

The Syntax of 1 Peter: Just How Good Is the Greek?

KAREN H. JOBES
WESTMONT COLLEGE

The Greek of 1 Peter is almost unanimously viewed as being the quality of a highly-educated native Greek writer. This study applies a quantitative analysis of the syntax of 1 Peter in comparison to that of Polybius, Josephus, 1 Thessalonians, and Hebrews 5–9, showing that there is a significant degree of Semitic interference in 1 Peter. The study concludes that 1 Peter was probably written by a Semitic speaker for whom Greek was a second language.

Key Words: syntax criticism, bi-lingualism, linguistic interference, 1 Peter, Polybius, Josephus, 1 Thessalonians, Hebrews, descriptive statistics, authorship, rhetoric

One of the weightiest arguments against Peter's authorship of 1 Peter is that the Greek of the epistle is just too good for an uneducated Galilean fisherman to have written.¹ Scholars who accept pseudonymous authorship opt for an anonymous author of the Petrine circle in Rome, or perhaps a Christian elder in Asia Minor. Scholars who wish to defend Peter as the author often propose his use of an amanuensis, perhaps even Silas (5:12), writing under the direction of the apostle.²

Therefore, the quality of the Greek of 1 Peter seems to be recognized by both sides of the authorship debate as being too good for Peter himself to have written. This opinion involves many assumptions that need to be reconsidered critically from time to time as more knowledge of the presence of Greek in Galilee becomes available. There seems to be a presumption that Galilean fishermen were uneducated,

1. Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermenia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); John H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (AB 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000). For a detailed discussion of elements of the language of 1 Peter, see Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 2–9.

2. Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988).

and relative to other segments of the population, this assumption is probably more true than not. However, the further assumption that only formally educated people can develop a high level of proficiency in a second language probably rings truer to North Americans, who by-and-large acquire a second language through formal academic courses, than it does to pockets of the population, mostly in the borderlands, who live in societies that are in practice bilingual. In these areas, even formally uneducated people can develop a relatively high level of proficiency, especially if exposed to the second language early in life.

Currently available evidence is inconclusive about how pervasive the Greek language was in Galilee, and particularly in that crossroads town of Capernaum, hometown of the fisherman-turned-apostle.³ Recent archeological evidence from the excavation of Sepphoris has indicated that despite its primarily Jewish population, the Greek culture and language may have had more of a presence in Galilee than previously recognized, though its extent is still highly contested.⁴ Corresponding to the debated prevalence of the Greek language in Galilee is the prevalence of use of the Septuagint. Previous to recent archaeological work at Sepphoris, Josephus gave the impression that very few Palestinian Jews of his day spoke Greek well, and that acquisition of good Greek proficiency was looked down upon.⁵ Based on such information, the use of the Septuagint in Palestine was thought to be minimal at best. However, Josephus also mentions that ordinary freedmen and even slaves could acquire skill in the Greek language if they so desired.⁶ Moreover, the use of Greek for public announcements in Palestine and on ossuaries from the vicinity of Jerusalem attests, according to Fitzmyer, "to the widespread use of Greek among first-century Palestinian Jews at all levels of society."⁷ Fitzmyer cites the discovery of many documentary papyri written in Greek in Palestine between the two Jewish revolts (A.D. 70–135), including most surprisingly a letter from Bar-Kokhba to his lieutenants—written in Greek!⁸ Fitzmyer follows C. F. D. Moule, who understood the Hellenists referred to in Acts as those who spoke only

3. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine," *A Wandering Aramean* (Mishoul: Scholars Press, 1979) 29–56.

4. Richard A. Batey, "Sepphoris and the Jesus Movement," *NTS* 46 (2001) 402–9, and "Sepphoris: An Urban Portrait of Jesus," *BAR* (May/June 1992) 50–62; Mark Chancey, "The Cultural Milieu of Ancient Sepphoris," *NTS* 47 (2001) 127–45.

5. Cited by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Did Jesus Speak Greek?" *BAR* (Sept/Oct 1992) 58–63.

6. *Ibid.*, 59.

7. *Ibid.*, 59–60. Also J. N. Sevenster, cited by Moisés Silva, "Bilingualism and the Character of Palestinian Greek," *Bib* 61/2 (1980) 215.

8. Fitzmyer, *Wandering*, 36.

or primarily Greek.⁹ Fitzmyer also lists the numerous hints in the Gospels that Jesus himself—who was arguably not better educated than Peter—spoke Greek.¹⁰

Although Peter is described in Acts 4:13 as ἀγράμματος (*agrammatos*, “uneducated”), in that context the adjective probably means that because Peter had had no formal rabbinic training his theological statements astounded those who had.¹¹ As Achtemeier points out, because Peter’s fishing business was located in the crossroads town of Capernaum, it would have brought him into daily contact with foreigners, and conversation with them would have been conducted most likely in the common language of Greek. The Greek name of Peter’s brother, Ἀνδρέας (*Andreas*, Andrew) may suggest some Greek influence even within his own family (John 1:40). Moreover, just as missionaries today make great efforts to learn the language of the people to whom they are called, Peter could certainly have developed greater proficiency in Greek in the decades between Jesus’ death and his own, understanding the importance of proclaiming the gospel in the language and style of the lingua franca of the empire. Some such education was apparently available even in Palestine if Josephus could claim that ordinary freedmen and even slaves could learn Greek if they chose to do so. And if Peter spent extensive time in Rome or another large city—a highly debated point—certainly he could have availed himself of the opportunities for developing proficiency in Greek there.

If it can be assumed that Peter began as a disciple of Christ with some proficiency in Greek, the question concerning authorship of 1 Peter really becomes: could someone like Peter have developed proficiency in Greek writing to the level exhibited in the epistle? And therefore, the question of just how “good” the Greek of 1 Peter is takes center stage. It is at this point that the definition of “good” needs to be objectified. Although there are many elements of the text of 1 Peter that bear consideration, one point directly relevant to the authorship issue is whether the Greek of 1 Peter shows signs that it was written by a native Greek speaker or by someone for whom Greek was a second language. The concept of linguistic interference is helpful here. Linguistic, or dynamic, interference

occurs when features from one language are transferred temporarily into the other language. Interference can occur at any level of language (syntax, phonology, vocabulary) and in either written or spoken language. One example of dynamic interference would be a

9. C. F. D. Moule, “Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?” *ExpTim* 70 (1958–59) 100–102.

10. Fitzmyer, *Wandering*, 37; also Batey, *Sepphoris*, 406.

11. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 7.

native English speaker who also has some competence in French using the word *librairie* to mean library whereas it means bookshop¹²

In his discussion of bilingualism in first-century Palestine, Moisés Silva cites linguistic studies of modern situations analogous to that of first-century Palestine¹³ In the northeastern region of Spain, Spanish has been imposed as the official language upon a population whose native language is Catalan The study of linguistic interference between the two languages by A M Badia-Margarit concluded that "cultured Catalans cannot generally prevent a series of characteristic features of their natural language from appearing in their Spanish"¹⁴ A second study of the interference between Welsh and English concludes similarly that the English spoken by native Welsh speakers contains a superabundance of features which are possible and comprehensible in English but reflect characteristics of their native language This concept of linguistic interference led Moulton to conclude that

the ordinary Greek speech or writing of men whose native language was Semitic brought into prominence locutions, correct enough as Greek, but which would have remained in comparatively rare use but for the accident of their answering to Hebrew or Aramaic phrases¹⁵

Therefore, Greek writings known to have been produced by native Semitic speakers can be compared to those known to have been written by native Greek speakers and the relative frequency of occurrence of certain elements of style and syntax can be examined for indication of linguistic interference

Opinion about the quality of the Greek of 1 Peter is apparently often based on the subjective feel of the text, as there have been no *quantitative* analyses of the Greek syntax of 1 Peter in comparison to other books of the NT or to other Greek texts This study compares certain elements of the syntax of 1 Peter with that of other writings to gain some perspective on the relative quality of the Greek of 1 Peter This study is not an attempt to defend or refute Peter's authorship of the epistle or an attempt to identify his alleged amanuensis It is simply an attempt to bring some objective, quantitative perspective to the question of the quality of the syntax of 1 Peter in comparison with other Greek texts, specifically other NT books, Josephus, and Polybius

12 C Baker and S Prys Jones, *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education* (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1998) 58

13 Silva, "Bilingualism," 198–219

14 Ibid., 214

15 Quoted in *ibid.*, 202–3

Of course, when we speak of proficiency in a language, syntax is only one indicator of the linguistic proficiency of a writer, and quantitative analysis should not end there. The rhetorical elements of 1 Peter are most often cited as revealing that the author "had enjoyed some level of formal education; if not an 'advanced' education in rhetoric or philosophy, and least a 'middle' education."¹⁶ It is argued that 1 Peter exhibits the formal elements of the rhetorical structure of deliberative or epideictic oration.¹⁷ While this may be true, it is also true that all well-structured arguments, even in contemporary English, could be expected to exhibit structural contours similar to those taught in formal Greek rhetoric because universal principles of logic underlie the structure of a good presentation. All thoughtful speakers or writers introduce their presentation in a way that is intended to engage the audience, then state the context for their argument in general terms, then in increasingly specific terms that get to the heart of the issue. Most provide a concluding summary that is intended to help the audience remember, and perhaps act upon, what they have heard or read. Labeling those contours with Latin names—*exordium*, *narratio*, and so on—does not prove that the author of such a text was deliberately following the outline of formal Greek oration.

On the other hand, the text of 1 Peter does indeed exhibit some elements of rhetorical ornamentation, though not nearly as much as the book of Hebrews does. Achtemeier points out series of words with similar sounds, accumulation of synonyms, the use of anaphora, antithetic and synthetic parallelism, coordinate parallel expressions first negative, then positive, rhythmic structure, and the frequent use of conjunctive participles and relative clauses.¹⁸ However, the claim that these features demonstrate formal training in rhetoric must also, of course, be critically evaluated.

So while an analysis of syntax does not settle the question of just how good the Greek of 1 Peter is, syntax is nevertheless a good place to start. The advantage of analysis that starts at the syntactical level is that syntax generally operates for most writers at an unconscious level that flows from their proficiency with a language, and therefore provides an indicator of proficiency unencumbered by the more deliberate structures of content. Moreover, as the studies cited above show, it is at the level of syntax that interference from a native language frequently and prominently occurs. Therefore, syntactical analysis is

16. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 4.

17. Lauri Thurén, *The Rhetorical Strategy of 1 Peter* (Åbo: Åbo Academy, 1990), and *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis* (JSNTSup 114; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Barth L. Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (SBLDS 160; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

18. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 3.

useful in showing whether or not the Greek of 1 Peter shows evidence of Semitic interference that is consistent with what would be expected from a bilingual author whose native language was Aramaic. If it could be determined with some certainty that the Greek of 1 Peter shows Semitic interference at the syntactical level, the possibilities for authorship would at least be circumscribed.

The quantitative methodology used in this study was developed in my doctoral dissertation to facilitate a direct comparison of the syntax of the Greek texts of the Septuagint.¹⁹ Without modification it can be applied to any Greek text, enabling both a graphic profile of the given text to be produced and a numeric quantification of the character of its syntax overall (its S-number). The S-number positions the text on a scale that represents literary texts composed in Greek at one end and texts translated from Hebrew into Greek at the other.

Syntax criticism was a methodology originally formulated by Raymond Martin in *Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Greek Documents*.²⁰ Martin identified seventeen syntactical criteria which he believed indicated Semitic interference in Greek and which therefore could be used to distinguish Greek translated from a Semitic source from composition Greek:

- Criteria 1–8. The relative frequency of occurrence of eight prepositions with respect to the preposition ἐν: (1) διὰ with the genitive, (2) διὰ in all its occurrences, (3) εἰς, (4) κατά with the accusative, (5) κατά in all occurrences, (6) περὶ in all occurrences, (7) πρός with the dative, (8) ὑπό with the genitive
- Criterion 9. The relative frequency of occurrence of καί coordinating independent clauses with respect to δέ
- Criterion 10. The percentage of articles separated from their substantives
- Criterion 11. The relative frequency of occurrence of dependent genitives preceding the word on which they depend
- Criterion 12. The relative frequency of occurrence of dependent genitive personal pronouns
- Criterion 13. The relative frequency of occurrence of genitive personal pronouns dependent upon anarthrous substantives
- Criterion 14. The relative frequency of occurrence of attributive adjectives preceding the word they qualify

19. Karen H. Jobes, *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text* (SBLDS 153; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 29–47.

20. Raymond Martin, *Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Greek Documents* (Cambridge, Mass.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974).

- Criterion 15. The relative frequency of occurrence of attributive adjectives
- Criterion 16. The relative frequency of occurrence of adverbial participles
- Criterion 17. The relative frequency of occurrence of the dative case used without the preposition *ἐν*

Martin's approach has been criticized with the claim that all of the elements he identifies as indicators of Semitic interference can and do occur in Greek written by native speakers. That criticism misunderstands the concept of linguistic interference, which looks for elements of syntax in the second language that happen to be congruent with elements of the speaker's/writer's first language, but occur with statistically greater frequency in speech or a text than would be expected of native speakers/writers. Other criticisms of Martin's approach have to do with the effectiveness of individual criterion as indicators of Semitic interference and Martin's use of "raw" frequency counts rather than statistical averages, which appear to make his conclusions arbitrary.²¹ My methodology overcomes some of the weaknesses in Martin's analyses by applying some simple descriptive statistics that facilitate direct comparison of the relative frequency of occurrence of each criterion in a text as well as comparison of its overall syntax as characterized by the criteria with the overall syntax of other texts.²² Additional elements of syntax that would be useful as indicators of Semitic interference could be identified, and should be, if the methodology of syntax criticism is to advance.²³ To this end, studies of the translation technique exhibited by the various books of the Septuagint would provide a wealth of such information. In addition to identifying additional elements of syntax that would indicate Semitic interference, further testing of each criterion should be done to see how reliable an indicator of interference it is, for one could imagine that there may be motivation other than Semitic interference that affects the frequency of occurrence of a given element of syntax.

The methodology I developed from Martin's approach is useful for seeing how the syntax of a given Greek text compares with others along the scale of "composition" Greek at one end (i.e., Greek composed by Greek speakers with native proficiency) to "translation" Greek at the other (i.e., Greek translated from a Semitic source, for

21. E. C. Maloney, Review of *Syntax Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels* in CBQ 51 (1989) 379; S. Farris, cited in R. A. Martin, *Syntax Criticism of Johannine Literature, the Catholic Epistles, and the Gospel Passion Accounts* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1989) 169.

22. Jobes, *Alpha-Text of Esther*, 40–47.

23. E. C. Maloney offers some additional criteria in his *Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax* (SBLDS 51; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981).

which Semitic interference is clearly exhibited). For the purpose of graphing the profile of a text on a numerical axis, -1 represents the norm for composition Greek for each of the 17 criteria and $+1$ represents the norm for translation Greek for each of the 17 criteria. The norm for each of the two poles was calculated by examining the frequency of occurrence of each of the 17 criteria in texts known to have been composed by highly proficient Greek writers, namely, passages from Plutarch's *Lives* (325 lines); Polybius, *Histories*, bks. 1 and 2 (192 lines); Epictetus, *Discourses*, bks. 3 and 4 (138 lines), passages from Josephus's *Contra Apionem* and *Antiquitates* (215 lines), and selected documentary papyri (630 lines).²⁴ The norm for translation Greek was calculated by examining the frequency of occurrence of the 17 criteria in 3,415 lines of text from books of the Septuagint (Genesis, 1 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, both Greek versions of Daniel, and Ezra) for which Hebrew source texts are extant and for which Semitic interference from the source can be demonstrated. The average frequency of occurrence of the 17 criteria as found in the two groups of texts was used to define two norms, one for composition Greek and one for translation Greek, which were then normalized to $+1$ and -1 , respectively, forming a scale on which the syntax numbers of other texts can be positioned, thereby forming a quantitative basis of comparison.

A Greek text under study, such as the alpha-text of Esther in my dissertation work or the epistle of 1 Peter in this present study, can then be examined for the frequency of occurrence of each of the 17 syntactical criteria, and the value of each of the 17 criteria plotted on the numerical scale to yield the text's profile. A numeric representation of the overall syntax of a given text can be represented by the normalized average of those 17 values, a number referred to as a text's S-number. The S-number of a given text can then be compared with the norms for composition or translation Greek, as well as with the S-numbers of other texts. The position of the value of each of the criterion on the scale indicates whether that element of syntax occurs in frequencies that tend toward composition Greek or translation Greek—that is, showing Semitic interference. The value of the S-number relative to that of other texts shows the same tendency in the syntax of the text overall. This methodology allows any one of the 17 criteria to be compared across various texts. For instance, one could compare the relative frequency of occurrence of *καί* with respect to *δέ* in the alpha-text of Esther as compared with OG Daniel, as compared with 1 Peter, and so on. Furthermore, a comparison of the overall syntax of a text compared with others can be made simply by comparing their S-numbers.

24. See Martin, *Syntactical Evidence*, 18.

A text written by an author whose Greek syntax is influenced by either a Semitic source text or by interference from a native Semitic language would be expected to use the elements of syntax identified as criteria with a relative frequency that would fall heavily on the scale between 0 and +1 or higher. A text by an author with no such Semitic influence would exhibit traits that fall heavily on the scale between 0 and -1 or lower.

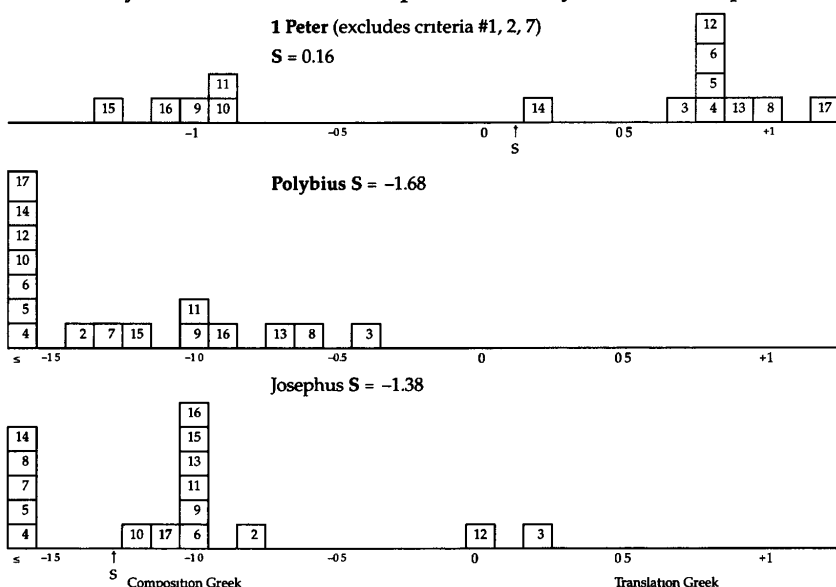
THE SYNTACTICAL PROFILE OF 1 PETER

When the text of 1 Peter was examined, only 14 of the 17 syntactical criteria occurred in sufficient frequency to be included in the profile (criteria #1, 2, and 7 were excluded).²⁵ Of the 14 criteria relevant to 1 Peter, 9 clearly fall on the side of the scale showing Semitic influence (##3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 17). Five clearly fall on the "composition" side of the scale (##9, 10, 11, 15, and 16; see graph 1). Criteria ##3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 show that the use of prepositions in 1 Peter has probably been influenced by Semitic syntax. The one preposition $\epsilon\upsilon$ represents several relationships that are expressed by a variety of Greek prepositions. However, $\epsilon\upsilon$ is most frequently translated $\epsilon\upsilon$ in the Septuagint. Therefore, a relatively high frequency of occurrence of the preposition $\epsilon\upsilon$ as compared with texts composed by native-proficiency speakers is understood to be an indicator of Semitic interference. In comparison with 1 Peter, the use of prepositions in Polybius is the Greek of an educated, native Greek speaker, and the values of criteria ##2-8 fall heavily on the scale in the negative range (see graph 1). Even Josephus, a significant point of comparison because of his Galilean origins, uses the Greek prepositions more as a native Greek speaker than does the author of 1 Peter, with the exception of $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ (criterion #3). This suggests that Josephus had mastered the use of Greek prepositions to near native proficiency, but indicates that his Greek did exhibit signs of Semitic interference. Since prepositions are notoriously the most difficult element of a new language to master, this is one indication that the syntax of 1 Peter reflects an author whose native language is not Greek.

Criterion #12, the frequency of occurrence of dependent genitive personal pronouns, and criterion #13, the frequency of occurrence of genitive personal pronouns dependent upon anarthrous substantives, occur with a relative frequency in 1 Peter that also reflects Semitic interference. Martin explains the rationale for criterion #12:

25. See Jobes, *Alpha-Text of Esther*, 33-34, for a chart of the minimum number of occurrences of each criterion needed for analysis based on that criterion to be statistically valid.

Graph 1:
The Syntax of 1 Peter in Comparison to Polybius and Josephus



The numbers in the boxes refer to criterion number. The position of the box on the axis indicates the normalized value of the relative frequency of occurrence for that criterion. For instance, the normalized value of criterion #3 is 0.7 for 1 Peter, -0.4 for Polybius, and 0.2 for Josephus. If the normalized value of every criterion equaled the norm for composition Greek, all of the boxes for these texts would pile up over -1. The data for Polybius and Josephus come from R. Martin, *Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Greek Documents* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974).

The genitive personal pronoun is expressed in Hebrew and Aramaic by pronominal suffixes attached directly to the substantive. This suffix must be repeated with each word in a series—he sold his horse, his cow, his cart and his plow. This practice is in contrast to Greek style which often omits the genitive personal pronoun, or uses it only once in a series, or uses a possessive adjective in its place.²⁶

He describes the rationale for criterion #13:

In Semitic languages a noun with a pronominal suffix cannot normally also have an article. It is, by way of contrast, the regular practice in Greek for the substantive to have the article whenever a genitive pronoun depends upon it.²⁷

The Greek writer influenced by these elements of Semitic syntax tends to use a greater number of dependent genitive personal pro-

26. Martin, *Syntactical Evidence*, 76.

27. *Ibid.*, 28.

nouns as well as a greater number that are dependent on anarthrous substantives. This is certainly the pattern in 1 Peter, where the frequency of occurrence of both criteria #12 and #13 clearly fall on the "translation" end of the scale (see graph 1). In comparison, Polybius uses the style of native speakers, since criteria #12 and #13 have values well below -0.5. Josephus, however, uses dependent genitive personal pronouns in a way that tends toward Semitic syntax, though not nearly with the frequency of the author of 1 Peter (see graph 1).

The position of attributive adjectives (criterion #14) in 1 Peter also indicates Semitic interference.

In Hebrew always and in Aramaic generally an attributive adjective follows the word it qualifies and the Greek translator will usually retain this word order. In original Greek style however, the attributive adjective precedes as often or more often; that is, Greek style usually prefers the first attributive position.²⁸

Attributive adjectives in 1 Peter actually more often precede the word being qualified (22×) than follow it (16×). But there are enough following adjectives to bring this criterion into the range of the scale indicating Semitic interference. Even with the number of adjectives preceding, their frequency of occurrence in 1 Peter when compared with Josephus and Polybius, where criterion #14 is off the scale, shows a clear difference in the positioning of adjectives between Josephus and Polybius on the one hand, and 1 Peter on the other.

Finally, the lower relative frequency of the dative case used *without* the preposition ἐν (criterion #17) also indicates a Semitic influence in the syntax of 1 Peter. In Hebrew and Aramaic, the dative, locative, and instrumental sense are often expressed with the preposition כִּי, which is most often translated into Greek with the preposition ἐν. In native Greek composition these ideas are often represented by the dative alone or by the use of some other preposition. Therefore, a higher frequency of ἐν with the dative case, such as is found in 1 Peter, indicates Semitic influence (see criterion #17, graph 1). Such is not the case in either Josephus or to an even greater extent Polybius, where criterion #17 falls below -1 in both writers.

The style of 1 Peter, with its long sentences and rhetorical elements may suggest someone who has a greater proficiency in Greek than would be expected of a Galilean fisherman. Nevertheless, Semitic interference is indicated by (a) the use of prepositions (criteria ##3, 4, 5, 6, 8); (b) the use of the genitive personal pronoun (criteria ##12, 13); (c) the position of attributive adjectives; and (d) the use of the dative case with ἐν (criterion #17). A comparison of the syntactical

28. Ibid., 30.

profile of 1 Peter with Josephus and Polybius clearly shows that its syntax, at least as measured by these 14 syntactical criteria, is not as "good" as Polybius, or even as Josephus, if "good" is defined as the Greek style and syntax of a native-proficiency speaker. With this information in hand, a feel for the spread of their respective S-numbers can be better appreciated:

1 Peter =	0.16 ± 0.97
Josephus =	-1.38 ± 1.10
Polybius =	-1.68 ± 0.97

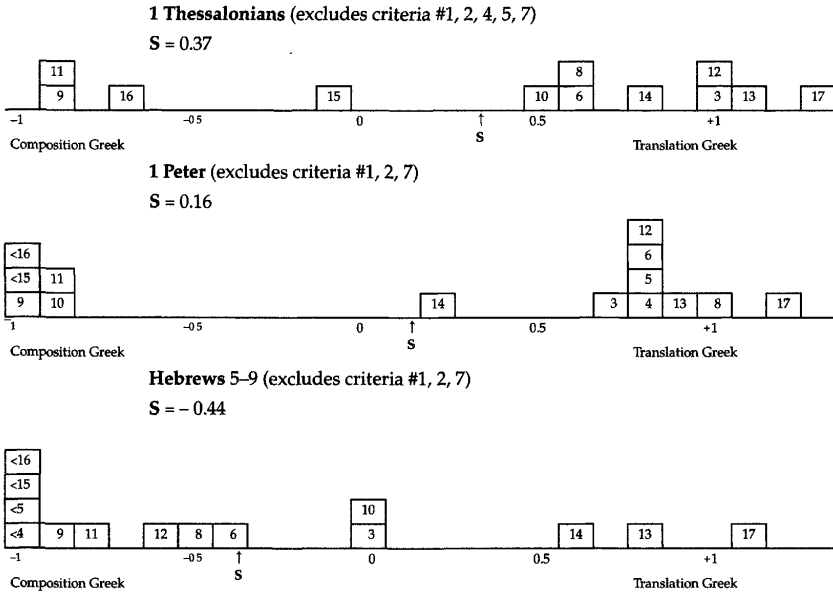
One of the features of 1 Peter is its extensive use of quotations from the Septuagint. Given the extent of the quotations relative to the brief length of the letter, the overall syntax of 1 Peter would certainly be expected to exhibit Semitic interference simply from the syntax of the quotations. However, in the data presented above, the quotations have been eliminated from consideration. When the quotations are included in the analysis, the S-number of 1 Peter increases significantly to 0.28, approaching the S-numbers of Septuagint books such as *Susanna* = 0.28; *LXX Esther* = 0.33; *Alpha-text Esther* = 0.39; *OG Daniel* = 0.54; and *Theodotion Daniel* = 0.62.

THE COMPARISON OF 1 PETER WITH OTHER BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The results of this comparison with Polybius and Josephus leads directly to the question of how the syntax of 1 Peter stacks up against other writers of the NT. Because some would argue that Peter used Silvanus (= Silas, 1 Pet 5:12) as his amanuensis, a comparison with 1 Thessalonians, also associated with Silas (1 Thess 1:1), is a good place to start. When the syntactical profile of 1 Thessalonians is examined, clear Semitic influence can be seen because 8 of the relevant 12 criteria fall heavily on the "translation" side of the scale (see graph 2). Its S-number is 0.37, indicating even more Semitic interference in its syntax than in 1 Peter's. It is interesting that 7 of the 8 relevant elements of syntax (criteria ##3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 17) occur with similar frequency in both 1 Peter and 1 Thessalonians (see graph 2). Specifically, the use of the prepositions *εἰς*, *περί*, and *ὕπο* with the genitive (criteria ##3, 6, 8) not only occur with a similar frequency, but with a frequency indicating Semitic interference.

This usage can be compared with the syntax of Hebrews 5–9, whose author is reputed to write in the high style and good syntax of a highly educated Greek speaker. As one would therefore expect, in Hebrews 5–9 the relative frequency of those same three prepositions falls in the range of usage similar to Polybius and Josephus.

Graph 2: The Syntax of 1 Peter in Comparison to 1 Thessalonians and Hebrews 5–9



The numbers in the boxes refer to criterion number. The position of the box on the axis indicates the normalized value of the relative frequency of occurrence for that criterion. For instance, the normalized value of criterion #3 is 0.7 for 1 Peter, 1.0 for 1 Thessalonians, and 0 for Hebrews 5–9. If the normalized value of every criterion equaled the norm for composition Greek, all of the boxes for these texts would pile up over -1 .

Criteria ##12 and 13, the frequency of occurrence of dependent genitive personal pronouns and the frequency of occurrence of genitive personal pronouns dependent upon anarthrous substantives, occur with a very similar relative frequency in 1 Peter and 1 Thessalonians. In comparison, when the author of Hebrews 5–9 uses genitive personal pronouns, he also tends to make them dependent upon anarthrous substantives in a way that tends toward Semitic style, but he uses genitive personal pronouns with a relative frequency consistent with native proficiency (see graph 2).

Criterion #14, the frequency of occurrence of attributive adjectives preceding the word they qualify, is found to be more toward the style of “composition” Greek in 1 Peter than in either 1 Thessalonians or Hebrews 5–9, but not by much and still well within the range of Semitic interference (see graph 2). In all three books, the positioning of the attributive adjective tends toward Semitic style.

And finally, the frequency of occurrence of the dative case used without the preposition $\epsilon\upsilon$ (criterion #17) is almost identical in 1 Peter, 1 Thessalonians, and Hebrews.

The contour of the profiles and a comparison of the respective S-numbers clearly show that the syntax of 1 Peter is more similar to the syntax of 1 Thessalonians than either is to the syntax of Hebrews:

1 Peter =	0.16 ± 0.97
1 Thessalonians =	0.37 ± 0.84
Hebrews 5-9 =	-0.44 ± 1.07

The positive arithmetic sign of the S-numbers for 1 Peter and 1 Thessalonians indicates that their syntax tends overall toward the Semitic. The negative sign of the S-number for Hebrews 5-9 indicates that the syntax of those chapters tends overall toward Greek without Semitic interference.

Moreover, the profile of Hebrews more closely resembles the profiles of Josephus and Polybius than it does those of 1 Peter and 1 Thessalonians. However, even the high Greek style of Hebrews displays Semitic tendencies in (a) the frequency of occurrence of genitive personal pronouns dependent upon anarthrous substantives (criterion #13); (b) the frequency of attributive adjectives preceding the word they qualify (criterion #14); and (c) the frequency of the dative case used without the preposition *ἐν* (criterion #17). If the author of Hebrews is Apollos, a native Greek-speaker of Alexandria, these three elements of syntax may indicate traits of the style of Greek in more general use among the Jewish population.

CONCLUSIONS

The major conclusion drawn from this study is that the extent of Semitic interference in the syntax of 1 Peter indicates an author whose first language was not Greek. Moreover, the syntax of 1 Peter is comparable to that of 1 Thessalonians, but significantly different from that of Hebrews 5-9, whose formal elements of rhetoric far surpass those found in 1 Peter as well. These conclusions underline Achtemeier's warning that despite the admirable features of the rhetoric of 1 Peter, "The quality of its Greek ought nevertheless not be exaggerated."²⁹ Achtemeier concluded that the author was probably not the Apostle Peter because he perceived an absence of influence by Hebrew or Aramaic, and because of the extensive use of the Septuagint in the epistle, which he apparently judges to be improbable for an author from Palestine.³⁰ This study has demonstrated quantitatively the presence of Semitic interference in the Greek of 1 Peter and opens the way for Semitic authors to be considered for whom

29. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 2.

30. *Ibid.*, 7.

Greek was a second language. And as for the implications for authorship in 1 Peter's use of the Septuagint, the debate continues about the pervasiveness of the Greek language in Palestine, and therefore, about the use of the Septuagint in Palestine. The question remains to what extent the Greek text of 1 Peter actually demands an author formally schooled in Greek rhetoric, as opposed to someone whose rhetorical skill was acquired by less formal means, and whether someone such as the Apostle Peter could have achieved that level of proficiency.

Being based on an analysis of syntax, the study presented is *not* sufficient for determining who the author of 1 Peter was, or for concluding that the same author wrote both 1 Peter and 1 Thessalonians, because syntax is shared by all speakers and writers of a given language. The interference in Greek as a second language caused by Semitic syntax could be expected to be similar for all Semitic speakers whose second language was Greek and who had attained equivalent proficiency in the language. It does demonstrate that it is unlikely that the author of 1 Peter was a native speaker of Greek. The discrepancy between Josephus—for whom it might be argued that Greek was also a second language—and the author of 1 Peter probably indicates differing levels of proficiency in the Greek language. This analysis of syntax demonstrates that Josephus had a much better mastery of Greek than did the author of 1 Peter, which is consistent with historical information about him.

Hopefully, this study has demonstrated the advantages of a quantitative textual analysis that moves beyond one's subjective feel for the text. To that end more objective and quantifiable analyses of various elements of the text of 1 Peter and the other books of the NT are needed that can replace the subjective opinions about the quality of its Greek, upon which many theories of authorship are based.

Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.