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Hearer's Response to Jesus' Aramaic in Mark

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The fact that the Gospel of Mark was written in vernacular Greek, called *Koine*[1], facilitated its accessibility to the large population of the Hellenistic culture, i.e. one of the widest possible audience in that time. The Gospel could be practically read or heard from Marseilles to Alexandria Eschate (modern Tajikistan) and from Caucasus to Egypt. Nevertheless, the Gospel has its "local color", planted in the geographical and cultural settings of the narrated story. The umbrella term "Semitism", eventually "Aramaism" or "Hebraism", serves in the Biblical studies to label words and expressions foreign for the Greek language and Hellenistic culture as such, since they imply from a special LXX and NT Greek tradition, whose roots are found in the Hebrew Bible. This paper will focus on the way how the Gospel of Mark copes with combining these two cultural worlds for his audience and in which manner the evangelist leads his readers/hearers to understand the clear lexical Semitisms in his work. As a special case, three full Aramaic quotations, found in Jesus' mouth in Mark, will reveal a dramatic technique that is very rare, but not unknown to the art of Greek-Roman performances.

1 Strange Words

The names like Ἰησοῦς, Ἡσαΐας, Ἰωάννης, Ἰορδάνης and Ναζαρὲτ τῆς Γαλιλαίας at the beginning of the Gospel must have seemed enough unusual for a mediocre Greek-speaking inhabitant of Syracuse in Sicily in the first century AD. Our Syracusan, most probably, would understand – from the narrative context and from their grammatical-syntactical functions – that the first three words are personal names and the last two are place-names. In such a way, the ancient Greek recipient, who was not familiar with the geography and culture of Galilee and Judea, had to reconstruct in his/her imagination the unknown places and to figure out the character with the foreign names.

[1] Cf. BLASS – DEBRUNNER – FUNK, *A Greek Grammar*, §2.

Generally, there was no need to translate the proper nouns. For a better understanding, an author sometimes puts an attribution ("place", "river", "city" etc.) behind the foreign proper name, as Mark does in 1:5: ...ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα... ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ...

Among the proper nouns of the Gospel of Mark there are, however, two exemptions, when the author directly translates the names: Βοανηργές (3:17) and Γολγοθᾶ (15:22)[2]. The latter term is translated "Place of Skull" and it completes the picture of the execution of Jesus. The former "nickname" of James and John seems to have a special literary-audible effect. The author creatively plays with similar sounds of Greek βοαν ("to shout") and Semitic *bney-* (sons of)[3].

Apart from the personal names and geographical terms, Mark as an author uses also several words which are clearly Semitic in their origin. Many of them can be considered loanwords, i.e. the foreign words that became a part of the language and thus they are not viewed to be "strange" any more. Mark does not explain the words: σάββατον (1:26 etc.), σατανᾶς (1:13; 8:33), ῥαββί (9:5; 11:21; 14:45), ῥαββουνί (10:51) and ὡσαννά (11:9.10). His audience is probably presupposed to know the meaning of these expressions and to have some basic knowledge about the Jewish religion, to which the terms are related.

On the other hand, there are different Hebrew-Aramaic words by which the author gives a hint to let the reader/hearer understand: The one who is not familiar with the term πάσχα in 14:1 can easily deduce that it deals with a feast, because in the next verse the high priests are afraid to arrest Jesus "during the festival (ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ)" (v. 2). Similarly, the enigmatic expression γέεννα is accompanied with the attribution τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον in 9:43, which indicates that the Semitic word refers to a place of a fire of punishment. In the same way, Βεελζεβοὺλ in 3:22 has its parallel expression ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων at the end of the verse for those who do not know the Hebrew expression.

One can suppose that the Hebrew-Aramaic term אמין was well known from the liturgical usage among the first Christians and therefore it is not translated in Mark. Nevertheless, in the same Gospel, the Greek transcription αμην always appears with the expression λέγω ὑμῖν (3:28; 8:12; 9:1.41; 10:15.29;

[2] Another proper name Βαρτιμαῖος (10:46) creates a special case, because it is proceeded by an explanation of the patronymic name: ὁ υἱὸς Τιμαίου, which also can be considered as a kind of the name translation, however in an indirect way, which I call a "hint" for understanding the Semitism.

[3] The reconstructed Aramaic name for "sons of thunder" should be בני רגם, in Greek transcription βνερεγεμ or βονερεγεμ. See BUTH, Mark, 29-33.

11:23; 12:43; 13:30; 14:9.18.25; once with λέγω σοι in 14:30). Thus, in case anybody of the audience does not understand the meaning of "amen", the additional expression will provide its affirmative and performative nuance.

A mere juxtaposition is found also in Jesus' appellative, αββα ὁ πατήρ (14:36), in his Gethsemane prayer. The connection of these two words, the first Aramaic and the second Greek[4], seems to be fixed in the tradition of the first Christians, since Paul uses the very same expression in Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6. Once again, if somebody was not familiar with the Aramaic appellative αββα, the second word would introduce him/her in its meaning and its literal function of intimacy and filial prayer.

Another group of the "strange" words in Mark's Gospel is created by Semitic expressions, which evidently need to be translated. Here, it is not enough for the author to give only a hint, an attribution in juxtaposition or a parallel expression, but he clearly provides the translation introduced by the formula: ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον (5:41; 15:22.34) or with a simple ὅ ἐστιν (3:17; 7:11.34).

We have already mentioned the translation of two proper names Βοανηργές and Γολγοθᾶ. In both cases (3:17; 15:22) the formula is used. The translation is similarly required for the technical word κορβᾶν (7:11), which in the ritual terminology stands for a sacrificial gift (ὅ ἐστιν δῶρον). The term κορβᾶν sounds in the mouth of Jesus, when he makes objection against the tradition of the elders in 7:1-23, and in the same chapter the formula ὅ ἐστιν introduces translation of another Semitic expression – εφφαθα (v. 34). In contrast to the previous Hebrew-Aramaic words, this one represents a clause, an independent proposition and not just a technical or proper loanword. Jesus is quoted in a foreign language – foreign to the Greeks – and probably in his own language. The translation, hence, serves to make access for the Greek audience to enter this "strange" world and to understand Jesus beyond a language barrier. This is true also of Jesus' sayings in 5:41 (ταλιθα κουμ) and 15:24 (ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι). The Aramaic quotes are necessarily translated after the formula ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον in both cases.

In the multi-lingual ancient society of the Roman Empire it is hardly imaginable that Mark had presupposed that nobody of his audience would have

[4] The nominative case with article can be used as vocative. See BLASS – DEBRUNNER – FUNK, *A Greek Grammar*, §147.

understood Aramaic[5]. Nevertheless, his Gospel as a whole was addressed to a Greek-speaking audience. For those who knew both languages, the Aramaic quotes must have been a moment of a vivid surprise in which they could switch from one language to another. For those, however, who understood only Greek, the strange sounding words could present a moment of confusion, because of a momentary incomprehension. But the immediate translation should give them a possibility to reenter once again into the scene and to overcome this confusion.

Having identified four groups of the "strange" non-Greek words, i.e. (1) the untranslated proper names and (2) some loanwords, (3) the terms with a hint and (4) the expression with a clear translation, we can draw up the conclusion, that Mark as an author had in his mind a Greek-speaking audience, to whom he was writing the Gospel[6], and for whom some basic Jewish-Christian terminology and conceptions (Sabbath, rabbi etc.) were not totally strange. The implicit and explicit translation of Semitic technical words and of the Aramaic clauses helps the audience to become familiar with the "non-Greek" side of Jesus' story.

In the following paragraphs, we will focus our attention on the last group of the foreign words – on Jesus' Aramaic quotes. What is their narrative function? Why was the author convinced to put them in the story? These stories would be meaningful also without ταλιθα κουμ (as is Matt 9:25 and Luke 8:53), εφφαθα (no in Matt 9:32-34 or Luke 11:14) and ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι (Luke 23:46 and John 19:28-29 offer another Scripture quotations, only in Greek). What kind of response should Mark expect of the audience to Jesus' Aramaic words, when he inserted them in the story? Is this literary technique attestable in the Greek-Latin literature of that time?

2 Effective Words

Three Jesus' Aramaic quotes are presented in three different narrative contexts: raising from death, healing, and prayer of dereliction. The first story, in which Jesus' order ταλιθα κουμ is recorded, at the first glance resembles to other healing stories – starting with a petition (5:23) and ending with Jesus'

[5] Still in the 4th century AD Christians would manage to organize themselves in Greek-Aramaic or even Greek-Latin-Aramaic communication. Cf. BIVILLE, The Graeco-Romans, 84-85.

[6] See the detailed analysis of the Mark's social-linguistics settings in Greek-Roman culture in BEAVIS, *Mark's Audience*, 13-44. For a discussion about the audience and purpose of the Mark's Gospel, see COLLINS, *Mark*, 96-102.

command not to tell anybody what happened (v. 43). The great difference, however, is that the healing intervention is postponed. The narrator delays the arrival of Jesus to the dying girl by the insertion of another healing story on the way to Jairus' house (vv. 25-34). The pace of narration is slowed down even to the point of the death of Jairus' daughter and a report is delivered to the poor father with the question, "Why trouble the teacher any further?" (v. 35).

The situation is unique in the Gospel. Jesus has already proven himself to be able to heal various illnesses (1:30.31.42) and handicaps (2:11-12; 3,5). Recently, he has demonstrated his power over "the wind and sea" (4:41) and over "the legion" of unclean spirits (5:9). Even more, his power (δύναμις) has been described as a force that emanates from him also without his control, if somebody touches him with faith (v. 30). Now, the question arises whether Jesus' power could restore a dead person into the life. The report of the girl's death, surprisingly, does not urge Jesus to act in hurry. The pace of narration slows down even more and it seems that the narration time is almost equal to the narrative time – every minute detail of Jesus' action is noted down: his encouraging words to Jairus, choosing three disciples to accompany him, entering the house, seeing the people weeping, reproaching them and their reaction, putting them out, taking the child's parents and his three disciples with him, entering the room, touching the girl's hand (vv. 40-41a). After this step by step description, we can imagine the audience hanging on the Jesus' next step. Finally, he is about to utter something to the girl (λέγει αὐτῇ), but from his mouth an enigmatic sentence comes out, Ταλιθα κουμ, which instead of a resolution brings a new confusion. A translation is required. It comes indeed, but once again in a very slow pace – introduced by the long formula: ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον and with an insertion, σοὶ λέγω, between the appellation ταλιθα and the order κουμ (v. 41).

In such a way, the narrator manages to keep the audience in the longest possible expectation of the solution of the story's complication. From the point of view of the narration time, the Aramaic sentence serves to postpone the final resolution. This may be, however, not the only narrative function of the foreign words. The slow pace of the storytelling emphasizes the importance of Jesus' power to restore life. Using the Aramaic expression, the author might intend to create a mysterious and impressive atmosphere for such a powerful act[7].

[7] Cf. SCHMITHALS, *Das Evangelium*, 288; COLLINS, *Mark*, 286.

Some commentators argue that the Aramaic language could have alluded to magic spells or ritual formulas of the Middle East[8]. This can be true only to some extent, since the language Jesus used was first of all a regular and common tongue of the Syrian province, in which Greek and Aramaic existed side by side for centuries[9]. Hence, it would not sound odd that Jesus turns to the little girl somewhere by the Galilean sea in their local language.

On the other hand, the sentence is uttered in a very powerful moment of high narrative tension and it makes an effect of the strong impression on the audience. The Aramaic order together with the performative expression σοὶ λέγω underline Jesus' supremacy over human life. The "strange" words almost materialize the power of the protagonist in the ears of the audience. The translation, nonetheless, immediately explains the simple order "get up" – simple in the common human speech, but the most powerful for a dead person, if it is put in practice.

In conclusion, the last delay of the resolution of the story and the impression of the powerful moment in Jesus' ministry are embodied in the Aramaic expression ταλιθα κουμ with its translation. These two narrative strategies (delay and power) seem to be decisive for the narration and they can be applied in a smaller scale also to the next healing story in which another Aramaic quote is used (7:31-37).

We find many stories of Jesus healing either by a mere word (2:10; 3:5; 7:29) or by touching (1:31; 5:27; 6:5.56) or by both touching and speaking (1:41; 5:41). Listening to the accounts in ch. 7, the audience encounters a new type of healing – a twofold manual procedure for healing of a deaf and tongue-tied man[10]. The first step of Jesus consists of putting his fingers into the man's ears, spiting and touching the man's tongue (7:23). The next series of actions describe Jesus looking up to heaven, sighing and saying, Εφφαθα, that is (ὅ ἐστιν), "Be opened" (v. 34). From the narrative time point of view, the complicated procedure delays the expected resolution of the narrative tension. Though some people in v. 32 asked Jesus to "lay his hand" on the man, Jesus does not resolve the problem by a simple hand-laying. He takes the disable person "aside from the multitude in private" (v. 33) and starts with the "procedure" that is concluded by the Aramaic imperative *epp̄aṯaḥ* (εφφαθα)[11].

[8] Cf. IERSEL, *Mark*, 209; COLLINS, *Mark*, 286.
[9] TAYLOR, Bilingualism, 319.
[10] IERSEL, *Mark*, 253-254.
[11] Cf. MORAG, Ἐφφαθά, 198-202.

The relatively short Aramaic expression, followed by the brief translation formula (ὅ ἐστιν), does not bring a long delay in itself, but it takes part in the sequence of actions that together delay the expected result. The actions can be considered to create a staircase construction and, in this case, the Aramaic imperative with its translation stand at the top of the structure. Once again, though in a smaller scale, the Aramaic expression conveys a powerful impression about Jesus' performance.

Furthermore, the twofold healing of the deaf man has a parallelism with the two-step healing of a blind man in 8:22-26. The two-step progression is, therefore, considered a typical strategy of repetition in Mark with a special effect on the hearers, who remain in suspense and the desire to know (see and hear) what is going to happen[12]. The story of the blind man in ch. 8, however, does not contain a non-Greek quote and so the Aramaic language is not a unique way to communicate the powerful climax of the healing narrative. It is rather one of the narrative techniques. Mark does not repeat the same healing stereotyped structure but uses various modes for telling the stories and for keeping the attention of the audience. Should we then consider the word εφφαθα as a pure embellishment of the healing account?

The enigmatic foreign word must have caused an extraordinary echo in the ears of the hearers. Jesus stands alone with the man, but the man is not yet able to hear Jesus' command, "Be opened". From an apocalyptical point of view the order could be addressed to the heavens, which should open and send a divine blessing on the man[13]. In light of the performance criticism, however, εφφαθα and its translation is uttered in respect to the hearers of the Gospel. In contrast to Jesus' disciples (6:52; 7:18; 8:17-21) and his opponents (7:1-13; 8:11-13), the audience should have ears open and the tongue untied. Two main actions of any performance of the Gospel are included in the story: to speak plainly and to listen. There must be someone speaking – reading aloud or performing the text of the Gospel in front of or among the audience and his/her task is to "speak plainly", i.e. in an understandable way. Others in the assembly need to have a good hearing. For these obvious reasons, Jesus' "opening" command serves as a vivid moment, in which the speaker/reader is motivated to perform the Gospel more "plainly" and the audience is encouraged to pay more attention.

Moreover, the fact that Jesus is alone with the deaf man, when he utters the Aramaic expression, is not without significance. In the ταλιθα κουμ story,

[12] Cf. RHOADS – DEWEY – MICHIE, *Mark*, 49.
[13] Cf. LINCICUM, Εφφαθα, 652-653.

Jesus was also in a private condition – in an inner room of the house, without the mourning crowd, but only with three chosen disciples and with the parents of the girl. Such privacy, apart from the gesture of taking the girl's hand and calling her ταλιθα, creates a certain atmosphere of intimacy. One finds a similar solitary-private intimacy in our second story in which Jesus takes nobody with him but the deaf man alone. To hear Jesus speaking in a Semitic language – supposedly his mother tongue – does intensify the intimacy of the moment and draws the hearer into a close personal relationship with the main protagonist of the Gospel.

The healing story of εφφαθα order and the raising story with ταλιθα κουμ command are more or less of a similar vein and both belong to Jesus' public ministry. Nevertheless, the next account in which the last Aramaic words of Jesus are recorded differs in the context and usage of the foreign quotation. Jesus finds himself on the cross and quotes the opening verse of the Psalm 22 in Aramaic, ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι (15:34)[14]. His words are a cry of dereliction and not a powerful, tension-resolving, healing command. It is the last of Jesus' utterance in the Passion narrative and in the Gospel as a whole and it is addressed to God as a prayer similar to the prayer in Gethsemane in which Jesus calls God Αββα, ὁ πατήρ (14:36).

Notwithstanding the evident differences with ταλιθα κουμ and εφφαθα, the identified narrative technique of the last delay and the literary effect of a powerful moment and intimacy seem still helpful for analyzing this Jesus Aramaic cry.

It is properly between the challenging derision of the bystanders (15:29-32) and the faithful confession of the centurion after Jesus' death (vv. 37-39), where the last dereliction cry of Jesus is placed (vv. 34-36). The cry is characterized as "a load cry" φωνῇ μεγάλῃ and the same expression (φωνὴν μεγάλην) describes Jesus' last cry before his death. Did Jesus cry twice? Or was it only one load cry during which the bystanders thought that he was calling for Elijah and after which he passed away? Finally, did Jesus breathe his last "by" giving a loud cry (contemporary aspect of ἀφεὶς) or "after" having given the cry (antecedent aspect)? It is difficult to answer the questions, but in any case, the content of Jesus' cry, its translation and the reaction of bystanders certainly prolong the narration time between the "crying" and "breathing the last". The procrastination of the description of Jesus' death makes possible to the audience

[14] Cf. BUTH, The Riddle, 395-396.

to stay longer with the main character in this most crucial moment of his passion and to contemplate his prayer of relinquishment.

The effect of suspense and escalated tension are clearly expressed in the reaction of the bystanders, "Wait (ἄφετε), let us see (ἴδωμεν) whether Elijah will come to take him down" (15:36). Naturally, the hearer of the Gospel is waiting with the open eyes as well, listening to this passage. The action of giving a sponge with sour wine to Jesus to drink evidently served for putting off his death in order to see an eventual intervention of Elijah from the heavens.

Though the bystanders are Jesus' fellow countrymen, they do not understand his Aramaic cry. They think that Jesus was calling Elijah, misinterpreting the word ελωι with *'elīāh*[15]. The only ones, however, who understand Jesus' cry correctly are the hearers of the Gospel – due to the narrator's translation. Accordingly, the audience knows more than the eye-witnesses at Golgotha and this fact creates irony that the hearer/reader becomes indeed the "only genuine witness to the crucifixion"[16]. The exclusive understanding leads to the relation of intimacy and hence the Aramaic quote with the translation once again creates a space for the deep affection between the recipient of the Gospel and the main character.

Summing up, although the cry ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι has not the same literal healing function like ταλιθα κουμ and εφφαθα, it does have a comparable narrative effect – to express a powerful moment of high suspense and close intimacy. What is more, the last Jesus' Aramaic quote anticipates the confession of the centurion and prepares the audience for such declaration of faith. The prayer of dereliction claims for a response in the hearts and minds of the listeners. The response should be modeled on the centurion's confession.

The careful listener of the Gospel may make a connection between the Aramaic expressions of Jesus. His/her ears have been open (εφφαθα) to hear and understand Jesus' words properly, in contrast to the disciples, opponents and bystanders at the cross. He/she is not terrified by Jesus cry of dereliction (ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι) or by his death, because he/she knows that Jesus has power to restore into life (ταλιθα κουμ) and that God is his father (Αββα). Likewise, his/her tongue is untied (εφφαθα) to confess the faith together with the centurion and to enter the mystery of the final scenes of the Gospel.

[15] For the Aramaic name אֵלִיָּה (*'elīāh*) see the Targum Jonathan (2 Kgs 17:1 etc.). The vowel ā was pronounced like open /o/ in the Galilean Aramaic (cf. ROSENTHAL, *A Grammar*, §10), which makes understandable the shift from /eloi/ to /elio/. *Contra* BUTH, The Riddle, 403.

[16] FOWLER, *Let the Reader Understand*, 109.

3 Performable Words

To use a foreign expression in Greek transcription with its translation is a phenomenon that we hardly find in the Greek-Hellenistic literature. The classical Greek authors were generally not interested in "barbarian" languages at all[17]. For example, in the Histories, Herodotus mentioned only some foreign technical terms, difficult to translate[18]. Even when the Greek tragedians wanted to induce a scene which should represent an alien culture, they used to insert so-called "heterophonic" words, i.e. the strangely sounded utterances which should make an impression of a foreign language without any real sense[19].

The situation naturally changed after the rising and spreading of the Hellenistic Culture and the common Greek language Koine in which the influence of other languages and dialects was inevitable[20]. Nevertheless, the contact between the Hellenistic literal Greek and other languages still remained on the level of loanwords and γλωσσαι without mixing up the languages[21]. Even in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Septuagint), we do not find a whole Hebrew quotation in Greek alphabet and afterwards followed by a translation. Instead, the Greek transcription of Hebrew words was used exclusively for proper nouns, technical terms and unknown rare expressions[22]. Hence, notwithstanding the multi-lingual situation of the Hellenistic-Roman world, the distinction between the Greek and non-Greek languages was respected. For example, among hundreds of bilingual Greek-Aramaic inscriptions in Palmyra, there is only one Aramaic dedicatory graffito written in Greek letters, written probably by a bilingual person who knew the spoken Aramaic, but was trained only in the Greek writing[23]. Otherwise, it is very uncommon to find a meaningful non-Greek expression transcribed in the Greek alphabet as we find in the Gospel of Mark.

Does it mean that Mark invented a new literary figure of introducing a non-Greek quote in Greek transcription and with the translation after the formula ὅ ἐστιν (μεθερμηνευόμενον) in the Hellenistic literature? The lack of

[17] Cf. HARRISON, Herodotus' Conception, 40-43.
[18] Cf. HARRISON, Herodotus' Conception, 7, 44-45.
[19] Cf. HALL, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 117-121.
[20] Cf. SCHIRONI, Lexical Translation, 268.
[21] Cf. SCHIRONI, Lexical Translation, 282-284.
[22] TOV, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible*, 504-512.
[23] Cf. TAYLOR, Bilingualism, 318.

evidence in the Classical and Hellenistic works might suggest a great originality of Mark in doing so. Nonetheless, a somewhat similar literal technique had been already used by a Roman playwright, translator and adapter of the Greek New Comedy, Plautus (c. 254 – 184 BC)[24]. In his comedy named Poenulus (The Little Carthaginian), the author makes Hanno, a father of two raptured Carthaginian girls, utter several sentences in the Punic language with a translation or rather a pseudo-translation. The introductory prayer of Hanno, at the beginning of the fifth act, consists of ten Punic verses transcribed in Latin alphabet, preserved in two versions, and followed by a Latin, more or less accurate translation[25].

In the next, second scene of the fifth act, however, the "translation" of Hanno's speech becomes a matter of amusement. The Carthaginian, who speaks Latin very well, left his homeland in order to find his daughters. When he met a certain Agorastocles and his slave Milphio and after having overheard their dialogue about two raptured girls from Carthage, Hanno decided to enter into the conversation, but to do it first in the Punic language. Miphio, the Agorastocles' slave, was also born in Carthage and similarly captured for slavery in his infancy. Though he doesn't understand Punic any more, the slave offers himself to be a translator between his master and Hanno. The ludicrousness of the scene insists in the fact, that Milphio translates Hanno's saying extremely freely according to the sounds, using homophones in Latin. When Hanno addresses him, "Donni", that is "my lord" (*'dny* in Punic), the slave claims that he wants to give a "donation" to his master ("doni uolt tibi dare", *Poen.* 998)[26].

Indeed, Milphio knows just to say "hello" in Punic "avo" and he understands only the introductory sentence of Hanno's speech. The slave is not even able to recognize a stereotyped phrase, "Mechar bocca" (*Poen.*1002) (more exactly: MKR BK) that can be translated as "a ware for you" and was used by Punic sellers to offer their merchandise[27]. However, Milphio translates this obvious phrase as Latin, "Miseram... buccam" (*Poen.* 1003) ("a miserable... mouth"), drawing a conclusion that the Carthaginian is looking for a dentist. Since Hanno sees the nonsense of Milphio's translation, he plays on their ignorance and keeps uttering some other sentences in his mother tongue – to the point in which Miplhio's phantasy becomes exhausted and the slave has to admit

[24] Cf. KENNEDY, *Oxford Companion*, 468.
[25] Cf. SZNYCER, *Les passages*, 108-109.
[26] Cf. FALLER, Punisches im Poenulus, 191.
[27] Cf. FALLER, Punisches im Poenulus, 192.

his incomprehension. After this confession, Hanno starts to speak Latin and he slowly reveals his business.

Apart from the entertaining using of the foreign language, Punic sounds once more at the stage in an impressive scene of a meeting between another Carthaginian slave-boy with his missing mother. Giddenis was a nurse of Hanno's daughter and she was captured with them. Now, Agorastocles sends for her to confirm the identity of Hanno. When she did so, a slave from Hanno's escort recognizes her and fell into her embrace saying, "Auomma silli" (*Poen.* 1141) ("Hi, my mother")[28]. The nurse then gives an emotional and eloquent response in Punic, which is interrupted by Agorastocles' curious question, "What are they saying?" Here, it is Hanno who translates the foreign expressions, however, not verbatim but rather in a descriptive way, "He is greeting his mother, and she her son" (*Poen.* 1144)[29]. The whole scene and the use of the "strange" words in it are to have a moving effect on the audience and to prepare them for the final and even more emotional meeting of Hanno with his daughters.

Summing up, the entire quotations in a foreign language with a (pseudo)translation are used in the Latin play Poenulus for three basic reasons: to show a devotion of Hanno to the gods (his introductory prayer), to create amusing situations (Milphio's mistranslation), and finally to create an emotional atmosphere (lost Giddenis and his son) shortly before the climax and the denouement of the plot.

How can we make a connection between Mark's Gospel and Plautus' comedy? It would be highly hypothetical to assume that Mark himself saw the comedy Poenulus and that he became inspired by it to use a somehow similar rhetorical technique in his Gospel. On the other hand, the analyses of the play reveal that Plautus did not invent the technique, but he rather took it from a Greek New Comedy author, either from Menander or from Alexis[30]. This fact means that from a certain time the use of foreign quotation in the Greek literature ceased to be a taboo. On the contrary, at least in a lower genre of literature – such as

[28] The distorted Latin text was reconstructed by Schröder as "Hau' amma silli". Cf. FALLER, Punisches im Poenulus, 195, n. 140.

[29] Cf. Nixon's English translation: PLAUTUS, *The Little Carthaginian*, 113.

[30] Cf. ARNOTT, The Author, 252-62. Furthermore, Rosół demonstrated that the two versions of the same Punic prayer of Hanno result from a two stage redaction of the play. In the first phase, Plautus simply transcribed a Greek transcription of the Punic prayer into Latin alphabet, while the second version of the prayer comes from the pen of a later redactor who knew Punic and wanted to provide a more accurate text. Cf. ROSÓŁ, Lingua Punica, 55-68.

a comedy and probably also in other popular genres – it became a literary technique appreciated by the audience which naturally lived the intracultural and intralinguistic reality.

The literal style of Mark's Gospel obviously differs from that of the Greek-Latin authors of comedy. However, what Plautus and Mark have in common, is a clearly pronounceable transcription of the foreign sayings for a practical reason, having in view their audience. The transcriptions of both authors are not transcriptions of a Semitic text, but of living Semitic speech. Modern scholars are able to reconstruct the original Punic text behind Hanno's prayer in its form of an inscription[31]. But for Plautus it was not important to render an accurate transcription of the Punic consonantal inscription (e.g. 'T 'LNM W'LNTH). His actor playing Hanno had to be able to read it also without knowing the language and so Plautus rather wrote: *yth alonim ualonuth*, i.e. how it sounds in the ears of Latin listeners with the vowels. The scope of the transcription was to be read aloud and to be performable in front of an audience.

Similarly, in the Gospel of Mark, we find a fully phonetic transcription of εφφαθα and ταλιθα κουμ, which can be pronounced also by a reader who does not speak the Aramaic language. In the light of Plautus' work, the Markan Aramaic expressions do not bring about a visual effect, but rather an audible one. The words ταλιθα κουμ, εφφαθα, and ελωι ελωι are written in way to be pronounced, read aloud or even performed in front of an audience.

The audience of Plautus' play hears Hanno speaking in Punic and has an impression to encounter a real Carthaginian, who is searching for his lost daughters. The hearers of the Gospel of Mark listen to Jesus uttering three sentences in Aramaic and they can have a similar impression of authenticity of three crucial moments of Jesus' life: the raising from the dead, opening the ears and tongue and crying to God from the cross.

Judging from the very rare usage of the foreign dicta in the Greek-Roman literature, it is not impossible that Mark adopted the technique of non-Greek quotations from the antique theatrical world. The "strange" and "effective" words of Jesus are first of all "pronounceable". The reader can read them aloud – either for him-/herself or for the Greek audience. If the reader has an acting ability, he/she can even perform Jesus' speech with an appropriate gesture and

[31] Cf. SZNYCER, *Les passages*, 108.

tone of voice, since the narrator informs about the significance of the Aramaic expressions. The words are "performable" and "authentic" for the audience[32].

Conclusion

The performative quality of Jesus' Aramaic quotes permits us to make a conclusion, shifting the accent from the reader to the hearer. The audience listens to the "strange" expressions uttered by Jesus and this experience draws them closely into the scene. Staying in a tensional suspense, they may conceive the powerful and authentic moment of the divine authority of Jesus and intimacy with him. Their attention rises with Jairus' daughter, their perception and understanding open with ears and tongue of the healed man and their prayer of distress goes up to God together with Jesus' last cry. The Aramaic of Jesus' speech intensifies the hearers' experience of the words of the Mark's Gospel and helps them to take part more vividly and personally in the story. From among the NT writers, Mark remains an author who is exceptionally capable of enriching his simple storytelling line with a quality of an audible and performable plasticity in which the "strange" Semitic words in Jesus' mouth became familiar and most effective for the audience.

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[32] "Authentic" in the sense of an "authentic experience" of the audience and their "impression of authenticity" as it has been explained above, without entering the inscrutable problematic of *ipsissima verba*.

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Summary

The shortest Gospel is known for its performable quality that makes it suitable to read cover-to-cover in front of an audience with a dramatic tone of voice. The performative nature of the work sheds light on some lexical Semitisms used in the Gospel as well. In many cases, Mark either gives a hint to the reader for understanding Hebrew-Aramaic terms or he translates them directly. Three of Jesus' Aramaic quotations, ταλιθα κουμ, εφφαθα, and λεμα σαβαχθανι, play a special role among the Semitisms and their usage can be interpreted in terms of reader-response method, or rather, in this case, hearer-response method: By using a foreign language and translating it afterwards, the author intends to bring out an effect and a response in the hearers' acceptance of the story. A similar literary-rhetorical technique is found in Plauto's play Poenulus in which a foreign language with a (pseudo)translation is used in certain moments of drama, amusement, and excitement. In both works the mother tongue of the protagonist creates an impression of authenticity in order to create a more sympathetic and intimate relationship of the hearer to the main character of the story.

Key words: NT Aramaic, Mark, reader-response, Plautus, Poenulus.

Zhrnutie

Evanjelium podľa Marka vyniká spomedzi iných kníh NZ ako text vhodný na umelecký prednes pred publikom a v jeho celosti. Vo svetle tejto jeho dramatickej kvality možno lepšie porozumieť tomu, prečo a ako Marek využíva semitské slová v tomto gréckom diele. Evanjelista častokrát uvádza hebrejské či aramejské výrazy spolu s istou nápoveďou pre poslucháča, respektíve cudzí výraz vzápätí prekladá. Tri Ježišove aramejské výroky, „Talitha kum", „Effeta" a „Heloi, heloi, lema sabakthani", hrajú dôležitú rolu uprostred iných semitizmov a ich dôležitosť možno špecifikovať na základe metódy odozvy u čitateľa, v našom prípade odozvy u poslucháča: Autor využíva cudzí jazyk a následný preklad s cieľom vyvolať u poslucháča istú odozvu. Podobnú literárnu a rétorickú techniku nájdeme v Plautovej hre Kartáginec, v ktorej sú cudzia reč a jej (pseudo-)preklad použité v niektorých dramatických, zábavných a dojímavých okamihoch. V oboch dielach slúži materinská reč hlavnej postavy na vyvolanie zážitku autentického stretnutia sa s hrdinom, ku ktorému si príjemca vytvára vzťah sympatie a dôvernosti.

Kľúčové slová: aramejčina NZ, Marek, odozva u čitateľa, Plautus, Kartáginec.

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