

Chapter 4

Support-verb constructions in the Gospels: A comparative study between Greek and Latin

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In this article we analyse the data on the frequency of support-verb constructions (SVCs) in the Gospels, both in their original Greek version and in the Latin translation of the Vulgate. In the former case, we identify the most frequent support verbs and highlight the differences among the gospel writers. These differences also speak of their varying proficiency in Greek and are sometimes the result of linguistic influences. The parallel analysis of the Latin text of the Vulgate allows us to compare the use of SVCs in both languages and reflect on the translation criteria employed. The evidence, in addition to highlighting the reasonable tension between the literal translation of the source language (Greek) and the naturalness of the target language (Latin), demonstrates the existence of different translation criteria in each Gospel.

En este trabajo analizamos los datos sobre la frecuencia de las construcciones con verbo soporte (CVS) en los evangelios, tanto en su versión original en griego como en la traducción latina de la Vulgata. Mostramos en el primer caso cuáles son los verbos soporte más frecuentes, así como las diferencias entre los evangelistas. Estas diferencias nos hablan también de su distinta competencia en la lengua griega y son resultado a veces de interferencias lingüísticas. El análisis paralelo del texto latino de la Vulgata permite comparar el uso de las CVS en ambas lenguas y reflexionar sobre los criterios de traducción empleados. Los datos estudiados, además de reflejar la lógica tensión entre la traducción literal de la lengua de partida (el griego) y la naturalidad de la lengua de llegada (el latín), revelan criterios de traducción distintos en cada evangelio.



1 Introduction

As part of a much broader study on the whole of the New Testament, this chapter aims to present and analyse general data on the use of support-verb constructions (SVCs) in the Gospels, both in the original Greek version and the Latin translation of the Vulgate.¹

The structure is as follows: firstly (Section 2), we will define the concept of support-verb construction used in the collection of the data and identify the main support verbs in Greek. Next (Section 3), we will examine the frequency of SVCs in the four Gospels in the original Greek version, paying particular attention to the internal differences among the gospel writers. Finally (Section 4), we will focus on the analysis of the Vulgate, highlighting different degrees of literalness in the Latin translation of the Greek SVCs, which we will illustrate primarily through collocations containing the nouns συμβούλιον *symbolion* ‘counsel’ and χρείαν *chreían* ‘need’. By way of summary (Section 5), we will present the main conclusions of the article and indicate some avenues for research.

In order to facilitate the comparison between the Greek texts and their Latin version, in each example we have tried to align word for word. Obviously, alignment has not always been possible: sometimes the word order does not match in both languages, as in (6a), or a Greek synthetic predicate (e.g., in (2b) ἐράπισαν *erápisan* ‘strike’ is translated into Latin by an analytic predicate (*palmas in faciem ei dederunt*).

2 The concept of support-verb construction

The term support-verb construction (SVC henceforth) is employed in this study to refer to a type of complex predicate formed by a verb and a predicative or eventive noun with its own argument structure. The noun serves as the base that selectively chooses the support verb(s) with which it combines, supplying the relevant semantic content and, consequently, determining the semantic functions of the participants in the construction. The verb, on the other hand, provides the grammatical categories (person, number, tense, mood, voice) and the syntactic positions into which the participants of the event are inserted.

This framework allows us to approach SVCs broadly. Thus, we consider prototypical SVCs, i.e. those collocations in which (i) the verb has a general or vague

¹The dataset is accessible here: <https://doi.org/10.21950/E98VTJ>. The Greek and Latin texts are aligned for examples from the synoptic gospels such that the gloss applies to both.

meaning (light verbs), (ii) its subject is co-referential with the first semantic argument of the noun, and often (iii) equivalent to a synthetic predicate (cf. Langer 2004, Jiménez López 2016), as illustrated by examples (1a–1b) and (2a–2b).²

- (1) a. πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν δοῦλος ἐστὶν [τῆς ἁμαρτίας]
pâs ho poiôn tēn hamartían doûlos estin [tēs hamartías]
 everyone the practice the sin slave be [the sin]
qui facit peccatum servus est peccati
 ‘everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.’
 (NT John 8.34)

- b. ῥαββί, τίς ἥμαρτεν...;
rabbí, tíς hémarten...?
 Rabbi who sin
Rabbi, quis peccavit...?
 ‘Rabbi, who sinned...?’
 (NT John 9.2)

- (2) a. καὶ ἐδίδοσαν αὐτῷ ῥαπίσματα
kai edídosan autōi rapísmata
 and give him slaps
et dabant ei alapas
 ‘and struck him with their hands.’
 (NT John 19.3)

- b. ἐκολάφισαν αὐτόν, οἱ δὲ
ekoláphisan autón, hoi dè
 buffet him these and
colaphis eum ceciderunt, alii autem
ἐράπισαν
erápisan
 strike
palmas in faciem ei dederunt
 ‘they struck him. And some slapped him.’
 (NT Matthew 26.67)

However, we also consider collocations in which the verb, possessing a fuller meaning, contributes diathetic values — causative, passive, see (3a) —, aspectual

²We follow the edition of Nestle et al. (2012) for the Greek text of the Gospels. The Latin text of the Vulgate follows the edition of Weber & Gryson (2007). The English translations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (2007).

— inchoative, see (3b), terminative, durative — or even intensive, see (3c),³ among others.

- (3) a. καὶ ἐν σαββάτῳ περιτέμνετε ἄνθρωπον. εἰ περιτομὴν
kai en Sabbátōi peritémnete ánthrōpon. ei peritomēn
 and on Sabbath circumcise man. if circumcision
in sabbato circumciditis hominem. Si circumcisionem
 λαμβάνει ἄνθρωπος ἐν σαββάτῳ...
lambánei ánthrōpos en Sabbátōi
 receive man on Sabbath...
accipit homo in sabbato...
 ‘you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man
 receives circumcision...’

(NT John 7.22-23)

- b. καὶ ἐταράχθη Ζαχαρίας ἰδὼν καὶ φόβος ἐπέπεσεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν
kai etaráchthē Zacharías idōn kai phóbos epépesen ep’ autón
 and trouble Zechariah see and fear fall upon him
et Zaccharias turbatus est videns et timor inruit super eum.
 ‘And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon
 him’

(NT Luke 1.12).

- c. καὶ ἔκστασις ἔλαβεν ἅπαντας καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν
kai éktasis élaben hápantas kai edóxazon tôn
 and amazement take all and glorify the
et stupor adprehendit omnes et magnificabant
 θεὸν καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν φόβου
theòn kai eplésthēsan phóbou
 God and fill fear
Deum et repleti sunt timore
 ‘And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were
 filled with awe.’

(NT Luke 5.26)

In most SVCs the predicative or eventive noun is the direct object of the collocative verb, see (1a, 2a, 3a). However, this is not the only possible syntactic construc-

³Gross (1998: 34) introduces the concept of intensive variants of support verbs to refer to collocations such as *jump for joy* (‘to be very happy’), *burn with desire* (‘to desire very much’) or, as in (3c), *fill with fear* (‘to be very afraid’). In these, the verb semantically expresses an intensification of the event or experience denoted by the noun of the collocation.

tion. In our corpus, we also consider SVCs, such as φόβος ἐπέπεσεν *phóbos epépesen* in (3b) and ἔκστασις ἔλαβεν *ékstasis élaben* in (3c), in which the noun is the subject. These collocations present the event from a perspective which cannot be expressed by the corresponding synthetic predicate — φοβεῖσθαι *phobeisthai* ‘to be afraid’, ἐξιστάναι *existánai* ‘to be astonished’ —, since in these SVCs the subject is not the Experiencer but the eventive noun itself (Benedetti 2010, 2013, Tur 2019, Jiménez López 2024).

In sum, the concept of SVC as employed in this study encompasses not only support verbs in a narrow sense but also the so-called support-verb extensions⁴ (cf. Gross 1981, Vivès 1983, Cicalese 1999, Ježek 2004), as well as converse constructions (Gross 1989, Mendózar 2020). This broad approach is, in our view, necessary, as it allows the description of the full collocational pattern of a predicative noun and of the motivations underlying the selection of the verbs with which it combines.

2.1 The most frequent support verbs in Greek

Since it is not possible to present here a full list of the support verbs we have considered, Table 1 includes, as part of the results of our study, the six most frequently used verbs in the Gospels. These represent approximately two-thirds of both the total number of instances examined (521) and of the number of distinct SVCs (231) in which they appear: ποιεῖν *poieîn* ‘to do’, γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai* ‘to happen’, εἶναι *eînai* ‘to be’, διδόναι *didónai* ‘to give’, ἔχειν *échein* ‘to have’, and λαμβάνειν *lambánein* ‘to take’.

The most frequent of these verbs is ἔχειν *échein* (83 instances), due to the frequency of certain SVCs — χρεῖαν *chreían* ‘need’ (20 instances), ζωὴν *zōēn* ‘life’ (15 instances), ἐξουσίαν *exousían* ‘power, authority’ (13 instances) —, followed by ποιεῖν *poieîn* (75 instances) — ἔργον *érɡon* ‘deed’ (15 instances), σημεῖον *sēmeíon* ‘sign’ (15 instances). Additionally, γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai* (with 34 distinct SVCs) and διδόναι *didónai* (with 30 distinct SVCs) exhibit the greatest variety of different SVCs.

These data are consistent with the fact that the same predicative noun may often select several of these verbs as part of its collocational pattern to present the event from different perspectives. Let us consider some representative examples.

Starting with the verb ‘to do’, one of the support verbs *par excellence* in many languages, it is important to differentiate in classical Greek between ποιεῖσθαι

⁴In previous studies (Baños 2015b, Baños & Jiménez López 2017a,b, 2022, Jiménez López 2018), the term *verb-noun collocation* is used in the same sense. A list of different designations can be found in Hoffmann (2022: 25–28) and the state of the field in Pompei et al. (2023).

Table 1: Support verbs in the Gospels

SVs	n ^o of distinct SVCs	Total n ^o of instances
ἔχειν <i>échein</i>	26	83
ποιεῖν <i>poieîn</i>	26	75
διδόναι <i>didónai</i>	30	70
γίγνεσθαι <i>gígnesthai</i>	34	58
εἶναι <i>eînai</i>	23	44
λαμβάνειν <i>lambánein</i>	13	22
Total for the 6 verbs	152 (65.80%)	352 (67.56%)
Other verbs	79 (34.20%)	169 (32.44%)
Total	231	521

poieîsthai ‘to do’ in the middle voice, which behaves as a prototypical support verb in the narrowest sense, and ποιεῖν *poieîn* in the active voice, which is generally a causative extension (Jiménez López 2012). Although this distinction persists in the Gospels, as shown by (4a) and (4b), the active voice is often used in the New Testament as a general support verb instead of the middle voice, as demonstrated in (1a) above (Jiménez López 2018: 103–113). Other collocative uses of ποιεῖν *poieîn* in the active voice are those in which this verb denotes accomplishment or fulfillment of an action, as in (4c).

- (4) a. οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου νηστεύουσιν πυκνὰ καὶ δεήσεις
hoi mathētai Iōánnou nēsteúousin pyknà kai deēseis
the disciples John fast often and prayers
discipuli Iohannis ieunant frequenter et obsecrationes
ποιοῦνται
poiountai
do
faciunt
‘The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers.’
(NT Luke 5.33)
- b. Ἡρώδης τοῖς γενεσίοις αὐτοῦ δεῖπνον ἐποίησεν τοῖς μεγιστάσιν
Hērōidēs toîs genesíois autoû deipnon epoíēsen toîs megistâsin
Herod the birthday him banquet bring about the nobles
Herodes natalis sui cenam fecit principibus

αὐτοῦ
autoû
 his

‘Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles.’

(NT Mark 6.21)

- c. ὃς [γὰρ] ἄν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἀδελφός
hòs [gàr] àn poiḗsēi tò thélēma toû theoû hoûtos adelphós
 who [for] PRT do the will the God this brother
qui enim fecerit voluntatem Dei hic frater
 μου... ἐστίν
mou... estín
 my... be
meus... est

‘For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother.’

(NT Mark 3.35)

Examples (4b) and (4c) also lead us to consider other parallel cases as SVCs, such as (5a) and (5b), where the verb γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai* ‘to happen’ is used to express the corresponding impersonal passive of these collocations (Jiménez López 2021). Γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai*, as well as εἶναι *eînai*, function in these cases as typical support verbs,⁵ denoting the occurrence of an event (Gaaton 2004) in which the Agent is either irrelevant or relegated to a secondary role, as demonstrated in (6a–6b). These verbs may alternate when combined with nouns denoting inagentive processes or natural phenomena, as in (6c–6d). It is worth noting that the Latin translation of the Greek alternation in (6a) and (6b) involves in both cases the verb *feri*.

- (5) a. Καὶ δείπνου γινομένου...
Kaì deípnu ginoménu...
 And supper happen...
Et cena facta...
 ‘During supper...’

(NT John 13.2)

⁵We do not include, obviously, cases in which these verbs are used as a copula with an attribute or nominal predicate. On γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai* in the Gospels, see Tronci (2020).

- b. γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου
genēthētō tò thélēmá sou
 be done the will your
fiat voluntas tua
 ‘Your will be done’

(NT Matthew 6.10)

- (6) a. Μὴ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ, μήποτε ἔσται θόρυβος τοῦ λαοῦ
Mē en tēi heortēi mēpote éstai thórybos toû laou
 Not in the feast never be uproar the people
non in die festo ne forte tumultus fieret populi
 ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people’

(NT Mark 14.2)

- b. Μὴ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ, ἵνα μὴ θόρυβος γένηται ἐν τῷ λαῷ
Mē en tēi heortēi ina mē thórybos génētai en tōi laōi
 Not in the feast in order that not uproar happen in the people
non in die festo ne forte tumultus fiat in populo
 ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people’

(NT Matthew 26.5)

- c. ἐγένετο λιμὸς μέγας ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν
egéneto limòs mégas epì pasan tēn gēn
 happen famine big over all the land
facta est fames magna in omni terra
 ‘A great famine came over all the land’

(NT Luke 4.25).

- d. σεισμοὶ τε μεγάλοι καὶ κατὰ τόπους λιμοὶ
seismoí te megáloi kai katà tóπους limoí
 earthquakes PRT big and in places famines
terraemotus magni erunt per loca et pestilentiae
 καὶ λοιμοὶ ἔσονται
kai loimoí ésontai
 and pestilences be
et fames

‘There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences’

(NT Luke 21.11).

In a similar vein, the comparative analysis of the four Gospels allows the description of the collocational pattern of certain highly frequent nouns, such

as ἐντολή *entolḗ* ‘order, command’. The verb ἐντέλλεσθαι *entéllēsthai* ‘to command’, see (7a), is used 9 times in the Gospels. However, John (and only he) also has recourse to various SVCs which present the event from different perspectives: ἐντολὴν διδόναι *entolēn didónai*, see (7b), and, complementarily, ἐντολὴν λαμβάνειν *entolēn lambánein*, see (7c), and ἐντολὴν ἔχειν *entolēn échein*, see (7d), that is, ‘to give, receive, and have an order’. Moreover, an order is by definition a command that must be obeyed, observed, and executed. Thus, the verb τηρεῖν *tēreîn* ‘to observe, keep’, see (7d), also forms part of the combinatorial possibilities of ἐντολή *entolḗ*, expressing the fulfillment of the order, as well as the opposite: ‘to break the commandment’, ἀφιέναι *aphiénei* (NT Mark 7.8) or παραβαίνειν *parabaínein* (NT Matthew 15.3).

- (7) a. καθὼς ἐνετείλατο μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὕτως ποιῶ
kathōs eneteílato moi ho patér houtōs poiō
as command me the Father so do
*sicut **mandatum dedit** mihi Pater, sic facio*
‘I do as the Father has commanded me.’
(NT John 14.31)
- b. ὁ πέμψας με πατὴρ αὐτός μοι ἐντολὴν δέδωκεν
ho pémpsas me patrēr autós moi entolēn dédōken
the sent me Father himself me commandment give
*qui misit me, Pater, ipse mihi **mandatum dedit***
‘The Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment.’
(NT John 12.49)
- c. ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου
taútēn tēn entolēn élabon parà tou patrós mou
This the charge receive from the Father my
*hoc **mandatum accepi** a Patre meo*
‘This charge I have received from my Father.’
(NT John 10.18)
- d. ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολάς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτάς ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν
ho échōn tās entolās mou kai tērōn autās ekeinós estin
the have the commandments my and keep them that be
*qui **habet** **mandata** **mea** et **servat** ea, ille est*

ὁ ἀγαπῶν με
ho agapôn me
 the love me
qui diligit me

‘Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.’

(NT John 14.21)

In order not to prolong this discussion, let us consider one last example. Concerning the meaning ‘to magnify, glorify’ expressed by the synthetic predicate δοξάζειν *doxázein* in (8a) and (8d), one finds the analytic alternative δόξαν δοῦναι *dóxan doûnai*, see (8b), but also other SVCs with the same noun, which present the event from different perspectives: metaphorically, ‘glory’ is an ‘object’ given, see (8b), but also received, see (8c), or possessed, see (8d–8e).

- (8) a. ἐδόξαζον τὸν θεὸν
edóxazon tòn theòn
 glorify the God
magnificabant Deum
 ‘They glorified God.’

(NT Luke 5.26)

- b. δοῦναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ
doûnai dóxan tōi theōi
 give praise the God
darent gloriam Deo
 ‘Give praise to God.’

(NT Luke 17.18)

- c. δόξαν παρὰ ἀνθρώπων οὐ λαμβάνω
dóxan parà anthrōpōn ou lambánō
 glory from people not receive
gloriam ab hominibus non accipio
 ‘I do not receive glory from people.’

(NT John 5.41).

- d. καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, πάτερ, παρὰ σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξῃ
kai nŷn dóxasón me sý páter parà seautōi tēi dóxēi
 and now glorify me you Father near yourself the glory
et nunc clarifica me tu Pater, apud temet ipsum claritatem

ἢ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί
hêi eíchon prò tou tòn kósmōn eînai parà soi
 that have before the the world be near you
quam habui priusquam mundus esset apud te

‘And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.’

(NT John 17.5)

- e. τότε ἔσται σοι δόξα ἐνώπιον πάντων τῶν
tôte éstai soi dóxa enópion pántōn tōn
 then be you glory face to face all the
tum erit tibi gloria coram simul
 συνανακειμένων σοι
synanakeiménōn soi
 recline together at table you
discumbentibus

‘Then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at table with you.’

(NT Luke 14.10)

3 Support-verb constructions in Greek: the shared and exclusive SVCs in each Gospel

In accordance with Table 1, a total of 521 SVCs are attested in the Gospels, distributed as follows: 76 in Mark, 117 in Matthew, 138 in Luke, and 193 in John. However, these absolute figures need to be refined considering the different length (number of words)⁶ of each Gospel. Thus, if we examine the relative frequency of SVCs (number of SVCs per 1000 words), as shown in Table 2, the synoptic Gospels exhibit similar frequencies, as opposed to the Gospel of John, who is by far the author that most frequently employs SVCs (almost twice as often as Matthew).

This congruence among the three synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke) is not *a priori* surprising, as they essentially narrate the same events from the life of Jesus. Likewise, one would expect the different aims and content of the Gospel of John to be also reflected in the use of SVCs.

⁶The number of words for each work is taken from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

Table 2: Number of examples with an SVC in the Gospels

	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John	Total
n° of examples with an SVC	76	116	136	193	521
n° of words	11,299	18,338	19,451	15,635	64,723
n° of examples/1000 words	6.72	6.32	6.99	12.34	8.04

However, this general impression will undergo considerable refinement upon a closer analysis of the evidence. In fact, differences in SVC usage appear not only between John and the synoptic Gospels but also between Mark, Matthew, and Luke, due to the different nature and varying quality of the Greek they employ (Moulton et al. 1906/1976: vol. IV, Porter 2014).⁷

These internal differences become more evident when comparing not only the total number of occurrences of SVCs, but also the number of distinct SVCs used in each Gospel, regardless of their frequency. Thus, the 521 examples correspond to 231 distinct SVCs. Some of these are shared by multiple gospel writers, while others, as will be seen later, are exclusive to a given text.⁸ Table 3 presents the number of different SVCs attested in each Gospel.

Table 3: Number of distinct SVCs in the Gospels

	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
n° of Greek words	11,299	18,338	19,451	15,635
n° of distinct SVCs	57	67	98	84
n° of SVCs /1000	5.04	3.65	5.04	5.37

In light of the above, Mark, Luke, and John employ, in relative terms, a similar number of SVCs, whereas Matthew uses proportionally the lowest number of distinct SVCs.

⁷It is useful to bear in mind when comparing the three synoptic Gospels that the first published Gospel was that of Mark (hence it is cited first in the tables) and that both Matthew and Luke had the text of Mark in front of them and sometimes varied in the use of certain SVCs.

⁸One should take into account the SVCs shared by multiple authors to understand why the figures in Table 3 total more than 231 cases.

However, it is necessary to delve even further into the data. Thus, out of the 231 SVCs attested in the Gospels, 182 are exclusively used in one Gospel; that is, almost four out of every five SVCs (78.79%) are employed solely by one author.⁹ Table 4 details the distribution of these 182 SVCs in each Gospel.

Table 4: Number of SVCs unique to each Gospel

	n° of SVCs	n° of unique SVCs	%
Mark	57	24	42.10%
Matthew	68	28	41.17%
Luke	99	69	69.69%
John	84	61	72.61%

According to the data, the Gospel of John displays, in relative terms, the highest number of unique SVCs: three out of every four SVCs used by John (72.61%) do not appear in any other Gospel. Among the synoptic Gospels, Luke employs proportionally the highest number of unique SVCs (two out of every three), a frequency that decreases significantly in Mark and Matthew.

This information is relevant, as it reveals the extent to which the use of SVCs can be idiosyncratic. To mention a few illustrative cases, John employs σημειῶν ποιεῖν *sēmeïon poieîn* ‘to do signs’, see (9a), in an exclusive manner and with notable frequency (15 instances), while the synoptic Gospels use (7 instances) σημειῶν διδόναι *sēmeïon didónai*, see (9b).

- (9) a. Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς
Pollà mèn oûn kai állassēmeîa epoiēsen ho Iēsoûs
 Much PRT PRT and other signs do Jesus
multa quidem et alia signa fecit Iesus
 ‘Now Jesus did many other signs.’

(NT John 20.30)

⁹Out of the 231 SVCs, only 6 appear in all four Gospels; the most frequent is *χρεῖαν ἔχειν chreïan échein* ‘to need’ (20 instances). There are only 7 SVCs common to Mark, Matthew, and Luke (e.g., *πίστιν ἔχειν pístin échein* ‘to have faith’) and another 7 are shared by John and two of the three synoptic Gospels, such as *θέλημα ποιεῖν thélēma poieîn* ‘to fulfill the will’. Two further gospel writers share the use of 29 SVCs.

- b. καὶ δώσουσιν σημεῖα μεγάλα καὶ τέρατα
kai dósousin sēmeîa megála kai térata
 and give signs big and wonders
et dabunt signa magna et prodigia
 ‘[They] will perform great signs and wonders.’

(NT Matthew 24.24)

A similar pattern is observed with ψυχὴν τιθέναι *psychēn tithénai* ‘to lay down the life’, see (10a), attested up to 6 times in John, while Mark and Matthew (2 instances) use ψυχὴν διδόναι *psychēn didónai*, see (10b):

- (10) a. τὴν ψυχὴν μου ὑπὲρ σοῦ θήσω
tēn psychēn mou hyper soû thésō
 the soul my for you put
animam meam pro te ponam
 ‘I will lay down my life for you.’

(NT John 13.37)

- b. καὶ γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου... ἦλθεν... διακονῆσαι καὶ
kai gār ho huiōs toû anthrōpou... êlthen diakonēsai kai
 and for the son man come serve and
Nam et Filius hominis... venit... ut ministraret et
 δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν
doûnai tēn psychēn autoû lýtron anti pollôn
 give the soul him price paid instead of many
daret animam suam redemptionem pro multis
 ‘For even the Son of Man came... to serve, and to give his life as a
 ransom for many.’

(NT Mark 10.45)

Other SVCs exclusive to John include λόγον τηρεῖν *logon tēreîn* ‘to keep the word’ (8 instances), ἀμαρτίαν ἔχειν *hamartian échein* ‘to have guilt’ (4 instances), and ἀγαπῆν ἔχειν *agapēn échein* ‘to have love’ (3 instances). In addition to the synthetic predicate μαρτυρεῖν *martyreîn* ‘to give witness’ (33 instances appear in John out of the total of 35 instances in all the Gospels), John exclusively employs, on three occasions, μαρτυρίαν λαμβάνειν *martyrían lambánein* ‘to receive testimony’, see (11), to express the reverse perspective, placing the recipient of the testimony instead of the one providing it in the subject position.

- (11) ὃ ἑωράκαμεν μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἡμῶν οὐ
ho heōrākamen martyroûmen kai tēn martyrian hēmōn ou
 what see bear witness and the witness our not
quod vidimus, testamur, et testimonium nostrum non
 λαμβάνετε
lambánete
 receive
accipitis

‘We speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.’

(NT John 3.11)

Matthew uniquely employs (5 instances) the SVC συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein* ‘to form a plan, to decide’, where Mark uses συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai* or συμβούλιον ποιεῖν *symboúlion poieîn*.¹⁰ In contrast to the systematic use of φονεύω *phoneúō* ‘to commit murder’ in the synoptic Gospels (7 instances), Mark is the only one to employ the SVC φόνον ποιεῖν *phónon poieîn* (NT Mark 15.7). Additionally, alongside the synthetic predicate τρέφειν *tréphein* ‘to nourish’ (5 instances), only Matthew (NT Matthew 24.45) has recourse to τροφήν διδόναι *trophēn didónai* ‘to give food’.

Finally, Luke is the only author who writes, on two occasions, φόρον διδόναι *phónon didónai* ‘to pay tax’, see (12a), whereas Mark and Matthew, see (12b), use κῆνσον διδόναι *kênsōn didónai* for the same episode:

- (12) a. ἔξεστιν ἡμᾶς Καίσαρι φόρον δοῦναι ἢ οὐ;
éxestin hēmâs Kaísari phóron doûnai ê ou?
 it is possible we Caesar tribute give or not
licet nobis dare tributum Caesari an non?

‘Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?’

(NT Luke 20.22. cf. also NT Luke 23.2)

- b. ἔξεστιν δοῦναι κῆνσον Καίσαρι ἢ οὐ;
éxestin doûnai kênsōn Kaísari ê ou?
 it is possible give tribute Caesar or not
licet censum dare Caesari an non?

‘Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’

(NT Mark 12.14; cf. also NT Matthew 22.17)

¹⁰NT Mark 3.6 and NT Mark 15.1, respectively. For an analysis of the SVCs with συμβούλιον *symboúlion*, cf. *infra* Section 4.1 and Jiménez López (2017).

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the evidence presented here (along with other findings yet to be discussed), a dedicated study of the unique collocations of each Gospel writer from a diachronic perspective is required. It is thus crucial to investigate which SVCs are already attested in literary texts from the archaic and classical periods, which ones appear in koine writers contemporaneous with the composition of the New Testament, or if this usage is unique to the Greek of the Septuagint (LXX henceforth). This approach will allow an assessment of the degree of continuity or innovation exhibited by each gospel writer in employing these complex predicates.

By way of example, 7 out of the 24 collocations exclusive to the Gospel of Mark are already attested in classical times.¹¹ Another 2 are found in the LXX, as well as in koine literary texts.¹² The remaining, that is, more than half of the unique SVCs, are attested for the first time in this author. A similar comparative analysis of the rest of the Gospels will reveal the degree of classicism or, conversely, innovation in the language of each author. It will also shed light on potential interference from Aramaic, Hebrew or Latin within the multilingual context in which the Gospels were written (Janse 2007, 2014, George 2010, Rochette 2010, Horrocks 2010: 124–125).

Thus, for example, the collocation κῆνσον διδόναι *kênsōn didónai* in Mark, see (12b), is partially a Latinism (from *censum*), which Luke corrects by opting for the more natural-sounding Greek construction φόρον διδόναι *phónon didónai*, see (12a), in line with the higher-quality Greek attributed to him (Moulton et al. 1906/1976: vol. IV: 47–60, Porter 2014, Jiménez López 2018: 98). Luke, in turn, is the first to use ἐργασίαν διδόναι *ergasían didónai* ‘to make an effort’ (NT Luke 12.58), considered a calque from the Latin *operam dare* (Mayser 1926/1934: II, 1, 123), just like συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein*, which is exclusively used by Matthew and is a calque from *consilium capere* (Blass et al. 1961: 5–7, Marucci 1993: 7). On the other hand, the combination συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai* in Mark (NT Mark 3.6) is often considered a Hebraism or Aramaism (Westcott & Hort 2007: 852, Zerwick & Grosvenor 2008: 128, Jiménez López 2017).

Finally, the influence of Hebrew, indirectly evident in the Gospels primarily through quotations and phraseology borrowed from the Greek of the LXX, explains, for instance, Matthew’s alternating use of ἀνομίαν ἐργάζεσθαι *anómian*

¹¹Specifically, ἀπώλειαν γίνεσθαι *apóleian gínesthai* ‘to be wasted’, θόρυβον εἶναι *thórybon eínai* ‘there be an uproar’, λόγον λαμβάνειν *logon lambánein* ‘to receive the word’, λόγον παραδέχεσθαι *logon paradéchesthai* ‘to accept the word’, τρόμον ἔχειν *trómon échein* ‘trembling overtakes someone’, φέγγος διδόναι *phéngos didónai* ‘to give light’, and φωνὴν ἀφιέναι *phōnēn aphíēnai* ‘utter a cry’.

¹²Specifically, ἁμαρτήματα ἀφιέναι *hamartémata aphíēnai* ‘to forgive sins’ and φόνον ποιεῖν *phónon poieîn* ‘to commit murder’.

ergázesthai (NT Matthew 7.23) and ἀνομίαν ποιεῖν *anomían poieîn* (NT Matthew 13.41). This alternation arises from the use of two different Hebrew support verbs in the Old Testament, פָּעַל *pā'al* and עָשָׂה *ʿāsâ*, and their literal translation in the LXX as ἐργάζεσθαι *ergázesthai* and ποιεῖν *poieîn*, respectively (Baños & Jiménez López 2022, 2024a).

4 Support-verb constructions in the Vulgate

In the Latin version of the Vulgate, a total of 644 SVCs are attested in the Gospels with the following distribution: Mark 96 examples, Matthew 162, Luke 158, and John 238. Considering the varying length of each Gospel, their relative frequency (number of SVCs per 1000 words) is presented in Table 5. As expected in a Latin translation which aimed to be literal, a proportion similar to the original Greek version is observed (cf. Table 2): the Gospel of John includes by far the highest number of examples, while the three synoptic Gospels exhibit a comparable usage.

Table 5: Number of examples with SVC in the Gospels (Vulgate)

	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John	total
n° of examples with an SVC	96	162	148	238	644
n° of words	12,076	19,521	20,728	16,576	68,901
n° of examples/1000 words	7.95	8.30	7.14	14.36	9.35

According to the data in Table 5, the Gospels contain 9.35 SVCs per 1000 words. This figure is particularly striking when compared to the frequency of SVC usage in the broader body of Latin literature.

Figure 1 presents the data from Baños (2023)¹³ on SVC frequency in 30 Latin works, both in prose and verse, across various literary genres in a comprehensive corpus from Plautus to the *Historia Augusta*. We have incorporated the data from the Gospels into this figure, arranging the works from the highest (leftmost edge of the figure) to the lowest (rightmost edge of the figure) frequency of SVC usage:

¹³The study of Baños (2023) includes an analysis of SVC from 30 different literary works (or fragments thereof) displaying a comparable length (of approximately 4400–4600 words each). Among them was a fragment from the Gospel of Matthew (NT Matthew 1-10.10), with a relative frequency (8.71 SVCs per 1000 words) similar to that in Table 5 (8.30) or the entire Gospel of Matthew.

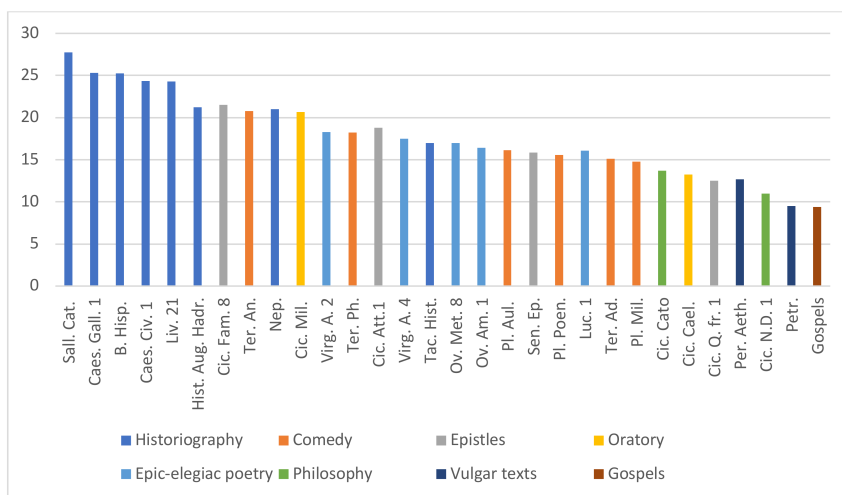


Figure 1: Frequency of SVCs from Plautus to the *Gospels*

The Gospels are primarily narrative works, closely resembling historiographical texts, which are the Latin literary genre that most employs SVCs, as illustrated in Figure 1. However, out of the 30 Latin works examined, regardless of their content or literary genre, the Gospels contain the lowest number of SVCs. This is due to their nature as translations, and particularly, translations from Greek. On the one hand, these complex predicates are generally used much less frequently in ancient Greek than in classical Latin, constituting a fundamental distinguishing feature between the two classical languages.¹⁴ On the other hand, considering that the Latin translation of the Vulgate aimed to be literal, one might reasonably expect that if the source language (Greek) used few SVCs, this would be reflected to a greater or lesser extent in the target language (Latin).

4.1 Translation *verbum e verbo* or *sensum de sensu*?

However, this assumption of a literal translation must be qualified in view of the evidence. Indeed, when comparing the Greek and Latin versions of the Gospels, it is striking that the Vulgate contains many more SVCs (644 examples) than the original Greek (521 examples).

This is largely because, given the more natural use of SVCs in Latin than in Greek, the Vulgate often translates a Greek synthetic predicate with an SVC. To

¹⁴Cf. Baños (2015b). Thus, for example, when comparing a corpus of similar size and content from Caesar and Xenophon (López Martín 2019), there are four SVCs in Caesar for every one found in Xenophon.

illustrate this point, it is sufficient to compare the original Greek version of the passage on the commandments in the three synoptic Gospels ('Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud') with its respective Latin translation:

- (13) a. μὴ φονεύσης, μὴ μοιχεύσης, μὴ κλέψης, μὴ
mè phoneúsēis mè moicheúsēis mè klépsēis mè
 not murder not commit adultery not steal not
ne adulteres, ne occidas, ne fureris, ne
 ψευδομαρτυρήσης, μὴ ἀποστερήσης
pseudomartyrésēis mè aposterésēis
 bear false witness not defraud
falsum testimonium dixeris ne fraudem feceris
 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear
 false witness, Do not defraud.'
 (NT Mark 10.19)

- b. Τὸ οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ
tò ou phoneúsēis ou moicheúseis ou
 the not murder not commit adultery not
non homicidium facies, non adulterabis, non
 κλέψεις, οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις
klépseis ou pseudomartyrésēis
 steal not bear false witness
facies furtum, non falsum testimonium dices
 'You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not
 steal, You shall not bear false witness.'

(NT Matthew 19.18)

- c. μὴ μοιχεύσης, μὴ φονεύσης, μὴ κλέψης, μὴ
mè phoneúsēis mè moicheúseis mè klépseis mè
 not murder not commit adultery not steal not
non occides, non moechaberis, non furtum facies, non
 ψευδομαρτυρήσῃ
pseudomartyrésēis
 bear false witness
falsum testimonium dices
 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear
 false witness.'

(NT Luke 18.20)

As can be seen, the three Greek Gospels express each commandment through the same synthetic predicates, albeit with slight variations among them.¹⁵ However, in the Vulgate these are sometimes translated as SVCs: φονεύειν *phoneúein* = *homicidium facere* ‘to murder’, κλέπτειν *kléptein* = *furtum facere* ‘to steal’, ψευδομαρτυρεῖν *pseudomartireîn* = *falsum testimonium dicere* ‘to bear false witness’, and ἀποστερεῖν *apostereîn* = *fraudem facere* ‘to defraud’. Moreover, it seems that there is no consistent approach to their translation, as the same Greek predicate is sometimes translated into Latin synthetically and other times as an SVC: φονεύειν *phoneúein* = *occidere* (Mark, Luke) / *homicidium facere* (Matthew); κλέπτειν *kléptein* = *furari* (Mark) / *furtum facere* (Matthew, Luke).

In his revision of the earlier Latin translations of the Gospels (commonly known as *Vetus Latina*), carried out in AD 382 at the request of Pope Damasus, it seems that St. Jerome did not strictly follow, in the case of the SVCs, the general principle which he had laid out in his *Letter to Pammachius* to explain his approach to translating Greek texts:

- (14) *Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor, ne in interpretatione Graecorum, absque Scripturis Sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu.*

‘Truthfully, I admit it and also profess it openly: in the translation of Greek texts — *apart from the Holy Scriptures*, where even the order of the words is a mystery —, I do not render word for word but sense for sense’

(*Epistula Hieronymi ad Damasum papam* 57.5-6, italics our own).

As can be seen, St. Jerome explicitly excludes the Bible (*absque Scripturis Sanctis*) in his defense of the non-literal translation (*non verbum e verbo*) of Greek texts, since in his opinion the literalness of the sacred text, including word order, must be respected. However, when it comes to the use of SVCs in the Gospels, he does not strictly adhere, or only partially adheres, to this principle.

In this regard, it is necessary to distinguish between two types of Latin SVCs in the Vulgate (Baños 2015a: 68–69) based on their greater or lesser literalness with respect to the original Greek:

- (i) Greek SVCs consistently translated as Latin SVCs, that is, *verbum e verbo*. Specifically, 502 Latin SVCs follow this principle. This means that 77.95% of the Latin SVCs in the Gospels are, in turn, translations of Greek SVCs.

¹⁵In addition to a change in the order of the first two commandments in Luke compared to Mark and Matthew, Mark adds a commandment — ‘do not defraud’ — which is absent from the versions of Matthew and Luke.

- (ii) However, on several occasions, a Latin SVC corresponds to a synthetic predicate in the Greek text, as in the examples discussed in (13). In such cases, a less literal translation is provided, more *sensum de sensu*: 138 Latin SVCs (22.05%) in the Vulgate, that is one out of five, do not have a parallel analytic correspondence in the original Greek text.

In what follows, we will discuss the first type; in other words, how the Greek SVCs are translated in the Vulgate. We will leave the second type, which presents numerous variations and alternatives, for a future study.¹⁶

4.2 The Latin translation of Greek support-verb constructions

When the Greek text of the Gospels contains an SVC, St. Jerome remains faithful to the principle of literal, word-for-word translation. Out of the 521 occurrences of Greek SVCs in the Gospels, there are only 19 instances in which the Vulgate does not offer a corresponding Latin SVC. In other words, only 3.65% of the Greek SVCs are not translated with Latin SVCs.

Let us take a closer look at these exceptions, drawing a link with other less literal translations of Greek SVCs. We will distinguish for this purpose three types of examples on a scale from less to more literal.

- (i) A Greek SVC is translated in the Vulgate as a synthetic predicate. This is the most exceptional case and only occurs with χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein* ‘to need’, an SVC to which we will return below, and which is translated with four different Latin verbs: *desiderare* in (15a), *egere* in (15b), *debere* in (15c), and *indigere* in (15d).

¹⁶Thus, a Greek synthetic predicate can be translated (i) with an SVC (εὐχαριστεῖν *eucharisteîn* ‘to be thankful’ = *gratias agere*), (ii) with various SVCs (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι *epimeleisthai* ‘to take care of’ = *curam agere* and *curam habere*; θανατοῦν *thanatoûn* ‘to kill’ = *morte afficere* and *morti tradere*), or (iii) interchangeably with a synthetic predicate and an SVC. To give three illustrative examples, μαρτυρεῖν *martyreîn* ‘to bear witness’ is translated as *testari* (John), as well as *testimonium perhibere* (John), *testimonium dare* (Luke), or *testimonio esse* (Matthew); μετανοεῖν *metanoeîn* ‘to repent’ as *paenitere*, *paenitentiam agere* and *paenitentiam habere* (Baños & Jiménez López 2017a); and μισεῖν *miseîn* ‘to hate’ as *odisse*, *odio habere* and *odio esse* (Baños & Jiménez López 2017b). The translations of types (ii) and (iii) sometimes reveal different translation criteria in each Gospel: *morti tradere*, for example, is an exclusive translation of θανατοῦν *thanatoûn* found only in the Gospel of Matthew; the same is true of *odio habere*, which translates μισεῖν *miseîn*, whereas the translators of Luke and John opt for *odisse*.

- (15) a. Τί ἔτι **χρεῖαν** ἔχομεν μαρτύρων;
ti éti chreían échomen martýrōn
 what yet need have witnesses
Quid adhuc desideramus testes?
 ‘What further witnesses do we need?’

(NT Mark 14.63)

- b. Τί ἔτι **χρεῖαν** ἔχομεν μαρτύρων;
ti éti chreían échomen martýrōn
 what yet need have witnesses
Quid adhuc egemus testibus?
 ‘What further witnesses do we need?’

(NT Matthew 26.65)

- c. Ἐγὼ **χρεῖαν** ἔχω ὑπὸ σοῦ βαπτισθῆναι
egō chreían échō hypō soû baptisthēnai
 I need have by you be baptized
Ego a te debeo baptizari
 ‘I need to be baptized by you.’

(NT Matthew 3.14).

- d. Ὁ λελουμένος οὐκ ἔχει **χρεῖαν** εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας
ho lelouménos ouk échei chreían ei mē toûs pódas
 the be washed not have need if not the feet
qui lotus est, non indiget
 νίψασθαι
nípsasthai
 wash
ut lavet

‘The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet.’ (NT John 13.10)

- (ii) A Greek SVC is translated analytically, not as an SVC, but rather as a complex predicate with a verb + adverb, see (16), or a verb + adjective, see (17). Once again, *χρεῖαν ἔχειν* *chreían échein* provides examples of both possibilities: *necesse habere* in (16a), *necessarium esse* in (17a), and *necessarium habere* in (17b).

- (16) a. Οὐ **χρεῖαν** ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλ' οἱ κακῶς
ou chreían échousin hoi ischýontes iatroû all' hoi kakôs
 not need have the be strong physician but the badly
*Non **necesse habent** sani medicum, sed qui male*
ἔχοντες
échontes
 have/be
habent

‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.’

(NT Mark 2.17)

- b. Ἀγρὸν ἡγόρασα καὶ ἔχω **ἀνάγκην** ἐξελθὼν ἰδεῖν αὐτόν
agròn ēgórasa kai échō anánkēn exelthōn ideîn autón
 field buy and have necessity go out see it
*Villam emi et **necesse habeo** exire et videre illam*
 ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it.’

(NT Luke 14.18).

- (17) a. Ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ **χρεῖαν** ἔχει
ho kýrios autoû chreían échei
 the Lord it need have
*Domino **necessarius est***

‘The Lord has need of it.’

(NT Mark 11.3)

- b. Ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ **χρεῖαν** ἔχει
ho kýrios autoû chreían échei
 the Lord it need have
*Dominus eum **necessarium habet***

‘The Lord has need of it.’

(NT Luke 19.34).

- c. τί αὐτῇ **κόπους παρέχετε;**
tí autēi kópous paréchete
 why her trouble supply
*quid illi **molesti estis?***
 ‘Why do you trouble her?’

(NT Mark 14.6)¹⁷

¹⁷The same translation of κόπον/κόπους παρέχειν *kópon/kópous paréchein* as *molestum esse* is repeated in NT Matthew 26.10, NT Luke 11.7, and NT Luke 18.5.

- (iii) A third way in which an SVC is not rendered by means of a strictly literal translation is when the text of the Vulgate, although using a Latin SVC, does not employ the expected support verb (γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai/fieri*, διδόναι *didónai/dare*, εἶναι *eînai/esse*, ἔχειν *échein/habere*, ποιεῖν *poi-eîn/facere*, etc.), but opts for a more suitable Latin verb or provides various translation alternatives.¹⁸

Since it is not possible to discuss all the examples of this kind, we will focus on those SVCs containing the nouns συμβούλιον *symboúlion* and χρεῖαν *chreían*, as they offer a greater variety of translations and, more importantly, can help illustrate three crucial aspects of the analysis of Greek SVCs and their Latin translations. From the perspective of the original Greek text, SVCs with συμβούλιον *symboúlion* emphasise, on the one hand, the interferences between Aramaic (the native language of the gospel writers), Greek, and Latin in the multilingual context in which the Gospels were composed in the 1st century AD. On the other hand, they reveal the varying proficiency of the gospel writers in Greek. From the perspective of the Vulgate, the multiple Latin translations of χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein* seem to suggest the existence of different translation criteria in each Gospel.

4.2.1 The translation of the support-verb constructions with συμβούλιον *symboúlion*

Thus, συμβούλιον *symboúlion* (a calque from the Latin noun *consilium* ‘meeting, resolution, counsel’) forms three different SVCs in the Gospels (Jiménez López 2017): συμβούλιον ποιεῖν *symboúlion poieîn*, συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai*, and συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein*.

¹⁸Thus, the 44 instances of SVCs with γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai* in the Gospels are translated into Latin as *fieri*, except for two specific cases where the translator of Mark uses *oriri* (NT Mark 4.17) and *efficere* in the passive (NT Mark 6.2). In the case of SVCs with εἶναι *eînai*, in the previously mentioned example (6a), the Vulgate uses *fieri* instead of *esse*, precisely due to its proximity with γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai*. Regarding ἔχειν *échein*, when the predicative noun is the subject, Latin does not use *habere* but *invadere* (NT Mark 16.8). A similar example is NT Luke 2.26, where λαμβάνειν *lambánein*, instead of its common translation as *accipere*, is rendered as *aprehendere*. Other examples of non-literal translation include NT Mark 14.65 (ῥαπίσμασιν λαμβάνειν *rhapismasin lambánein* = *alapis caedere* ‘to receive someone with blow, to slap’), NT Luke 14.31 (συμβάλλειν εἰς πόλεμον *symbaleîn eis pólemon* = *committere bellum* ‘to engage in war’) and NT John 3.21 (τὰ ἔργα εἰργασμένα *tà érga eirgasména* = *opera facta sunt* ‘to do works’), the only example in the Gospels where an SVC with ἐργάζεσθαι *ergázesthai* is translated as *facere* and not as *operari* (Baños & Jiménez López 2022, e.p.).

The first one is translated literally in the Vulgate (NT Mark 15.1: *consilium facientes*). However, the other two are approached differently. The sole instance of συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai* is translated as *consilium facere*, see (18), instead of *dare*, and συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein*, a collocation unique to Matthew (5 instances), is once translated almost literally as *consilium accipere* (NT Matthew 28.12), but also more freely as *consilium facere*, see (19), and, most importantly,¹⁹ as *consilium inire* in (20):

- (18) καὶ ἐξελθόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι εὐθὺς μετὰ τῶν
kaì exelthóntes hoi Pharisaiōi euthùs meta tôn
 and go out the Pharisees immediately with the
Exeuntes autem statim Phariseai cum
 Ἡρωδιανῶν συμβούλιον ἐδίδουν κατ' αὐτοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν
Herōidianōn symboúlion edídoun kat' autoû hópōs autòn
 Herodians counsel give against him how him
Herodianis consilium faciebant adversus eum quomodo eum
 ἀπολέσωσιν
apolésōsin
 destroy
perderent
 'The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the
 Herodians against him, how to destroy him.'
 (NT Mark 3.6).
- (19) ἐξελθόντες δὲ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι συμβούλιον ἔλαβον κατ' αὐτοῦ
exelthóntes dè hoi Pharisaiōi symboúlion élabon kat' autoû
 go out and the Pharisees counsel receive against him
Exeuntes autem Phariseai consilium faciebant adversus eum,
 ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν
hópōs autòn apolésōsin
 how him destroy
quomodo eum perderent
 'But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy
 him.'
 (NT Matthew 12.14).

¹⁹ Apart from example (22), cf. NT Matthew 27.1 (συμβούλιον ἔλαβον *symboúlion élabon* = *consilium inierunt*) and NT Matthew 27.7 (συμβούλιον λαβόντες *symboúlion labóntes* = *consilio inito*).

- (20) Τότε πορευθέντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι συμβούλιον ἔλαβον ὅπως αὐτὸν
tóte poreuthéntes hoi Pharisaíoi symboúlion élabon hópos autòn
 then go the Pharisees counsel receive how him
tunc abuentes Pharisaei consilium inierunt ut
pagideúsōsin en lógōi
 lay a snare in word
caperent eum in sermone
 ‘Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words.’
 (NT Matthew 22.15)

It is worth commenting briefly on this variety of seemingly synonymous SVCs with the same noun, both in the original Greek and the Latin translation.

(i) In the case of the Greek SVCs with συμβούλιον *symboúlion* (Jiménez López 2017), as in fact in that of any other collocation, our starting point is Mark, as he is the earliest gospel writer and reveals a higher degree of external influence in the use of SVCs, undoubtedly reflecting his comparatively lower proficiency in Greek.

Indeed, the SVC συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai* in Mark, see (20), is foreign to ancient Greek and, as mentioned above (Section 3), is often considered a Hebraism or Aramaism. Here it does not mean ‘to advise, counsel’ (for which Greek regularly uses the verb συμβουλεύειν *symbouleúein* in the active voice) but rather ‘to form a plan, deliberate, consult’. Perhaps for this reason Matthew, who has Mark’s text in (18) at hand, corrects this unusual collocation by selecting a clearer Greek expression for the same passage, συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein*. This, in turn, is a Latin loan from *consilium capere*, the prototypical SVC for expressing the predicate ‘to form a plan, decide’ in classical Latin (Baños 2014), namely, at the time when the Greek Gospels were written.

(ii) In the context of the Vulgate, there is a clear attempt to avoid a literal translation of example (20) in Mark (συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai* = *consilium dare*), since the Latin SVC conveys a different meaning (‘to counsel’)²⁰ than the one expressed by the original Greek (‘to deliberate’). Mark’s text is thus translated as *consilium facere*, an SVC which is also employed as a literal translation of συμβούλιον ποιεῖν *symboúlion poieîn* (NT Mark 15.1), συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein*, see (21), and συμβουλεύεσθαι *symbouleúesthai* (NT Matthew 26.4) to express in all three cases the predicate ‘to deliberate’.

²⁰In NT John 18.14, *consilium dare* is used precisely to translate συμβουλεύειν *symbouleúein*.

Nevertheless, from a Latin perspective, the use of *consilium facere* is striking, as it is uncommon in classical Latin,²¹ compared to the more frequent *consilium capere* and *consilium inire*. Indeed, one would have expected συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein* to be translated as *consilium capere*, an SVC which is nevertheless found nowhere in the Bible. This paradox ultimately reflects the extent to which there might have been a diachronic renewal in the use of these collocations over the three centuries that had elapsed between the original Greek text and the Latin translation of the Vulgate.

In the 1st century AD, Matthew employed συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein* under the influence of the classical Latin SVC *consilium capere*. However, when the Greek text was translated into Latin three centuries later, *consilium inire* had already displaced *consilium capere*²² as the prototypical expression of the analytic predicate ‘to form a plan, to take a decision’ and was therefore given preference over the latter in the Gospel of Matthew (NT Matthew 22.15, NT Matthew 27.1, NT Matthew 27.7).

In the meantime, a new SVC, *consilium facere*, had emerged in biblical Latin as a literal translation of συμβούλιον ποιεῖν *symboúlion poieîn* (NT Mark 15.1),²³ but it also ended up being used to translate συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai*, see (18), συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein*, see (19), and even συμβουλευέσθαι *symbolouésthai* ‘to deliberate’ in a context, such as (21) similar to that of (18–20):

- (21) καὶ συνεβουλεύσαντο ἵνα τὸν Ἰησοῦν δόλω κρατήσωσιν
kaì synebouleúsanto hína tôn Iēsoûn dólōi kratēsōsin
 and deliberate in order that the Jesus ploy conquer
et consilium fecerunt ut Iesum dolo tenerent

²¹According to the data from DiCoLat (as of 30/11/2023), which includes the SVCs attested in the textual corpus of the *Packard Humanities Institute* (PHI), there are two occurrences of *consilium facere* in classical Latin: the first one (Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius (2nd-1st c. BC), *Historiae* fr 5) is fragmentary; and the second (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 35.42.8), with a non-personal subject (*fortuna vel ingenium*), does not convey the same meaning as the biblical examples.

²²Indeed, according to the data from DiCoLat, despite the prevalence of *capere* over *inire* in classical Latin (129 vs 71 instances), both are used with a similar frequency in post-classical Latin (28/25), until *inire* took precedence over *capere* in late Latin, to the point that the latter is entirely absent from the Vulgate (Old and New Testaments).

²³Burton (2000: 126–127) also mentions *consilium capere* ‘instead of the standard VNCs [verb-noun collocations] *consilium capere* and *consilium inire*, as a literal translation of συμβούλιον ποιέω [*symboúlion poiéō*]’. The SVC *consilium facere* had already appeared in earlier versions of the *Vetus Latina*, thus introducing an SVC which was foreign to Latin but was eventually generalised in the Vulgate.

καὶ ἀποκτείνωσιν

kai apokteînōsin

and kill

et occiderent

‘and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.’

(NT Matthew 26.4)

4.2.2 The translations of *χρεῖαν ἔχειν* (*chreían échein*)

Equally interesting are the examples of *χρεῖαν ἔχειν chreían échein* which, along with other translation possibilities already discussed — *supra* (15) to (17) —, are also rendered with three SVCs in the Vulgate: *necessitatem habere* in (22a), the most literal translation, which however gives rise to an SVC unknown to classical Latin, as also happens with *opus habere*, see (22b), and its classical counterpart *opus esse*, see (22c):

- (22) a. οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε τί ἐποίησεν Δαυὶδ ὅτε **χρεῖαν**
oudépotē anégnōte tí epoiēsen Dauid hōte chreían
 never read what do David when need
numquam legistis quid fecerit David quando necessitatem
ἔσχευ καὶ ἐπείνασεν αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ;
éschen kai epeínasen autōs kai hoi met’ autoû
 have and be hungry himself and the with him
habuit et esuriit ipse et qui cum eo

‘Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him?’

(NT Mark 2.25)

- b. Ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν **χρεῖαν ἔχει**
ho kýrios autōn chreían échei
 the Lord them need have
Dominus his opus habet

‘The Lord needs them.’

(NT Matthew 21.3).

[Compare with *necessarium esse* in (17a) and *necessarium habere* in (17b) for the same passage in the other synoptic Gospels].

- c. Οὐ **χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν** οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλ’ οἱ κακῶς
ou chreían échousin hoi ischýontes iatroû all’ hoi kakôs
 not need have the be strong physician but the badly
Non est opus valentibus medico, sed male

ἔχοντες

échontes

have/be

habentibus

‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.’

(NT Matthew 9.12)

[Compare with *necesse habere* in (16a) for the same passage].

The SVC *χρεῖαν ἔχειν chreían échein* illustrates the three possible ways of translating a Greek SVC into Latin discussed in the preceding pages: through various simplex verbs, as seen in the examples in (15); through an analytic predicate of the type verb + adverb, see (16a), or verb + adjective, see (17a) and (17b); and through the three SVCs cited in (22). In sum, *χρεῖαν ἔχειν chreían échein* is rendered through 10 different translations in the Gospels: *desiderare* in (15a), *egere* in (15b), *debere* in (15c), *indigere* in (15d), *necesse habere* in (16), *necessarium esse* in (17a), *necessarium habere* in (17b), *necessitatem habere* in (22a), *opus habere* in (22b), and *opus esse* in (22c).

Although it would be worthwhile to analyse each of these translations individually²⁴, the existence of so many diverse translations for the same Greek SVC, especially considering the almost inviolable principle (in 96% of the cases) that every Greek SVC should be translated with a corresponding Latin SVC, clearly suggests, in our view, that there was no uniform approach to translating this SVC in the Gospels, and that St. Jerome’s subsequent revision in this respect was either superficial or nonexistent.

This is particularly evident in those passages of the synoptic Gospels which reproduce Jesus’ exact words — words which are repeated in practically identical form in the original Greek versions. One would expect that, as sacred words, these would be faithfully replicated in their respective Latin versions. Nevertheless, the Vulgate does not strictly adhere to the principle of literal translation. Each Gospel seems to be the work of a different translator, who attempts to stay

²⁴We will dedicate a specific study to the analysis of the various Latin translations. It is worth bearing in mind in this respect that *χρεῖαν chreían* can be constructed absolutely (for instance, in the only example in which it is translated as *necessitatem habere*, see 22a) or, more commonly, with an adnominal complement: either a noun in the genitive or, less frequently, an infinitive or a subordinate with ἵνα *hína*. In addition, it will be necessary to determine, among other aspects, whether this variety of translations reflects a possible polysemy of the predicate in Greek, and analyse, from the point of view of Latin, the classicism of each possible translation, considering also translations previously attested in various versions of the *Vetus Latina*.

faithful to Jesus' words, yet achieves different results which St Jerome respects and preserves.

Let us focus on the three most representative passages. In the first one, responding to the Pharisees' muttering about him and his disciples eating at the house of the tax collector Levi, Jesus replies in an almost identical manner ('it is not the healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick') in all three Greek Gospels (NT Mark 2.17 and NT Matthew 9.12: Οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ *Ou chreían échousin hoi ischýontes iatroû*; NT Luke 5.31: Οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ὑγιαίνοντες ἰατροῦ *Ou chreían échousin hoi hygiáinontes iatroû*). However, the Latin translation of Jesus' words is different: *non **necesse habent** sani medicum* (Mark), *non **est opus** valentibus medico* (Matthew), and *non **egent** qui sani sunt medico* (Luke).

In the second passage, just before his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus sends two disciples to a village to bring him a donkey tied to a colt. He instructs them that should anyone question them, they should simply reply, 'The Lord needs it/them'. The wording in Greek is the same in all three Gospels (repeated twice in Luke), with a slight variation in number: Ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχει *Ho kýrios autoû chreían échei* (NT Mark 11.3, NT Luke 19.31, NT Luke 19.34) / Ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν χρεῖαν ἔχει *Ho kýrios autôn chreían échei* (NT Matthew 21.3). However, in the Vulgate, four different translations are provided: *Domino **necessarius est*** (Mark), *Dominus his **opus habet*** (Matthew), *Dominus operam eius **desiderat*** (NT Luke 19.31), and *Dominus eum **necessarium habet*** (NT Luke 19.34).

Finally, when Jesus is arrested and brought to the house of the high priest Caiaphas, the latter asks him whether he truly is the Messiah, the Son of God, to which Jesus responds, 'You have said it'. Caiaphas exclaims in shock: 'What need do we have of any more witnesses?' Once again, Caiaphas' words in Greek are almost the same in all three gospel writers (Τί ἔτι χρεῖαν ἔχομεν μαρτύρων; *Tí éti chreían échomen martýrôn*? in NT Mark 14.63 and NT Matthew 26.65; Τί ἔτι ἔχομεν μαρτυρίας χρεῖαν; *Tí éti échomen martyρίας chreían*? in NT Luke 22.71). However, their Latin translations in the Vulgate differ: *quid adhuc **desideramus** testes?* (Mark), *quid adhuc **egemus** testibus?* (Matthew) and *quid adhuc **desideramus** testimonium?* (Luke).

In our opinion, these examples suggest that there is a different Latin translator behind each Gospel, a perception that seems to be confirmed when considering all the translation variants of χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein* and their frequency in each gospel writer, as demonstrated in Table 6.

As can be observed, each Gospel translation has its own distinctive characteristics. The translator of Mark employs two exclusive SVCs for χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían*

4 Support-verb constructions in the Gospels

Table 6: Different translation options of χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein* in the Gospels

χρεῖαν ἔχειν <i>chreían échein</i>	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
<i>opus esse</i>		6.8, 9.12		2.25, 13.29, 16.30
<i>necessitatem habere</i>	2.25			
<i>opus habere</i>		21.3		
<i>necesse habere</i>	2.17	14.16		
<i>necessarium esse</i>	11.3			
<i>necessarium habere</i>			19.34	
<i>desiderare</i>	14.63		19.31, 22.71	
<i>debere</i>		3.14		
<i>egere</i>		26.65	5.31	
<i>indigere</i>			9.11, 15.7	13.10

échein, *necessitatem habere* in (13a) and *necessarium esse* in (17a), both of which are not attested in the other Gospels. The former, a result of extreme literalness, is also unfamiliar in Latin.

The translator of the Gospel of Matthew also provides two unique translation alternatives: *opus habere* in (22b), an SVC attested only in late Latin and, more specifically, in Christian Latin, and the verb *debere* in (15c), a surprising choice for a collocation like χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein*, which always expresses necessity in Greek. However, in this specific context (when Jesus presents himself to John to be baptised) the Latin translator imbues it with an additional sense of obligation.

On the other hand, the translator of Luke is the only one who avoids using a parallel Latin SVC in all six instances in which χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein* appears. Only once does he use the analytic predicate *necessarium habere*, see (17b), a choice that is also unique to this Gospel. In the remaining five examples, he consistently employs synthetic predicates: *desiderare*, *egere*, and *indigere*.

Finally, the translator of John takes a radically different approach from that of Luke. Except for one instance in which the verb *indigere* is used, see (15d), in the rest of the cases he uses *opus esse*, which must have been the most natural translation of χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein* from the perspective of classical Latin, had a uniform translation criterion been applied to this Greek SVC.

Ultimately, we have four Gospels and four distinct translation principles. Faced with the differences of these early translations (for all of them are found in manuscripts of the *Vetus Latina*), St. Jerome did not opt for a unifying criterion in his revision. This holds true, at least, for the three passages in the synoptic

Gospels just discussed, in which Jesus' exact words are reproduced. Interestingly, his words remain the same across the various synoptic Gospels in Greek but vary in the Vulgate version of each Gospel.

5 Conclusions and prospects

By way of conclusion, the general data we have discussed regarding the use of SVCs in the Gospels, both in the original Greek version and the Latin translation of the Vulgate, allow us to draw some important conclusions and, at the same time, lay out new avenues for research which we hope to address in future studies.

The frequent occurrence of collocative verbs in the original Greek text, such as ποιεῖν *poieîn* 'to do', γίγνεσθαι *gígnesthai* 'to happen', εἶναι *eînai* 'to be', διδόναι *didónai* 'to give', ἔχειν *échein* 'to have', or λαμβάνειν *lambánein* 'to take', is partially due to the fact that they complement each other and enrich the collocational pattern of many predicative nouns by expressing the same event from perspectives which are different from those of the corresponding synthetic predicates.

Although our analysis of Greek SVCs has primarily been based on a synchronic approach, we have also noted the need for a diachronic focus. From a synchronic perspective, we have highlighted some significant quantitative and qualitative differences among the four gospel writers in the use of SVCs. John, for example, not only shows the highest frequency of SVCs but also the highest number of unique SVCs, while the exact opposite situation is observed in Matthew. These and other differences reveal, on the one hand, the idiosyncratic nature of this type of collocations, and, on the other hand, the level and quality of Greek employed by each writer. SVCs, situated halfway between lexicon and syntax due to their degree of fixation, ultimately pose a challenge for second-language users, such as the authors of the Gospels.²⁵ Their study, therefore, can help shed light on the level of linguistic competence of each Gospel writer.

To accomplish this, it is also important to adopt a diachronic perspective and differentiate between those SVCs that are remnants of classical Greek, e.g. πορεύειν *poreíen* 'to go, to walk' or δεήσεις ποιεῖσθαι *deéseis poieísthai* 'to pray, to make a prayer', and those that represent innovations. The

²⁵Most of the New Testament authors were L2 (second-language) Greek users, except perhaps Luke, who may have been an L1 (first-language) user (Moulton et al. 1906/1976: vol. IV, Porter 2014).

latter either reflect the renewal of these complex predicates in koine Greek (for example, the use of the active voice of the support verb ποιεῖν *poieîn* instead of the middle, as in φόνον ποιεῖν *phónon poieîn* ‘to murder, to commit murder’ or κρίσιν ποιεῖν *krísin poieîn* ‘to judge, to make a judgement’) or result from linguistic influences from other languages, such as Hebrew and Aramaic (e.g. τὴν ἀνομίαν ἐργάζεσθαι *tēn anomían ergázesthai* ‘to commit iniquity, to act lawlessly’ or συμβούλιον διδόναι *symboúlion didónai* ‘to deliberate, to form a plan’) or Latin: συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν *symboúlion lambánein* ~ *consilium capere* ‘to form a plan, deliberate’, κῆνσον διδόναι *kênsōn didónai* ~ *censum dare* ‘to tax, to pay tax’, or ἐργασίαν διδόναι *ergasían didónai* ~ *operam dare* ‘to make an effort, to give attention to’ are noteworthy in this regard. This diachronic perspective and the linguistic influences on specific SVCs constitute areas that still require further research.

Moreover, the analysis of the Latin text of the Vulgate has allowed us to compare the use of these constructions in both languages and consider the translation principles at play. It became clear in this respect that there is a tension between the desire for a literal translation (when a Greek SVC finds a parallel translation in Latin) and the need for linguistic naturalness in Latin (when a Latin SVC corresponds to a synthetic predicate in Greek).

The quest for a literal translation of the original Greek text explains the limited use of these complex predicates in the Vulgate compared to the whole body of Latin literature, a phenomenon which is ultimately related to the lower frequency of the SVCs in Greek than in Latin.

This principle of literal translation can clearly be seen in the way in which Greek SVCs are almost always translated into Latin in a parallel fashion, occasionally creating combinations (συμβούλιον ποιεῖν *symboúlion poieîn* = *consilium facere*, χρεῖαν ἔχειν *chreían échein* = *neccesitatem habere, opus habere*) which are uncharacteristic of classical Latin. The few exceptions in which the Greek SVCs are not translated literally in the Vulgate are therefore particularly significant. The two most interesting cases in this regard are the SVCs with συμβούλιον *symboúlion* and χρεῖαν *chreían*. Their varied translations into Latin, apart from highlighting linguistic influences, reveal the existence of different translation criteria in each Gospel – an aspect that merits further exploration. The study of the Latin SVCs that correspond to synthetic predicates in Greek, with their multiple variants and possibilities,²⁶ can throw ample light on this matter. This will be the focus of a future study.

²⁶Cf. note 16.

Abbreviations

NT New Testament

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