The Role of Punctuation in Old Romanian Bible Translations

Ana CATANĂ-SPENCHIU*

Key-words: *Bible*, *literal translation*, *Cyrillic alphabet*, *Septuagint*, *punctuation marks*

1. Preliminary Considerations

Punctuation, the element of alphabetic writing and an important topic for teaching area, has recently become a central subject for linguistics and philological sciences, mainly because their focus lies on text, on the graphic system and the rules which govern it. An important dimension of this paper is to provide interesting data about the punctuation system, pointing out at the same time to the contexts that led to significant changes such as printing technology or the languages of culture from which the punctuation has extracted its essence. Since today the research in this field talks about a linguistic of punctuation (Nunberg 1990), we think that it is necessary to present the main research areas of this system. The main objective of this paper regards the role of the punctuation in the *Bible* translation, because in this area we find little or no information at all. The second part represents a short comparative analysis of the differences of punctuation and their function in the first Bible translation into the Romanian language, the *Bible* of Bucharest (1688), and the *Bible* of Blaj (1795), translated by Samuil Micu. We have to mention that our text corpus is based on the texts written in the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabet. Also, we will take into consideration the Greek source-texts, *Septuagint*, Frankfurt edition (1597) and Franeker edition[1] (1709) (SEPT.BOS). Given the large amount of possible situations that could be discussed we choose for our investigation some important linguistic contexts that allow us to detect punctuation changes from one text to another and to point out even the ones that took place from one century to another.

We will conduct a diachronic type of investigation on punctuation because the three graphical systems (Greek, Cyrillic and Latin) imposed in time diversity. From the analysis of each text results a certain stage of evolution for the punctuation system. Even at the Greek texts level we can identify differences in the use of the punctuation signs. Mainly due to this fact, the Romanian biblical translators, in their

*"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi, Romania.

[1] Eugen Pavel and Ioan Chindriş in the *Introduction* from the *Blaj Bible* (1795) present the Septuagint, in Franeker edition, from 1709, as the source-text for the translation of the *Bible* from 1795, made by Samuil Micu.

„Philologica Jassyensia", An X, Nr. 1 (19), 2014, p. 27–38.

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

attempt to stay close to the source-texts, keep, in most cases, the punctuation signs from the model-texts, even if, that could mean sense changes in the target-texts. However, we can anticipate that the punctuation system of every text is adapted to the linguistic norm of every century if we take into consideration the literal translation tradition of sacred texts.

2. A Brief Research Overview

In the Romanian language, the term *punctuaţie* comes from the Latin word *punctum*, which means "point". The Romanian punctuation system, which we use today, was formed in nineteenth century.

Today, we find a few research directions kept over time, such as: correcting and storing the special problems of punctuation and their contexts. For the Romanian language there are important normative works like: the *Romanian Language Grammar*, published by the Romanian Academy Press, Bucharest, 2005, which discusses the punctuation in relation to syntax and to the prosodic organization of an assertion. The most important study on the use of standard punctuation in Romanian language is the *Romanian Orthographical, Orthoepic and Morphological Dictionary*, Second Edition revised and enlarged, published by Encyclopedic Universe, Bucharest, in 2005, belonging to a group of researchers from the "Iorgu Iordan–Al. Rosetti" Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy. In this paper we find inserted the punctuation system into the orthographical signs due to the fact that the authors believe the distinction between punctuation marks and orthographical marks to be artificial, mostly because the correct spelling includes punctuation also and hyphen is mainly a spelling sign; slash, blank line and paragraph breaks are mainly punctuation marks and comma, even if it is a punctuation mark, also refers to the spelling in some extent (DOOM 2005: XXXVII).

The topic of punctuation in the old Romanian language has been briefly discussed in current studies with the exception of the studies regarding Romanian-Cyrillic paleography. Another important area of application is represented by translation studies. Although punctuation is a fundamental semantic unit in the translation process there is no work to deal with this issue extensively. *Bible Translating*, the well-known work of Eugene A. Nida discusses the topic of punctuation and its role in *Bible* translation, giving useful rules to be followed in this process. A unique contribution on the history of punctuation marks is *Pause and Effect. An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, written by M. B. Parkes. A new approach to this area is achieved by Geoffrey Nunberg in *The Linguistics of Punctuation*, published by the Center for the Study of Language and Information, in 1990. A special place in the research on punctuation on Romanian biblical tradition studies is represented by the introductory studies and also by the comments attached to various critical editions of old biblical texts, such as *Monumenta Linguae Dacoromanorum* volumes, edited by the Center of Biblical-Philological Studies "Monumenta Linguae Dacoromanorum" and published by the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press, Iaşi, Romania. The correct use of punctuation was and it still is, *inter alia*, a

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

permanent concern for linguists and lexicographers. Punctuation was imposed by tradition, and its rules, so-called rules of punctuation, have been established with the main objective to avoid confusion, to point out stylistic values and for a clear expression of thoughts.

3. Moments in the History of Punctuation

Generally, the role of punctuation is the one of marking the syntactic segmentation of the text according to the structure, content and intonation of speech. The punctuation marks provide the semantic indication of the relationship between sentences and phrases which vary in each language. The specific features of using the same punctuation marks in different languages are generated by the principles and norms from each language, but also by the specific grammatical structures.

Punctuation has a conventional nature, because its form is not required by the nature of the expressed content. In their youth, the punctuation marks were arbitrarily substituted, but in time, their generalization determined the use of a specific punctuation sign to mark a unit of speech. The role of punctuation must be correlated with the author's intention because this represents his certainty that the receptor has understood the message in a correct way. Generally, we can say that in the translation field, the punctuation system represents a fundamental unit for translators. This is much more important, if we apply it for to the biblical translations, mostly due to the attention given by *Bible* translators to literalism and to the principle of fidelity in translating sacred texts. There are two serious consequences for the violation of punctuation rules: primarily, the confusion of the receptor and secondly, the distortion of meaning.

If today the problem is how to use the punctuation system according to norms, the shape of the punctuation marks was an essential problem in the past. Before the discovery of print, the copyist determined the shape of the punctuation marks according to his style. Even a single text can present serious punctuation problems since it is the synthesis achieved over time by authors, scribes, printers and revisers. Aristophanes of Byzantium ($3^{rd} – 2^{nd}$ century B.C.) was considered to be the initiator of punctuation because he used different marks for punctuation. This tradition was continued by Dionysius Thrax, a Greek scholar who distinguished between: upper full-stop, indicating the end of a thought, middle full-stop, indicating a breathing pause, low full-stop, which was necessary to emphasize an unfinished sentence (Ciobanu 1993: 25).

In the fourth century the codices containing religious texts were found. They were copied, corrected and annotated by scholars after the model of the critical apparatus, borrowed from the classical grammars. An important part of sacred texts were read individually, but most of them were read in the Church, which led to punctuation to become significantly more important because it expressed the Bible's word. Biblical texts were divided into two columns and copied into *scriptio continua.* Each *periodus* or *capitulus* was initiated with *littera notabilior* in the left side of the page and no break was made inside the chapters. Another writer who emphasized the role of punctuation in order to understand and interpret the biblical text was Hieronymus. The Latin translator chose to translate books of Ezekiel and

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

Isaiah in a new way (*novo scribendi genere distinximus*). He arranged each sentence or phrase in a new row (*per cola et commata*). In the prologue to the book of Ezekiel, Hieronymus motivates his option from the readers' point of view (*per scriptus et commata manifestiorem legentibus sensum tribuit*) and in the prologue to the book of Isaiah he recognized the source of this technique in the speeches of Cicero and Demosthenes. The innovation brought by Hieronymus set a precedent that led other scholars to adopt this strategy between the 5th and the 9th century (Parkes 1993: 14–16).

So, by the twelfth century the main conventions of writing were established. Beginning with this century, there is a tendency to abandon the punctuation marks from the previous systems for a new inventory of signs which led to the present one. In the Middle Ages, the general punctuation repertoire was represented by four main elements. The full stop is used to delineate, to cite or to pause in a statement. This sign is used in combination with three other graphic elements: *punctus elevatus* and *punctus interrogatives*, borrowed from the liturgical repertoire and *litterae notabiliores*. If the last sign was represented by a capital letter indicating the beginning of sentences of larger units, *punctus elevatus* was used to indicate a major middle break and *punctus interrogativus* was used to mark the end of an interrogation. Also in this period, the sign *K* will be modified in *C* to indicate the beginning of a new paragraph (Parkes 1993: 41–43).

Starting with the discovery of modern printing, we find the beginnings of punctuation having approximately the same signs and features as today: full stop, comma, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point. These signs, however, are not the ones used in the Greek language and writing, because the higher point had the value of a semicolon, a semicolon had the value of a question mark. The semicolon sign was not easily accepted by printers because of the similarity with the colon and in their opinion this would confuse the reader. In the sixteenth century printers added to the repertoire the quotation marks in order to separate, specifically within textual comments, a quote (Lemma) from the comment. The round brackets were used by printers to make bibliographic references or to insert information. Unlike these additions, printers found the solution to mark the omissions. These were marked by an apostrophe with the function of replacing either a vowel or another letter. Two old critical signs survived and gained new functions in printed texts. *Notae*, the first one, was represented by an asterisk [*], which marks an omission, and the second one, *obelus*, has the shape of a cross [†] and its primary function was to mark an erroneous reading, drawing attention on the text. The footnotes and the marginal notes, very important in content for translators, revisers and readers were correlated with the asterisk and *obellus* having the main function – the orientation through the text. *Notae* [>], [»], ["], unlike the signs mentioned above managed to stabilize in the punctuation system. Originally used by translators or readers to draw attention to an important biblical term, it was represented by quotes and moved from marginal sign to a textual one to indicate direct speech and quotations (Parkes 1993: 50–61).

Only in the nineteenth century does the standardization of punctuation in the Romanian language emerge, with features similar to those of today. As in other writings, the first punctuation mark used in Romanian texts was the full stop/ period.

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

It appeared in ancient Romanian texts written in the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabet. Originally, the point held a more important function, not only to mark the end of a sentence, but also to segment sentences, groups of words and even words. After the Greek model, in the nineteenth century the question mark will be represented by a semicolon. This mark will be also found in the eighteenth century Romanian texts, but used in parallel with the one used today in standard language. The colon mark will appear in the seventeenth century having the same features and function as today: to introduce an enumeration or an explanation. Only in the eighteenth century do we find quotation marks used in parallel with parentheses in religious texts. It had the same function as today – to indicate omissions, interpolations, references (Badea, Miu 1999: 424). The transcription of sacred texts from the Cyrillic alphabet requires from translators a good knowledge of the texts and their correspondences in the two systems of writing.

4. The Role of Punctuation in the Biblical Text

One of the objectives of this paper is to study the punctuation of the *Bible* texts edited at Bucharest in 1688 and at Blaj in 1795. In this paper we will put emphasis on three punctuation marks: *brackets*, *question mark* and *exclamation mark*. Among the important causes that led to producing obscure passages of the biblical text, as we mentioned, is that of punctuation. We consider, however, that the issue of punctuation is not only specific of these texts, and that marking adequate punctuation in current editions of old Romanian texts represent a less discussed chapter. The specificity of the biblical text consists in the relation between: punctuation and division into chapters and verses; grammatical units and division into verses, as there is not always an equivalence between them. Therefore, punctuation has the role of elucidating some passages by marking the grammatical and logical units. According to Eugene A. Nida, punctuation is a specifically designed system indicating the relationship between different units of the assertion. The simpler the punctuation, the better is the illustration of the source-text structure. The principles of consistency and simplicity must remain essential in adopting punctuation signs (Nida 1961: 126–127).

4a. Brackets

By means of the same semantic characteristics of its marks, punctuation may help signal other values of the syntactic units. Brackets, for example, are a specific mark for the written representation of an explanatory addition and semantically characterize independent, integrated units such as: "Şi trimise către el (povăţuitoriu) un căpitan de 50 de oameni şi pre cei 50 de oameni ai lui" (B1688: 4 Reg., 1:9). In this context, the bracket is a transposition from the Cyrillic text and represents here a copy of the bracket from the Greek text of *Septuagint*, in the Frankfurt edition [*ἡγούμνουν*]. This Greek term is not present in SEPT.BOS and consequently it is neither present in Samuil Micu's translation. We also identify this term in verse 1:13, but although given in brackets in FRANKF. it is integrated in the text of B1688 without brackets, both with the Cyrillic version and with the modern edition: "Şi adaose împăratul încă a trimite povăţuitoriu al treilea căpitan de 50 şi pre cei 50 ai

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

lui". A different situation of this verse appears at Samuil Micu, as he omits the noun in his translation, although the term is present in the text of SEPT.BOS without the mark of brackets. Explicative interpolations delineated by brackets are numerous in FRANKF. (2 Reg., 20:13; 4 Reg., 1:6; 2:10, 15, 16; 3:11), as opposed to SEPT.BOS, but these are transposed in Cyrillic graphics and then in the modern editions of the text, without being marked by brackets. If we can notice square brackets for these assertions in the Greek text, their function is overtaken by round brackets in Romanian texts.

Another case where brackets are integrated is to be found in *Paralipomenon*, in 12:5, in B1688:

> Şi Sameas prorocul au venit către Rovoam şi către boiarii Iudeii, carii s-au adunat la Ierusalim de către faţa lui Susachim, şi zise lor: "Aşa au zis Domnul: «Voi m-aţi lăsat pre mine, şi eu voiu lăsa pre voi în mâna lui (Susachim)»".

Round brackets are used here only by the B1688 translators or correctors as Ms. 45 does not present these double punctuation marks in this context, and the proper noun is integrated in the text. The Greek source-texts contain the form *Σουσακίμ*, without brackets delineation. Translators' or correctors' intervention of introducing brackets is probably motivated by stylistic reasons, namely, avoiding repetition in the same assertion.

A similar situation may be identified in Paralipomenon, in 12:7, in B1795. Samuil Micu inserts in this verse a bracket with an explanatory content for more clarity:

> Şi dacă au văzut Domnul că s-au umilit, au fost cuvântul Domnului către Samea, zicând: "S-au umilit, nu-i voiu piiarde pre ei, ci preste puţin voiu mântui pre ei, şi nu să va vărsa mâniia Mea preste Ierusalim (prin mâna lui Susachim)".

The segment in between brackets is absent in Franeker *Septuagint*, but it is present in the Frankfurt edition and accordingly translated in B1688. Samuil Micu adopts the B1688 translation option and integrates it in his text within brackets. Compared to the *Bible* from Blaj, the *Bible* from Bucharest contains the highest number of usages of this punctuation mark, as a consequence of the transposition and of the influence of the Frankfurt edition. As different from the latter, the Lambert Bos edition does not use a high number of brackets, which leads to the fact that Samuil Micu's translation does not frequently use them, either.

Brackets are a double punctuation mark, being present under various graphic forms: round, square, curly or angular (half). The main role of this punctuation mark is delineation, as it isolates something almost without exception, even in the case when it also holds other functions in the text. Brackets are not highly dependent on syntax, as it can be the case with other punctuation marks. They generally represent an explanatory addition which, although secondary in importance, remains essential for the text. Alongside explanatory additions brackets may also signal omissions, absences from the text. They represent a complex but contrasting punctuation mark, as they signify a secondary background, on the one hand, and reveal important options made by translators, on the other hand, which is interesting for the knowledge about the history of texts. If brackets have alongside the delineation function that of substitution, the delineation function is dominant in the biblical text, with specific

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

usages, such as bringing light upon a secondary option for translation, signaling secondary in important elements, while at the same time they may signal the mechanical transcription of the graphic signs in the source-texts, in order to achieve a close transposition.

4b. The Question Mark

The question mark is the graphic sign of interrogative intonation after (groups of) words, assertions, phrases with the role of direct questions (DŞL: 272): "Cum ştii că au murit Saul şi Ionathan, fiiul lui?" (B1688, 2 Reg., 1:5). The fundamental characteristic of the question mark is expressed in its own denomination, namely, that of interrogation mark: "Au, doară, astăzi am început a întreba pre Dumnezeu pentru el?" (B1795, 1 Reg., 22:15). With the mentioned value, the question mark can be: final punctuation mark with delineation function syntactically determined and with function of semantic identification from the point of view of the communication aim: "Tu eşti Siva?" Şi zise: "Eu, robul tău!" (B1688, 2 Reg., 9:2), internal punctuation mark with delineation function, syntactically determined and with similar function.

The question mark delineation function is syntactically determined, marking the final pause preceded by a certain type of intonation, which marks the interrogative assertion in speech. The interrogative sentence, phrase or assertion are oriented towards the interlocutor and represents a request for information, being thus different from the assertive and imperative sentences. In a text, the question mark has delineation function, performing separation between interrogative assertions and other types of assertions or between several interrogative assertions which are different in scope, such as the following examples: "Ce aceasta ai socotit întru judecată? Tu cine eşti? Căci ai zis: «Direpţ sânt înaintea Domnului?»" (B1688, Iov, 35:2).

The question mark is limited in its semantic identification function to identifying the direct question character of an assertion that bears the question mark at the end, and thus marks only the opposition between an interrogative sentence or phrase and a declarative sentence or phrase: "Pentru că au neştine va socoti că va fi delungare la tâlhării? Şi pre carii nu vor veni poruncile de la el?" (B1688, Iov, 25:3). We identify the same situation in Samuil Micu's translation: "Că au socoteaşte neştine că va fi delungare tâlharilor? Şi preste carii nu vor veni pândiri de la El?" (B1795, Iov, 25:3). A similar situation is to be found in 1 Reg., 21:14. Although in the Cyrillic version of B1688 the final pause is delineated by full stop, in B1688 and B1795 written in the Latin alphabet, the full stop is replaced by a question mark, as we deal with an interrogative assertion which includes an interrogative pronoun: "Şi au zis Aghus cătră slugile sale: «Iată, vedeţi om nebun, pentru ce l-aţi adus la mine?»" (B1795, 1 Reg., 21:14). This assertion could have been considered a declarative type nowadays, in case that the final full stop would have been kept as such in this context, but it was replaced with the question mark in order to achieve context and meaning adequacy: "Şi zise Anhus către slugile lui: Iată, aţi văzut, om dezmeatec; căci l-aţi adus pre el la mine?" (B1688, 1 Reg., 21:14).

The interrogative sentences can be total, marked by a specific intonation, or they can be partial, marked by both intonation characteristics and interrogative

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

words (e.g. who?; what?; how?), as we can notice in the following example: "Şi au zis David către Saul: «Cine sunt eu şi carea easte viiaţa rudenii tatălui mieu în Israil, ca să fiu ginere împăratului?»" (B1795, 1 Reg., 18:18); "Şi zise David către Saul: «Cine sunt eu? Şi care iaste viaţa rudeniei părintelui mieu în Israil, ca să fiu ginere împăratului?»" (B1688, 1 Reg. 18:18). The Cyrillic alphabet text of B1688 uses in this verse the full stop in order to delimit the interrogative sentence, while the Greek text uses the semicolon mark with the value of a question mark.

In the Romanian language, a distinction can be made between direct vs. indirect interrogative sentences, according to the way in which the question is addressed to the interlocutor or reproduced, by subordination to regent verbs of interrogation or *dubitandi*, as can be seen in B1688, in Iov, 31: 3–4:

> Încinge ca un om mijlocul tău şi te voiu întreba şi tu să-m răspunzi: Unde ai fost când puneam temeiul pământului? Şi-m spune mie, de ştii priceapere.; Încinge ca un bărbat mijlocul tău şi te voiu întreba, iară tu să-Mi răspunzi. Unde ai fost când am întemeiat pământul? Spune-mi de ai cunoştinţă? (B1795, Iov, 31: 3–4).

The last sentence draws our attention by using two different punctuation marks in the mentioned biblical texts, namely: the full stop in B1688 and the question mark in B1795. Thus, if the source Greek texts present a full stop for this sentence and B1688 maintains the same mark both in its Cyrillic and Latin version, Samuil Micu considers the sentence to be interrogative, and consequently uses the interrogative marking: "Spune-mi de ai cunoştinţă?" (B1795, Iov, 31: 3–4).

There are interrogative words in the class of pronouns, pronominal adjectives, adverbs that are usually set at the beginning of the assertion and which have an interrogative marker function (DŞL: 271). Interrogative sentences can be rhetorical, optative, dubitative ["Şi au grăit slugile lui Saul în urechile lui David după cuvintele aceastea, şi au zis David: «Au lucru mic să pare întru ochii voştri a fi ginere împăratului? Şi eu sânt bărbat smerit, şi nu slăvit?»" (B1795, 1 Reg., 18:23)], as opposed to the modern edition of the B1688, which marks an exclamatory sentence in the end of the assertion: "Şi grăiră slugile lui Saul în urechile lui David după cuvintele aceastea. Şi zise David: «De iaste uşor întru ochii voştri a fi ginerele împăratului? Şi eu – om smerit, şi nu slăvit!»" (B1688, 1 Reg., 18:23) due to the imperative character of the assertion, although the Cyrillic version of the text presents the question mark in this context. Samuil Micu prefers to coordinate interrogative sentences by means of *and*, as well as by using the comma, a method different form B1688, where we have identified a higher number of simple interrogative sentences that are marked with interrogation sign: "Şi au zis David către el: «De unde eşti, şi al cui eşti?»" (B1795, 1 Reg., 30:13); "Şi zise David: «De unde eşti? Şi al cui eşti tu?»" (B1688, 1 Reg., 30:13).

The differences in using the question mark in the two Romanian texts are less frequent; nonetheless, we encounter assertions such as that from Iov, 31: 17, where we can distinguish among two different options, namely, among a declarative assertion marked by a full stop (B1795: "Şi de am mâncat pâinea mea sângur şi n-am dat şi celui sărac dintr-însa") and an interrogative assertion marked by a question mark (B1688: "Şi de am mâncat pâinea mea sângur şi n-am dat şi celui sărac dintr-însa?").

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

The question mark signals delineation of assertions with different nuances, such as: causative, optative, rhetorical imperative, exclamatory etc. The interrogation value is represented by each script of the biblical text even if it is marked differently: by semicolon in the Greek biblical texts and by question mark in the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabet.

4c. The Exclamation Mark

The exclamation mark graphically signals the intonation of exclamatory independent phrases or group of words with the role of exclamatory sentence (GA: 487). The semantic characteristic of the exclamation mark is given by its denomination and indicates the affective exclamatory mood of the syntactical unit (Beldescu 2004: 95). In final position, the exclamation mark signals the exclamatory character of an assertion – an independent sentence, a declarative or direct interrogative phrase. This function is delimitating and it works both syntactically and prosodically: the exclamation mark signals the final pause preceded by the exclamatory intonation, which delineates in speaking an exclamatory assertion. In the analyzed biblical texts, the exclamation mark is less used by translators than the question mark, and, in some situations, the exclamatory value is given in writing by the question mark. The exclamatory assertions in the Romanian biblical texts are delineated by full stop, comma and question mark. A relevant example is found in 2 Reg., 1:27. As opposed to B1688, Samuil Micu's translation contains a low number of exclamatory assertions, as these have been equated to declarative and interrogative assertions, as in the following example: "Cum au căzut cei tari, şi au perit unealtele ceale de războiu?" (B1795, 2 Reg., 1:2); "Cum au căzut tarii şi periră unealtele de războiu!" (B1688, 2 Reg., 1:27). Another example is identified in 2 Reg, 1:4: "Şi au zis David către el: «Ce easte cuvântul acesta? Spune-mi»" (B1795); "Şi zise lui David: «Ce iaste cuvântul acesta? Spune-m mie!»" (B1688), where the use of the full stop instead of the exclamation mark may be noticed. A similar situation may be identified in 3 Reg., 21:3: "Şi au zis Navute către Ahaav: «Ferească-mă Dumnezeul mieu, să dau eu moşiia părinţilor miei ţie»" (B1795); "Şi zise Navuthe către Ahaav: «Să nu mi se facă de la Dumnezăul mieu să dau moştenirea părinţilor miei ţie!»" (B1688). An exclamatory assertion interpreted as declarative and marked as such by comma in B1795 is to be found in 2 Reg., 1:21: "Munţii cei din Ghelvue, să nu să pogoară roao şi ploaie preste voi, şi ţarinile celor de pârgă, că acolo s-au lepădat pavăza celor tari, pavăza lui Saul nu s-au uns cu untdelemn" (B1795), whereas the B1688 presents the exclamation mark for this context: "Munţii de la Ghielvue! Nu pogoare roao şi nu fie ploaie preste voi şi ţarinele începăturilor!" (B1688).

The exclamation mark as final punctuation mark signals the ending of any independent sentence or exclamatory phrase, regardless of their structure, semantic content or affirmative or negative aspect. The exclamation mark is used with independent sentences and with phrases fragmented by expressive intentions, according to the speaker's interpretation, under the same syntactic, prosodic and marking conditions as the full stop or the question mark. The classical shape of the exclamation mark (!), which is met in the modern editions, is the equivalent of the

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

Greek full stop, while in the Cyrillic script it is represented under various forms, namely full stop, comma, question mark, without any consistency in its usage.

In terms of composition, exclamatory sentences are of two kinds: marked by exclamatory words which are different from one language to another (what, how, how much): "Cum căzură tarii!" (B1688, 2 Reg., 1:19); "Cum au căzut tarii în mijlocul războiului!" (B1688, 2 Reg., 1:25); "Ce s-au mărit astăzi împăratul lui Israil, carele s-au descoperit astăzi întru ochii slujnicelor robilor lui, în ce chip să descopere descoperindu-se unul dentru cei ce joacă" (B1688, 2 Reg., 6:20) and without special exclamatory words: "Şi să nu lipsească den casa lui Ioav înfrânt şi stricat şi ţiind cârjă şi căzând în sabie şi lipsindu-se de pâine!" (B1688, 2 Reg., 3:29); "Să răsplătească Domnul celui ce face ceale reale după răul lui!" (B1688, 2 Reg., 3:39).

5. Conclusions

We believe that alongside the issues encountered when translating the biblical text, an essential element is that of punctuation, as it may fundamentally modify the meaning. The punctuation marks designate textual relations between higher rank elements, as well as relations between lower rank elements. The punctuation marks have the role of clarifying the text and bring forth more precision and play an important part in adding value to the text meaning. The specificity of the biblical text is represented by the relation between punctuation/ division into chapters and verses; between grammatical units and division into verses, while an equivalent report is not always met. Punctuation has the role of clarifying certain passages by marking logical and grammatical units. Punctuation marks have the following functions in the biblical text: delineation, identification and substitution. The general array of punctuation marks in the modern editions of the biblical text is similar to those which may be encountered in any other type of text. Though, we have to underline that, in the case of the biblical text, the contextual situations are far more difficult to identify.

The transcription of the punctuation marks from the Cyrillic script texts and from the Greek texts into Latin script represents an effort of transposition and adaptation of form and meaning in the biblical text, while keeping an alert eye on faithfully following the original text at all times. Although the punctuation marks system has been periodically enriched, the succeeding generations of translators and correctors have managed to reduce unclear situations and to invest the text with an adequate vitality in accordance with each step in the development of the Romanian language by means of punctuation. Even though certain inconsequence in the use of punctuation marks was noticed in the Cyrillic script texts, the modern translators apply a punctuation marking system that is in line with the content and the current rules of punctuation. In spite of the fact that the graphic signs are different, the translators of the old biblical texts did illustrate their correct meaning in an adequate manner.

There are differences in punctuation during the evolution of the biblical text even among texts written in the same script. Thus, SEPT.BOS and FRANKF. are different in their ways of marking assertions, and as a consequence, the Romanian translations in Cyrillic script represent two distinct translations, influenced by two

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

different systems of punctuation. The full stop, the comma and the brackets are markers used with a specifically high frequency in the Greek source-texts and have an important role in the identification and delineation of textual units. Their reduction in numbers is visible in the Romanian translations of the biblical text, as well as their substitution according to the graphic needs and possibilities of expression. The basic mission of the punctuation marks is to replace in writing the intonation and pauses present in speech, as well as the logical and semantic relations between words and sentences.

Bibliography:

Sources

B1688 = *Biblia adecă Dumnezeiasca Scriptură ale cei vechi şi ale cei noao leage toate care s-au tălmăcit dupre limba elinească spre înţelegerea limbii rumăneşti cu porunca preabunului creştin şi luminatului domn Ioan Şărban Cantacuzinó Basarabă Voievodă*..., tipărită întâia oară în 1688. *Biblia 1688*, text stabilit şi îngrijire editorială de Vasile Arvinte şi Ioan Caproşu (volum întocmit de Vasile Arvinte, Ioan Caproşu, Alexandru Gafton, Laura Manea), Iaşi, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2001, vol. II (volum întocmit de Vasile Arvinte, Ioan Caproşu, Alexandru Gafton, Laura Manea, N. A. Ursu), Iaşi, Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2002.

B1795 = *Biblia, adecă Dumnezeiasca Scriptură a Legii Vechi şi a ceii Noao, care s-au tălmăcit de pre limba elinească pre înţălesul limbii româneşti* (...), Blaj, 1795. *Biblia de la Blaj (1795), Ediţie jubiliară*, cu binecuvântarea Î.P.S. Lucian Mureşan, mitropolitul Bisericii Unite, coordonatorul ediţiei Ioan Chindriş, Roma, 2000.

MLD = *Biblia de la Bucureşti (1688), în seria Monumenta linguae Dacoromanorum*, Pars VII, *Regum I*, *Regum II* (coordonatorii volumului: Al. Andriescu, Paul Miron, Gabriela Haja; autorii volumului: Tamara Adoamnei, Mădălina Andronic, Mioara Dragomir, Gabriela Haja, Elsa Lüder, Paul Miron, Alexandru Moraru, Mihai Moraru, Adrian Muraru, Veronica Olariu, Elena Tamba Dănilă; consultant ştiinţific: Eugen Munteanu), Iaşi, Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2008.

FRANKF. = *Τῆς θείαῶ Γραφῆς Παλαίας δηλαδὴ καὶ Νέας Διαθήκης ἅπάντα – Divinae Scripturae nempe Veteris ac Novi Testamenti omnia, Graece, a viro doctissimo recognita et emendata, variisque lectionibus aucta et illustra, Frankofurti ad Moenum, apud Andreae Wecheli haeredes*, 1597.

SEPT.BOS = *Η ΠΑΛΑΙΑ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΗΚΟΝΤΑ. VETUS TESTAMENTUM EX VERSIONE SEPTUAGINTA INERPRETUM. Secundum exemplar Vaticanum Romae editum, accuratissime denuo recognitum, una cum scholiis ejusdem editionis, variis manuscriptorum codicum veterumque exemplarium lectionibus, nec non fragmentis versionum Aquilae, Symachi Theodothionis. Summa cura edidit Lambertus Bos, L. Gr. in Acad. Franeq. Professor. Franequerae. Excudit Francisus Halma, Illustr. Frisiae Ord. atque eorundem Academiae typogr. ordinar. MDCCIX.*

Dictionaries and Grammars

DOOM 2005 = *Dicţionarul ortografic, ortoepic şi morfologic al limbii române*, ediţia a II-a revăzută şi adăugită, Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti", Bucureşti, Univers Enciclopedic.

DŞL = (coord.) Angela Bidu-Vrăncianu, Cristina Călăraşu et alii, *Dicţionar de ştiinţe ale limbii*, Bucureşti, Editura Nemira, 2001.

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)

GA = *Gramatica limbii române*, vol al II-ea, ediţia a II-a revăzută şi adăugită, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1966.

GALR = *Gramatica limbii române*, vol. al II-lea, *Enunţul*, Editura Academiei, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu-Iordan – Al. Rosetti", Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 2005.

References

Badea, Miu 1999: Gh. Badea, Const. Miu, *Îndreptar de sintaxă, fonetică, ortografie, ortoepie, punctuaţie*, Iaşi, Editura Moldova.

Beldescu 2004: G. Beldescu, *Punctuaţia în limba română*, Bucureşti, Editura Gramar.

Ciobanu 1993: Anatol Ciobanu, *Punctuaţia limbii române*, Chişinău, Editura Lumina.

Nida 1961: Eugene A. Nida, *Bible Translating, An Analysis of Principles and Procedures, with Special Reference to Aboriginal Languages*, First Edition 1961, London, United Bible Societies.

Nunberg 1990: Geoffrey Nunberg, *The Linguistics of Punctuation*, Center for the Study of Language and Information, Standford, 1990.

Parkes 1993: M.B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect. An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Abstract

An important cause for the obscure passages in the production of biblical texts is punctuation. The article is structured into two main sections. The theoretical framework that we have incorporated in the paper is a diachronic overview over the evolution of the punctuation system. The second part is a comparative study on punctuation made on two fundamental Romanian biblical texts: the *Bible* of Bucharest (1688) and the *Bible* of Blaj (1795) with a constant reference at the Old Greek source-texts: the *Septuagint*, Frankfurt edition from 1597 and the 1709 Franeker edition. The purpose of the paper is to put emphasis on some of the most important punctuation marks used in biblical translations: brackets, question mark and exclamation mark.

BDD-A6638 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:36 UTC)