

THE BILINGUAL EMPEROR:
EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA'S *VITA CONSTANTINI**

José B. Torres Guerra

This contribution deals with the presentation of the emperor Constantine as a bilingual character in Eusebius' Vita Constantini. The paper evaluates the extension and limits of his knowledge of Greek according to the works of Eusebius, who was bilingual and probably trilingual himself. The textual evidence suggests that Constantine's bilingualism was intended to be another of the positive features included in Eusebius' encomiastic image of the emperor. A contrast is also established with another Augustus, Julian, and his own historiographer, Ammianus Marcellinus, both of whom had Greek as their first language. The possibility that Ammianus may have known the Vita Constantini is finally taken into account.

The *XII Panegyrici Latini* collection comprises five eulogies addressed to Constantine¹. In his multilingual Empire, where Latin was predominantly spoken in the West and Greek in the East, the son of Constantius Chlorus always had someone to praise his figure, either in Latin or in Greek. This political task was exemplarily developed by a Christian bishop, Eusebius of Caesarea, mainly in his *Vita Constantini* (*VC*), a biographical text that Photios classifies as a ἐγκώμιαστική τετράβιβλος ('an encomium in four books')². A similar praising tone can also be found in other works by the bishop from Caesarea. Thus, this is the case as regards his *Praise of Constantine* and, somehow, as regards his *Church History*, at least

* This paper was written in the framework of the research project 'Linguistic and Cultural Alterity in the Roman Empire (third and fourth centuries AD): Historiography and related genres', funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (FFI2010-15402). I must thank professors M^a.P. García Ruiz, Á. Sánchez-Ostiz (University of Navarra), and A. Quiroga (University of Granada) for their comments and suggestions on previous drafts of this work; I must also thank professor D. DeVore (Ball State University) for his useful and suggestive comments on Eusebius' plurilingualism.

¹ Numbers IV-VII and XII according to Mynors' 1964 edition.

² Cf. Phot. *Bibl.* 127. Leo 1901, 311-312 summarized the fusion of biographical, historiographic and encomiastic elements in this work upon defining it as "ein ἐγκώμιον in vier Büchern, halbbiographischen Titels, halbhistorischen Inhalts, ganz rhetorischen Stils und kirchlicher Tendenz". Barnes 1981, 255 defines *Life of Constantine* as "an extravagant panegyric".

for the parts in which Constantine plays some role³. The present contribution is focused on the *VC* through the revision of the passages in which the author refers to Constantine's knowledge not only of his mother tongue, Latin, but also of Greek, the second language of the Empire.

Eusebius' *Church History* contains no references to the emperor's linguistic competences⁴. However, it is advisable to begin the present analysis with this work because it is a valuable testimony of Eusebius' interest in bilingualism. Remarkably, this text refers with a relative frequency to people who speak two languages. Eusebius – who speaks Greek and has an Eastern perspective – supplies in the *Church History* no examples of the commonest bilingualism case among educated people from Antiquity: Romans who also spoke Greek (Torres Guerra 2006). However, he refers to people who, apart from speaking or writing in Greek, also knew a Semitic language. The first example of this is Flavius Josephus, who is said to have written two versions of *The Jewish War* in Greek and in “his native tongue” (Eus. *HE* 3.9.3)⁵. The case of Hegesippus is analogous, as he is also likely to have spoken Aramaic as his mother tongue and wrote his historiographic works in Greek⁶. On the other hand, Origen and Dorotheus of Antioch set off from the knowledge of the Greek language upon their decision to learn Hebrew, as it gained them direct access to the original version of the Holy Scriptures⁷.

³ This attitude gained Eusebius' criticism from other Christian authors such as Socrates Scholasticus; cf. Socr. Sch. *HE* 1.1.2: Γράφων δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἰς τὸν βίον Κωνσταντίνου τῶν κατ' Ἄρειον μερικῶς μνήμην πεποιήται, τῶν ἐπαίνων τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῆς πανηγυρικῆς ὑψηγορίας τῶν λόγων μᾶλλον ὡς ἐν ἐγκωμίῳ φροντίσας ἤπερ τοῦ ἀκριβῶς περιλαβεῖν τὰ γενόμενα (“He, in his book about the life of Constantine, mentions only slightly the matters concerning Arius, being more interested in praise of the king and panegyric style than on the accurate description of facts” [tr. editors]).

⁴ There is no reference to this question in Eusebius' *Laus Constantini*, neither is the point touched in the anonymous *Origo Constantini Imperatoris*.

⁵ οὗτος (...) τὴν δ' ἱστορίαν τοῦ κατ' αὐτὸν Ῥωμαϊκοῦ πολέμου ἐν ἑπτὰ, ἃ καὶ οὐ μόνον τῇ Ἑλλήνων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ πατρίῳ φωνῇ παραδοῦναι αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ μαρτυρεῖ, ἄξιός γε ὦν διὰ τὰ λοιπὰ πιστεῦεσθαι (“He (sc. Josephus)... wrote the account of the war with the Romans of his own time in seven [books]. The latter he had published not only in Greek, but also in his native language, as he himself testifies, and also for other reasons he is worthy of credence” (Eus. *HE* 3.9.3 [tr. Maier]). In relation with τῇ πατρίῳ φωνῇ, “in his native tongue”, cf. Rochette 1998; Torres 2012.

⁶ Cf. Eus. *HE* 4.22.8: καὶ ἕτερα δὲ πλείστα γράφει, ὧν ἐκ μέρους ἤδη πρότερον ἐμνημονεύσαμεν, οἰκείως τοῖς καιροῖς τὰς ἱστορίας παραθέμενοι, ἕκ τε τοῦ καθ' Ἑβραίους εὐαγγελίου καὶ τοῦ Συριακοῦ καὶ ἰδίως ἐκ τῆς Ἑβραϊδος διαλέκτου τινὰ τίθησιν, ἐμφαίνων ἐξ Ἑβραίων ἑαυτὸν πεπιστευκέναι, καὶ ἄλλα δὲ ὡς ἐξ Ἰουδαϊκῆς (“He wrote much else (some of which I have already quoted, inserting the accounts in their appropriate places), and cites the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Syriac Gospel and especially works of Hebrew language and oral tradition, showing that he was a Hebrew convert, and he mentions other matters from the Jewish tradition” [tr. Maier, adapted]).

⁷ On Origen, cf. *HE* 6.16.1: Τοσαύτη δὲ εἰσήγετο τῷ Ὀριγένει τῶν θείων λόγων ἀπικριβωμένη ἐξέτασις, ὡς καὶ τὴν Ἑβραῖδα γλώτταν ἐκμαθεῖν (“So painstaking was Origen's analysis of the divine books that he even mastered Hebrew” [tr. Maier]). Regarding Dorotheus, cf. *HE* 7.32.2: φιλόκαλος δ' οὗτος περὶ τὰ θεῖα γεγονώς, καὶ τῆς Ἑβραίων ἐπεμελήθη γλώττης, ὡς καὶ αὐταῖς ταῖς Ἑβραϊκαῖς γραφαῖς ἐπιστημόνως ἐντυγχάνειν (“In his

It should not be forgotten that Eusebius himself is very likely to have been bilingual or even trilingual. If Eusebius was born in Caesarea Maritima (Palestine), he is far more likely to have spoken Aramaic as his mother tongue and have changed to Greek for his written works⁸. It can be also deduced from the *Church History* that he must have had certain knowledge of Latin. However, there is no evidence to indicate that Eusebius was able to express himself in this language, and there is little that can be said about his Latin readings; he knows Tertullian but probably (*HE* 2.2.4) he had read him in a Greek version (cf. Carriker 2003, 261-262; Torres Guerra 2013). On the other hand, Eusebius could translate texts from one language into another, as he says he did with a rescript sent by Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus (*HE* 4.8.8; cf. Torres Guerra 2013):

τούτοις ὁ μὲν δηλωθεὶς ἀνὴρ αὐτὴν παρατίθει τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ἀντιγραφὴν, ἡμεῖς δ' ἐπὶ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν κατὰ δύναμιν αὐτὴν μετελήφραμεν, ἔχουσιν ὅδε (“After these words the author referred to [Justinus] gives the rescript in Latin, which we have translated into Greek as accurately as we could” [author’s translation; all the translations are by the author of this article, unless otherwise stated]).

Eusebius’ interest in bilingualism and in the languages spoken in the Empire known to the Emperor is dealt with in his *VC*. In relation to this, the idea of the existence of a fundamental caesura in the territory ruled by the Augustus gathers basic relevance. Eusebius’ perspective counters ‘the other part’ of the Empire with ‘us’, according to texts such as the following (*VC* 2.20.1; 2.22.1):

Ἦπλοῦντο δὲ καὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν, ὡσπερ οὖν καὶ πρότερον παρὰ τοῖς θάτερον μέρος τῆς οἰκουμένης λαχοῦσι, βασιλέως φιλανθρωπίας ἔμπλεοι διατάξεις (“There were now promulgated among us [in the East], as previously among those who occupy the other half of the civilized world, decrees full of the generosity of the Emperor”)⁹

and:

ἅπαντες οἱ καθ’ ἡμᾶς, ὅσα τὸ πρὶν ἀκοῆ πυνθανόμενοι ἐν θατέρῳ μέρει τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς γιγνόμενα τοὺς εἰ πάσχοντας ἐμακάριζον (“All those in our [Eastern] part saw before their eyes those things which they had previously heard were being done in the other half of the Roman Empire, and had called the beneficiaries happy”).

theological fervour, he mastered Hebrew so thoroughly that he could read and understand the Hebrew Scriptures” [tr. Maier]).

⁸ Cf. Torres Guerra 2014. On the linguistic situation of Caesarea in Eusebius’ times, cf. Patrich 2011, 2-3. It should be also taken into account that the majority of official inscriptions in Caesarea were written in Latin until Constantine’s time; cf. Eck 2001, 50-51, 55-61; DeVore 2013, 19 (on the other hand, cf. Isaac 2009).

⁹ Translations of passages from the *Life of Constantine* are taken from Cameron/Hall 1999.

The opposition referred to in these two texts is precisely the opposition between the West and the East, the latter being the part of the Empire that represents ‘us’ according to Eusebius. However, Constantine’s perspective must be different, as suggested by the words added as a coda to an edict quoted by Eusebius in *VC* 2.24-42: Προτεθήτω ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἀνατολικοῖς μέρεσιν (“To be published in our eastern regions”: *VC* 2.42.1). This document – emanated in Latin from the Imperial Chancery – had to be published in all territories, including the Eastern part of the Empire, which involved its translation into Greek¹⁰. Other texts in *VC* also show that both parts of the Empire do not only differ geographically but also linguistically. That Eusebius’ ‘us’ comprises a community that expresses itself in the predominant language in the East, while the other part speaks Latin, can be well observed in this passage, referred to as Constantine’s autograph letter in Latin, which shall be reproduced in Greek for easier understanding παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἡμῖν (“among ourselves”: *VC* 4.8.1):

φέρεται μὲν οὖν Ῥωμαία γλώττη παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἡμῖν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ βασιλέως ἰδιόγραφον γράμμα, μεταβληθὲν δ’ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλήνων φωνὴν γνωριμώτερον γένοιτ’ ἂν τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσιν (“This document also is in circulation among us, written by the Emperor personally in Latin¹¹, which may be more readily understood by the reader when translated into Greek”).

The mention of ἰδιόγραφον γράμμα (‘personally written document’) implies that, as expected¹², the emperor’s language is Latin, not Greek. The same is pointed out by this passage from the *VC*, referring to a letter written by the emperor (*VC* 2.48-60, esp. 2.47.2): καὶ ταύτην δὲ τὴν γραφὴν, αὐτόγραφον οὖσαν αὐτοῦ μεταληφθεῖσαν δ’ ἐκ τῆς Ῥωμαίων φωνῆς, ἀπολαβεῖν ἀναγκαῖον τῷ παρόντι λόγῳ (“This document too, which bears his autograph but is translated from the Latin, is highly relevant to quote in our present study”)¹³. *VC* 4.19.1 informs us that he prayed in Latin or, at least, that he taught his troops to say in this language a prayer, which is later reproduced by Eusebius in Greek: καὶ τῆς εὐχῆς δὲ τοῖς στρατιωτικοῖς

¹⁰ The passage that precedes the text of the edict (*VC* 2.23.1) reads as follows: τοῦτό τ’ αὐτὸ ἀνεκήρυττε διὰ χαρακτήρων Ῥωμαίας τε καὶ Ἑλληνίδος φωνῆς εἰς ἕκαστον ἔθνος ἐν γραφῇ διαπεμφθεῖση (“And he proclaimed this very thing in both Latin and Greek in a document sent to every region” [tr. Cameron/Hall]). On the publication of official imperial documents in Latin and Greek at the time of Augustus and Diocletian, cf. Rochette 2011.

¹¹ Ῥωμαία γλώττη in Eusebius’ text. In relation with a question posed by prof. Rees, the author reminds that Ῥωμαία γλώττη or τῆ Ῥωμαίων φωνῆ are the most usual expressions to say “in Latin” in ancient Greek. Alternative word groups like τῆ Λατίνῃ γλώττῃ (τῆ Λατίνῃ φωνῇ, τῆ Λατίνῃ διαλέκτῳ - “the Latin tongue, the Latin dialect”) are employed very seldom (cf. e. g. D.H. 8.56.2; Str. 3.1.4; 6.1.6).

¹² Given our knowledge on the earliest years of the life of Constantine (cf. Barnes 1981, 3-4; Herrmann-Otto 2007, 17-18), and as it was common among Roman emperors.

¹³ Cameron/Hall (1999, 244) understand that the translator of the text must have been Eusebius himself. The expression αὐτόγραφον οὖσαν does not indicate that the historian had a copy of the document written by the emperor himself but only signed by him.

ἅπασι διδάσκαλος ἦν αὐτός, Ῥωμαία γλώττη τοὺς πάντας ὧδε λέγειν ἐγκελευσάμενος (“He was himself the instructor in prayer to all the soldiery, bidding them all to say these words in Latin”)¹⁴. Moreover, Eusebius expressly affirms that the emperor wrote his speeches in Latin and then had the texts translated into the Eastern language (*VC* 4.32.1): Ῥωμαία μὲν οὖν γλώττη τὴν τῶν λόγων συγγραφὴν βασιλεὺς παρεῖχε. μετέβαλλον δ’ αὐτὴν Ἑλλάδι μεθερμηνευταὶ φωνῆ οἷς τοῦτο ποιεῖν ἔργον ἦν (“Latin was the language in which the Emperor used to produce the text of his speeches. They were translated into Greek by professional interpreters”; cf. Cameron/Hall 1999, 325).

Undoubtedly, the knowledge of the second language of the Roman Empire was never a mandatory requirement imposed to the Augustus, unlike in some present-day multilingual nations¹⁵; a priori, it should be taken into account that some of the people who ruled the Empire were monolingual, though we have no evidence for that assumption¹⁶. Of course, there was a long series of emperors who are known for certain to have been bilingual: for instance, in Suetonius’ *The Twelve Caesars* these emperors (except Vitellius) are said to have had, all of them to a certain degree, command of the Greek language¹⁷. The most outstanding in the group of bilingual emperors is Marcus Aurelius, who authored works in both languages: the epistles exchanged with his teacher Fronto are in Latin and his *Meditations* are in Greek (Torres Guerra 2006, 1011-1012, 1015)¹⁸.

Constantine may have acquired his knowledge of the Greek language at different times throughout his life, perhaps taught by his teachers, and later during the time he spent with his father, Constantius Chlorus, in Nicomedia, imperial seat since Diocletian’s times (cf. Barnes 1981, 6). Eusebius supplied evidence on the fact that his command of Greek allowed him to express himself in this language (*VC* 3.13). Chapters 6 to 14 in the third book refer to the First Council of Nicaea (AD 325), in which Constantine took part with a speech that Eusebius, who was per-

¹⁴ On this prayer of Constantine, cf. Cameron/Hall 1999, 318.

¹⁵ Felipe VI of Spain had to study in his school years the co-official languages of his country (namely, Catalanian, Basque and Galician). Likewise, we could mention, for instance, Belgium and its bilingual monarchs (or even trilingual; note that there are also small German-speaking communities in Belgium).

¹⁶ Cf. Kaimio (1979, 142): “Evidently all Roman Emperors from Augustus to Hadrian, I would go so far as to say even up to Diocletian, knew Greek well”.

¹⁷ But Kaimio (1979, 136) affirms that “no records of their attitudes towards the Greek of Nero’s three successors, Galba, Otho and Vitellius, are preserved”; therefore, it is advisable to refer to these two passages of Suetonius’ work: *Galba* 20, *Otho* 7. Strikingly, unlike Suetonius, *History of the Roman Empire from the Death of Marcus*, written by Herodian in Greek, does not refer to the emperors’ bilingualism.

¹⁸ For an overall view of the emperors’ bilingualism, cf. Kaimio 1979, 130-143; Rochette 2011, 13-16; for the case of the successors of Julian, cf. Moroni 2005.

haps present at the time¹⁹, reproduces in *VC* 3.12. After concluding, the narrator explains that the emperor expressed himself in his mother tongue, Latin, and relied on an assistant to translate his words later on to make them understandable to all bishops (*VC* 3.13.1): Ὁ μὲν δὴ ταῦτ' εἰπὼν Ῥωμαία γλώττη, ὑπερμηνεύοντος ἑτέρου, παρεδίδου τὸν λόγον τοῖς τῆς συνόδου προέδροις (“When he had spoken these words in Latin, with someone interpreting, he made way for the leaders of the Council to speak”). But the main issue is that, according to Eusebius, Constantine could follow the content of the deliberations without the help of an interpreter, and would even participate in the discussions (*VC* 3.13.1):

πλείστων ὑφ' ἑκατέρου τάγματος προτεινομένων πολλῆς τ' ἀμφιλογίας τὰ πρῶτα συνισταμένης, ἀνεξικάκως ἐπηκροῶτο βασιλεὺς τῶν πάντων σχολῆ τ' εὐτόνω τὰς προτάσεις ὑπεδέχετο, ἐν μέρει τ' ἀντιλαμβανόμενος τῶν παρ' ἑκατέρου τάγματος λεγομένων, ἡρέμα συνήγαγε τοὺς φιλονείκως ἐνισταμένους (“A great many proposals were made by each side, and there was at first much controversy. The Emperor listened to all, without resentment, and received the proposals with patient flexibility; he took up what was said by each side in turn, and gently brought together those whose attitudes conflicted”).

In a Council held in Asia Minor, at a time when most Christian bishops came from the East (Herrmann-Otto 2007, 116, 122-123), it was unavoidable that Constantine's interventions were at least partially in Greek. Indeed, this is when Eusebius positively affirms that Constantine spoke this language and made use of this capacity to reach agreements among those attending the Council (*VC* 3.13.2-14):

πράως τε ποιούμενος τὰς πρὸς ἕκαστον ὁμιλίας ἐλληνίζων τε τῆ φωνῆ, ὅτι μηδὲ ταύτης ἀμαθῶς εἶχε, γλυκερός τις ἦν καὶ ἡδύς, τοὺς μὲν συμπείθων, τοὺς δὲ καταδυσσωπῶν τῷ λόγῳ, τοὺς δ' εὖ λέγοντας ἐπαινῶν, πάντας τ' εἰς ὁμόνοιαν ἐλαύνων, εἰσόθ' ὁμογνώμονας καὶ ὁμοδόξους αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀμφισβητούμενοις ἅπασι κατεστήσατο, ὡς ὁμόφωνον μὲν κρατῆσαι τὴν πίστιν, τῆς σωτηρίου δ' ἑορτῆς τὸν αὐτὸν παρὰ τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁμολογηθῆναι καιρὸν (“He addressed each person gently, and by speaking Greek – for he was not ignorant of that language either – he made himself pleasant and agreeable, persuading some and shaming others with his words, praising those who were speaking well, urging all towards agreement, until he had brought them to be of one mind and one belief on all the matters in dispute. Thus the Faith prevailed in a unanimous form, and the same timing for the Festival of the Saviour was agreed on all sides”).

¹⁹ Eusebius is the bishop referred to in 3.11: Τῶν δ' ἐπισκόπων ὁ τοῦ δεξιῶν τάγματος πρωτεύων διαναστὰς μεμετρημένον ἀπεδίδου λόγον (“The bishop who was first in the row on the right then stood up and delivered a rhythmical speech” [tr. Cameron/Hall]), according to Sozomen (*HE* 1.19.2); Cameron/Hall 1999, 265, among many others, refute this interpretation.

Eusebius makes use of a litotes to indicate that the emperor can express himself in Greek: ὅτι μηδὲ ταύτης ἀμαθῶς εἶχε (“for he was not ignorant of that language either”)²⁰. This rhetorical device seems to give to understand that Constantine spoke the Eastern language fluently, implying no reservations regarding his bilingualism. In relation with this, comparisons with texts on the bilingualism of an emperor whose first language was Greek – Julian – are very telling²¹. According to Ammianus Marcellinus (16.5.7), *super his aderat latine quoque disserendi sufficiens sermo* (“Besides all this he had at his command adequate fluency also in Latin conversation”)²². The way that Eusebius and Ammianus refer to Constantine’s and Julian’s linguistic skills differs. Obviously, a *sufficiens sermo Graecus* would have been insufficient for Constantine to reach consensus among those who attended the First Council of Nicaea²³. The *VC* contains another passage that allows us to deduce something about the limits of the emperor’s competence in Greek. It is included in a letter sent to Eusebius by Constantine (4.35.2-3):

πλὴν ὁμῶς ὑπερθαναμάσας σε τῆς φιλομαθείας τε καὶ φιλοτιμίας, αὐτὸς τε τὸ βιβλίον ἀνέγνω ἀσμένως, καὶ τοῖς πλείοσιν, οἳ γε τῇ περὶ τὸ θεῖον λατρεία γνησίως προσανέχουσι, καθὰ ἐβουλήθης, ἐκδοθῆναι προσέταξα. συνορῶν τοῖνυν μεθ’ ὅσης θυμηδίας τὰ τοιαῦτα παρὰ τῆς σῆς ἀγχινοίας δῶρα λαμβάνομεν, συνεχεστέροις ἡμᾶς λόγοις εὐφραίνειν, οἷς ἐντεθράφθαι σαυτὸν ὁμολογεῖς, προθυμήθητι· (...) ὅπου γε καὶ τὸν εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων τοὺς σοὺς πόνους μεταρρυθμίζοντα γλῶτταν οὐκ ἀνάξιον ἠύρῃσθαι σοι τῶν συγγραμμάτων ἢ τοσαύτη πεποιθήσις δείκνυσιν, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τὰ καλὰ τῶν λόγων ἢ τοιαύτη ἐρμηνεία ὑφίστασθαι κατ’ ἀξίαν ἀδυνάτως ἔχει (“Nevertheless with great admiration for your learning and endeavour I have gladly read the book myself, and as you desired I have ordered it to be published for the large number who are sincerely attached to the worship of God. Now that you are aware how cordially we enjoy receiving such gifts from your Intelligence, do make every effort to give us the pleasure of more frequent literary works, in which you agree you are

²⁰ Other ecclesiastical historians later reproduced Eusebius’ words concerning Constantine’s competence in Greek verbatim or almost verbatim; cf. Socr. Sch. *HE* 1.8.22: ὅτι μηδὲ ταύτης ἀμαθῶς εἶχεν (“because he mastered the language”) and Soz. *HE* 1.20.1: καθότι οὐδὲ τῆς Ἑλλήνων γλώττης ἀπείρωσ εἶχε (“because he mastered the Greek tongue”). There are no further allusions to this topic in the historiographical works of these authors.

²¹ Julian was born in AD 331 in Constantinople and, after the death of his parents (337), grew up between Constantinople, Nicomedia (hometown of his relative Eusebius), and Cappadocia. Cf. Bowersock 1978, 22-25; Tougher 2007, 14-16.

²² Cf. Thompson 1944; Sánchez-Ostiz 2007, 295-296. Rochette 2010, 458-459 analyses in depth the sense of the participle *sufficiens* in this passage. For the English translation (Rolfé 1935; 1939) cited in the text, cf. <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Ammian/>.

²³ On the linguistic difficulties involved in following and taking part in debates in a Synod or a Council at this time, cf. Hanson 1988, 181-207; Woods 2001, 262.

well trained (...). Such great confidence certainly shows that the one who renders your efforts into the Latin tongue has not been found by you to be unworthy of what you have written, true though it is that it is impossible for such a translation satisfactorily to represent the elegance of the words”).

Speaking a language differs from reading or writing in it. The emperor affirms to have read a document written by the bishop of Caesarea on Easter (*VC* 4.35.1), which greatly pleased him. For this reason, he urges Eusebius to keep on writing works of this kind and indicates that the pleasure felt upon reading it proves the translator’s skills upon translating the original Greek text into Latin. Thus, it remains clear that Constantine did not read Eusebius’ works, or at least this work, in Greek²⁴. This may allow us to deduce that Constantine’s lack of reading habit in Greek is due to the fact that his knowledge of this language is likely not to come from school learning but from practice and everyday contact with Greek-speaking people²⁵.

It is true that, regarding Constantine’s bilingualism, many issues remain unclear. In this sense, evidence on his non-Christian readings, and knowledge of whether or not these included Greek authors, would provide us with valuable information on the theme. As expected, Eusebius says nothing on this issue in the *VC*, nor on the emperor’s capacity to write in Greek, an ability that some other emperors and members of the imperial dynasty had²⁶. Indeed, there is no sign of the fact that the emperor himself wrote this or the following letter (*VC* 4.36) in Greek²⁷.

Constantine’s bilingualism is another of the positive features which form part of Eusebius’ encomiastic image of this emperor. Praising the emperor’s bilingualism was, in no case, a compulsory issue to deal with in an encomium according to the current rhetorical precepts at that time²⁸. Although a secondary feature in Eusebius’ shaping of the ideal ruler, it should be also taken into account as it acquired great relevance within the narration because it is precisely Constantine’s linguistic capacity that, according to Eusebius (*VC* 3.13-14), enabled the emperor to reach consensus in a historical event such as the First Council of Nicaea.

²⁴ Note that, besides, the emperor took for granted that the bishop entrusted the translation to a third party. On Eusebius’ Latin command, cf. *supra*.

²⁵ Cf. the aforesaid on the stay in Nicomedia of the son of Constantius Chlorus; cf. also Rochette 2010, 468.

²⁶ This is the case of those who spoke Latin as their mother tongue and wrote literary works in Greek such as Germanicus (cf. Torres Guerra 2006, 1010, 1013) and Marcus Aurelius (cf. *supra*).

²⁷ Between both letters Eusebius points out (*VC* 4.35.3): Τὸ μὲν οὖν περὶ τοῦδε γράμμα τοῖόνδε ἦν, τὸ δὲ περὶ τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἀναγνωσμάτων ἐπισκευῆς ὅδε πῆ περιέχει (“Such was his letter on that subject. The one on the provision of divine Scriptures runs as follows: ...” [tr. Cameron/Hall]); τοῖόνδε ... ὅδε may indicate that Eusebius reproduces the tone of a Latin letter translated in Greek by himself.

²⁸ At least it is not so according to the treatises attributed to Menander Rhetor (on Eusebius and Menander, cf. Cameron/Hall 1999, 32-33). Linguistic competence is not referred to by *Pan. Lat.* either; consequently they do not deal with Constantine’s linguistic abilities.

It is worth contrasting the work of the Palestinian bishop with the abovementioned fourth century historian, Ammianus Marcellinus. The latter also dealt with an emperor's bilingualism, and like Eusebius himself, was also bilingual. Ammianus – who introduced himself as a Greek and frequently spoke as such – is one of the earliest authors from the East to write an extensive work in Latin²⁹. The preserved books of his *Res Gestae* contain allusions to bilingual figures such as the author himself³⁰. A special group comprises the members of the imperial dynasty who could express themselves in both languages. The first of these references is to Constantius Gallus and the last is to Valentinian³¹. However, the most outstanding bilingual figure in the *Res Gestae* is Julian, the unofficial hero of Ammianus Marcellinus³², as Constantine was for Eusebius.

The analysis of the words of the bishop of Caesarea regarding his emperor's ability to express himself in Greek³³ has already led us to deal with the passage in the *Res Gestae* that includes the essential observation regarding Julian's command of Latin (Amm. Marc. 16.5.7): *super his aderat latine quoque disserendi sufficiens sermo* ("besides all this he had at his command adequate fluency also in Latin conversation" [transl. editors]). The analysis of this passage is of a capital importance for the present contribution. But before it is discussed, it should be remembered that Julian's Latin competence is also referred to by two other authors, Eutropius and Libanius. Both were contemporary, directly acquainted with the

²⁹ Ammianus affirms to be Greek: cf. Amm. Marc. 31.16.9 (*haec ut miles quondam et Graecus (...) pro virium explicavi mensura* ("I, a former soldier and a Greek, ... have explained to the measure of my ability": cf. Guzmán Armario 2003)). Ammianus takes a Greek viewpoint: cf. 17.7.11 (*in cavernis minutis terrarum, quas Graece syringas appellamus* ("in the tiny recesses in the earth, which in Greek we call syringes [subterranean passages]")), and further Amm. Marc. 20.3.11, 22.8.33, 22.9.7, 22.15.29, 23.4.10, 23.6.20, 25.2.5, 26.1.1, and 29.2.28. Not long after Ammianus' work, Claudian will also write in Latin; cf. Geiger 1999; Sánchez-Ostiz 2007, 293-294. See also Kelly's article in this volume about Ammianus' being Greek.

³⁰ Cf. 15.13.1, 18.2.2, 18.5.1, 19.11.5, 26.7.15.

³¹ On Constantius Gallus, cf. Amm. Marc. *RG* 14.1.9: *vesperi per tabernas palabatur et compita quaeritando Graeco sermone, cuius erat inpendio gnarus, quid de Caesare quisque sentiret* ("he used to roam at evening about the inns and streetcorners, inquiring of everyone in Greek, of which he had remarkable command, what he thought of the Caesar" [tr. Rolfe]). On Valentinian, cf. Amm. Marc. *RG* 30.5.9-10: *qui cum imperatorem vidisset, agnitus adventusque sui causam interrogatus, Graece respondit (...). quo ille verbo tamquam telo percussus, actus eius ut sagax bestia rimabatur genuino percunctando sermone, quos noscibat* ("And he, when he came into the emperor's presence, being recognized and asked the reason for his coming, replied in Greek: ... By these words the emperor was struck as by a dagger, and like a keen-scented hound he searched into all the conduct of the prefect, asking [him] in his native tongue about people who he personally knew"). Gallus was Julian's half-brother yet, unlike him, his first language was Latin. In relation to Gallus' and Valentinian's Greek knowledge, cf. Moroni 2005, 83; Rochette 2010, 459-460.

³² Julian appears for the first time in the preserved books of *Res Gestae* in 14.11.28 and plays a leading role in books 20-25. On the introduction of Julian as a new Achilles, cf. Barnes 1998, 143-165.

³³ Cf. Eus. *VC* 3.13.2: ὄτι μηδὲ ταύτης ἀμαθῶς εἶχε ("for he was not ignorant of that language either").

emperor, and wrote in the two imperial languages. Eutropius' *Breviary* contains a brief allusion to the question in Eutrop. *Brev. Hist. Rom.* 10.16.3, where he regards Julian as instructed in Latin although not so well-read as in Greek culture:

liberalibus disciplinis adprime eruditus, Graecis doctior atque adeo ut Latina eruditio nequaquam cum Graeca scientia conveniret ("He was eminently accomplished in liberal knowledge, but better read in Greek culture, so that his Latin instruction was by no means comparable to his Greek learning")³⁴.

On the other hand, Libanius refers to the question in a laudatory tone in a speech written to honour Julian's consulate and consequently presents his competence in both languages as impressive, although perhaps he might have preferred that Julian had no knowledge of Latin at all (Lib. *Or.* 12.92)³⁵:

νικᾷς τοὺς μὲν ῥήτορας τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ, τοὺς δ' αὖ φιλοσόφους τῇ ῥητορείᾳ, τῇ ποιήσει δὲ ἀμφοτέρους, ὥσπερ αὖ τοὺς ποιητὰς ἀμφοτέροις ἐκείνοις καὶ νῆ Δία γε πάντα οὖς ἔφην, θατέρᾳ φωνῇ τελεώτατα ἐχούσῃ, λέγω δὲ οὐκ αὐτὸς ἐπαῖων, ἀλλὰ με πέπεικεν ὁ Καρχηδόσιος ἐκεῖνος ("You excel the orators in philosophy, philosophers in oratory, and both alike in poetry. Similarly you excel poets in both these accomplishments and indeed all those just mentioned by your perfect Latinity, of which I cannot speak from my own knowledge, but from the conviction that our Carthaginian friend has inspired in me" [Translation taken from Norman 1969]).

Ammianus' affirmation (*super his aderat [Iuliano] latine quoque disserendi sufficientis sermo* ("Besides all this he had at his command adequate fluency also in Latin conversation")) appears in a section in book 16 (sc. 16.5.7) of the *Res Gestae* that glosses the virtues of Constantius' successor. After referring to his encouragement of poetry and rhetoric and prior to praising his wonderful memory³⁶, the historian introduces this remark on Julian's Latin. Located between the

³⁴ I have slightly modified the English version of J. S. Watson; cf. http://www.tertulian.org/fathers/eutropius_breviarium_2_text.htm. On the statements by Eutropius, cf. Rochette 2010, 461-463.

³⁵ On the passage by Libanius, cf. Rochette 2010, 463-464. On the relation between Julian and Libanius, cf. Wiemer 1995; on Libanius' attitude towards Latin, cf. Criboire 2007, 206-212. Libanius deals with Julian's ability to speak in both languages in two other passages, Lib. *Or.* 18.21: Ἦν οὖν ἐκεῖνον παντοδαπὴ σοφία συνειλεγμένη καὶ δεικνυμένη, ποιηταί, ῥήτορες, γένη φιλοσόφων, πολλὴ μὲν Ἑλλάς φωνή, οὐκ ὀλίγη δὲ ἄτερα ("He gathered together wisdom of every kind and displayed it – poetry, oratory, the various schools of philosophy, much use of Greek and not a little of Latin, for he was interested in both") and Lib. *Ep.* 668.1, a letter to his friend Clearchus, AD 361: Σοὶ κτήμα πρέπον Ἰουλιανὸς οὐτοσί, πρῶτος μὲν ἐν Ἑλλάδι φωνῇ, πρῶτος δὲ ἐν τῇ τῶν κρατούντων ("This Julian is just what you are looking for, foremost in Greek language, and foremost in that of the rulers"), [tr. editors]).

³⁶ Ammianus deals with Julian's poetic and rhetorical activity in Amm. Marc. *RG* 16.5.7, with his memory in Amm. Marc. 16.5.8.

preceding and subsequent praising observations, this remark cannot be regarded as a litotes, as was the case with Eusebius' *VC* 3.13.2; actually it constitutes a kind of low point in comparison with all comments relative to the excellence of Julian's liberal education and wonderful memory. As suggested in a previous contribution (Sánchez-Ostiz 2007, 295, 307-308), Ammianus may indicate subtly that he, a Greek speaker as Julian, is more competent than he had been upon speaking or even writing in Latin. Be it as it may, it seems true that Julian must be considered bilingual, although dominantly Greek, according to the aforementioned study (Sánchez-Ostiz 2007, 294, 301; cf. also Rochette 2010, 477). When he was Caesar in Gaul, soldiers under his command and the people that Constantius trusted in, must have been aware of this fact as all of them ended up actually vituperating against Julian by calling him 'Greek'³⁷.

The game of contrasts found by the reader in these two works – the *Vita Constantini* and the *Res Gestae* – is highly suggestive. The author of the former, a Christian, tells the story of the emperor who triggered the Empire's conversion into Christianity. The latter, surely pagan, praises as a hero the emperor who tried to back out the process of Christianization begun by Constantine. The main character in the former text is a bilingual who speaks Latin as his mother tongue. On the other hand, the main figure in Ammianus' *Res Gestae* is also a bilingual character, yet his mother tongue is Greek. May there be any intention behind this game of contrasts? Given the chronology of both authors, the following is the only contrast that may entail intentionality: can Ammianus have known the *Vita Constantini*? May he have tried to reply Eusebius regarding his emperor's bilingualism?

An important work on Ammianus was published in the first decade of the 21st century: Gavin Kelly's *Ammianus Marcellinus. The Allusive Historian* (2008). Special attention was drawn to his allusions and intertextual references. This work (which is not an exhaustive study of intertextuality in Ammianus' work) does not pose the idea that the historian who was *miles et Graecus* ("a soldier and a Greek") may have gone through some of the works of the bishop of Caesarea. It is true that simple coincidence in the mention of bilingualism of such two opposite emperors constitutes a rather scarce ground to support this hypothesis. At the same time, it cannot be discarded that Ammianus – whether an apostate or not³⁸ – may have known Christian literature and, therefore, perhaps the writings of the bishop of Caesarea; but a definitive answer for this question is yet to be found³⁹.

³⁷ Cf. Amm. Marc. *RG* 17.9.3: *miles (...) Iulianum compellationibus incessebat et probris, Asianum appellans Graeculum et fallacem et specie sapientiae stolidum* ("the soldiers ... assailed Julian with foul names and opprobrious language, calling him an Asiatic, a Greekling and a deceiver and a fool with a show of wisdom" [tr. Rolfe]); Amm. Marc. 17.11.1: *Iulianum (...) appellantesque 'loquacem talpam' et 'purpuratam simiam' et 'litterionem Graecum'* ("and calling [Julian] a 'chattering mole' and 'an ape in purple' and 'a Greekish pedant'" [tr. Rolfe]).

³⁸ On Ammianus as an apostate, cf. Barnes 1998, 82-84; Kelly 2008, 130.

³⁹ The underlying issue here is Ammianus' sources. On this topic cf. Kelly 2008, 222-225. In spite of being pagan and perhaps apostate, Ammianus seems to have used Christian sources. Cf. Bleckmann 2007; Kelly 2008, 230, 253, 255.

As long as other more significant coincidences between Eusebius' works and Ammianus' *Res Gestae* are not identified and assessed, it seems advisable to resign the possibility of an intertextual relation and turn to a simpler explanation for the aforementioned game of contrasts. Ammianus and Eusebius themselves were bilingual and therefore seem to have been particularly sensitive to their preferred emperors' bilingualism. Ammianus does it with certain reservation, perhaps because he compares his own case with that of Julian: the historian who writes a work such as the *Res Gestae* in a language different from his own, seems to feel certain unconscious superiority above the cultured emperor who could only express himself in Latin with a *sufficiens sermo*⁴⁰. On the other hand, Eusebius deals with his emperor's bilingualism as a panegyrist, according to the general tone of his *Life of Constantine*, ἐγκωμιαστική τετράβιβλος: although Constantine could not perhaps write in Greek or even read it, the main point is that his knowledge of this language let him manage such an intricate situation as that of the First Council of Nicaea.

José B. Torres Guerra
Dpto. Filología
Universidad de Navarra
E-31080 Pamplona
Spain
jtorres@unav.es

⁴⁰ This hypothesis is basically the same as the one supported by Sánchez-Ostiz 2007, 307-308.