopped beating Paul” (οἱ δὲ ἐπαύσαντο τύπτοντες τὸν Παῦλον) in 21:32. Third, the commander “arrested Paul” (ἐπελάβετο αὐτοῦ) in 21:33a, “ordered him to be bound in two chains” (ἐκέλευσεν δεθῆναι ἀλύσει δυσί) in 21:33b, and “was questioning who he was and what he had done” (ἐπυνθάνετο τίς εἶη καὶ τί ἐστὶν πεποιηκώς) in 21:33c. Fourth, “some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another” (ἄλλοι δὲ ἄλλο τι ἐπεφώνουν ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ) in 21:34a. And fifth, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks (ἐκέλευσεν ἄγεσθαι αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν παρεμβολήν) in 21:34b. The processes involved consist of three “active” material processes—a report going up (ἀνέβη) to the commander, the people stopping their beating (ἐπαύσαντο τύπτοντες), and the commander arresting (ἐπελάβετο) Paul, and three verbal processes—the commander ordering (ἐκέλευσεν) the chaining (21:33b) and the bringing of Paul into the barracks (21:34b), the commander questioning (ἐπυνθάνετο) Paul (21:33c), and the crowd shouting (ἐπεφώνουν) one thing to another (21:34a).

The third sub-setting is found in 21:35a: “When he arrived at the stairs” (ὅτε δὲ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀναβαθμούς). The location of this third setting moved from a place in the city to a more specific place, that is, at a place near the stairs (τοὺς ἀναβαθμούς), upon the order of the commander (21:34b). This dependent clause is introduced by the adverbial conjunction ὅτε (when), indicating the temporal setting of the incident. There are two events involving two participants that happened in this particular setting. The first event is “the carrying of Paul by the soldiers happened” (συνέβη βαστάζεσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν στρατιωτῶν) in 21:35b. In this first event, we have an inanimate subject as a participant. However, it is important to note that the implicit subject in this inanimate participant is Paul. Rephrasing this independent clause would read something like this: “what

happened was that Paul was carried by the soldiers.” And the second event is “the multitude of crowd followed and shouted ‘away with him’” (ἠκολούθει γὰρ τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ λαοῦ κράζοντες, Αἶρε αὐτόν) in 21:36. The processes involved in this incident include two material processes, one passive (συνέβη βαστάζεσθαι) and the other active (ἠκολούθει), and a verbal process (κράζοντες).

Grouping together the participants and the corresponding processes associated with them, we can see that the first two main participants (i.e., the crowd and the cohort commander) were responsible for the material processes that were acted on Paul (the Jews laid hands on Paul; the crowd stopped beating Paul; and the commander arrested Paul and bound him in two chains) as well as the verbal processes that were brought up against him (the crowd shouting in stirring up the crowd; the commander questioning who Paul was and what he had done; the crowd shouting various things; the commander ordering Paul to be brought to the barracks; and the crowd shouting to get rid of Paul). The third main participant, Paul, was the victim (i.e., the receiver) of these material and verbal processes.

I now turn to the second component of register analysis, which is the tenor of discourse to determine how these processes were negotiated between these participants.

4.3.2 *Tenor*. With reference to the tenor of discourse, virtually all the finite verbs in the discourse are in the third-person indicative mood form. This is expected, since the account in 22:27–36 is a narrative that is told by the author of Acts. Thus, in order to determine the negotiations of the processes between the participants, we need to examine and interpret these mood forms in the light of what could plausibly have happened in the actual event. Here it is important to set aside the background material in the analysis, which means that only the verbal processes in the discourse need analysis. We can identify three sets of verbal processes in the discourse. They involve the Jews from Asia, the commander, and the crowd; we have already dealt with Paul’s interaction with them (see the section above, *Analyzing the*

Social Relationship between Paul and the Crowd in Acts 21:27–22:5), which only came at 21:37.

The first set is embedded within the circumstance of the processes of the stirring up of the crowd (21:27b) and the seizing of Paul (21:27c). As the Jews from Asia were doing these things, they were also calling (κράζοντες) out a message to the crowd (21:28a). The purpose of the message was to “demand for a service” through the use of the second-person plural imperative βοηθεῖτε (come to our aid). Accompanying this purpose were three sets of information (or reasons) these Jews gave to the crowd negotiated in terms of three declarative statements: first, “this is (ἐστίν) the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the law and this place” (21:28b); second, “he brought in (εἰσήγαγεν) Greeks to the temple” (21:28c); and third, “he has defiled (κεκοίνωκεν) this holy place” (21:28d).⁵⁰

The second set is found in 21:33–34 and involves the commander. When the commander came to Paul and took hold of him, he gave an order that Paul (through his soldiers of course) be bound with two chains (21:33b). Subsequently, when the commander was confused about what happened because of the uproar, he gave another order that Paul be brought into the barracks (21:34b). The text indicates that the verb ἐκέλευσεν (he ordered), which is used in both cases, is in the indicative mood, but “to order” of course in the actual event is to demand for goods or services; hence, the indicative is being used as a command. The commander also began to question Paul about his identity and actions (21:33c). Again, the verb form of ἐπυνθάνετο (he was questioning) is in the indicative mood, but “to question” someone in actuality is to demand for information; hence, the speech function is that of asking a question.

50. It is perhaps important to note the use of the perfect tense-form κεκοίνωκεν here. It is possible that the author is highlighting the fact that the bringing of the Greeks into the temple was a defilement of the temple. This fact is supported by the following verse with the use of another perfect tense-form προεωρακότεες (had previously seen) in reference to Paul’s association with Trophimus the Ephesian (22:29). This could be the main reason for the arrest.

The third set of verbal processes is found in 21:34 and 21:36 and involves the crowd. Some in the crowd were shouting one thing after another (22:34a), such that the commander became confused as to the truth of the matter (δὲ αὐτοῦ γινῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλές). Whereas the Jews from Asia in 21:28a called out (κράζοντες) to the crowd to demand for a service, that is, to come to their aid, the crowd here in 22:34a was evidently calling out (ἐπεφώνουν) to bring false accusations against Paul to such a degree that their accusations do not match each other.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the intentions of both the Jews from Asia, and eventually of the crowd, are in one accord: as they followed Paul into the barracks, they were shouting (κράζοντες), “Away with him” (αἶρε αὐτόν) (21:36; cf. 21:31a). The Jews demanded aid from the crowd (21:28a), and together they demanded to get rid of Paul (21:36). The verb αἶρε (to take away) is in the imperative mood.

Analyzing the negotiations that transpired between these three participants, we can observe that the Jews from Asia were actually the ones responsible for the arrest of Paul, as they were the ones who called out for help from the crowd, and they were also involved in the pronouncement of false accusations against Paul and his arrest. Both the crowd and commander were instruments that were used by these Jews in their attempt to get rid of Paul. On the one hand, the crowd gave false accusations and demanded to get rid of Paul. On the other hand, the commander was responsible for the questioning and arrest of Paul.

I now turn to analyze the textual component of the discourse in order to analyze the organization of the message.

4.3.3 *Mode*. With reference to the mode of the discourse, we need to look at the text from the perspective of the author as to how he organized the narrative. Unless the discourse is in a conversational mode, there is no point for us to examine the

51. Both ἐπεφώνουν and κράζοντες belong to the semantic sub-domain “Speak, Talk” (see Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, 1:396–98).

organization of the discourse in its original (or actual) context of situation. After all, the discourse is a narrative told from the perspective of its author. I have already indicated in my discussion of the field of discourse the three sub-settings of the discourse. From a textual perspective, this is one of the ways to see how the author organizes the general framework of the narrative, that is, by way of three dependent clauses that serve as adjuncts for the processes that introduce the three major participants of the discourse—the Jews from Asia (21:27a) together with the gathered crowd (21:27b), the cohort commander (21:31a), and Paul (21:35). This is also perhaps the way the author wants to highlight the “points of departure” of the passage both to introduce the participants and to indicate the settings of the discourse. Within each of these narrational frameworks, there is what is known as “cohesive chains” that bind the elements in the narrative together.

In 21:27–30, we see a participant chain that begins with the term “crowd” (τὸν ὄχλον) at 21:27, which is subsequently followed by a series of nominal and verbal forms (in Greek, the subject is implied in the verb) that refer to it: “men of Israel” (ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται) in 21:28, “they” (in the verbs προεωρακότες and ἐνόμιζον) in 21:29, and “the people” (τοῦ λαοῦ) in 21:30. We also see a second set of participant chains in the form of nouns as well as pronouns that refer to ὁ Παῦλος (Paul) in 21:29: “him” (αὐτὸν) in 21:27, “the man” (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) in 21:28, and “Paul” (τοῦ Παύλου) in 21:30. There is also a lexical chain that links them together; the noun ἱερόν (temple) is found in all verses, which consequently indicates that the geographical setting of this episode in the narrative was in the temple.

In 21:31–34, the two participant chains that refer to the crowd and Paul continue on in these verses. Reference to the crowd is found in the plural participle “they were seeking” (ζητούντων) in 21:31, in the implied subject in the verb “they stopped” (ἐπαύσαντο) in 21:32, and in the phrase “the crowd” (τῷ ὄχλῳ) in 21:34. Reference to Paul is found in the pronoun αὐτὸν and αὐτοῦ (him) in 21:31, 34 and 21:33, respectively, and in the phrase “Paul” (τὸν Παῦλον) in 21:32. A lexical chain ὁ χιλιάρχος (cohort commander) introducing and linking the new participant is also

found in 21:31–33, with an anaphoric pronominal reference “he” (αὐτοῦ) at 21:34 (note the reference to Paul in 21:34 is αὐτὸν).

In 21:35–36, we continue to notice the participant chains that refer to Paul and the crowd. Whereas reference to the crowd is found in the phrases “the crowd” (τοῦ ὄχλου) in 21:35 and “the people” (τοῦ λαοῦ) in 21:36, reference to Paul is found in the pronoun “him” (αὐτὸν) in both verses. It is interesting to note that beginning with 21:37, the participant “crowd” disappears and will not be seen again until 21:40.

There are still other kinds of cohesive ties that can be found in the passage. But this brief analysis of the textual component (mode) of the discourse allows us to see how the author groups the discourse into chunks of information that correspond to both the ideational (field) and interpersonal (tenor) components of the discourse. Together, they tell us much about the context of situation of Paul’s arrest in the temple as I have shown in the above discussion.

5. Conclusion

My objective in this article from the outset has been to showcase three sociolinguistic approaches that can be used for analyzing texts or discourses in the New Testament. Each of these approaches has their own particular strengths as well as focus in terms of the kinds of aspects or elements in the text that need analysis. Whereas the first approach (social agent focused), as exemplified in my use of social identity theory and communication accommodation theory, can be appositely used in analyzing the social and power relationships among the participants of a discourse, the second approach (text focused), conversation analysis, can best be used for mapping out the structure and organization sequence of texts or discourses that are conversational in nature. The third approach (system network focused), SFL register analysis, is a powerful theory that can be used to get at the context of situation of a text.

With reference to Acts 21:27–22:5, this study has provided many kinds of information that are relevant for the exegesis of the text. These kinds of information include those that tell us

about the contextual aspects of the text, such as its social setting, purpose, message, goals, structure, and most importantly, the sociolinguistic context of the incident of Paul's arrest in the temple. It is the aim of this study that future exegetical studies on the texts of the New Testament will consider the use of sociolinguistic theories in order to arrive at a better understanding of the context of a text.

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