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HOW DO DIFFERENCES IN GOSPELS AFFECT SEMANTIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC LEVEL

This paper analyses the impact of the diversity of the canonical gospels and their linguistic and discourse characteristics on the semantic and sociolinguistic levels. Attention is focused on several examples from the gospels in which the differences are extremely evident because the choice of lexis, syntactic structure or content is very different for each gospel writer. Special attention is given to the semantic layering of the gospel messages and their adaptation to the target communities, which affects the sociolinguistic level. Specifically, how parameters such as status, occupation, specific audience, etc., influence the writing style of every gospel writer is analysed. In addition, how differences were reflected in the definition of the course of reading in the field of liturgy and what influences the sentences from gospels had on the field of liturgy are shown. The Croatian translation of the New Testament by Bonaventura Duda and Jerko Fućak was used for the analysis. The computer version (www.biblegateway.com) English Standard Version (ESV) was used for translation into English. The results indicate that the differences between the gospels do not represent contradictions but rather enrich the understanding of the Christian tradition and enable a wider understanding of the uniqueness of the gospel message.

Keywords: *gospels; content; sociolinguistics; semantics.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In many nations, the Bible is the basis of cultural, religious, linguistic, and literary identity. It is divided into the Old and the New Testament, whereby the Old contains – 56 books and the New – 27 books in the Christian tradition. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek and is still the most translated book in the world. Research into biblical texts

has been ongoing for centuries, and in recent times, those aspects that are not exclusively theological have increasingly been studied. The language and logic of the Bible were analysed by G. R. Evans (1984), who assumed that the Bible was read in the West from St. Augustine's time until the end of the 12th century. From the point of view of contemporary linguistic theories and approaches, Christo H. J. van der Merwe (2006) dealt with meaning using the notion of semantic potential to determine the relationships between lexemes in the Hebrew language. Great attention has also been focused on research into gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, which, according to tradition, were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. M. A. Matson (2011) studied the depiction of Jesus' death and resurrection in Luke's gospel and John's gospel. Some foreign authors were engaged in listing or counting the number of words and the frequency of their occurrence, and in this way, they tried to determine the prototypical gospel. All these studies focused on the model of the Greek language and resulted in the publication of dictionaries and manuals for reading the New Testament in the language in which they were written (Van Voorst, 2001; Brodie, 2004; Poirier, 2008; Abakuks, 2015; Mealand, 2016). Gareiou and Zervas (2018) used descriptive statistics to determine the words from gospels that refer to the environment.

Recently, Croatian linguists have also increasingly analysed gospels because the international interest in them is constantly growing. Tina Mihić (2012) addressed synonymy by analysing translation differences in seventeen different translations of the same text. Valentina Baričević and Martina Kekelj (2009) researched gospels and viewed this research as a starting point for the study of language acquisition by native speakers from the perspective of psycholinguistics. Adriana Tomašić (2012) analysed the relationships of nouns within grammatical categories: gender, number, case and declension. The language of John's gospel was analysed by Zrinka Jelaska and Valentina Baričević (2012), who concluded that the Croatian translation is lexically more diverse than the Greek original. Zrinka Jelaska and Miroslav Fuček (2018) offered numerical ratios of phonological and morphological noun categories in the Bible. Nada Babić (2018) published linguistic research on Croatian translations of the New Testament since the 20th century. On this basis, in 2020, the book *Bibliana, a Croatian translation of the Bible*, was created. Frano Musić (2022) offered a thorough presentation and description of metaphors and gestures in the Gospels, and the author of this paper, in her doctoral dissertation (Đorđević, 2024), studied the linguistic and stylistic features of the Gospels in the Croatian language.

Sociolinguistics, as a linguistic branch, focuses on the relationship between language and society and the reasons and consequences of language-

ge changes that occur due to social influences, which can be observed from many different perspectives. Allan Bell (2013) highlights three subgroups of research within sociolinguistics: sociolinguistics of multilingualism, ethnographic-interactive sociolinguistics and variationist sociolinguistics, where the first includes language research at the macro level (the relationship between a minor and a dominant language), the second language research of smaller groups, and the third includes language research at the micro level, i.e., changes within the language. This relationship between linguistic phenomena and social phenomena was also the focal point of many analyses (McKirnan, 1983; Takhirovna Abdullaeva, 2001; Holmes, 2008), especially with respect to second language acquisition (Tarone, Swain, 1995; Young, 1999). Regardless of the type of research, sociolinguistics has recently been at the center of interest for linguists. A. Milković (2006) offered sociolinguistic research in the framework of teaching and learning. T. Šinžori (2019) studied how social reality was reflected in monolingual explanatory dictionaries of the Croatian and Czech languages, whereas A. Vlastelić and I. Galunić (2018) studied the adaptation of car advertisements to the market. The phenomenon of multilingualism is also interesting and is also the focal point of the study of sociolinguistics (Kovačević, 2001; Malechová 2016; Kružić, Malnar, 2019; Miloš, 2023). Much attention has also been given to research on the linguistic landscape. An exceptional contribution in this field was made by Elena Shohamy and Dark Gorter (2009), who edited a collection of 20 scientific papers dealing with the sociolinguistic framework in landscape research, theoretical perspectives, and methodological and linguistic problems. Robert J. Blackwood and S. Tufi (2015) subsequently studied the linguistic landscape of the Mediterranean, emphasizing space as a feature of identity. Durk Gorter and Jasone Cenoz (2024) provided an overview of linguistic research on space from the end of the 20th century to the present day.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ANALYSIS

The aim of this paper is to show how the diversity of gospels affects semantics (the meaning and messages conveyed by the text) and sociolinguistic levels (the adaptation of language and style to the needs of the target audience). This paper provides examples of linguistic and semantic differences and their influence on the understanding of the gospel as a universal message. Linguistic and discourse features are presented to highlight the differences between the gospels. This paper is continuation of the analysis the author started in her doctoral thesis (Đorđević, 2024). In the preface to the gospels in the Croatian translation of Jerusalem Bible (2007), for Christians, the gospels represent the

“good news” (from the Greek word *euangelion*) announced by Jesus Christ. The first three gospels are called synoptic because of their similarity in content (from the Greek *sin* – together and *opsis* – observation), because they are considered to show events from the same general point of view and because they are literary interdependent. John’s Gospel is distinguished from the other three gospels in theological terms because it emphasizes the goal of Jesus’ mission. It has been confirmed that gospels are historical records created from oral tradition. Numerous redactors of the gospels recorded testimonies with as much objectivity as possible to distinguish them from apocryphal ones. Therefore, the history of the creation of the gospel is not simple.

Therefore, even though all the gospels present the same topic – the life and actions of Jesus Christ – the choice of lexicon, syntactic structure or content of gospels is different depending on the gospel writer, which is ultimately reflected not only semantically but also sociolinguistically. When choosing a language, social factors are always considered. All the gospels have the same central narrative line, and the differences between them can also be attributed to social factors, such as social status and the target audience. Examples of these will be provided. For the purpose of semantic analysis, two events were presented: Jesus’ baptism and Jesus’ resurrection. For the purpose of sociolinguistic analysis, a general sociolinguistic view of the gospels was given. The analysis was made on the texts from the gospels in the Croatian translation of the New Testament by Bonaventura Duda and Jerko Fućak. The computer version (www.biblegateway.com) – English Standard Version (ESV) – was used to translate this paper to English.

3. EFFECTS OF DIFFERENCES AT THE SEMANTIC LEVEL

Two events from the gospels are presented to show how linguistic choices affect the semantic level. The first event is Jesus’ baptism, and the second event is Jesus’ resurrection. In the event of baptism, it will be shown when and in what way Jesus was baptized, whereas in the event of resurrection, it will be shown how woman/women who came to the tomb reacted after she/they realized it was empty.

3.1. Semantic analysis of the event of Jesus’ baptism in gospels

The synoptic gospels (Matthew’s, Mark’s and Luke’s) approach the event of baptism by giving more details and describing it directly, whereas John’s Gospel talks about baptism indirectly during the testimony of John the Baptist, who participated in that act because he was the one who baptized

Jesus. By directly conveying and quoting John's words, greater intensity is achieved in conveying the message that Jesus is the Son of God. This is shown in (1).

(1)

Matthew **Then** Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. (...) And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw **the Spirit of God descending like a dove** and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "**This** is my beloved Son, **with whom** I am well pleased." (Mt 3:13; 16–17)

Mark **In those days** Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, **immediately** he saw the heavens being torn open and **the Spirit descending on him like a dove**. And a voice came from heaven, "**You** are my beloved Son; **with you** I am well pleased." (Mk 1:9–11)

Luke **Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized** and was praying, the heavens were opened, and **the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove**; and a voice came from heaven, "**You** are my beloved Son; **with you** I am well pleased." (Lk 3:21–22)

John **The next day** he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw **the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him**. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (Jn 1:29–34)

While Matthew's, Mark's and John's Gospel stated the time of baptism (*then, in those days, the next day*), in Luke's Gospel, it is also suggested that Jesus did not want to stand out from the crowd – he was baptized in the same way and at the same time as everyone else, which is a sign of Jesus' humility. Mark's Gospel is almost identical to Matthew's in the description of the act of baptism, and the same adverbial marking of time is used; however, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus saw a scene before him when he had already come out of the

water (Mk 1:10), which indicates that the heavens had opened simultaneously with the act of baptism. Luke stands out from the other two synoptics because Luke refers to the fact that heaven was not opened by the act of baptism itself but by Jesus' prayer (Lk 3:21). According to Christian interpretations, the open sky at the moment of Jesus' baptism could symbolically depict the beginning of a new covenant between God and man because Heaven was "closed" for man when the first man was expelled from Paradise because of the first sin, which is recorded in the book of Genesis: "therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken" (Gn 3:23). However, the open sky and the voice from heaven mentioned by synoptics are not mentioned at all in John's Gospel.

In Matthew's Gospel, the voice from heaven is addressed with the demonstrative pronoun *this* and speaks of Jesus in the third person singular (Mt 3:17), whereas in Mark's and Luke's, it is addressed with the personal pronoun *you* and the verb in the second person singular (Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22). Thus, in Matthew's Gospel, the voice is used as a means by which God addresses the multitude, with it he testifies that Jesus is his son and expresses his love for him. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, the voice does not address the crowd but directly Jesus; the emphasis is not on testimony but on the declaration of love, which is confirmed by the act of baptism.

All four gospels mention the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus. The Holy Spirit took a physical form at the moment when it descended on Jesus, and in all four gospels, it was compared to a dove. The verb form used is not the same for all four gospel writers. In Matthew's, Mark's and John's gospels, when mentioning the Spirit, the authors use the imperfective verb form *descending* (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Jn 1:32), which could mean that it is uncertain whether the Spirit remained where it descended, whereas in Luke's Gospel the writer used the perfective verb form *descended* – the action was brought to an end (Lk 3:22). In Luke's Gospel and John's Gospel, the intensity of the Spirit's action is more strongly expressed than in Matthew's Gospel and Mark's Gospel. Luke's Gospel achieved this with a perfective verb, and John's Gospel supplemented the statement that emphasized the spirit's remaining on Jesus (Jn 1:32). Thus, in Luke's and John's gospels, it is emphasized that the Holy Spirit guided Jesus permanently.

3.2. Semantic analysis of the event of Jesus' resurrection in gospels

3.2.1. Woman/women who found the empty tomb

In presenting the information about the persons who came to see the tomb, the texts of the gospels do not match in terms of content, neither in number nor in terms of the names of the women, as presented in (2).

(2)

Matthew (...) Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary** went to see the tomb. (Mt 28:1)

Mark (...) When the Sabbath was past, **Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome** bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. (Mk 16:1)

Luke (...) Now it was **Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them** who told these things to the apostles (...) (Lk 24:10)

John (...) **Mary Magdalene** came to the tomb early (...) (Jn 20:1)

Two women are mentioned by name in Matthew's Gospel, three in Mark's and Luke's, and only one in John's. Only one woman's name is mentioned by all four gospel writers – Mary Magdalene. Matthew's Gospel contains an adjective attribute next to the name: "the other Mary", which does not specify which Mary it is exactly, but in relation to the previous parts of Matthew's Gospel, it could be concluded that it is the mother of Jacob and Joseph. Mark's and Luke's gospels mention three women by name (Mk 16:1; Lk 24:10), where two names are common to both: Mary Magdalene and Mary of Jacob, whereas Mark's Gospel mentions Salome, Luke's John as the third. Furthermore, in Luke's Gospel, the women's names are mentioned only at the moment when the news came to be communicated to the apostles; thus, in this context, the apostles were also mentioned by others. However, it is not possible to unambiguously determine from the meaning of the sentence whether the other women only told the apostles about it or were present at the tomb themselves.

3.2.2. Reactions

All four gospels also report the reactions of the woman/woman, as presented in (3).

(3)

Matthew So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and **ran to tell his disciples**. (Mt 28:8)

Mark And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and **they said nothing to anyone**, for they were afraid. (Mk 16:8)

Luke And they **remembered** his words, and returning from the tomb **they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest**. (Lk 24:8–9)

John So **she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple**, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” (Jn 20:2)

In the synoptic gospels, the women’s reactions are linked to the apparition at the tomb (in Matthew, on the way to the disciples, an encounter with Jesus took place), whereas in John’s Gospel, the reaction of the only woman mentioned (Mary Magdalene) occurs after she saw the empty tomb. In Matthew’s Gospel, how women left the tomb and reported the news are emphasized. The women broke the news to the disciples. The emphasis is on the speed of the reaction. In Mark’s Gospel, the reaction is completely different from that in the other three gospels; here, the women did not pass on the news out of fear (Mk 16:8). In Luke’s Gospel, the recollection of Jesus’ foreshadowing of the resurrection is emphasized (Lk 24:8), after which the women went and informed the disciples and others. Therefore, unlike the Matthew’s Gospel and John’s Gospel, the news was given not only to the eleven apostles but also to all the others (Lk 24:9). Haste is emphasized in John’s Gospel, as in Matthew’s. Mary Magdalene broke the news to Peter and John. It is also stated what exactly she said to them, and from her words, the reader can sense astonishment and confusion. Therefore, unlike synoptic gospels, reactions do not include the knowledge that Jesus has gained.

The content discrepancy in the depiction of the event of the resurrection, i.e., the arrival of the women at the tomb, especially among the synoptics, can be explained by the fact that the event in which the women find the empty tomb was transmitted orally, so not everyone had the same story, and each

gospel writer wrote down what he heard. Only the event from John's Gospel is described from the perspective of John himself – the one who witnessed it. In these several examples, the diversity of language choices resulted in diverse content and interpretations. Examples have shown that gospels often differ even when they present the same or similar events. Sometimes there comes to differences in terms of facts (e.g., how many women came to the tomb after the resurrection), sometimes in terms of grammar (e. g. the choice of pronouns: *you are/this is*; or the choice of verb: *descending/descended*), which affects all the other language levels, especially the semantic one.

4. EFFECT OF DIFFERENCES AT THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC LEVEL

The differences between the gospels also influence sociolinguistic levels. Sociolinguistics, as a branch of linguistics, takes into account what social factors affect language and how language affects society. It is a complex process that includes numerous factors for language development – “a society of people using a given language, the social structure of this society, differences between native speakers in age, social status, level of culture and education, place of residence, as well as differences in their speech behavior depending on the communication situation” (Takhirovna Abdullaeva, 2021: 415). In this context, it is also possible to observe gospels. Although scholars often state that it is not entirely certain whether each gospel was written by only one person, church tradition attributes the first four books of the New Testament to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In recent research, it has been established that the journey from Jesus and the tradition about him are much more complex than initially thought, so the history of how gospels were created is also very complex. Contemporary scientific research is still focused on the exact dating of the first gospel, about which no clear conclusion has yet been reached. However, it is generally considered that Mark's Gospel was written first and that Matthew's and Luke's are largely dependent on it. John's Gospel was written a little later than the other three, but it is related to the narration of the synoptics; it highlights the basic points of Jesus's life and activities.

When choosing a language, or a particular type of language variety, certain social factors are always considered. “Some relate to the users of language – the participants; others relate to its uses – the social setting and function of the interaction” (Holmes, 2008: 8). Considering that all the gospels have the same central narrative line, the differences between them can also be attributed to social factors, such as social status and the target audience.

4.1. Social status and social circumstances

According to the Bible, Matthew was a tax collector by profession and he was also Jesus' disciple, so he followed Jesus during his life and wrote the gospel according to what he saw and experienced. In accordance with tradition, he wrote his gospel in Palestine. The fact that he was a tax collector is deeply evident regarding money. For example, in Matthew 6:19–34, there is a whole part of Jesus' speech in which Jesus is talking about money and possessions that people have or do not have on earth. Recently, studies (e.g., Keister, 2020) have focused on how many times and in which circumstances money was mentioned in Matthew's Gospel.

Mark, on the other hand, was the assistant of Paul and the apostle Peter. He was also Peter's translator. It is also known that Mark was from Jerusalem. In other words, he was an educated Jew who knew the Greek language. In the preface of the Jerusalem Bible (2007), it is stated that Mark "does not primarily try to bring the Master's teaching and therefore records few of his words. An important topic for him is the manifestation of the crucified Messiah". It is believed that, since he listened to Peter's sermons in Rome, the gospel writer Mark wrote down exactly what Peter taught there. In addition, Mark's Gospel mentions Peter more often than the other Gospels do and sometimes additionally emphasizes his presence in an event, e. g., "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." (Mk 16:7).

Luke, a physician of pagan origin, was Paul's assistant in his second and third apostolic journeys. Tradition considers him the author of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The fact that he was a doctor comes to the fore in the special emphasis on Jesus' concern for the sick and the poor, e.g., "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' (Lk 10:8–9). Moreover, the structure of this gospel is different from the structure of the others because it includes a dedication at the beginning and a combination of historical data, e.g., a detailed account of the historical and political circumstances of Jesus' time at the beginning: "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah" (Lk 1:5). The narrative flow is an indication that the author was an educated and well-read person who paid attention to structural and content design text.

According to the Bible, John was the fisherman at the beginning and later became the disciple of Jesus, the only one who remained present at the moment of crucifixion. Tradition often calls him Jesus' beloved disciple because John called himself "the other disciple" and "the disciple whom Jesus

loved” in the Gospels, for example: “Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in” (Jn 20:8), “That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter (...)” (Jn 21:7), “Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them (...)” (Jn 21:20). Given that he was writing from his own perspective, it cannot be said for sure whether he loved him more than the other disciples, or whether the gospel simply emphasizes the extraordinary amount of love that Jesus has for others, but it is known that he confided in him at the time of his death his mother: “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, »Woman, behold, your son!« Then he said to the disciple, »Behold, your mother!« And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” (Jn 19:26–27), which testifies to how close he was to him.

4.2. Target audience

The target audience is extremely important regarding sociolinguistics. The adjustment of language to certain cultural and religious communities can be easily related to the concept of code switching, which, according to Fisherman (1967), means that the language is adjusted according to the authors’ needs to communicate with different social groups. A. Bell (2014) even introduces the concept of so-called “audience design”, arguing that speakers adapt language to the audience, which he sees as a key factor in language variation. In this paper it will be presented for which audience each gospel writer wrote, which will be supported by quotations from the Bible.

Firstly, the Church tradition states that Matthew wrote his gospel for the educated Jews at that time, wanting to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. Considering that the Old Testament is the holy book of the Jews, which they knew very well, the gospel writer Matthew wanted to convince that the old prophecies were fulfilled precisely by the person of Jesus Christ. For this reason, references to the Old Testament are recorded in several places in Matthew’s Gospel, for example, “For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, »The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.«” (Mt 3:3); “This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet (...)” (Mt 21:4); “The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!” (Mt 26:24); “But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” (Mt 26:54), “But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled (...)” (Mt 26:56) and special drama when referring to the temple, the holy city and the dead, for example at the moment of Jesus’ death, which is not recorded in the other gospels: “And behold, the curtain of

the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs were also opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” (Mt 27:51–53). There is also a peculiarity in the mention of Jewish customs without special interpretations, for example “But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, »It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.«” (Mt 27:6) Therefore, the focus on a certain audience during the writing influenced the language choices and the demarcation of Matthew’s Gospel in relation to the others. In addition, at the beginning of the gospel, Matthew was the only gospel writers to bring the genealogy of Jesus Christ: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar (...)” (Mt 1:1–17).

Mark’s Gospel, on the other hand, does not mention any of these. The fact that Mark does not mention Old Testament quotations such as Matthew indicates that Mark’s Gospel was written for an audience unfamiliar with Jewish tradition. Therefore, Mark wrote his gospel for the Gentiles, especially those who lived in Rome, since he listened to Peter’s sermons in Rome and probably wrote them down. His sentences are short and dynamic since he was probably writing his gospel so that less educated people could understand it, which is direct evidence of language adjustments made for wider audiences and people of lower social status to understand. These adjustments are typical for sociolinguistics when the content is presented so that anyone can understand it, which depends on a variety of contextual factors because “there are many different groups in a community, and so any individual may share linguistic features with a range of other speakers” (Holmes, 1992: 207). Moreover, if we take into account the early persecutions of Christians, especially in Rome, it is clear why Mark’s Gospel puts more emphasis on persecution as part of following Christ: “(...) and calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’” (Mk 8:34) and importance of faith in moments of trial: “He said to them, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’” (Mk 4:40)

Luke wrote his gospel for Greeks and Gentiles. The fact that he writes to a wider audience comes to the forefront at the beginning of the gospel that he dedicates to Theophilus, who is considered to have been an educated Greek: “(...) it seemed good to me (...) to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” (Lk, 1:3–4). Moreover, Luke’s Gospel emphasizes that

Jesus came to save all people, not only Jews, which is also a proof of writing for wider audience: “(...) all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Lk 3:6) and “(...) that repentance for ‘he forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Lk 24:47). Exceptionally emphasizes Jesus' concern for people who are on the social margins: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor (...)” (Lk 4:18)

John's gospel was written for early Christians, who already had some basic knowledge about Jesus. John pointed them to a deeper theological interpretation of Jesus' actions. Therefore, this gospel differs from the other gospels both chronologically and in terms of content. At the very beginning of the Gospel, John emphasizes the divine nature of Jesus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (Jn 1:1). John also states that Jesus is the bread of life, which is a metaphor for Christian Eucharist (Holy Communion)¹: “Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” (Jn 6:35), and the early Christian community participated in Holy Communion from the very beginning. Jesus Christ is presented as the one who protects: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (Jn 10:11) and the emphasis is on love and harmony: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (Jn 13:34). Moreover, John's Gospel provides the most concise account of Jesus' passion (although John was under Jesus' cross), probably because John considered Jesus' death less important than what followed – the death was not primarily an act of suffering but an act of salvation: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (Jn 12:32).

To conclude, on the basis of examples from the four gospels, it is possible to conclude that the target audience influenced the way each gospel was written.

4.3. Language contact and Jesus' mother tongue

All the gospels were written according to different intercultural contacts. In several places in gospels, elements of Hebrew or Arameic language were kept in order for the gospels to be more authentic. In sociolinguistic terms, these are all examples of language transfer, by which “any linguistic feature can be transferred from any language to any other language” (Thomason

¹ According to the Catholic Church, the Eucharist is the sacrament in which *the bread and wine convert into Christ's body and blood*.

& Kaufman, 1988:14). It has already been mentioned that Matthew's Gospel was written for Jews, so it has more examples of Hebrew or Arameic than the others do, but other gospels also keep several elements from these languages, which is evident in Greek original but also in translations of the Bible, e.g., *Immanuel* – 'God with us' (Mt 1:23), *Hosanna* – 'pray, save us' (Mt 21:9, Mt 21:15; Mk 11:9–10; Jn 12:13), *Talitha cumi*– 'little girl, I say you arise' (Mk 5:41), *Ephphatha* – 'be opened' (Mk 7:34), *Abba* – 'Father' (Mk 14:36), *Rabbi* – 'teacher' (Jn 1:38, Jn 3:2, Jn 6:25), *Messiah* – 'anointed' (Jn 1:41, Jn 4:25), *Golgotha* – 'The Place of a Skull' (Jn 19:17). Moreover, Matthew's Gospel contains the sentence Jesus said on the cross in Hebrew: *Eli, eli, lema sabahtani* (Mt 27:46) and Mark's Gospel contains the same sentence, but in Arameic: *Eli, eli, lema sabahtani* (Mk 15:34) – 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'. The explanation is provided in both gospels immediately after the sentence was used. Considering that Jesus said this in a moment of agony and despair, it is obviously his mother tongue, which is again something truly important in terms of sociolinguistics. However, when both languages are used during the writing process, gospel writers understand both Greek and Hebrew/Arameic. These examples are all in accordance with Ferguson's definition of diglossia (1959: 325).

4.4. Direct effect in terms of social usage in liturgy

In Church liturgy there are liturgical years – A, B and C.² It is about three-year cycles of reading in worship. This reading system was introduced after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Before that council, the Roman Rite had a circle of readings that did not change over the years, but it was considered necessary to provide the believers with insight into various aspects of Jesus Christ's activities and diversity. In liturgical year A – Matthew's Gospel is to be read; in year B – Mark's Gospel; and in year C – Luke's Gospel. Owing to its theological and symbolic character, John's Gospel is read on important holidays and in special periods of the liturgical year – for example, Christmas, Good Friday and the period from Easter to Pentecost. Therefore, the differences in the content (as well as the language choices made in gospels) directly affected the arrangement in liturgy so that different perspectives could be offered to believers, which had wider social resonance.

The General Introduction to the Lectionary conveys in detail the decisions made at the Second Vatican Council and states how and in what setting the mass should be celebrated. It is also stated in detail how the readings

² The liturgical period starts with Advent.

should be approached, at which place, and it is emphasized that the reading from the gospel is a special part of the mass and that it is a source of strength for Christians: "The proclamation of the gospel always stands as the high point of the liturgy of the word. (...) The sacred scriptures, above all in their liturgical proclamation, are the source of life and strength. As the Apostle Paul attests, the Gospel is the saving power of God for everyone who believes." In other words, reading the gospels brings together a community in a shared experience of the sacred text. This act is a sociolinguistic process in which the community shares meaning, thereby a social identity is built and bonds with others through language are provided (Gumperz, 1982).

Moreover, the gospels are read ceremonially, which emphasizes the symbolic prestige of the texts presented by Labov (1972). It is also important to highlight the phatic function of the biblical/religious style, which is particularly evident in liturgy. Among the features of this style, Katnić-Bakaršić (2001) singles out a high degree of givenness, established language structures, established forms of the beginning and end of prayers or other texts, and a specific scheme of development of a particular oral or written genre (Katnić-Bakaršić, 2001: 71). Interestingly, many of the established forms in which the priest and the faithful pronounce during the Holy Mass can be found precisely in the Gospel texts. For example, on the eve of the Eucharist, believers extend their hands to each other and say: "Peace be with you!", which are the words from the Gospel of John (Jn 20:19) spoken by Jesus himself when he appears to the apostles after the resurrection. Furthermore, during the Eucharist, the priest pronounces the words: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the son of the world!", which are the words pronounced by John the Baptist in the Gospel of John (Jn 1:29) at the moment when Jesus comes for baptism. The believers give the answer: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word (...)", which are the words of the Roman centurion from the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 8:8), who addresses Jesus and believes that He can help his sick servant. These are all examples of how the language from gospels is directly reflected in society in regard to one specific social group of believers.

5. CONCLUSION

The differences between gospels are extremely important for understanding their semantic and sociolinguistic impact. This paper shows how linguistic, stylistic and content differences between gospels affect these two levels. It has been shown that gospels, although they all present the same "good news" – the life and actions of Jesus Christ – very often differ in the

choice of vocabulary, syntactic structure, and grammatical features, which are directly reflected at the semantic level. In several examples presented in this paper, the diversity of language choices during the presentation of similar events resulted in diverse content and interpretations of canonical gospels (e.g., different usages of pronouns in the event of Jesus's baptism in synoptic gospels changed the perspective and interpretation – the voice of God during baptism in Matthew's gospel was used as if God addresses the multitude and testifies that Jesus is His Son, whereas in the Mark's gospel and Luke's gospel, the voice addresses Jesus directly, so the emphasis is not on testimony but on the declaration of love, which is confirmed by the act of baptism). Given that each gospel reflects specific cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts, their content and structure shape meanings that go beyond literal interpretation.

The semantic diversity of the gospel enables a deeper and multilayered understanding of the fundamental messages of the Christian tradition, whereas sociolinguistic analysis emphasizes the adaptation of language to the target community, which illustrates the importance of communication in different social circumstances. Additionally, the fact that they were written by authors who had different professions and social statuses (e.g., Matthew – tax collector, Luke – doctor, etc.) and who wrote for different target audiences (e.g., Matthew's Gospel – Jews, Mark's Gospel – Gentiles, etc.), as well as the fact that the gospels underwent translations and redactions, directly reflected on the language of the gospel and therefore on the concrete application of gospels in society, especially in the field of liturgy. All the differences in the four canonical gospels resulted from the fact that in Catholic liturgy, there are liturgical years – A, B and C, which represent three-year cycles of reading during the holy mass because it was considered crucial to provide believers with a broader perspective to provide them with insight into various aspects of Jesus Christ's actions. Through liturgy, the language of the gospel was directly reflected in social reality, and throughout the centuries, it was reflected in the words that believers say all over the world every day. In conclusion, the semantic and sociolinguistic diversity of gospels should not be seen as a contradiction but rather as a reflection of their universality and ability to inspire different communities throughout history.

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6B. INTERNET SOURCES

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KAKO SE RAZLIKE MEĐU EVANĐELJIMA ODRAŽAVAJU NA SEMANTIČKU I SOCIOLINGVISTIČKU RAZINU

U ovom se radu analizira utjecaj raznolikosti kanonskih evanđelja, njihovih jezičnih i diskursnih obilježja, na semantičku i sociolingvističku razinu. Pozornost je usmjerena na nekoliko primjera iz evanđelja u kojima razlike osobito dolaze do izražaja jer je odabir leksika, sintaktičke strukture ili sadržaja kod svakoga pisca evanđelja uvelike različit. Posebna pozornost posvećena je semantičkoj slojevitosti poruka evanđelja te njihovoj prilagodbi ciljnim zajednicama, što se odražava na sociolingvističku razinu. Ukazat će se na to kako parametri poput statusa, zanimanja, ciljanja na određenu publiku i sl. utječu na stil pisanja svakoga pisca evanđelja. Osim toga, prikazat će se kako su se različitosti odrazile na definiranje tijeka čitanja u liturgiji te kakve su utjecaje rečenice iz evanđelja imale na liturgiju. Građu čine evanđelja na hrvatskom jeziku, pri čemu je za analizu upotrijebljen hrvatski prijevod Novoga zavjeta. Bonaventure Dude i Jerka Fućaka. Za prijevod na engleski jezik upotrijebljena je računalna inačica (www.biblegateway.com) – English Standard Version (ESV). Rezultati ukazuju na to da različitosti među evanđeljima ne predstavljaju proturječja, već obogaćuju razumijevanje kršćanske tradicije i omogućuju šire shvaćanje jedinstvenosti evanđeoske poruke.

Ključne riječi: *evanđelja; sadržaj; sociolingvistika; semantika.*