THE LANGUAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

J ENGELBRECHT

ABSTRACT
This paper deals with the language of Matthew's Gospel. Language is seen as an aspect of the style of the Gospel. Because Matthew supposedly made use of sources which would have influenced his language, these possible sources are discussed. Next some characteristics of his language are pointed out with special focus on his vocabulary, after which some examples from the Gospel are discussed to illustrate to what extent his sources influenced his language usage.

I INTRODUCTION

No one can deny that the past decade has been characterised by what seems to be a renewed interest in the Gospel of Matthew. To this fact the spate of new commentaries on Matthew testifies: the eighties have seen new commentaries by Maler, Meier, Beare, Gundry, Minear, Carson, Luz, Schnackenburg, France, Gnilka, Limbeck, Sand, Patte, Davies & Allison and Smith, among others. Despite this interest, one aspect of the Gospel has been relatively neglected, namely its language. Luz (1985:32) makes the observation that some of the older commentaries, such as those of Allen, Lagrange and Schlatter, have made valuable contributions with regard to the syntax of Matthew, but that it is urgently necessary to bring the older syntactical investigations up to date in the light of the Jewish and Hellenistic Jewish materials that are more readily available today. An investigation of Matthew's language, more or less similar to that by Jeremias (1980) on Luke, has long been overdue. This gap has been filled to a certain extent by the appearance of Schenk's book Die Sprache des Matthäus (1987). We will return to this later. First it is necessary to make some further introductory remarks with regard to the specific goal of this paper.

The question might arise why it should be deemed necessary to pay attention to Matthew's language in particular, as if the books of the New Testament were not all written in what is widely known as the koine-dialect. Although the latter is true, it is an undeniable fact that there are definite differences between the style and language usage of the various writers of the synoptic Gospels, not to mention John, Paul and some of the other writers of the New Testament. Matthew, for instance, has his own composition, characteristic narrative style, as well as a predilection for certain words and constructions. In his Gospel we for instance find long discourses, the so-called fulfilment citations, Matthew's use of the Old Testament, his use of narrative oppositions, his love of parallelisms, chiastic ring compositions and so forth. From these examples it becomes clear that Matthew's language is inextricably intertwined with his style and it will therefore be necessary to spell out how I see the

0254-8356/90 $4.00 © NTSSA
distinction between language and style. Another aspect of Matthew's language which deserves attention is the fact that he did not compose his Gospel freely, but made use of sources. These sources certainly influenced his language. Therefore his sources will also have to be discussed. 

In what follows I would first like to pay some attention to Matthew's sources before discussing certain aspects of his language. After that I will discuss some examples from his Gospel to show how he dealt with his sources and how his language usage, when using sources, agrees with or differs from his language usage in the Gospel as a whole. Hopefully the exercise may make a contribution towards proving the validity (or invalidity) of the two-source theory.

2 MATTHEW'S SOURCES

Although there is a fair amount of agreement among scholars with respect to the two-source theory, it is nevertheless being questioned all the time and therefore the theory also has its avid adversaries. Moreover there are also different forms of the two-source theory. It is therefore not only necessary to define the two-source theory more closely, but also to pay attention to a few other theories which have been propounded.

In brief the synoptic problem has been dealt with in one of two ways: either the authors made use of a common written source or sources or of a common oral tradition, or they made use of one another. Since the previous century the second alternative has been preferred by most scholars and the focus has been on the literary relationship among the three synoptic Gospels. Studies in this century have given preference to a literary solution, while the role of oral tradition has been neglected (cf Bellinzoni 1985:3f). Only since fairly recently have voices been heard again arguing that the place of oral tradition should be given more attention.

It falls outside the scope of this paper to provide a survey of various literary solutions to the synoptic problem — for that the reader is referred to Bellinzoni (1985) and Stein (1987). Nevertheless attention should again be drawn to the Augustinian model which claimed that Matthew was written prior to Mark. In this Augustine was followed by Griesbach (1745-1812), but there the similarity between the two ends, because whereas Augustine claimed that Mark depended on Matthew and that Luke depended on both Matthew and Mark, Griesbach claimed that Luke depended on Matthew and that Mark was dependent on both Matthew and Luke. The latter is the view which was again taken up in 1964 by Farmer and which today represents the strongest alternative to the two-source theory.

Besides scholars with the above-mentioned views of the synoptic problem there are scholars who believe that the problem is insoluble, those who believe that a more important role should be attributed to the influence of the oral tradition and those who, instead of a simple linear solution to the synoptic problem, suggest a more complex one, as a number of French scholars, such as Vaganay, Léon-Dufour, Boismard, Gaboury, do (cf Bellinzoni 1985:10f). The case for the priority of Mark has been based on five main arguments which I will briefly repeat here (cf Bellinzoni 1985:14f, also Stein 1987:45-88).

a) The argument from shared content: Matthew shares 90 per cent and Luke
55 per cent of Mark's subject matter, in language very similar to that of Mark.

b) The argument from wording: In passages contained in all three Gospels, either Matthew or Luke or both exhibit close verbal agreement with Mark.

c) The argument from order or sequence of incidents: the order of episodes in Mark is generally echoed in both Matthew and Luke. Where one of them departs from the Marcan order, the other usually agrees with Mark.

d) The argument from Mark's more original or more primitive character: Matthew and Luke have improved upon and refined Mark's language, style and grammar.

e) The argument from distribution of Marcan and non-Marcan material throughout Matthew and Luke: The way in which Marcan and non-Marcan material is distributed throughout Matthew and Luke suggests that each was working independently using Mark and material from other sources.

The cumulative weight of these arguments (and a few others — cf Stein 1987) argues strongly in favour of the priority of Mark.

The question whether the Mark used by Matthew and Luke was the same as the Mark we know, or whether it was an earlier version of 'Mark, a so-called Ur-Markus, is answered differently by different scholars. Some still see Ur-Markus as a possibility (cf Fitzmyer 1970), while others find the arguments in favour of the hypothesis unconvincing (cf Kümmel 1973). In general it seems as if the current trend among scholars who accept the two-source hypothesis is to do away with Ur-Markus and to see our Mark as the source of Matthew and Luke. Luz (1985:30), on the other hand, is of the opinion that Matthew and Luke made use of a recension of Mark which was in some aspects secondary to our Mark.

If there is a fair amount of agreement on the priority of Mark, the same is not quite true of the existence and form of the Q-source. It must be granted, however, that there is more agreement regarding the existence than the form of this hypothetical source. The discovery of the Gospel of Thomas which consists of 114 disconnected sayings of Jesus, at Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945, has proved once and for all that a source such as Q could have existed. The alternative to the Q hypothesis — that Luke used Matthew or vice versa — presents far greater problems than the assumption of a Q source. Whether Q was a single written source, a collection of several different fragments, a combination of written and oral traditions or various oral traditions is uncertain. Perhaps most scholars who accept the hypothesis would agree that Q must have been a written document, because of the verbal agreement as well as the Q sequence of the individual pericopes which is often retained in Matthew (cf Luz 1985:28f). An interesting suggestion is made by Luz (1985:29), namely that Q circulated in different recensions, and that QMt was closer to the 'common' form than QLk, which was most likely enlarged substantially. Luz thinks of Q as a large notebook bound together with strings on the margin, permitting an insertion of new leaves at any time.

The greatest obstacle in the way of the two-source hypothesis is the so-called minor agreements between Matthew and Luke. There are, however, several possible explanations for these and various suggestions have been made, such as that Matthew and Luke changed Mark independently in the same fashion, or that Luke knew Matthew (Morgenthaler), or that Matthew and Luke knew Mark in a different form than we (Luz).
Lastly there is the question of Matthew's special material (Sondergut). Here one can probably think of separate oral traditions which have only been put in writing by Matthew. In support of this is the fact that these sections exhibit notably more Matthean characteristics than the sections for which Matthew possibly utilised (written) sources (cf Luz 1985 and also the last section of this paper). Here and there the possibility of a continuous (written) source surfaces, for instance in the case of some parables and certain parts of the Sermon on the Mount.

In summary, it may be stated that the whole question of the two-source hypothesis and the use of sources remains open. Luz (1985:31) is of the opinion that the two-source hypothesis also stands the test of the investigation of the style. I am inclined to agree with this statement, particularly if style refers to grammatical style.

3 SOME GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF MATTHEW'S LANGUAGE

Being aware of the comprehensiveness of the concept style (cf Botha 1989), it is in no way my intention to try and discuss Matthew's style in this paper. On the other hand, I judge it impossible to discuss Matthew's language without touching on aspects of style. In fact, in my opinion Matthew's language should be seen as one of a number of aspects which collectively could be referred to as Matthew's style. In a recent doctoral thesis, Botha (1989) has pleaded for a more comprehensive view of style, which should include more than figures of speech, vocabulary, sentence structure and grammatical peculiarities, in short grammatical style. The latter approach has until very recently represented the 'traditional' way of understanding style. Although I agree wholeheartedly with a more comprehensive approach to style, the purpose of this paper is nevertheless to discuss some grammatical aspects of Matthean style.

First it is necessary to say something about the language in which Matthew was originally written. Some scholars (such as Lagrange and Torrey) have claimed that all four Gospels were originally written in Palestinian Aramaic. This is surely too extreme in view of the evidence of grammatical style (cf Turner 1976). Black (1967:271-274) suggested that at least some sources of the Gospels were at one point extant in Aramaic.

There seems to be some reason to believe that the apostle Matthew wrote an Aramaic Gospel which was later translated into Greek. Saint Jerome referred to a Gospel according to the Hebrews, which was written in Aramaic, as the original Matthew. This idea has recurred from time to time in the views of people such as Butler (1951) and Parker (1953). It has, however, been pointed out that it does not do justice to Matthew's style of Greek to suppose that it was a translation of Aramaic (cf Turner 1976:6). Goulde (1974:116) sees it in the following way:

The First Gospel was written in Greek, but its thought is Semitic: indeed at a number of points its thought is Aramaic rather than Hebrew. Two hypotheses might account for this. The evangelist might be a Greek-speaking Jew; or he might be retailing Aramaic traditions which had come to him in their original language, or in a literal Greek translation; or, of course, both.

While Black (1967) favoured the second view referred to in the previous
paragraph, Goulder (1974:121) favoured the first view, namely that Matthew was a Greek-speaking Jew, whose own personal Aramaic thinking manifests itself in his Greek. In spite of the Semitic nature of Matthew's thinking, his Greek is at the same time more educated than that of Mark, he has a wider vocabulary, he introduces the passive voice, and so forth.

Silva (1990:34) points out that among the scholars who discuss the style of the Gospels the subject of Semitic influence has played a prominent role (cf Turner 1976:31-44; cf also Black 1967; Goulder 1974:118-121 and Black 1988:215-233). He then also points out the difficulties in this field such as the problem of distinguishing between Hebrew and Aramaic and the question of what counts as legitimate evidence in the case of Aramaicisms. For the sake of completeness, I will nevertheless give a brief survey of the results of previous investigations (cf Turner 1976:31-44).

3.1 Aramaic influence

a) Matthew relieves the asyndeton in Mark on some 30 occasions, yet there are still 21 instances in Matthew's Marcan sections where Mark has no asyndeton.

b) The Semitic form of the reflexive in 23:31· (bear witness to yourselves) and 23:9D (do not call you), instances of the Aramaic ethic dative.

c) The adverbial πάλιν in the sense of the Aramaic tubh (then) in 4:8; 18:19; 22:4.

d) The redundant 'begin to' has been reduced by Matthew to six out of Mark's 26 instances, yet he still uses it on seven other occasions.

e) 'From that hour' in 9:22; 15:28; 17:18 is a rabbinical Aramaism.

f) The active impersonal plural in 5:15; 9:2; 17:27.

3.2 Hebraic influence

a) Sentence construction:

i) The anarthrous partitive expression as the object of a verb which is found in Mark is found independently in Matthew, for instance in 23:34 and 25:8.

ii) Prolepsis, of the subject of a subordinate clause occurs in the teaching of Jesus, for instance in 10:25 and 25:24.

b) The verb: Perhaps the Greek aorist, on occasions when the present tense might be more appropriate, is an unconscious substitute for the Hebrew stative perfect, for instance in 6:12; 10:25; 13:24; 14:31; 22:2; 23:2.

c) The noun:

i) Perhaps the omission of the definite article on occasions when normal Greek requires it, betrays the habit of thinking in terms of the construct state, for instance in 1:20; 2:13,19; 12:35,42.

ii) Sometimes the Hebrew idiom influenced the Greek writers towards a needless insertion of the article in order to denote a special person or object, for instance in 5:15; 12:12,24-27; 15:29; 18:19.

iii) Literal translation of the Hebrew infinitive absolute, is a Septuagintism, for instance in 2:10.

d) The negative: The strong negative οὐ μή is another Septuagintal feature, for instance in 5:18,20,26; 15:5; 16:22; 21:19,28; 24:2,21,34,35; 26:29,35.
3.3 Semitic influence (either Hebrew or Aramaic)

a) Sentence construction:

i) Parataxis. In this respect Matthew reduces Mark's style on 19 occasions by the substitution of a participle, for instance 8:3. The reverse process is, however, true in four cases, namely 14:6; 17:11; 21:12; 26:69.

ii) Casus pendens or resumptive pronoun: This is a genuine feature of Matthew's style, but all the examples are from the words of Jesus, for instance 13:38; 19:28; 24:13, etc.

iii) Questions as protasis of a conditional clause: 24:45 represents a possible example.

b) The verb:

i) Periphrastic tenses in Mark are nearly always changed in Matthew, but he leaves them unaltered in seven instances and also uses them in his other material.

ii) The auxiliary verb 'take' is very common in Matthew, who takes it over from Mark only four times, namely in 21:35,39; 26:26,27.

iii) The auxiliary 'come' is taken over from Mark in 9:18; 15:25; 26:43 and is used independently on several other occasions.

iv) Use of the impersonal plural is taken over from Mark and also used independently in 1:23; 5:15; 7:16; 9:17.

v) Matthew changes Mark's historic present 78 times, yet uses it 23 times in places where it does not occur in Mark.

c) The pronoun:

i) Substitutes for the indefinite pronoun (τις). Matthew retains Mark's ις on two occasions (19:16; 22:35), yet on three other occasions supplies one where Mark does not (21:19; 26:51; 27:48). Twice it is peculiar to Matthew. Other substitutes for the indefinite pronominal adjective are ἰνήρωμος (such as in 7:9; 12:11, etc) and ἰνήρ (such as 7:24,26).

ii) Superfluous pronoun. Instances of oblique cases of αὐτός occur throughout the Gospel, for instance in 1:2,11,18; 3:3,4,6,13; 5:2,25,32,45, etcetera.

iii) Resumptive pronoun after a relative. This Semitic feature, which is also found in Mark, is used independently by Matthew or taken over from Q (cf 3:12; 10:11D; 18:20D).

iv) Proleptic nominative pronoun. Used in Mark 6:17; 12:36,37, it is also added to a Marcan section in Matthew 3:4.

v) Distributive pronoun. Matthew retains some of Mark’s instances of ις...ις for one...another (20:21; 27:38) and also of Q (24:40,41), but leaves Q unaltered in 6:24 where Q has the normal Greek. In one place he alters Mark to less Semitic Greek (13:8).

vi) Reflexive pronoun. Like other New Testament authors, Matthew tends to use the simple pronoun where a reflexive would be more appropriate, for instance in 6:19; 17:27; 18:15, which might be due to Semitic influence.

d) Conjunctions. Epexegetical ἵνα: This occurs fairly often in Matthew, although Matthew tends to substitute an infinitive expression for Mark's ἵνα.

e) Prepositions. The use of the preposition πρὸς in 27:14 (πρὸς οὐδὲ ἐν ῥήµατι) is a Septuagintism and may belong to Jewish Greek (Turner 1976:36). On the whole Matthew is not as Septuagintal in style as Luke.
3.4 Relative Semitic quality of Matthew and Mark
On the question whether Matthew writes Greek of a less Aramaic quality than Mark and whether Matthew tends to soften the Semitisms in general, Turner (1976:37) has found that this is not always the case. In a number of instances Matthew in fact substitutes an expression with a normal Greek sound for one with a Semitic flavour, yet the contrary is also often true.

3.5 A smoother style than Mark’s
a) Particles. Matthew’s usage is the most considerable in the New Testament.
b) Change to less vernacular speech. Doubtful instances of this include the absence of ένα after a verb of command in 10:10 (unaltered in 16:20; 20:31), the removal of some of Mark’s favourite words such as immediately, again, adverbial πολλά and recitative ὅτι, the alteration of Mark’s imperfect and historic present to aorist, the change of voice and the alteration of a compound verb followed by the same preposition.

On the other hand, Matthew is sometimes quite vernacular in style. He is indifferent to the distinction between the definite and indeterminate relative pronouns ὁς and ὅστις. He is fond of using the genitive absolute, using it once to agree with the subject (1:18), but often substituting it for the participle in the dative (1:20; 8:28; 9:18; 18:24, etc).

More probable instances of Matthew’s changing Mark’s more vernacular speech include the substitution of ἔτι for εἰς and the replacing of πρὸς by a plain dative, avoiding ὅτων with indicative and ὅπου ἂν with indicative.

c) Avoidance of redundancy. In a number of instances Matthew seeks to avoid Mark’s repetition and prolixity of expression.
d) Avoidance of the graphic. Matthew often avoids Mark’s vivid and colourful descriptions, for example in 3:16; 4:1,18; 9:6,16, etc.

e) Systematic arrangement of material. Matthew favours certain didactic arrangements involving three, five, seven and 14, while the midrashic element is prominent.

3.6 Further grammatical characteristics of Matthew
a) Matthew has the habit of repeating a phrase within the scope of a short passage, never to use it again, for instance genitive absolute plus ‘behold’ is used three times in 2:1-19. For further examples see Turner 1976:41f.
b) The use of prepositions. An examination of the kind of prepositions Matthew uses and their relative frequency leads to the conclusion that Matthew is in a class with Hebrews, James, 1 Peter and Luke-Acts (cf Turner 1976:42 for details).
c) The use of other syntax:
i) Number. The use of pluralis categoriae in 2:23 and 27:44 (prophets and robbers, when only one prophet and robber is intended) should probably have been in the singular. Also 14:9; 21:7; 22:7; 28:9. Many crowds, which Matthew often uses, is his idiom for a great crowd.

In summary it may be said that the above-mentioned data clearly show...
that there are many inconsistencies in Matthew's language usage which make it difficult to form a coherent picture of his language. This cannot only be ascribed to his use of sources, since it has been indicated several times above that Matthew is not consistent in the changes he makes to his sources. One aspect which should be kept in mind is the matter of bilingualism at the time of the writing of the Gospel. To my mind the language of the Gospel clearly shows that the author knew Greek as well as Hebrew/Aramaic. Therefore the suggestion made by Goulder that the author was a Greek-speaking Jew has to be taken seriously. What Goulder does not spell out is that in a bilingual situation speakers are usually better versed in their mother tongue than in the second language, no matter how fluent they are in the latter.

4 MATTHEW'S VOCABULARY

The language of the evangelist might be described as synagogue Greek, on account of the following characteristics (cf Luz 1985:31f):

- It is more differentiated, polished and elevated than the language of Mark.
- It is sparser than that of Mark.
- It is repetitive.
- It is influenced by the LXX.
- It is Greek which is influenced by Jewish and sometimes rabbinical features.

Certain words may be distinguished as characteristic of Matthew. He has a vocabulary of some 1690 words, of which 112 are New Testament hapax. However, Matthew falls very low on the list of literary writers in the New Testament, judging by vocabulary.

The vocabulary characteristics of Matthew have often been pointed out. The way in which 'characteristic' is defined differs however. Let us briefly survey some of the most important work which has been done in this area.

In his list Hawkins (1909:3) takes as characteristic words or phrases which occur at least four times in Matthew and which are either not found in Mark or Luke at all, or which are found in Matthew at least twice as often as in Mark and Luke together. He proceeds to distinguish 95 such words and phrases. Matthew distinguishes other peculiar and common characteristics in chapters 1-2 of Matthew.

In view of certain weakpoints of Hawkins' methods, Gaston (1973:1) has deemed it necessary to do his work all over again, this time with the help of a computer. Accordingly Gaston points out that one should distinguish between those cases where a redactor has simply taken over a word from a source and those in which he has written it of his own accord, as it is clear that the latter cases are the most significant for the preferences of the later writers (1). He further deems it not only important to know how often a word has been added to a source, but also how often the later writers have refrained from copying a word (1). He also wants to take some account of an important development since Hawkins' time, namely form criticism. He then goes on to work with the categories Mk, Q, Q Mt, Q Lk, M and L, although he says that Q, M, L, etcetera represent only the situa-
tion with respect to the presence of parallelism and are not meant to de-
signate possible sources (4).

Goulder (1974) distinguishes between Matthean and semi-Matthean words. The Matthean words are those pointed out by Hawkins together with a number of others which he included as coming close to his criteria, as well as a few expressions which meet the criteria, but are not on Hawkins' list (1974:476). Semi-Matthean words are those which meet one or both of the following two criteria: Either they occur twice as often in Matthew as in Mark and more often than in Luke; or they are inserted redactionally by Matthew into an agreed Marcan context or Old Testament citation.

Gundry (1982) states: 'In examining the way Matthew uses Mark and the materials shared only with Luke, we discover the outstanding features of his style' (2). With regard to statistics concerning word frequency he grants that the way we appraise their significance will depend on our view of the synoptic problem (3). If Matthew wrote first, we might assign words appearing with special frequency in his Gospel to the tradition that came to him. But if Mark wrote first and Matthew and Luke used Mark and shared another tradition, such words signal Matthew's editorial work. Where Matthew inserts words in paralleled material his fondness for the words inserted is clear. Unparalleled passages may either be attributed to un-shared, but edited tradition, or to the evangelist himself, in which case he would naturally use his pet expressions. This viewpoint also favours insertion by Matthew in material shared only with Luke, although statistics occasionally point in the opposite direction (3). Gundry comes to the following conclusions on the basis of the foregoing comments:

Both Matthew and Luke used Mark and non-Marcan tradition. The shared non-Marcan tradition included not only the material usually designated Q, but also the nativity story and some of the materials usually regarded as peculiar to Matthew (M) and Luke (L). In other words Q included more than is usually believed, but at times Matthew redacted it so freely that his drawing on Q has gone unrecognized and separate traditions have wrongly been posited.

The appearance of Mattheanisms in Luke is explained by Gundry as Luke's using Matthew as an overlay on his primary sources. According to him the minor agreements between Matthew and Luke may also be explained along the same lines (5). At the end of his book Gundry supplies a list of word-statistics where he distinguishes between the number of Matthean insertions in paralleled material, the number of occurrences in passages peculiar to Matthew and the number of occurrences shared with one or both of the other two synoptics.

Luz (1985:35-53) also supplies a list of characteristic words in Matthew, which, according to him, contains all vocables which result in a significant redactional finding. He is of the opinion that both Goulder and Gundry's lists contain far too many words. He also gives a separate list of words which Matthew reluctantly takes over from Mark (54-55). A case in point is the word αἰθόυς which occurs in Mark 41 times, but only five times in Matthew.

On the basis of the vocabulary list, Luz (56) draws the following conclusions:

1) Matthew deals relatively freely with Marcan redaction, but on the whole he accepts the Marcan redactional wording.
2) Matthew improves Marcan Greek in many instances, but rarely as consistently as Luke.

3) Neither Aramaisms nor Latinisms are consistently eliminated.

Lastly we may mention Schenk's book on the language of Matthew. In his book Schenk lists the 1691 vocabulary words or lexemes in Matthew alphabetically. He attempts to analyse these lexical elements in their syntactical relations throughout the Matthean word-field so that each word can be seen within its larger textual relations. He strives to move from the micro-syntactical level of sign-clusters to the macro-syntactical level of textual clusters. He describes the purpose of the book as follows:

Zielpunkt ist eine kommunikativ-äquivalente Übersetzung...inssofern stellt die Darbietung dieses Handbuchs die Teilarbeit eines Kommentars dar; sein Ziel ist es, den Quellentext als strukturiertes Material für weiterführende Einzelforschungen bereitzustellen (1).

Although Schenk has been criticised on various points of his presentation (cf. for instance Becker 1988 and Burnett 1989), his book is nevertheless an invaluable workbook on Matthew which goes beyond existing works by giving word-clusters and summaries of the most current and important exegetical discussions.

To summarise this section we may say that a considerable amount of work has been done towards establishing the Matthean preferential vocabulary. This work may be seen as an invaluable tool for the Matthean scholar. Especially in the field of source criticism and redaction criticism, this vocabulary may provide the scholar with valuable insights and help him/her to make important decisions, as is obvious from the discussion of Gundry and Luz above. On a different level, in the trend of intertextuality which seems to be gaining popularity among New Testament scholars, such a list may prove to lead to valuable insights (cf. for instance Van Tilborg's [1989] discussion of Mt 23:3-10; cf also Vorster's [1989] discussion of intertextuality and redaction criticism).

In working with the vocabulary of the evangelists one can on the other hand not ignore the qualifications mentioned by Silva (1990: 28f). They are that one must take into account the relative length of the Gospels, that high lexical frequencies may reflect the special content of a book rather than the distinctive style of the author, the literary dependence among the evangelists, and that lexical items should not be treated in isolation from other items with which they are semantically associated, but that an effort must be made to identify networks of terms that occupy the same semantic field or domain.

5 SOME EXAMPLES OF MATTHEW'S LANGUAGE USAGE

I will now discuss a few passages from Matthew in order to demonstrate his way of dealing with his proposed sources. Unfortunately space does not allow me to take into consideration all the grammatical details that have been pointed out in this paper, therefore I will only concentrate on Matthew's vocabulary. The question I want to pose is whether it is obvious from Matthew's vocabulary that he used sources or composed freely. What it boils down to is whether the two-source hypothesis can be proved from the evidence of the vocabulary. I prefer to work with Luz's vocabulary list in
view of the fact that he criticises the lists prior to his own as containing more than the truly significant vocables (1985:35). The passages which are discussed have been chosen at random and with only two criteria in mind, namely length and parallel material, in order to find passages of equal length which are paralleled in Mark and Luke, then paralleled in Luke only and, lastly, material which occurs in Matthew only. I am aware that statistical information can be easily misused, but on the other hand that is no reason to avoid it, as long as one is aware of the relativity of the results obtained.

5.1 Matthew 8:14-15 (par Mk 1:29-31; Lk 4:38-39)
In this passage, which deals with the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and which Matthew has supposedly taken over from Mark, the first thing which occurs to the reader is that Matthew has abbreviated the passage, as he has so often done with Mark's narrative sections, so that Mark's 44 words become only 30 in Matthew. Of the 30 words in Matthew eight are from Luz's list of vocabulary preferred by Matthew. That gives a percentage of 27% (to the nearest percentage). The words are:

έλθεν, with a synoptic incidence of 34, 14, 13
Τοσούς (152, 82, 88)
εἰς (218, 168, 226)
δρᾶω (72, 50, 81)
βάλλω (34, 18, 18)
ἀπω (9, 11, 13)
δαίμονι (47, 34, 31)
ἐγείρω (36, 19, 18).

Taking into account the fact that Matthew might have been bound to his source, one has to look at the number of Matthean words which also occur in Mark. In this case the number is three, namely ἔρχομαι (although not in the same form: Mark has ἥλθεν, Matthew has ἔλθεν), εἰς and δαίμονι. This means that out of a total of 30 words Matthew has included five of his own preferential words, while he has also taken over three of the same from his source.

5.2 Matthew 6:24 (par Lk 16:13)
This passage, the saying on God and Mammon, is paralleled only in Luke and therefore was supposedly taken from Q. Matthew's version is almost exactly the same length as Luke's: Matthew 27, Luke 28. The number of words from Matthew's preferential vocabulary is seven, that is 26%. They are (with the synoptic incidence in brackets):

δύω (40, 18, 28)
κύριος (80, 18, 104)
γὰρ (123, 64, 97)
ἡ twice (68, 33, 45)
eἷς twice (66, 44, 45).

In a passage of more or less the same length as the previous one (5:1) the number of Matthean preferential words is more or less the same. What is
interesting here is that in this case all seven Matthean words seem to have occurred also in Q (cf Polag's version of Q [1982]).

5.3 Matthew 13:44 (unparalleled)
This passage, the parable of the treasure, is part of Matthew's Sondergut (special material). It contains roughly the same number of words as the two passages discussed previously, namely 31. But now the number of Matthean preferential words is more than double that of the previous two passages, namely 17. The percentage of Matthean words is now 55%. The words are:

όμοιος (9, 0, 9)
βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (32, 0, 0)
θησαυρός (9, 1, 4)
κρύπτα twice (12, 1, 5)
ἀγρός twice (17, 9, 10)
εὐρίσκω (27, 11, 45)
ἀνθυμοποι (116, 56, 95)
ἀπό (115, 48, 125)
χαρά (6, 1, 8)
ὑπάγω (19, 15, 5)
πάντα ὡσα (6, 3, 2)
ἐκεῖνος (56, 27, 37).

A noticeable increase in Matthean words thus occurs in a passage where no parallel to the Matthean material is known to us. This seems to support the theory that this material was only put into writing by Matthew, who naturally would be more inclined to use his favourite expressions in such material.

5.4 Matthew 9:32-24/Matthew 12:22-24
Lastly I want to look at two passages from Matthew which are so-called doublets, namely Matthew 9:32-34 and 12:22-24. The first passage deals with the healing of a dumb man and contains 39 words, of which 14 (36%) are Matthean preferential words. (Note that verse 34 is text-critically suspect because it is a Western non-interpolation. It contains two Matthean words, without which the number of Matthean words in the story comes to 12 out of 27 words or 44%). The Matthean words are:

ἴδοὺ (62, 7, 57)
προσφέρω (15, 3, 4)
ἀνθρωπος (116, 56, 95)
δαμασκίνιον (7, 4, 1)
θαμμάκω (7, 4, 13)
ἄχλου (28, 0, 17)
λέγω twice (505, 291, 534)
οὐδέποτε (5, 2, 2)
φαίνω (13, 2, 2)
οὕτως (32, 10, 21)
Ἰσραήλ (12, 2, 12)
δέ (495, 164, 543).
Matthew 12:22-24 deals with the healing of a deaf and dumb man and contains 47 words, of which 19 (40%) are Matthean words (two in combination, namely οὕτως ἐστίν and νῦν Δαυίδ. They are:

tóte with finite verb (65, 3, 11)
προσφέρω before αὐτῷ (9, 2, 1)
διαμονίζομαι (7, 4, 1)
tυφλός (17, 5, 8)
θεραπεύω (16, 5, 14)
ὁστε (15, 13, 4)
βλέπω (20, 15, 15)
πᾶς (129, 68, 157)
δρακον (28, 0, 17)
λέγω (505, 291, 534)
οὕτως ἐστίν (13, 2, 3)
νῦν Δαυίδ (9, 3, 4)
dε (495, 164, 543)
Φαρίσαῖος (30, 12, 27)
ἀκούω (63, 46, 65)
eἰπον (179, 80, 293)
oὕτως (149, 79, 229).

With regard to parallel material, it is noteworthy that Luke does not contain anything exactly similar to either of these two stories, but does contain something partly similar to both in Luke 11:14-15. Luke's story corresponds to Matthew 12:22-24 in being presented as the occasion of the defensive discourse in Matthew 12 and Luke 11, but on the other hand it more closely resembles Matthew 9:32-34 in wording. Apart from that, Mark 3:22 contains something similar to Matthew 9:32, 12:24 and Luke 11:15 (the accusation that Jesus drives out demons by the prince of the devils), but in a different context.

5.5 Conclusion
So let us summarise what we have found with regard to the occurrence of Matthean words in Matthew's material:

When using Mark: 27%
When using Q: 26%
Sondergut: 55%
Doublets: 36% and 40%

Knowing full well that these examples are too few to be accorded real scientific meaning, they nevertheless in my view illustrate a trend in Matthew's way of dealing with his sources which might prove helpful to the scholar interested in historical aspects of the text for the purpose of determining Matthew's sources and redaction. Furthermore, the few examples discussed do not seem to point away from the two-source theory. On the contrary, if anything, they seem to support the theory.
WORKS CONSULTED


Dr J Engelbrecht, Department of New Testament, University of South Africa, P O Box 392, Pretoria, 0001 Republic of South Africa.