

She was twelve years old: on γάρ and Mark 5:42*

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Abstract: Many scholars have grappled with the precise meaning of Mark 5:42. The main problem lies in the interpretation of γάρ, which is usually considered causal in nature. This paper proposes a departure from this outdated view and suggests a procedural reading of γάρ. In this sense, it does not mark a semantic relationship between the two clauses, but a communicative one – it indicates that the clause to which it belongs is communicatively subsidiary to the previous one.

Keywords: Mark, *gar*, pragmatics, discourse markers.

1. Introduction

Mark 5:42, forming the end of the episode where Jesus has revived Jairus' daughter, has long caused consternation among Bible exegetists. The problem lies in the nature of the relation between the two clauses, and, more specifically, on the precise meaning of the particle γάρ:¹

(1) καὶ εὐθὺς ἀνέστη τὸ κοράσιον καὶ περιεπάτει, ἦν γὰρ ἐτῶν δώδεκα.
(Mark 5:42)

Contrast the different translations, which are divided amongst themselves as to whether γάρ has to be translated explicitly:²

(2) Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). (NIV)

(3) And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age). (ESV)

(4) The girl got up at once and started to walk. (She was twelve years old.). (GWT)

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¹ The text edition used is K. Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Württemberg Bible Society ²1968).

² Abbreviations are explained at the end of this article.

(5) And straightway the damsel arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years. (KJ21)

(6) Immediately the girl got up and *began* to walk, for she was twelve years old. (NASB)

(7) And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! (NLT)

(8) And immediately the damsel arose, and was walking, for she was twelve years [old]; (YLT)

In translations (3), (5), (6), and (8), γάρ is rendered with causal *for*; in (2), (4), and (7), it is recorded with the addition of the parentheses.³ In this article, I attempt to explain why the latter interpretation is the correct one, employing a modern functional model of language (§3.1) and a reanalysis of the particle γάρ along the lines of Blakemore’s so-called ‘discourse markers’ (§3.2).⁴ On this view, γάρ encodes a procedure, not semantic content, to facilitate the interpretation of the text for the audience. Before turning to this account, however, I first discuss some earlier approaches to this passage.

2. Earlier analyses

In this paragraph, I give an overview of earlier studies of γάρ in Mark 5:42. I start with the standard account of γάρ (§2.1), followed by analyses of Mark 5:42 specifically (§2.2).

2.1. The standard account of γάρ in general

The go-to work on particles for any Ancient Greek scholar is J.D. Denniston’s *The Greek Particles* (1954²). For over half a century, this sturdy tome, with its enormous scope covering most of Classical literature, has served as the basis for analyses of any one particle; moreover, it has been the first work of reference when encountering difficulties with instances of particles in a specific Classical passage.

³ (3) uses *for* and parentheses – this translator seems to be hedging his or her bets.

⁴ D. Blakemore, *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers* (Cambridge University Press 2002); id., “Communication and the representation of thought: The use of audience-directed expressions in free indirect thought representations”, *Journal of Linguistics* 46.3 (2010) 575–599; id., “On the descriptive ineffability of expressive meaning”, *Journal of Pragmatics* 43.14 (2011) 3537–3550.

However, Denniston's mainly semantic approach to these items has become antiquated. On this model, connective particles (like γάρ) express the semantic relationship between states-of-affairs. In the case of γάρ, Denniston asserts that it is ultimately causal in nature – this means that it can usually be translated with *for*, as in four of the seven translations of Mark 5:42 quoted above.⁵

2.2. Previous accounts of γάρ in Mark 5:42

However, it is difficult to maintain that γάρ has a causal sense in (1). More to the point, the verse is nonsensical if γάρ is rendered as *for* – the girl does not stand up and walk around because she is twelve years old; she does so because of Jesus' healing powers. One can only conjecture that the translations with *for* are due to a misguided attempt to preserve what is perceived as the original sense of the text as much as possible. Yet this consideration rests on a misinterpretation of the function of γάρ. I turn to a more plausible analysis of γάρ in §3; first, I provide some earlier investigations of this seemingly obscure verse.

The first systematic attempt to provide a non-causal explanation of this passage was C.H. Bird's.⁶ He explained 5:42 (and other passages in the Gospel of Mark with an ostensibly out-of-place γάρ) as a cryptic reference to a passage in the Old Testament – in other words, γάρ marks an allusion to the Old Testament and, as such, reveals the links between Jesus' life and 'what has come before'.

Bird's hypothesis was reviewed and found to be inadequate by Thrall.⁷ She suggests that, instead, γάρ does in fact have "ordinary causal function".⁸ However, she then goes on to assert that 5:42 is actually an indication that Mark was not a "logical thinker"⁹ – he is not prone to narrate episodes chronologically, but has a tendency to impart the most important information first, and fill in the details afterwards.¹⁰ In this sense, γάρ is not causal but explanatory.

This account still seems lacking. It is inappropriate to extract a solution for a linguistic problem from a non-linguistic source. Put differently, it is unhelpfully speculative to suggest that the use of γάρ is derivative of the mental faculties of the author of Mark. We do not know if Mark was a logical thinker, and it does not help us to build our linguistic explanations around supposition. Designating γάρ as

⁵ J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1954) 56–57.

⁶ C. H. Bird, "Some γάρ Clauses in St. Mark's Gospel", *JTS* 4.2 (1953) 171–187.

⁷ M. E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill 1962) 41–50.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

explanatory, however, seems more promising – the age of the girl explains that she *was able* to walk around.¹¹ However, it does not explain the reason behind her walking around *at that moment*, which was due to Jesus’ powers of healing.

Finally, we have Fowler’s study, which analyses this passage from a more literary (reader-response critical) perspective.¹² On his account, awkward γάρ -clauses (including Mark 5:42) are explained as either “strategically [withholding] information” or “offering inside views to the reader”.¹³ Yet this cannot apply to Mark 5:42 – the age of the girl is neither information which is strategically withheld, nor does it offer an inside view of proceedings.

The copyists of the manuscripts which are available to us seem to have been baffled by γάρ here as well. In 2 manuscripts, γάρ has been changed to δέ.¹⁴ As δέ marks some sort of discontinuity between two utterances,¹⁵ it is not wholly surprising that it was inserted here – the break between the two clauses is so sudden that the use of a marker of discontinuity must have felt to have been warranted.

3. A new approach to γάρ

In this paragraph, I outline a pragmatic approach to particles. This model sheds new light on the conundrum of Mark 5:42 from a communicative point of view. I start by briefly describing the theoretical framework behind this analysis, which is indebted to both Functional Discourse Grammar (§3.1) and Blakemore’s work on discourse markers (§3.2).

¹¹ See also C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday 1986) 287.

¹² R. M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Trinity Press 1996) 92–98.

¹³ *Id.*, 94.

¹⁴ R. Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Mark* (Sheffield Academic Press 1995) 78.

¹⁵ See E. J. Bakker, “Boundaries, Topics, and the Structure of Discourse: An Investigation of the Ancient Greek Particle ΔΕ”, *Studies in Language* 17.2 (1993) 275–311; S. L. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew: καί, δέ, τότε, γάρ, οὐν and Asyndeton in Narrative Discourse* (Sheffield Academic Press 2002) 144.

3.1. Language as communication: Functional Discourse Grammar

Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG)¹⁶ developed from Simon Dik's Functional Grammar (FG),¹⁷ and was conceived as an attempt to incorporate the criticisms leveled against FG – mainly its pretension to be a model of discourse while taking a syntactic unit, the clause, as the basic unit of analysis.¹⁸ FDG, instead, takes the Discourse Act as its starting point.

An Act is characterised by its prosodic and communicative integrity. In other words, on the one hand it corresponds to one intonation unit, which is to say that it is marked by an intonational break at both its left and right edge.¹⁹ On the other hand, an Act usually contains only one focus, i.e. one piece of salient information.²⁰ This means that an Act is frequently quite similar to Chafe's 'intonation unit',²¹ a concept which has been successfully applied to Ancient Greek.²²

Acts can be subdivided into Nuclear and Ancillary Acts.²³ An Ancillary Act is dependent on the Nuclear Act in the sense that it has a

¹⁶ J. L. Mackenzie – M. Gómez-González, *A New Architecture for Functional Grammar* (Berlin: de Gruyter 2004); K. Hengeveld – J. L. Mackenzie, *Functional Discourse Grammar: A typologically-based theory of language structure* (Oxford University Press 2008).

¹⁷ S. C. Dik, *The Theory of Functional Grammar (2 vols.)* (Berlin: de Gruyter 1997).

¹⁸ Hengeveld – Mackenzie, *Functional Discourse Grammar*, 38.

¹⁹ W. L. Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time: The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing* (University of Chicago Press 1994) 58–60. The concept of Kolon (cf. E. Fränkel, *Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie, vol. 1* (Roma 1964) 73–139) is equivalent to the notion of an intonation unit.

²⁰ Hengeveld – Mackenzie, *Functional Discourse Grammar*, 28; see J. K. Gundel – T. Fretheim, "Topic and Focus", *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (eds. L. Horn – G. Ward) (Oxford: Blackwell 2004) 175–196 for discussion of the notion of focus.

²¹ Note that Chafe's intonation unit is not an exclusively prosodic phenomenon – one intonation unit usually contains only one 'idea'. In other words, Chafe's intonation unit is a prosodic and informational (communicative) entity (Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time*, 119).

²² E.g. S. R. Slings, "Oral Strategies in the Language of Herodotus", *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (eds. E. J. Bakker et al.) (Leiden: Brill 2002) 53–77; M. Janse, "The Metrical Schemes of the Hexameter", *Mnemosyne* 56 (2003) 343–348; F. Scheppers, *The Colon Hypothesis: Word Order, Discourse Segmentation and Discourse Coherence in Ancient Greek* (Brussels 2011); J. Soltic, "Distribution of the object clitic pronouns in the Grottaferrata manuscript of the Digenis Akritis", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 36.2 (2012) 178–197.

²³ C. Kroon, *Discourse particles in Latin: A study of nam, enim, autem, vero and at* (Amsterdam 1995); id., "Latin Linguistics between Grammar and Discourse. Units of Analysis, Levels of Analysis", *Pragmatische Kategorien. Form, Funktion und Diachronie* (eds. Rieken, E. & Widmer, P.) (Wiesbaden: Reichert 2009) 143–158; M. Hannay – C. Kroon, "Acts and the relationship between discourse and

so-called ‘rhetorical function’ like Concession, Correction or Motivation – put differently, Ancillary Acts provide more information about the Nuclear Act in the broadest sense. One of the main points of criticism of the FDG framework is that there is no definitive, exhaustive list of the different rhetorical functions. In this sense, Mann & Thompson’s ‘relations’ in their Rhetorical Structure Theory form an invaluable complement, as these are entirely similar to FDG’s rhetorical functions – as such, I will apply Mann & Thompson’s relations as rhetorical functions.²⁴

Take the example of Mark 5:42, repeated here as (9) (Acts are separated via the ‘/’ symbol):

(9) καὶ εὐθὺς ἀνέστη τὸ κοράσιον καὶ περιεπάτει, / ἦν γὰρ ἐτῶν δώδεκα.

Mark 5:42 is divided into two Acts, which correspond to two intonation units. The first Act is the Nuclear Act – it provides the central information, namely that the girl stood up and walked again, even though everyone had assumed she had perished. The second Act is Ancillary to the first – it provides more information about the girl and can be considered background information. The rhetorical function of this Act is that of Background – the Ancillary Act “increases the ability [of the audience, SZ] to comprehend” the Nuclear Act.²⁵ The information that the girl is twelve years old is obviously not crucial to the development of the narrative; however, as a sidenote, it indicates that the girl had been able to walk before her death, as she was twelve years old.

It is important to recognize that the *Act*, and not γάρ, is assigned a rhetorical function – put differently, the rhetorical function of Background pertains to the second Act, not to γάρ. This has been the main problem with previous analyses of γάρ (and particles in general) – their function is described in terms of the units to which they belong, instead of of their own contribution to the discourse.²⁶ On the pragmatic approach propounded in this paper, γάρ is reanalyzed as a discourse marker.

grammar”, *Functions of Language* 12.1 (2005) 87–124; Hengeveld – Mackenzie, *Functional Discourse Grammar*, 56.

²⁴ W. C. Mann – S. A. Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory: Towards a functional theory of text organization”, *Text* 8 (3) (1988) 243–281.

²⁵ Mann – Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory” 273.

²⁶ See S. L. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions*, 19; also Kroon, *Discourse particles*, 41–44 for similar complications with Latin particles.

3.2. Procedural markers: Blakemore's model of discourse markers

What, then, are discourse markers (DMs)? There has been much discussion about the nature of the words which can reasonably be termed DMs, which I will not get into here.²⁷ Suffice to say that, for the purposes of this note, discourse markers are those elements of the discourse which do not contribute to the semantic content of the discourse, but rather instruct the audience on how to interpret that content. Put differently, DMs are procedural, not conceptual items.²⁸ Examples in English include *you know*, *oh*, *however* and *so*.²⁹

DMs, on this view, decrease the cognitive cost of processing an utterance, and ensure that the discourse is as understandable as possible by constraining the possible paths of interpretation – in Carston's words, DMs are “effort-saving devices” which elucidate how an utterance, or the relationship between two utterances, is to be understood.³⁰ In what follows, I will apply this analysis to Mark 5:42.

3.3. An updated analysis of Mark 5:42

On my view, indebted to the approach espoused by Blakemore which was outlined above, γάρ is, then, a discourse marker, and hence encodes a procedure. But what procedure is this, exactly?

As I have stated above, it is not helpful to conflate the function of γάρ with the rhetorical function of the Act. While it was promising to regard the Ancillary Act marked by γάρ as an explanation (see §2.2), it becomes obvious that this view is not refined enough when confronting 5:42 with other occurrences of γάρ:³¹

(10) (Jesus' disciples have just informed Him that they have stopped a pretender from acting as if he were Jesus)
ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, / Μὴ κωλύετε αὐτόν, / οὐδεὶς γάρ ἐστιν ὃς ποιήσει
δύναμιν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου καὶ δυνήσεται ταχὺ κακολογήσαί με (Mark
9:39)

²⁷ See K. Fischer (ed.), *Approaches to Discourse Particles* (Amsterdam: Elsevier 2006); A. Celle – R. Huart (eds.), *Connectives as Discourse Landmarks* (Amsterdam: Benjamins 2007).

²⁸ Blakemore, *Relevance*; id., “Audience-directed expressions”; id., “Descriptive ineffability”; see also R. Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002).

²⁹ A. H. Jucker – Y. Ziv, *Discourse markers: descriptions and theory* (Amsterdam 1998); D. Schiffrin, *Discourse markers* (Cambridge University Press 1987); Blakemore, *Relevance*.

³⁰ Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances*, 162.

³¹ Mark 2:15 and 16:4 are very similar to 5:42 – in all three cases, the Act marked by γάρ introduces an Ancillary Act with the rhetorical function of Background.

“Do not stop him”, Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me”. (tr. NIV)

This γάρ is closer to the traditional sense outlined in §2.1, although it is still not causal in a strict sense – in 9:39, the Ancillary Act marked by γάρ serves to increase his disciples’ desire to perform the Nuclear Act (Μὴ κωλύετε). It is an added incentive: complying with Jesus’ instructions ensures that He will have one fewer potential enemy. As such, this Act is a Motivation.³² Γάρ in 9:39 can be differentiated from γάρ in 5:42 by a simple test – in 9:39, the Act marked by γάρ forms an answer to the question *why* (should we not stop him who acts in Jesus’ name without his benediction)?³³ The answer is that those impostors who present themselves as Jesus cannot be enemies of Jesus himself, so there is no reason to stop them. In 5:42, this is not the case – the Act marked by γάρ does not form an answer to the question *why* (the girl walked around); instead, it provides background information about one of the persons involved.

Of course, the rhetorical function of Motivation is conceptually connected to that of Cause,³⁴ but there is an important difference. Motivation implies a deliberate action in the Nuclear Act, for which (a) the speaker feels the need to add a Motivation to encourage his audience (as in example 10) (b) the narrator feels the need to add a Motivation to explain the character’s behavior – as in e.g. Mark 9:34:

(11) (Jesus has asked his disciples what they had been talking about; they are disinclined to answer)

οἱ δὲ ἐσιώπων, / πρὸς ἀλλήλους γὰρ διελέχθησαν ἐν τῇ ὁδοῦ τίς μείζων.
(Mark 9:34)

“But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest”. (tr. NIV)

In this case, the narrator provides information as to why the disciples did not answer Jesus’ question.

Cause, on the other hand, in a strict sense, does not imply deliberateness in the Nuclear Act, as, for example, in (12).³⁵

³² Mann – Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory” 274.

³³ See also e.g. Mark 13,22; 13,33; 15,14. Note that in Nestle’s 1932 edition, he considers δέ the correct reading at the expense of γάρ in 13,22.

³⁴ Mann – Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory” 274.

³⁵ Mann – Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory” 274–5 differentiate between Motivation, Non-Volitional Cause and Volitional Cause relations; however, the distinction between Motivation and Volitional Cause is not entirely clear to me. The opposition I outline above, based on deliberateness, is – hopefully – somewhat more obvious.

(12) (Accounts of Jesus' extraordinary healing and exorcist exploits have spread rapidly)

Καὶ ἤκουσεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης, / φανερὸν γὰρ ἐγένετο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ
(Mark 6:14)

“King Herod heard about this [i.e., Jesus' miracles, SZ], for Jesus' name had become well known”. (tr. NIV)

In this instance, the γάρ clause is the cause of the situation described in the Nuclear Act in the strict sense outlined above – Herod's knowledge of Jesus came about *because* the rumors and stories surrounding him had spread across Israel. Note that this instance does not involve any deliberateness on Herod's part – he now knows about Jesus, whether he wanted to or not.³⁶

The next example marked by γάρ contains yet another rhetorical function:

(13) (The rumors have even reached King Herod, who is worried that the person performing these miracles is his old foe, John the Baptist)

ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἡρώδης ἔλεγεν, / Ὅν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, οὗτος ἠγέρθη. /¹⁷ Αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Ἡρώδης ἀποστείλας ἐκράτησεν τὸν Ἰωάννην / καὶ ἔδησεν αὐτὸν ἐν φυλακῇ (Mark 6,16–17)

“[Herod] said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead”!

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison”. (tr. NIV)

Γάρ here marks an Act which is different from the other three. It is not backgrounded, as it contains information which is important for the interpretation of the Nuclear Act;³⁷ neither is it a Motivation or a Cause – the Nuclear Act does not need any incentive, nor are the character's words motivated. This Act, rather, is an instance of the rhetorical function of Elaboration – it provides “additional detail” for the Nuclear Act via a shift in perspective – the action shifts from the explicit words of one of the characters to the narrator's voice (or vice versa).³⁸ In the case of (13), the narrator clarifies Herod's words by

³⁶ See also e.g. Mark 6:48.

³⁷ Note that the Nuclear Act, which runs from ὄν to ἠγέρθη, consists of two intonation units in this instance (one containing the relative clause, the other the main clause). As I stated in §3.1, Acts are frequently identical to intonation units, but this similarity is not mandated. The communicative Act is here separated into two prosodic segments – it is a prosodically complex Nuclear Act.

³⁸ Mann – Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory” 273. Three of the four most obvious instances of Elaboration (6:17; 6:18; 14:2) are accompanied by this shift in perspective. In 7:3–4 – where there is a transition between the Pharisees who see Jesus' disciples eating without having washed their hands and a sidenote by the narrator providing information about the Pharisaist habit of washing one's hands before eating – there is no explicit shift from direct speech to the narrator's words.

providing the relevant information about the matter he is referring to (John's beheading). In this sense, the Nuclear Act is qualified: the narrator interrupts his story and Herod to integrate an embedded episode about one of the characters in the Nuclear Act into the narrative.

Γάρ with an Act of Elaboration, then, can be considered a so-called PUSH marker (Polanyi & Scha 1983; cf. Slings 1997: 101).³⁹ PUSH markers, and their counterparts, POP markers, are devices which signal interruptions of the main line of discourse – PUSH markers indicate that the discourse unit to which it belongs, which can be of varying length, is an embedded episode, an interlude to the main storyline; POP markers, on the other hand, signal a transition back to the main line of discourse.⁴⁰ In this way, discourse units can be marked off as belonging to different hierarchical levels of discourse. As a PUSH marker with an Act of Elaboration, γάρ indicates that an extended embedded sequence will follow. 'Extended' is a flexible notion here – the embedded episode can consist of one Act or multiple Acts. Hence, it is important to recognize that γάρ does not need to pertain only to the Act to which it directly conjoins, but can apply to the following Ancillary Acts as well – in the case of Mark 6, the embedded episode runs from 6:17 to 6:29.⁴¹

This means that we have now encountered γάρ in four different contexts. In 5:42, it marks an Act which contains background information about one of the individuals involved; in 9:39, it marks a Motivation for a Nuclear Act with directive illocutionary force; in 6:14, the Act to which it pertains is a non-volitive cause; and in 6:17, it indicates a departure from the main narrative as an elaboration which follows from a mention of a previous episode.

Does the occurrence of γάρ across disparate Ancillary Acts preclude a unitary account? In other words can all these instances be considered different facets of one central function, or does γάρ have several distinct functions?

However, there is a shift from the action as it is seen from the Pharisees' point of view to an *excursus* by the narrator on Jewish traditions.

³⁹ L. Polanyi – R. J. H. Scha, "The syntax of discourse", *Text* 3 (3) (1983) 261–270; cf. also S.R. Slings, "Adversative Relators between PUSH and POP", *New Approaches to Greek Particles* (ed. A. Rijksbaron) (Amsterdam: 1997) 101–129 (especially 101–103).

⁴⁰ Polanyi – Scha, "The syntax of discourse" 264–265.

⁴¹ Of course, there can be hierarchy within this embedded Ancillary sequence as well. Some Acts within this greater Ancillary sequence can be Nuclear, others will be Ancillary to these embedded Nuclear Acts. However, these Nuclear Acts are still Ancillary to the Nuclear Act in the embedding, main storyline. Put differently, the FDG framework of Nuclear and Ancillary Acts is not only hierarchical, but recursive too.

In this respect, I follow Fanning's approach to verbal aspect in New Testament Greek.⁴² He argues that there is one fundamental parameter which underlies the alternation between present and aorist stem, namely viewpoint – the aorist is used to present an occurrence “in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence”;⁴³ the present stem, on the other hand, “reflects an *internal* viewpoint concerning the occurrence which *focuses on its development or progress* and sees the occurrence *in regard to its internal make-up, without beginning or end in view*”.⁴⁴ All other uses – according to the temporal distinction between anteriority and simultaneity; according to the opposition single v. multiple occurrence; etc. – are derivative, i.e. secondary functions, of this basic contrast in viewpoint, and the result of contextual and semantic features.⁴⁵

This conceptual distinction between primary and secondary function is applicable to γάρ in the Gospel of Mark as well. A generalized function can be postulated if the fallacy discussed above is abandoned – the rhetorical function of the Act to which γάρ belongs, is not equivalent to the function of γάρ itself. This primary function will be highly abstract and ill-suited for use in translations. Yet it is important to distinguish this function from the secondary functions – not only does it determine and constrain the contexts in which γάρ can be employed, but, more importantly, it is the function which pertains to *all* instances of γάρ, regardless of contextual features.

The rhetorical functions of the different Acts to which γάρ belongs can be, as we have seen, very different. However, their communicative status as such remains the same – all Acts marked by γάρ are Ancillary. In this sense, then, the procedural function encoded by γάρ is that of communicative subsidiarity – it guides the audience in interpreting the Act to which it belongs as Ancillary.⁴⁶

It is important to emphasize that γάρ, like all discourse markers, *constrains* the possible inferences the audience can make in relating the two Acts to each other and so does not prompt one, *discrete* interpretation.⁴⁷ In using γάρ, the author limits the audience's interpretive options in processing the Ancillary Act *vis-à-vis* the Nuclear Act. Yet

⁴² B. M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990).

⁴³ Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 97 (italics in original).

⁴⁴ Id., 103 (italics in original).

⁴⁵ Id., 323.

⁴⁶ Cf. also Kroon, *Discourse particles*, 168–70 for a similar view on *nam* in Latin.

⁴⁷ Cf. A. Hall, “Do discourse connectives encode concepts or procedures?”, *Lingua* 117 (2007) 155–156.

it does not indicate the precise nature, i.e. the rhetorical function, of that Ancillary Act. That nature is determined by the semantic and contextual features of the Ancillary Act itself – in other words, the rhetorical function of the Act is a property of the Ancillary Act; the function of γάρ lies in indicating *the very fact that the Act has a rhetorical function*, i.e. that it is communicatively subsidiary to the previous (Nuclear) Act.⁴⁸ The precise nature of that subsidiarity – whether the Ancillary Act is an Elaboration, Cause, Motivation, or Background – is established by features of the Act itself. Is the Nuclear Act directive? Is there a shift in perspective in going from Nuclear to Ancillary Act? These (and more subtle) contextual elements, along with the semantic information contained within the Act, determine the exact nature of the Act, but this should not be confused with the function of γάρ. This procedural analysis has the advantage “that it can cope better with the variety of uses that [a discourse marker] can have, and this is because it doesn’t map invariably onto a particular concept: instead, it encodes a constraint that has the effect of filtering out certain types of interpretation”.⁴⁹

On this view, the context-independent, abstract, procedural meaning of γάρ could best be described as CLARIFICATION,⁵⁰ as all Ancillary Acts are, by definition, clarifications of Nuclear Acts – if they were not, they would not be subsidiary to another Act. In context, γάρ can, as we have seen, combine with different rhetorical functions, which impacts on its translation – with Backgrounds, for instance, γάρ can most often be equated with parentheses in English; with Causes, ‘because’ is a sure bet. ‘Indeed’ is a prime candidate for Elaborations, as it signals “that the current utterance constitutes an elaboration of an earlier one”.⁵¹ Motivations, on the other hand, may best be denoted by ‘after all’. According to Blakemore,⁵² this expression serves to strengthen an assumption on the part of the hearer. In the case of γάρ, the Motivation with which it is employed provides information for *why* something happened or should happen – by adding it, the addressee (be it a character in the narrative or the audience reading or listening to the text) should be more committed to the information

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Hall, “Discourse connectives”, 172.

⁵⁰ Abstract, procedural meanings are denoted with small capitals; concrete, context-dependent meanings are written between single quotes.

⁵¹ B. Fraser, “Types of English discourse markers”, *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 38 (1988) 31; cf. also E. C. Traugott, “The role of the development of discourse markers in a theory of grammaticalization” (paper presented at ICHL XII, Manchester; updated version 1997), 9.

⁵² Blakemore, *Relevance*, 89.

described or the action called for in the Nuclear Act. In this sense, ‘after all’ would mark an Act which strengthens not an assumption as such, but rather strengthens the addressee’s commitment to the information provided or the action required in the Nuclear Act. At any rate, these different translations are not inherent to γάρ itself – they are the result of the combination of γάρ’s function of CLARIFICATION with semantic and contextual aspects of the Act.

4. Conclusion

In this note, I have tried to shed some light on a seemingly confusing occurrence of γάρ in the Gospel of Mark. This instance had been variously analysed as involving a veiled reference to the Old Testament, a manifestation of the author’s non-logical thinking, and even a marker of “strategically withheld” or inside information.⁵³ In fact, modern pragmatic models can provide a new perspective on this passage, offering an integrated approach to the particle as a discourse marker which encodes a procedure to parse the utterance to which γάρ belongs as communicatively subsidiary to the Nuclear Act.

This interpretation offers an explanation for the problem of the divergent contexts in which γάρ can appear as well. The rhetorical function of the Act (Motivation, Elaboration, etc.) has to be separated from the function of γάρ (and discourse markers in general) – γάρ encodes communicative subsidiarity, which is further specified by the rhetorical function of the Act itself. Obviously, this analysis should be tested rigorously against more material. However, it has the advantage that it constitutes a more inclusive approach to γάρ – it can cover all instances in the Gospel of Mark. Moreover, it does not conflate the function of the discourse marker with that of the Act, as was the case in previous inquiries into Mark 5:42.

On this view, the translations which render γάρ as parentheses in (2)–(8) above (§1) are the most natural ones – parentheses are a viable way to display an Act with the rhetorical function of Background.

Abbreviations of Bible translations:

KJ21 = 21st Century King James Version	NIV = New International Version
ESV = English Standard Version	NLT = New Living Translation
GWT = God’s Word Translation	YLT = Young’s Literal Translation
NASB = New American Standard Bible	

⁵³ Fowler, *Reader-Response Criticism*, 94.